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# The king, the fool, and Longfellow

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San Jose State University, 1993

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THE KING, THE FOOL, AND LONGFELLOW

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The Faculty of the Department of English

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

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ABSTRACT

THE KING, THE FOOL, AND LONGFELLOW

by Christopher Salander

This thesis follows the historical development of one story, "King Robert of Sicily," as it progressed from ancient origins through several English versions up to the 20th century. It focuses on three major works: a 14th century English poem, a 19th century short story by Leigh Hunt, and a poem written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

An analysis of each work by itself and a comparison of each work with its predecessors reveals what changes were made to the story and how they reflected the author and his period. The history of "King Robert of Sicily" also reveals the repressive influence of politics and the restorative effect of literary research on the course of English literature.

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The story of King Robert, we beg leave to say, is an especial delight of our soul, and gave us some exquisite moments in the writing. How came Shakspeare to let such a subject escape him? or Beaumont and Fletcher? or Decker? or any of the great and loving spirits that abounded in that romantic age? It was extant in manuscript; it abounded under another name, in print; it presented the most striking dramatic points; extremes of passion were in the characters; pride and its punishment were in it; humility and its reward; a court, a chapel, an angel, pomp, music, satire, buffoonery, sublimity, tears. O Fate! give us a dozen years more life, and a lift in our faculties, immense; and let us try still if even our own verses cannot do something with it.

- Leigh Hunt

A Jar of Honey from Mt. Hybla, 1848

## Introduction

Sometime in the 14th century an anonymous English poet composed a verse exemplum or didactic romance in the South Midland dialect of Middle English. Untitled, this work would come to be called "Kynge Roberd of Cisyle," after its protagonist. The 444 line work describes how an angel humiliates the proud King Robert of Sicily until he becomes a humble and devout man. In spite of Latin and continental European predecessors, this poem is unique and uniquely English, owing little of its artistic merit to any other work. Not only does this tale compare favorably with Chaucer's tales, but it also contains one of the first descriptions in English literature of a court jester.

After approximately one century of popularity, "King Robert of Sicily" then languished virtually unnoticed until the 19th century. Leigh Hunt, the British Romantic editor, read this story and published his own prose version of it in his book A Jar of Honey from Mt. Hybla (1848). Soon afterwards, the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow decided to put together a 19th-century American version of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. In Tales from a Wayside Inn (1863), travellers of various backgrounds and nationalities tell stories at an inn Longfellow himself had visited. Through trips to Europe and his knowledge of many languages,

Longfellow assembled a collection of tales to be told by characters modelled after his friends. Longfellow took "King Robert" from Hunt's book and gave the words to a Sicilian guest.

Since they are uncommon and difficult to find, texts of the three main works are included in Appendices B, C, and D. The medieval text comes from French and Hale's transcription of the Vernon manuscript. The Hunt and Longfellow texts are taken from their respective books, as listed in the Works Cited.

The first chapter describes the possible origin of the tale, from the earliest tales of a proud king brought low, up to the medieval English poem. The second chapter evaluates the distinctive features of this 14th century English work as well as the form and content of "King Robert of Sicily." The tone and quality of the work are considered for what they say about the author and his times.

The third chapter quickly spans the centuries, covering what little happened to "King Robert" and why it may have remained unread for so long until Leigh Hunt came upon it. The fourth chapter considers how Hunt came to use the story and compares Hunt's work to the medieval version of "King Robert" to show what was lost or added through Hunt's rendering of the story, as a result of style, method, or

bias. The fifth chapter highlights the differences between the Hunt piece and the Longfellow poem and analyzes how Longfellow reshaped the work to suit his literary goals and his personal interests.

The last chapter reviews the progress of the story since Longfellow as well as the changes that "King Robert of Sicily" has undergone. The combined gain and loss make each work unique and not a replacement for its predecessor. Still, a single, basic story lives through each work, striving to be heard. Alone or as a set, the three stories of King Robert represent a type of well-written literature that lies just off the track of most literary study. This thesis should show the value of stopping by the literary roadside to consider such material.

