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BERTRAND DE BAR-SUR-AUBE, AUTHOR OF *AYMERI DE NARBONNE*?

By WILLIAM W. KIBLER

NOT one of the five manuscript copies of *Aymeri de Narbonne* gives any indication as to the original author of the poem.¹ Stylistically, it is clear that this epic was written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, and from 1865 when the identification was originally proposed by Gaston Paris in his *thèse de doctorat*,² critics have agreed that it was the work of Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube. This Bertrand, one of the few Old French epic poets whose name has come down to us, clearly identifies himself as the author of the epic poem *Girart de Vienne*:

A Bar-sur-Aube .i. chastel seignori,
La sist Bertrans en un vergier flori,
Uns gentis clers qui ceste chançon fist. (vv. 98–100)

In spite of the voluminous research and ingenious proposals by Prosper Tarbé,³ we must agree still with Louis Demaison who wrote of Bertrand in 1887, “en dehors de son nom et de l’indication de sa patrie, on ne possède à son sujet presque aucun renseignement biographique.”⁴

Why has Bertrand been credited with the authorship of *Aymeri de Narbonne*? Gaston Paris wrote in 1865:

Vers le commencement du treizième siècle . . . un clerc de Bar-sur-Aube, appelé Bertrand, composa deux chansons qu’on peut compter à bon droit parmi les meilleures de cette période, *Girart de Vienne* et *Aimeri de Narbonne*. Les derniers vers de la première annoncent la seconde comme immédiatement suivante, et le ton, le style, la versification y sont d’ailleurs trop identiques pour qu’on ne les attribue pas au même auteur.⁵

Paris nowhere offers any proof for this subjective statement that the “tone, style and versification” of the two poems are identical. It is, on the contrary, our contention that a study of these elements will show any resemblances to be coincidental and will indicate clearly that *Aymeri de Narbonne* and *Girart de Vienne* could not have been the work of a single poet.

¹ *Aymeri de Narbonne* is found in the following manuscripts: Brit. Mus. Royal 20 D XI (Fol. 63r col. I — Fol. 77r col. III), known as B¹; B. N. fr. 24369–24370 (Fol. 1r col. I — Fol. 27r col. I), known as B²; B. N. fr. 1448 (Fol. 41r col. I — Fol. 68v col. I), D; Brit. Mus. Harley 1321 (Fol. 32v col. II — Fol. 65v col. I); and Brit. Mus. Royal 20 B XIX (Fol. 39v col. II — Fol. 66r col. I). At least six other manuscript versions mentioned in medieval library catalogues have been lost. *Girart de Vienne* is in all of the above MSS. with the exception of B²; however, it also is to be found in a non-cyclical MS., B. N. fr. 1374. The principal edition of *Aymeri*, that in two volumes by Louis Demaison for the Société des anciens textes français (Paris; 1887), and the best edition of *Girart*, by Frederic G. Yeandle (New York; 1930), are both based on Brit. Mus. Royal 20 B XIX. All our quotations, taken from these two editions, therefore reflect the readings of this single MS., in which *Girart* immediately precedes *Aymeri*.

² *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne* (1865; rpt. Paris, 1905), pp. 326–327.

³ In the introduction to his *Le Roman de Girard de Vienne* (Reims, 1850).

⁴ In the introduction to his SATF ed., *A. N.*, p. lxxx.

⁵ *Hist. poet. de Ch.*, p. 326.

In a succeeding paragraph Paris puts forward an additional observation to support his proposed identification: "L'oeuvre de Bertrand est parfaitement homogène: ses deux poèmes peuvent servir, l'un de préparation, l'autre de conclusion à l'expédition d'Espagne."⁶

This identification is accepted wholeheartedly by Paul Meyer, both in his notes to the revised edition of Paris's *Histoire poétique* (p. 542) and in his article, "*La Chanson de Doon de Nanteuil*: fragments inédits," (*Romania*, 1884). Writing about the *petit vers* found in the fragments he is editing, Meyer notes:

On n'ignore pas que cette forme a été employée dans des poèmes en décasyllabes assez peu anciens, notamment dans le *Girart de Vienne* de Bertran de Bar-sur-Aube et dans *Aimeri de Narbonne* qui, selon toute apparence, est du même auteur. Notons dès maintenant cette coïncidence . . .⁷

In the same volume of *Romania*, W. Braghirolli, in his inventory of medieval French manuscripts in the collection of Francesco Gonzaga I, lists as Item 50 the following: "AYMERICUS DE NERBONA. Incipit. *Bone canzun plect vos che uos di*. Et finit: *sil ne faust listoire*. Continet cart. 165." He notes that the line cited is actually the *incipit* to *Girart de Vienne* and not that to *Aymeri de Narbonne*, "mais ces deux poèmes, sans doute du même auteur, sont ordinairement joints ensemble."⁸

The identification is by this time a *fait accompli*, so when Louis Demaison edits *Aymeri de Narbonne* for the Société des Anciens Textes Français in 1887 he, like scholars before and since his time, can take comfort in the weighty authority of Gaston Paris:

La chanson d'Aymeri de Narbonne offre de grandes analogies avec celle de Girart de Vienne, et est certainement l'oeuvre du même auteur. Telle a été jusqu'ici l'opinion unanime des juges les plus compétents. M. G. Paris, dans son *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne*, a fait très justement remarquer que le ton, le style et la versification des deux poèmes sont identiques, et que leur caractère est parfaitement homogène.⁹

Demaison, like Gaston Paris before him, offers no proof to support the contention that the tone, style and versification of the two poems are identical. He writes simply and inconclusively, "Nous n'insistons pas sur les ressemblances de style qui existent entre *Girart de Vienne* et *Aymeri de Narbonne*," because "ces ressemblances viennent à l'appui des autres preuves que nous avons déjà produites. . . ."¹⁰

Only one critic, Philipp August Becker in *Das Werden der Wilhelm- und der Aimeri-geste*,¹¹ has opposed the attribution of *Aymeri* to Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube. Becker, in his study of the origins of the William of Orange epic cycle,

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Romania*, XIII (1884), p. 8. This coincidence had already been noted by G. Paris in a footnote to his *Hist. poet. de Ch.*, p. 326.