## Chapter One

## The Origins of the Proud King

Stories of pride brought low and proud kings humbled pervade the stories and folk tales of many regions and languages. In his famous Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, Stith Thompson assigns the entire range of L410 to L419 to different types of stories of rulers humbled. "King Robert of Sicily" fits specifically into L411, "Proud king displaced by angel" (Thompson 22). The Bible contains one of the earliest and most widely known of such stories, the humiliation of King Nebuchadnezzar. In the Book of Daniel, Chapter 4, the king of Babylon develops the features and habits of various animals and suffers miserably until he recognizes Yahweh, the Hebrews' one true God.

German folklore researcher Hermann Varnhagen, in two of his works (see Bibliography), traces the story of Nebuchadnezzar into the Christian era, through an Arabic and a Turkish version of the story (Cook 168). Crusaders may have brought back a Muslim version of the tale, or new tales may have sprung up in Western Europe based upon the Bible. Evidence that Nebuchadnezzar was on the minds of medieval Europeans may be found around 1100 A.D., when "the story of Nebuchadnezzar was carved in the cloister of the abbey church at Moissac [,France]" (Hibbard 56).

Finally, two sets of tales that would lead to "King Robert of Sicily" developed. One version, written first in Latin prose, possibly originating in England, may be found as story 59 in the Gesta Romanorum, a collection of exempla supposedly compiled by monks. The other strain of story grew out of the French moralite', "Robert le Diable." The earliest known manuscript of Gesta Romanorum has been dated at 1326, and that manuscript shows signs of being several transcriptions removed from an unknown original (Swan vii). Parallel stories in French, Spanish, Italian, and German manuscripts date back to 1240. An early romance form of "Robert le Diable" may come from late in the 12th century (Hibbard 49), and a short version of the story was included in a collection of exempla put together by Etienne de Bourbon, a Dominican monk, in 1261 (Hibbard 50).

Both types of stories contain many of the elements found in "King Robert of Sicily." In exemplum 59 of the Gesta Romanorum, or "Of Too Much Pride, And How the Proud Are Frequently Compelled to Endure Some Notable Humiliation," Roman Emperor Jovinian stops to bathe in a stream after being thrown from his horse while hunting. When he emerges, his clothes are gone and an impostor has taken his place. He goes naked from estate to estate until he attempts to enter the palace itself. Not even the queen



and the royal dog recognize Jovinian. The imposter orders him put to death, but first the deposed emperor visits a confessor. Jovinian's confession and transformation are so profound that he is again recognized and is restored to the throne, where he devotes the rest of his life and all of his soul to God.

In "Robert the Devil," the story begins when a noble and childless couple ask the devil for a child, in return for its soul. The child Robert becomes a terror as an adult, committing evil deeds far and wide until he "sees the light" and becomes converted into a devout commoner. He goes to Rome, where he lives and works as a much-abused menial in the palace. Eventually, after especially intense prayer, Robert receives armor and weapons and wins three battles against the infidel for the emperor of Rome. His nobility is recognized by the emperor's daughter, and they live happily ever after.

Some very specific items from both tales show up in "King Robert." In both the Latin exemplum and the English poem, Jovinian must argue with and get past gate keepers, and he is quite filthy. Also, he must become completely humble before his conversion and he is a reigning monarch before he is dethroned, rather than winning the throne after his conversion. The French moralite' provides the name,