⁸ "Inventaire des manuscrits en langue française possédés par Francesco Gonzaga I, capitaine de Mantoue, mort en 1407," *Romania*, XIII (1884), 497-514. Both citations are from p. 512.

⁹ *A. N.*, pp. lxxiii-lxxiv.

¹⁰ *A. N.*, p. lxxvii.

¹¹ (Leipzig, 1939).

reaches the rather remarkable and lonely conclusion that *Aymeri de Narbonne* was the central epic around which the others eventually arose (p. 120). To make his theory plausible, Becker is forced to contend that *Aymeri* was composed by 1170 at the latest, rather than in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, as had hitherto been supposed. His proof is essentially twofold, and consisted in showing that *Aymeri* was influenced by works written in mid-century — Wace's *Geste des Normans* (1165), the *Pseudo-Turpin*, and the *Roman d'Alexandre* (about 1169) — and in demonstrating that it reflected the historical situation in southern France during the 1150–1170 period. Since Becker does not question that the productive period of Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube is in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, he is thus compelled to conclude that *Aymeri* could not be attributed to him. He cavalierly dismisses all allusions to *Girart* in *Aymeri* as interpolations (pp. 118–20); holds that contemporary political allusions in *Girart* referred to the 1180–85 period (pp. 126–27); and asserts that three of *Girart*'s principal characters — Hernaut de Beaulande, Aimeri de Narbonne, and Girart de Vienne himself — were borrowed from *Aymeri* (p. 128).

To aid in establishing his belief that *Aymeri* antedated *Girart* and could thus be the central epic of the William of Orange cycle, Becker includes the only comparative stylistic study which has been accorded our two poems. Contrasting the styles of these epics, he feels that that of *Aymeri* is straightforward and logical, "ein schlichter, aber bedeutsamer Ausschnitt aus dem Leben eines heldenhaften Mannes, bei dem das Geschehen in natürlicher Aufeinanderfolge verläuft, immer dem gleichen Faden folgend,"¹² while the style of *Girart* is periodic and random, "Gewiss hängen auch diese Vorgänge zusammen, aber mehr zeitlich und zufällig, wie sich die Dinge im Leben aneinanderfügen; und gerade diese Form der Lebensgemässheit, das Hervorkehren des Unvermuteten und Absichtslosen im Geschehen, ist ein kennzeichnender Zug in der Erfindungs- und Erzählungsweise Bertrams."¹³ Becker contrasts the paratactical versification of *Girart* with the more vivid verse of *Aymeri*:

Sehr auffällig ist der in dem Tonfall der Versrede, wenn man Gehör dafür hat. Bei Bertram ist er monoton stichisch und zwar in einem Grad, dass man bei längeren Lesen auf der Hut sein muss, dass man nicht mechanisch weiter skandiert und auf den Sinn nicht mehr achtet. Als Probe nehme man die *is-Laisse* T.p. 111–14 (B 1424–1529 [sic]):

Quant Olivier se vit si entrepris,
Ja ne cuida qu'il n'en eschapist vis.
Granz fu la presse, molt i ot de marchis.
De toutes parz fut assaillis et pris.
Tout li dessirent son bliaut de samis,
Et par desoz son boin peliçon gris, usw.

Dem kann man z. B. die *Laisse* LXXX des *Aimeri* entgegenhalten, wenn man sehen will, wieviel bewegter die Schallkurve ist im Auf und Ab der Tonhöhe, namentlich auch in den Versschlüssen. (. . .) Im *Girart de Vienne* wird man kaum dergleichen finden.¹⁴

¹² *Das Werden*, p. 124.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

Opposition to Becker's position has come from both Ferdinand Lot¹⁵ and Ernst Robert Curtius.¹⁶ Their objection was focused upon his dating of *Aymeri* in the twelfth century rather than in the early years of the thirteenth, thus making it a precursor to *Girart*. This objection, we feel, has merit. However, granted that *Aymeri* was composed in the early thirteenth century, this is insufficient cause to attribute the poem to Bertrand. It is significant that neither Lot nor Curtius attempted to refute Becker's stylistic impressions, only his historical data.¹⁷ It is thus not surprising that William Calin, the author of the latest and best study of *Aymeri*, wholeheartedly accepts the attribution of the epic to Bertrand, citing Demaison, "*Aymeri de Narbonne*, I, lxxiii-xcii, [who] discusses the very sound arguments, agreed to by most scholars, indicating that the epic was composed in the early years of the thirteenth century by Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube, the author of *Girard de Vienne*."¹⁸

If we turn now to examine the arguments put forward by Gaston Paris and Demaison to support their contention that Bertrand was the author of *Aymeri de Narbonne* as well as of *Girart de Vienne*, we will be surprised by the paucity of evidence upon which their case is based. Leaving aside for the moment his feeling that the "tone, style and versification" of the two poems is identical, Gaston Paris's arguments can be reduced to the following:

- a) The final *laisse* of *Girart* seems to introduce *Aymeri*; and
- b) *Girart* can serve as an introduction and *Aymeri* as a sequel to Charlemagne's disastrous excursion into Spain.

Demaison, after reviewing the above, proposes three additional arguments:

- c) In all manuscripts save one, *Aymeri* is immediately preceded by *Girart*:

¹⁵ "Encore la légende de Girart de Roussillon: à propos d'un livre récent," *Romania*, LXX (1948-49), 384.

¹⁶ "Über die altfranzösische Epik V. 3. *Girart de Vienne*," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, LXVIII (1952), 185-95.

¹⁷ *Girart de Vienne's* current editor, W. G. Van Emden, has turned to arguments from contemporary political history to suggest that the earliest version of *Girart* was composed no later than 1180. This dating of *Girart* properly places it prior to *Aymeri*, which it seems to have influenced in at least one passage (see below, pp. 285 and 290-291). Van Emden believes that Bertrand's work was that of a *remanieur*, and that his greatest originality was in associating the hero of *Girart de Vienne* with the William of Orange Cycle. He considers Bertrand to be the author of *Aymeri* as well as of *Girart*, and accepts its traditional dating in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. See his "Hypothèse sur une explication historique du remaniement de *Girart de Vienne* par Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube," fasc. 14 of *Studia Romanica* (Heidelberg, 1969); and "*Girart de Vienne*: problèmes de composition et de datation," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, XIII (1970), 281-90. The only support for Becker's suggestion that Bertrand did not write *Aymeri* has come from René Louis, *Girart, Comte de Vienne, dans les chansons de geste: Girart de Vienne, Girart de Fraite, Girart de Roussillon*, 2 vols., (Auxerre, 1947), who recognizes that the author of *Aymeri* distinguishes *Girart de Vienne* from *Girart de Roussillon*, while Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube "semble avoir conscience de l'identité profonde des deux personnages: tout le long de son roman, il modèle son *Girart de Vienne* sur le patron du *Girart de Roussillon* du manuscrit d'Oxford." (p. 70)

¹⁸ *The Epic Quest: Studies in Four Old French Chansons de Geste* (Baltimore, 1966), p. 4 N3.

“Elles formaient comme deux chapîtres d’un même ouvrage, et il est probable qu’elles étaient souvent récitées ensemble.”¹⁹

d) A passage in *Aymeri* seems to presuppose knowledge of *Girart*.

e) There is a stylistic similarity between two lines of *Girart* and two from *Aymeri*.²⁰

Paris’s observation that the final *laisse* of *Girart* serves to introduce *Aymeri* cannot be denied; however, it is just as properly an introduction to the *Chanson de Roland*, the action of which occurs between that of *Girart* (during which Roland and Olivier first meet) and that of *Aymeri* (where the defeated Charlemagne returns to France). More importantly, the action of *Girart* is much more directly related to that of the *Roland* than to that of *Aymeri*. Furthermore, the authenticity of the final *laisse* of *Girart* has been questioned even by Demaison,²¹ although with no proof to the contrary he quickly dismisses the thought. Even accepting the authenticity of the *laisse*, it is essential to recall that in the thirteenth century when the cyclical manuscripts of the William of Orange Cycle were being compiled, *laissez* were frequently added to effect transitions from one poem to another. This phenomenon has been carefully studied recently by Madeleine Tyssens, and for our purposes it will suffice to cite a single example.²²

The *Enfances Guillaume* is preserved in seven manuscript versions, from both the “Petit Cycle de Guillaume” and the “Grand Cycle de Guillaume et d’Aymeri.” This *chanson de geste*, like the *Narbonnais*, has for its central action the siege of Narbonne by the Saracens. All versions of the battle are identical up to the point at which Aymeri is captured. Manuscripts C (Boulogne-sur-Mer 192) and D (B. N. 1448) rescue Aymeri and end the poem within the same *laisse*:

Ovrent les portes si antrerent dedan.
 Dame Ermenjars est contre lui alant.
 Cent fois li baise la bouche de devan.
 Granz fu la joie dou peire et des anfans,
 Kant sont venu an Nerbone la gran.²³

The A and B versions lengthen considerably the account of the battle and rescue, and only A preserves the authentic ending. None of these endings, however, furnishes any transition to the *Couronnement de Louis*, which immediately follows the *Enfances* in all but the two B MSS. We see William here entering Narbonne in

¹⁹ A. N., p. lxxiv.

²⁰ We cite this passage below, p. 284.

²¹ A. N., p. lxxvi. “À la vérité, ces sortes de couplets, placés à la fin des chansons de geste pour y rappeler certains héros ou annoncer d’autres chansons racontant leurs exploits, manquent souvent d’authenticité et sont dûs aux jongleurs qui les récitèrent ou aux compilateurs des manuscrits.”

²² In *La Geste de Guillaume d’Orange dans les manuscrits cycliques*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l’Université de Liège, Fascicule CLXXVIII (Paris, 1967), *passim* and esp. chapter XXI.

²³ Cited by Tyssens, pp. 419–20. These are lines 3118–22 in Henry’s edition of the *Enfances Guillaume* (Paris: SATF, 1935), and 3122–26 in Perrier’s edition (Columbia University, 1933).

triumph, but in the opening lines of the *Couronnement* we find him far to the north, at Aix-la-Chapelle. As Madeleine Tyssens has pointed out, each version of the *Enfances* provides its own transition:

Dans D, ce sont les huit laisses du *Département des fils Aimeri*, qui répondent au double but de résumer l'essentiel des événements contenus dans les *Narbonnais* et de mettre en place les principaux acteurs des chansons suivantes. Dans C, on trouve une laisse de 14 vers médiocres en -i, qui résument d'abord toute la chanson, puis prêtent à Guillaume un discours où il rappelle sa promesse de toujours protéger Louis et annonce son intention de retourner auprès de Charlemagne: cette laisse a peut-être été composée pour le manuscrit C lui-même, car elle s'achève exactement à la dernière ligne du f° 20 et la miniature du *Couronnement* figure ainsi au sommet du folio suivant. Dans x enfin, la laisse en -ier s'achève par l'arrivée d'un messager qui raconte aux Narbonnais que Charlemagne, fort affaibli, est menacé par les intrigues des barons, qui veulent chasser Louis du royaume . . . ; Guillaume décide de se porter au secours de l'empereur.²⁴

The existence of such transitional *laisses*, composed for the most part to accommodate poems to the movement of the cycle as a whole, and occasionally (as in the case of C) even to fill spaces in particular manuscripts, can no longer be adduced as evidence of the relationship of poems they link.

Paris's second observation, that *Girart* can be viewed as a prologue and *Aymeri* as an epilogue to the defeat at Roncevaux, is likewise undeniable and, for reasons similar to those just given, is likewise inconclusive. That they introduce and conclude the Roncevaux disaster is no more than the accident of their locations and functions within the William cycle. The *Chevalerie Vivien* was conceived as a prelude to the defeat of *Aliscans*, while the *Bataille Loquifer* is its epilogue, yet no one would contend that these poems were composed by a single poet.