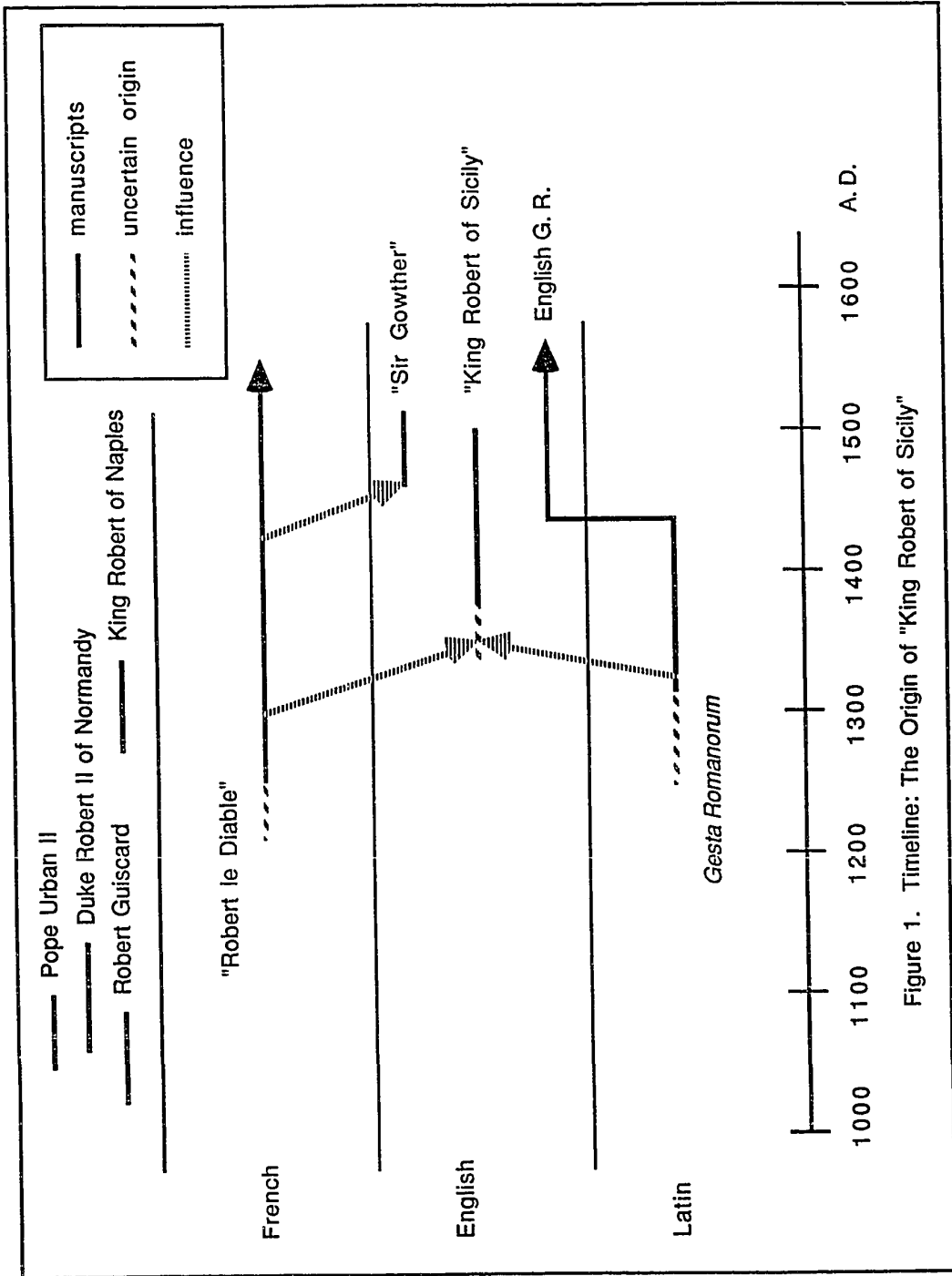


Figure 1. Timeline: The Origin of "King Robert of Sicily"

Robert, who is usually characterized as a Norman, and may have been modelled after Duke Robert II of Normandy (eldest son of William the Conqueror, went on the First Crusade, died 1134). This tale also describes Robert's mean lifestyle at the court, where he must eat with the dogs, and it includes a journey to Rome. All these elements appear later in "King Robert."

The time line shown in Figure 1 shows the suspected development of the different versions of this tale and the possible influence of these works on the creation of the English piece. Robert le Diable was eventually converted into the tale of Sir Gowther in English, the oldest ms. of which comes from the late 15th century (Hibbard 51). Another century would pass before Robert le Diable would be translated directly into English. The earliest English translation of the Gesta Romanorum known has been dated to around 1440 (Swan x, Garbaty 813). The oldest ms. to include "King Robert of Sicily" is the Vernon ms. from the Bodleian library at Trinity College, Oxford, which has been dated at c.1370 A. D.

Besides the two tales already described, history itself may have influenced the author of "King Robert." Robert Guiscard, a Norman knight who lived from 1015 to 1089, succeeded in conquering lower Italy and forming the Kingdom

of Naples. His brother and nephew simultaneously conquered Sicily and then became King Roger I and King Roger II of the Kingdom of Sicily. No Robert ever ruled Sicily. Whether the author deliberately changed facts to suit his story or whether all the stories were jumbled together when the author heard or read them, no one knows. Yet all of these elements went into the English metrical exemplum composed sometime before 1370.