Demaision's first argument, that *Aymeri* is generally preceded by *Girart*, is but an alternate formulation of Paris's second observation, and is the weakest reason proposed. *Aymeri* and *Girart* are both parts of the vast "Grand Cycle," the compilers of which sought to organize all the poems that treated William of Orange or his family into a coherent whole. To accomplish this, they arranged the poems according to their subject matter, beginning with the poems treating the exploits of William's great-grandfather, Garin de Montglane, followed by those dealing with the *gestes* of his father Aymeri, then by William's own exploits, and finally by those of his nephew Vivien and other scions of this powerful house. A glance at the contents of these cyclical manuscripts reveals that the poems included occur in an almost unvarying order: *Girart* precedes *Aymeri*, which precedes the *Narbonnais* (2 exceptions), which precedes the *Enfances Guillaume*, which precedes the *Couronnement de Louis*, which precedes the *Charroi de Nîmes*, which precedes the *Prise d'Orange*, etc.²⁵ Demaison's reasoning, pushed to its conclusion, would prove that any two adjacent poems were composed by the same author. In addition to the B² MS. (B.N. fr. 24369-24370) noted by Demaison in which *Aymeri* is not preceded by *Girart*, it must also be remarked that *Girart*

²⁴ Tyssens, p. 420.

²⁵ For a clear *tableau* of the make-up of the cyclical manuscripts of the William cycle, see Tyssens, pp. 44-45.

occurs in a non-cyclical manuscript, B.N. fr. 1374, in which it is associated not with other epics, but with romances (*Cligés*, *Parise la Duchese*, *Roman de la Violette*, *Florimont*, etc.). Its relation to *Aymeri* was clearly not felt by this compiler.

As a second argument, Demaison cites the following passage from *Aymeri*, which seems to presuppose a knowledge of *Girart*; (Charlemagne is addressing Aymeri):

“Ne te membre il de l’eure ne des dis,
Qant en Vienne estoit Girars assis,
En la forest avoie le porc pris?
La me surprist dans Girars li marchis,
Et tu meismes armez o lui venis;
Tant fus vers moi fiers et mautalentis,
S’il te creust, n’en eschapase vis,
Ne remest pas en toi ne fui ocis.” (vv. 719–26)

This argument is considerably weakened by Demaison himself when, in the chapter of his introduction entitled “Allusions à diverses chansons de geste,” he cites equally specific allusions in *Aymeri* to the *Chanson de Roland* (vv. 77–79, 84–91, 107–124, and 1273–87), the *Charroi de Nîmes* and the *Prise d’Orange* (vv. 4517–22), the *Couronnement de Louis* (vv. 4523, 4678–79, 4684–85), *Fouque de Candie* (vv. 4662–72), and *Gormont et Isembart* (vv. 7682–83).²⁶ Nothing is more notable in the William cycle than these cross-references to other poems, especially to those within the cycle, for this was one of the principal ways the poet or compiler was able to bring together the frequently disparate material into a relatively cohesive whole. Anyone familiar with the Old French epic will recall the powerful scene at the opening of the *Charroi de Nîmes* in which William reminds his king and overlord Louis of the great tasks he had performed in his name in the course of the *Couronnement de Louis*. And the following passage from *Aymeri* is remarkably accurate in its allusions to the *Chanson de Roland*:

De tote Espangne et de tote Persie
Eust il lors tote la seignorie,
Se ne fust Ganes qui par tel felonnie
Vandi Rollant a la chiere hardie,
Et Olivier et l’autre conpangnie,
Q’an Rancevax furent mort par envie . . .
. . . sus Marsile asenbla [Charles] s’ost banie:
S’ocistrent tant de la gent paiennie,
Coverte en fu plus de liue et demie
Toute la voie, et la place vestie;
Si en chacierent par molt fiere aatie
Marsilion et sa gent maleie. (vv. 109–14, 119–24)

Yet such detailed knowledge of the *Roland* is scarcely sufficient reason to attribute the two poems to the same author. These allusions were used prominently in the William cycle to give credibility and authority to the poet’s material, while at the same time permitting him to magnify the worth of his own heroes by com-

²⁶ A. N., pp. ccxvi–ccxxii.

paring them to their illustrious predecessors. Such allusions, unless supported by extensive stylistic or historical evidence, are worthless as a means for determining relationships among epics.

In what may therefore appear to be his strongest argument, Demaison cites a two-line passage from *Girart* which shares the same weak rhyme and a line found in a passage from *Aymeri*:

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Rollant la prist forment a esgarder, Et en son cuer forment a goloser | (<i>Girart</i> , vv. 3398–99) |
| and | |
| La cité prent li rois a esgarder, Dedanz son cuer forment a goloser | (<i>Aymeri</i> , vv. 190–91) |

The similarity, however, is purely coincidental, for one of the characteristics of the Old French epic, especially after the late twelfth century (as Demaison himself has recognized),²⁷ is that they have a *fonds commun* of expressions, topoi, hemistiches, and whole lines which can be used interchangeably from poem to poem. This “formulaic diction” has received considerable study since the publication in 1955 of Jean Rychner’s *La Chanson de geste, essai sur l’art épique des jongleurs*.²⁸ Although the present state of research does not permit us to affirm it unequivocally, it is quite probable that “Dedans son cuer forment a goloser” is such a formulaic line.²⁹

Rather more difficult to explain, I believe, is the similarity of this passage from *Girart*:

²⁷ A. N., p. civ: “A l’époque où fut composé *Aymeri de Narbonne*, le style des chansons de geste était jeté dans un moule passablement uniforme. On abusait alors des expressions banales, des clichés invariablement reproduits chaque fois que l’occasion s’en présentait. Les jongleurs avaient à leur disposition une série de phrases toutes faites, d’un emploi facile, dont ils se servaient sans cesse pour remplir et allonger leurs couplets.”

²⁸ (Geneva, 1955). See, for example, Duncan McMillan, “Notes sur quelques clichés formulaires dans les chansons de geste de Guillaume d’Orange,” in *Mélanges de linguistique romane et de philologie médiévale offerts à M. Maurice Delbouille* (Gembloux, 1964), II, 477–93; Jeanne Wathélet-Willem, “A propos de la technique formulaire dans les plus anciennes chansons de geste,” *ibid.*, II, 705–27; Stephen G. Nichols, Jr., *Formulaic Diction and Thematic Composition in the Chanson de Roland* (Chapel Hill, 1961); or Joseph J. Duggan, “Formulas in the *Couronnement de Louis*,” *Romania*, LXXXVII (1966), 315–44. The initial notes of Duggan’s article contain a bibliography of important formulaic studies to 1966, to which we should add Renate Hitze, *Studien zu Sprache und Stil der Kampfschilderung in den chansons de geste*, Kölner Romanistische Arbeiten, Neue Folge, Heft 33 (Paris, 1965); and Anne Iker-Gittleman, *Le Style épique dans Garin le Loherain*, Publications romanes et françaises, vol. XCIV (Geneva, 1967).

²⁹ To search the hundreds of thousands of lines in the nearly one hundred extant Old French epics even for a single formula is clearly impractical if not impossible. Until the formulaic expressions of many more epics are computed, we can only indicate the following lines from the *Enfances Renier* (ed. Carla Cremonesi, Milan, 1957) in which the second hemistich compares:

12394, Renier la voit, forment la goulousa
17550, moult le vi bel, forment le goulousai

If the reader is unwilling to accept this line as formulaic, its presence in *Aymeri* could also possibly be attributed to direct imitation of *Girart* by the *Aymeri*-poet (see below, pp. 290–291).

De ci a .xx. s'en vont apareillier.
 Vestent haubers, lacent elmes d'acier,
 Cengnent espées a lor flanc senestrier.
 Puis est montez chascun sor son destrier.
 A lor cous pendent les escuz de cartier,
 En lor poinz prangent les roiz tranchent espiez. (6332-37)

to the following passage from *Aymeri*:

Isnelement se vont apareillier;
 Vestent haubers, lacent hiaumes d'acier
 Cengnent espées a lor flanc senestrier,
 Puis est montez chascuns sor son destrier.
 A lor cox pendent les escuz de cartier,
 Et en lor poinz les roiz tranchanz espiez. (3676-81)

For reasons which will be made clear below (pp. 290-291), the poet of *Aymeri* appears to have copied this passage directly from *Girart*.

An equally striking example of parallel passages is the following from *Girart* and the *Charroi de Nîmes*:

Ce fu a Pasques que l'en dit en esté.
 Foillissent bois et verdissent cil pré.
 Cil oisel chantent doucement et soëf. (Girart, 3062-64)
 and
 Ce fu en mai, el novel tens d'esté:
 Fueillissent bois, reverdissent li pré,
 Cil oisel chantent belement et soë.³⁰

Yet no one would be prepared from this evidence to claim that Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube was the author of the *Charroi de Nîmes*. We are dealing in each case with stock motifs of the Old French epic which could be used interchangeably from piece to piece, and which therefore were freely borrowed in an age in which originality was not one of the accepted aesthetic criteria.

While the arguments proposed by Gaston Paris and Louis Demaison thus do not prove that Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube wrote *Aymeri de Narbonne*, they do afford us a method for testing their assumption, for the existence of this common poetic vocabulary and stock of expression *can* aid in determining authorship. When the repetitive patterns of one poem are compared with those of other poems it becomes evident that certain patterns pertain to the *fonds commun* of most poets, while others are peculiar to or particularly favored by an individual poet. If two given epics employ consistently the same formulaic diction, one might

³⁰ *Charroi de Nîmes*, (CFMA, #66), ed. J.-L. Perrier (Paris, 1963), vv. 14-17. We have replaced *gaut* by *bois* in v. 15 in accordance with the reading of MS. B¹ (Brit. Mus. Royal 20 D XI). Cf. the following lines from *La Prise d'Orange*, ed. Claude Régnier, (Paris, 1970):

Ce fu en mai el novel tens d'esté;
 Florissent bois et verdissent cil pré . . .
 Cil oisel chantent doucement et soëf. (39-42)

reasonably affirm that they were the product of the same mind. If, on the other hand, one can isolate a significantly high number of expressions used extensively and exclusively (or nearly so) in one poem, and not found in another, one should be able to affirm with equal certitude that the poems in question were not composed by the same poet. There are, of course, a number of expressions common to both *Aymeri* and *Girart*, and which belong to the poetic *fonds commun* of any epic poet of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Such expressions we have eliminated from consideration in the discussion which follows, for they are far outweighed, we believe, by the formulaic expressions not shared by the two poems.

One of the salient characteristics of epic dialogue is the manner in which the speaker appeals to God to emphasize his position or to confirm the truth of his statements. In *Girart* this takes two distinct forms: part-line or full-line appeals. Among the former *Por Deu le fiz Marie* (133, 940, 2210, 4085, 5135, 6209, etc.); *Si m'eist Deus* (164, 1343, 2101, 3915, 5400, 6761, etc.); *Par Deu le droiturier* (482, 649, 1445, 1935, 4849, etc.); *En non Deu* (530, 1662, 2170, 5495, 6903, etc.); *Foi que doi Deu* (406, 2235, 5396, etc.); *Glorieus Deu* (5264, 5281, 5952, etc.), or simply *Par Deu* (384, 2740, 3032, etc.) are the most common.³¹ *Por Deu le fiz Marie* and *En non Deu* both occur frequently in *Aymeri* as well. On the other hand, *Glorieus Deu* does not occur at all and *Par Deu le droiturier* occurs but once (3808) in *Aymeri*.³² The expression *Foi que doi Deu* is common in *Aymeri*, but only occurs in full-line expressions (e.g., *Foi que doi Deu le vrai criator*, v. 2433; *Foi que doi Deu, le roi de majesté*, v. 3057). Similarly, *Si m'eist Deus*, which occurs at least fourteen times in *Girart*, and only three times in full-line expressions (140, 4037, 5786), is with a single exception (3293) incorporated into full-line expressions in *Aymeri* (*Si m'eist Dex qui en sainte croiz fu*, v. 963; *Si m'eist Dex, li rois de paradis*, v. 2340; etc.)³³