The transformation of a story about the humiliation of a devilish king named Robert into a story about a proud king named Robert may have resulted from the life story of another famous King Robert who lived just before "King Robert of Sicily" was written (1275-1343). Although he never ruled Sicily, the second King Robert of Naples ruled southern Italy. Just as Robert in the story was brother to the pope, and the Holy Roman Emperor, this real Robert "was a brother of the King of Hungary (who was a contender for the title of [Holy Roman] Emperor) and was also affiliated, by marriage, with the Spanish royal house . . ." (Hornstein, "Analogues" 19). Robert supported Boccaccio at his court, awarded Petrarch a literary prize, and even intervened to prevent the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in 1321 (Hornstein, "Analogues" 19,20). Contemporary scholars praised him for his support of the arts.

The devil Robert had grown out of Robert, the Duke of Normandy's penchant for starting wars and looting monasteries. Medieval writers probably knew little about the emperor Jovinian, just that he argued with St. Jerome. Clearly, the rule of such a good, new Robert called for the creation of a new story. Somewhere near London, just before 1370, an anonymous English author took up the challenge of creating that story.


## Chapter Two

## An Exemplum Among Romances

Various scholars and critics have not been able to agree on the nature of "King Robert of Sicily." Hibbard calls it "either a romance or an ecclesiastical legend" (Hibbard 58). French and Hale label it a "pious legend" (French & Hale 933). Wells lists the work under Romances. Ellis and Hornstein label the work a romance. While most didactic works are stiff and uninteresting, "King Robert" has the same quality of verse and story as many entertaining romances which have no obvious lesson to teach. French and Hale seem to put it best when they say

Strictly speaking, this is a pious legend, told to edify rather than amuse. It is included in a volume of romances as an example of a literature that borders on fiction and often uses its methods, but differs from it in being supposedly founded on fact. Its style is simple, severe, and reverent. (933)

The medieval poem exists in 10 manuscripts, which are listed in Appendix A. The eight complete manuscripts follow the same story closely. All references to the text of the poem will use the modern edition of French & Hale, based on the Vernon manuscript, which appears to be the oldest and therefore probably the closest to the original. The modern



He is of kyng Robert of Sicyle  
 Hou prude duide him be sylle  
 Eruis proude. y bey in pwe.  
 Wol out tulle yng not leas.  
 In cysle was anoble kyng.  
 ffay and strong: and ouel zing.  
 He hedde a wyoye. in grette Rome  
 Pope of al cristendome  
 Anoye he hedde. In Almayne  
 An Emperour. y sayme wyoye to payne.  
 ye kyng was hote. kyng Robert.  
 neuy mon. no wuste him fet.  
 He was kyng. of gret honour.  
 For yat he was. conqueyoy.  
 In al yer world. nas his peoy.  
 kyng. no armow. for ne neoy.  
 And for he was. of chualtye flouy  
 His wyoye was mad. Emperour.  
 His oye wyoye. Godes Altye  
 Pope of Rome. us g. oude ey  
 ye Pope was hote. Pope Urban.  
 He was good. to God and man.

Figure 2.

Photofacsimile of the beginning of  
 "King Robert of Sicily"

Vernon manuscript, page 300,  
 lower half, right-hand column

transcription is provided in Appendix B. A photo facsimile of the beginning of the poem in the Vernon manuscript is shown in Figure 2, starting with the line "Her is of Kyng Robert of Cicyle."

#### Dialect

Every introduction to "King Robert" agrees that its dialect seems to come from the South Midlands, but no one ever bothers to prove that assumption. Examination of the work will fail to reveal any northern influence. Some northern characteristics that are absent are: kirk for church, ken for known, qw for wh, k for ch, -ande for -ing, s or es for plural verb inflections. This condition also rules out the North Midlands, since mss. from that area show a definite northern influence, while the Northwest Midlands poetic form was in the throes of the Alliterative Revival. A dialect map of medieval England in Figure 3 locates these references to various dialects.