Of the full-line appeals in *Girart*, by far the most frequent is *Par l'apostre qu'en quiert en Noiron pré*. This line, or a slight variant of it (*Par cel apostre*, etc.), occurs a dozen times in *Girart* (985, 1054, 1628, 1651, 1739, 2263, 2451, 2819, 2828, 2847, 4049, and 6126). It does not occur in *Aymeri*,³⁴ although it is one of the most widespread appeals in the poems of the William cycle.³⁵ Other full-line oaths in *Girart* generally make reference to pilgrimages:

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Par cel apostre qu'est a Rome requis | (612, 1092) |
| Par cel apostre que quierent peneant | (2247, 2254, 2568, etc.) |
| Por cel apostre que requierent paumier | (790) |
| Par la croiz que requierent paumier | (218, 480, 831: François); |

³¹ For clarity as we begin our comparison of the styles of *Girart* and *Aymeri*, let us recall that all line numbers refer to the Yeandle edition of *Girart* or to the Demaison edition of *Aymeri*, both based on the same MS., Brit. Mus. Royal 20 B XIX. This fortunate coincidence goes far toward reducing the chance for our observations being attributed merely to scribal variations. In this MS., *Aymeri* immediately follows *Girart* and seems to be written in the same hand. (See also our Note 1.)

³² Cf. v. 3391, *Foi que doi Deu le Pere droiturier*.

³³ At least eight occurrences (963, 1265, 1345, 2340, 2480, 2492, 2678, 3293).

³⁴ Cf. v. 3026, *Il n'a si bele de ci en Noiron pré*.

³⁵ It occurs in the *Couronnement de Louis* (1797), the *Charroi de Nîmes* (279, 405, 513, 1365), the

to Christ's sufferings on the Cross:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Cil Damedeu qui en croiz fu penez | (1772) |
| Por Deu vos pri qui en croiz fu penez | (5058) |
| Por amor Deu qui en la croiz fu mis | (1079; variants: 4865–66, 4884, 4999–5000, 5080, etc.); |

or to the power of God:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Par ce Deu qui tout a a jugier | (1150, 3132, 3884; variants: 1580, 4162, etc.) |
| Cil Damedeu, qui tot a a sauver | (896). |

While there are appeals in *Aymeri* similar to these in *Girart*,³⁶ by far the majority of oaths in *Aymeri* are of quite other structure. Most appeal to Faith:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Foi que doi au roi de majesté | (236, 3057) |
| Foi que doi Deu qui le mont doit jugier | (812) |
| Foi que doi Deu le verai jostissier | (1188) |
| Foi que doi Deu qui fist ciel et rousee | (2560) |
| Foi que doi Deu le roi | (313); |

or to the saints:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Foi que doi saint Fremin d'Aminoio | (612) |
| Por le cors saint Denis | (717) |
| Par le cors saint Climent | (761) |
| Par le cors saint Amant | (1341) |
| Par le cors saint Remi | (1382, 3431) |
| Par le cors saint Richier | (3415). |

Since such oaths are an important part of the stock vocabulary of the epic poet, the marked differences in their composition and content in our two poems suggest that they are the work of distinct minds operating in separate patterns.

Another instance in which we can see developed patterns is in the *injures* favored by particular authors. Bertrand clearly prefers *Fill a putain*, which he uses no less than eleven times in *Girart*. There are but three occurrences in *Aymeri* (933, 1655, 2798). In two of these cases (933, 1655) it is associated with the most popular *injure* in *Aymeri*: *gloton desfaé*. While *gloton* is one of the most frequently used *injures* in the Old French epic, the combination *gloton desfaé* does not occur in *Girart*, and *desfaé* itself occurs only four times (294, 2496, 4103, 5055). *Desfaé(e)* is used in *Aymeri* nearly twenty times.

Another frequent curse in *Girart*, *.c. daaz et qui . . .* (226, 235, 1589, 2189, 4251) or *Mau daaz et qui . . .* (253, 4406, 6331) is rare in *Aymeri* (3382 and 3665).

In addition to appealing to God and to His saints to witness the truth of their statements, Old French poets and their characters frequently asserted it on their own authority: *C'est fine verité*, *C'est verité provee*, *Veritez est*, etc. The most common of these statements in *Girart*, *c'est verité provee* (10 occurrences), is clearly

Prise d'Orange (848), the *Siège de Barbastre* (2561, 2856, 3469), the *Enfances Guillaume* (817, 857, 2215, 2301, 2450, 2820), etc.

³⁶ See, for example, *Par l'apostre que quierent peneant*, v. 1027; or, *Por Deu qui en croiz fu penez*, v. 674, with variants vv. 3327 and 4011.

occasioned by the rhyme. As it occurs five times in *Aymeri*, we cannot safely consider it a characteristic expression. Two other expressions common in *Girart* do seem characteristic: *par [por] verté le vos di* (6 occurrences) and *vos dites verité* (7 occurrences). Neither occurs in *Aymeri*. *De verté le savon* (4 occurrences in *Girart*) appears but a single time in *Aymeri* (v. 65). Though *Aymeri* does have appeals to the “*verité*” of a statement, the poet prefers expressions with *fi* (<fidus):

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| ce sachiez bien de fi | (27, 1672) |
| ce savons nos de fi | (4533) |
| ce set on bien de fi | (31, 4503) |
| par foi le vos afi | (1355, 2483) |
| por voir le vos affi | (1367, 1686), etc. |

This is not surprising when we recall that this poet also preferred sworn appeals using the word *foi* (<fides). Such expressions occur more than three times as frequently in *Aymeri* as in *Girart*.³⁷

Another manner in which the poet and his characters could assert the veracity of their statements was by reassuring their auditors that they were hiding nothing from them. In *Girart*, Bertrand has a penchant for such expressions as

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| a celer nel vos quier | (209, 229, 2942, 5475, etc.) ³⁸ |
| ja nel vos quier noier | (3950, 4026, 4179, 5111) |
| Gardez, nel me celez | (135, 366, 2817, 2860, 6241, etc.) ³⁹ |
| nel vos celeraï ja | (1388, 4384, etc.). |

While such expressions do occur in *Aymeri*, the rate of frequency is less than half that of *Girart*.⁴⁰

Epic action in the William Cycle is centered in the numerous battles of Christian vs. Pagan and Christian vs. Christian. A study of the vocabulary of war used in *Girart* and *Aymeri* reveals that, excepting to expressions common to all epic action (*branc d'acier*, *destrier arragon*, *le vis fier*, *preuz et hardiz*, etc.), the clichés of one poem are not those of the other.

To describe the combat itself, both epics have *estor* and *bataille*. In *Aymeri*, however, there is a three to one preference for *estor*, while *Girart* has an approximately five to three preference for *bataille*. Bertrand also frequently uses the noun *chapeïz* (2639, 3586, 3591, 4373, 5859, 5872: *chables*), while the *Aymeri* poet knows only the verb form (920, 4163, 4232, etc.).⁴¹ The horses ridden into battle in *Girart* are *auferrant destrier* (2927, 2985, 3003, 3015, 3143, 3872, 6317), *auferrant crenu* (1028, 2041, 3026, 6715), *destriers crenuz* (2715, 2727, 6153), or *corant destrier* (2959, 3120, 3163, 3336, 3945).⁴² In *Aymeri* the knights enter battle on *destrier abrivé* (893, 1412, 1582, 3562, 4015, 4219, 4246), *destrier misodor* (1258, 2926, 3149), or *misodor* (1268, 2951).⁴³

³⁷ At least 15 occasions in the 4708 lines of *Aymeri*, vs. 7 occasions in the 6934 lines of *Girart*.

³⁸ At least 17 occurrences through the poem.

³⁹ At least 16 occurrences.

⁴⁰ Sixteen occurrences in *Aymeri* vs. over forty in *Girart*.

⁴¹ See, however, in v. 904, *chape*.

⁴² For completeness, let us note that *Aymeri* has three examples of *destrier auferrant* (1199, 1716, 3204), two of *corant destrier* (3196, 3819) and one *destrier crenu* (4170).

⁴³ *Girart* has two examples of *destrier abrivé* (3302, 5387).

In addition to their *branc d'acier*, the knights in *Girart* generally carry into battle an *escu de cartier* (757, 2930, 2987, etc.),⁴⁴ or *escu voti* (2371, 2621, 3627, 5211). In *Aymeri* their shield is a *lion* (3131), *listé* (1585, 2006), *painz a flor* (1260), but never *voti* and only once *de cartier* (3680). The knights of *Aymeri* wear a *hauberc fremillon* (411, 2811, 3130)⁴⁵ or *auberc de Sartengne* (1780), while in *Girart* it is a *hauberc jazerant* (4942, 4961, 4966), *tresliz* (2362, 3229, 3685, 4303), or *doblier* (748, 2920, 3108, etc.).⁴⁶ In *Aymeri* the *hauberc* or *broine*⁴⁷ is *desrout et despanné* (907, 1434), *desrout et desarti* (4122),⁴⁸ *desrout et desafré* (3021, 4214) *fausé* (897, 1875) or *desmaillié* (1858, 1912, 2909, 4174). The *hauberc doblier* in *Girart* appears to be much stronger, for

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Fort fu l'auberc que maille n'en derront | (2688) |
| Forz haubers ont que maille n'en desment | (3012) |
| Fort fu l'auberc que maille n'en ronpi | (3629, 4346, 4510) |
| Fort fu l'auberc qui li fist guerison | (4492) |
| Forz haubers ont, nes porent enpirier | (5222). |

The *haubers* in *Aymeri* display no such resistance. When those of *Girart* do weaken, they are *desmaillié et rompu* (2042, 5742, 5770–1, 5833),⁴⁹ *ronpi* (3209, 3604), *rouz et desartiz* (4341), *ronpue et desartie* (4469). Such patterns are clearly distinct from those of *Aymeri* just given.

When the knights of *Girart* are slain, they are *detranchiez et ocis* (613, 852, 873, 1093, 3648), *ocis ne afolez* (2452, 2844, 3287, 5078, 6081, 6494), *afolez ne maumis* (3621, 4286), *veincu ne afolé* (5470), or *morz et afolez* (3907, 6748). This preference for patterns using *afolez* is not to be found in *Aymeri*,⁵⁰ which prefers a pattern on the model *ocis+d* . . . (*ocis et desmembrez*, *ocis et domagié*, *ocis et decopé*, *ocis et desconfit*, and so forth).

Tyssens's study of the *petit vers* has shown that they too reveal formulaic expressions which can be seen to be typical of a particular author, and she cites specific examples from both *Girart* (*G.V.*) and *Aymeri* (*A.N.*):

Mais, — et ceci est capital, — certains petits vers sont propres à un seul auteur et répétés trois ou quatre fois dans une même chanson, ils ne se retrouvent jamais ailleurs. Ainsi . . . dans *G.V.*, “Molt traoit [Bien traiez] a sa [ma] geste” (2 emplois), “Voiant ceus de Vienne” (3 emplois), “Duel en ot et pesance” (2 emplois); dans *A.N.*, “Car ja ne sera moie” (2 emplois), “Car la citez est moie;” . . . etc.

Sans doute, certains de ces petits vers sont trop liés par leur contenu au sujet même de la chanson pour qu'on s'étonne de ne pas les revoir dans la chanson voisine. Mais pour la plupart, ils semblent être, eux aussi, des formules. Toutefois, il ne s'agit plus de formules banales, mais de formules personnelles, appartenant à un seul auteur.⁵¹

Many other formulaic patterns occur in our two epics. However, it is not our

⁴⁴ Nine occurrences.

⁴⁵ Two examples in *Girart* (4430, 5356).

⁴⁶ One example in *Aymeri* (350), vs. eight in *Girart*.

⁴⁷ *Broine*, common in *Aymeri*, occurs but twice in *Girart*.

⁴⁸ Two occurrences in *Girart* (2648, 3660).

⁴⁹ One example in *Aymeri* (4174).

⁵⁰ There are but two uses of the *afolez* pattern (2613, 3040).

⁵¹ See Tyssens, ch. vi.

intent here to have exhausted these expressions, but merely to have considered a sufficient number of them to show that the patterns preferred in the two poems differ sufficiently from one another to suggest that they were not the stock expressions of a single mind.

In addition to formulaic diction, there are within the Old French epics many motifs which, by virtue of the subject matter treated, must recur from poem to poem: the description of the arming of a knight, the knight riding into battle, the one to one combat, the general melee, the description of physical beauty, the description of expensive clothes, etc. The vocabulary used within each motif is quite limited, so we should not be surprised to find a poet falling into patterns in his treatment of them. By way of illustration, we shall consider only the "arming for battle" motif in *Girart* and *Aymeri*.

The elements available to the poet are: *hauberc* (*broine*), *hiaume*, *branc* (*espee*), *escu*, and *destrier*. In *Girart* there develop two basic patterns:

- a) El dos li vestent le blanc hauberc treliz,
 El chief li lacent .i. vert hiaume bruni.
 Girart li ceint le branc d'acier forbi,
 Et de sa paume .i. grant cop le feri. (2362-65).

This pattern, which gives a full line to each element, is repeated on the same rhyme in vv. 4303-06, and twice with a rhyme in *-ier* (2920-23; 3868-71). A second pattern, in which the *hauberc* and *hiaume* are given but one line, occurs with even more frequency:

- b) Il vet l'auberc, lace l'iaume bruni,
 Au col li pendent .i. fort escu votiz,
 Et en son pong .i. roit espie forbi. (2620-22).

This is repeated with other rhymes in vv. 3001-03, 3141-43, and 5052-53, and in the plural in vv. 3179-81 and 6333-35. In all, these basically similar patterns occur no less than ten times in *Girart*. Yet such a pattern is found but once in *Aymeri* (3677-79). However, that single occurrence is of particular interest, for the passage in question repeats almost verbatim six lines from *Girart* (see above, p. 285). Before considering this coincidence in more detail, let us examine the "arming for battle" motif in *Aymeri*, where the poet has a marked tendency to reduce this to a summary statement:

- Lors s'arment tuit chevalier et sergent (1013)
 Dont veisiez ces chevaliers armer (1066)
 Maintenant s'arment chevalier et baron (3124)
 Dedanz la tor s'armerent maintenant (3167).

On the two occasions when the motif is treated more fully, it does not resemble the patterns indicated above from *Girart*:

- Et cil s'arma tantost, sans demorée;
 La broine vest qui fu fort et serrée,
 Puis lace l'iaume, si a ceinte l'espée. (1862-64).

and

Trés bien se font ainçois apareillier
De blans haubers et de hiaumes d'acier,
De forz escuz et de tranchanz espiés. (3645–47).

It is indeed striking then that on the single occasion when *Aymeri* does reproduce the pattern of *Girart* it should incorporate this into a six-line passage all but identical to one in *Girart*. Noteworthy also is the fact that this passage furnishes us the only usage in *Aymeri* of the characteristic *escu de cartier* from *Girart* (see above, p. 289). It seems quite clear that the poet of *Aymeri*, or possibly a scribe of an early cyclical manuscript, lifted the passage from *Girart*, for it is not in the style of *Aymeri* and contains vocabulary not found elsewhere in the poem. Furthermore, the version of the final line contained in *Girart*, with the verb *pranent*, is preferable to that in *Aymeri*, without.

Consideration of other traditional motifs yields analogous results, so in the interest of conciseness that study is omitted here.

An examination of the versification of *Girart* and *Aymeri* supports the conclusions obtained from a comparison of their formulaic expressions and traditional motifs. Both poems are written in the decasyllabic line most typical of the Old French epic. In addition, they are both composed of monorhymed *laissez* of unequal length ending in the six-syllable *petit vers* typical of the poems of the "Cycle d'Aimeri."⁵² The versification of *Aymeri* is unusually good. Of 122 *laissez* in the poem, only two show any tendency to assonance, and both are exceptionally long. *Laisse CI* (in *-er*) has 37 assonances in 213 lines; *laisse XCIX* (in *-ier*) has 9 in 183 lines. There is no reason to disagree with Demaison when he writes, "A part ces exceptions peu importantes et relativement peu nombreuses, la rime est fidelement respectée."⁵³

In *Girart de Vienne*, on the other hand, "A glance at the table of rimes will suffice to show that many of the *laissez* show a tendency toward assonance."⁵⁴ Of the 39 *laissez* in *-é*, *-er*, and *-ez*, only 5 are free of assonance; of the 33 *laissez* in *-ier*, 12 are free of assonance; of 24 *laissez* in *-i*, *-is*, only 1 is free of assonance. *Laisse CXCI* is a true assonanced *laisse*. Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube in *Girart* mixes freely endings in *-ant* and *-ent*. There is no example of a pure *laisse* in *-ent* or in *-ant*. In *Aymeri*, by contrast, there is one pure *laisse* in *-ent* (XXVII), four pure *laissez* in *-ant* (XVII, XL, CX, and CXVIII), two *laissez* in which the only offending word is *sergent* (XXXII, LI), one in which the offending word is *escient* (XCI), one split down the middle (LXI — probably better divided into two *laissez*); and three *laissez* with a total of 15 offending lines. In sum, 19 offending lines in a total of 338.⁵⁵

⁵² Tyssens, pp. 172–73.

⁵³ Demaison, p. cvii.

⁵⁴ Yeandle, p. 8.

⁵⁵ We therefore cannot agree with Demaison when he writes, p. cvi: "*An* et *en* sont absolument confondus."

The foregoing study of the style and versification of *Aymeri de Narbonne* and *Girart de Vienne* suggests that the poems were not composed by the same poet. The differences, we believe, are both numerous and evident and spring from the poets' conception of their materials rather than from surface embellishments which could be attributed to different scribes. This conclusion, however, must remain tentative until such time as a detailed study of the repetitive patterns and motifs of a large number of contemporaneous epics has set up a sufficient field of reference for these observations to be verified.⁵⁶

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⁵⁶ While this article was in the process of publication news came of the death of the author's teacher and guide in the fields of Old French literature and Romance Philology. It is a privilege, therefore, to dedicate this work to the memory of the former President of the Fellows of the Mediaeval Academy of America, Kenan Professor Urban Tigner Holmes, Jr, of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.