At the same time, we may eliminate the southern and southeastern dialects by the absence of many of their key characteristics: i- or y- at the beginning of a verb for past tense, v for f, and -th or -eth for plural verb inflections. Instead, we find the unique Midland trait of turning a into o before nasals (m and n). So, throughout



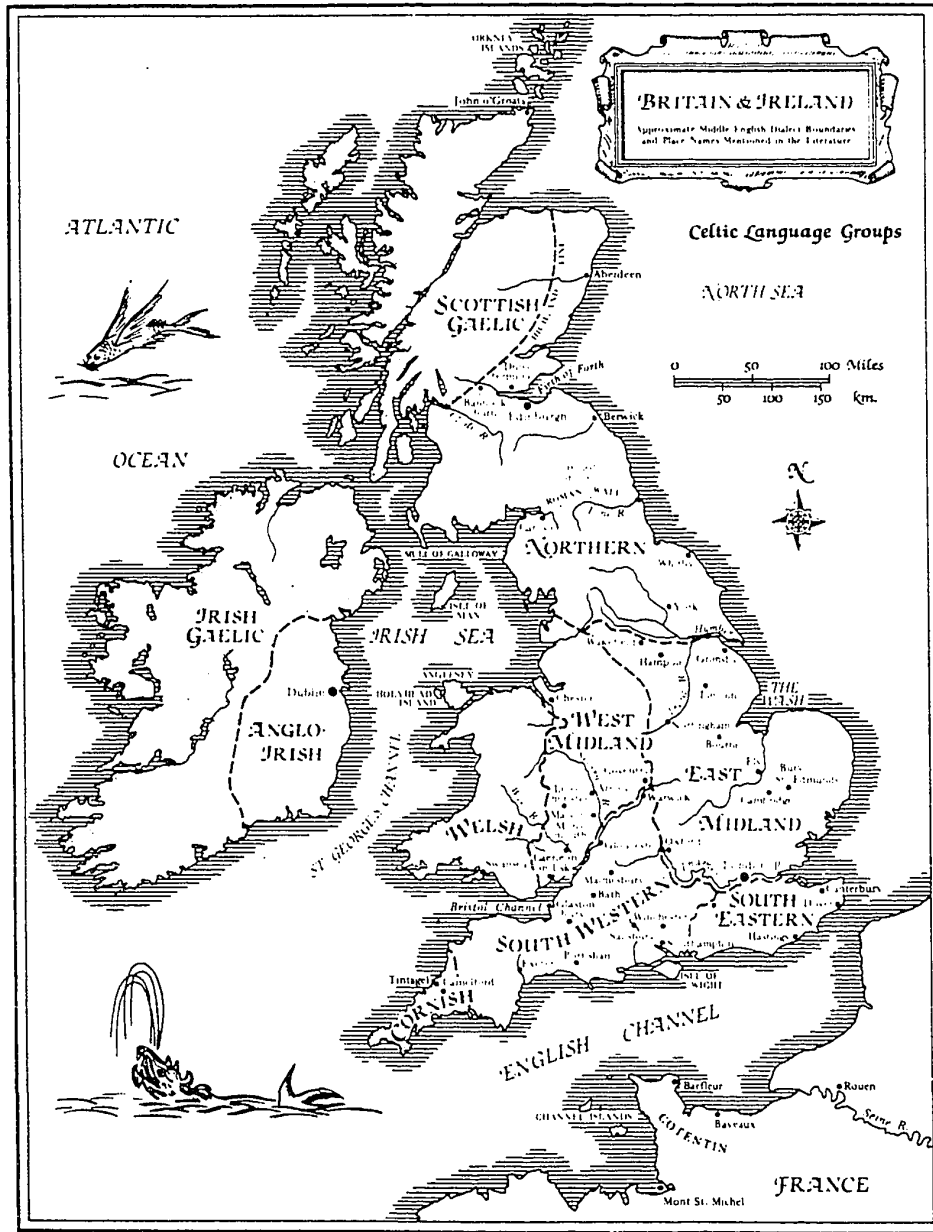


Figure 3. A dialect map of medieval England.  
(Garbaty xviii)

the entire poem, man is mon. Other examples include line 172: hond-brede for "hand breadth," and line 374: "thonked Crist" for "thanked Christ." The Midland plural verb inflection of e or en may be found wherever there are plural subjects. In line 227, "they might be" reads as "heo mihten beo." Line 380 includes examples of both Midland traits: "To heore owne lond heo wolden anon" (To their own land they would soon go).

Some southern features do creep in, suggesting that the manuscript originated in the South Midlands. One such feature is the frequent use of a final, inflectional e at the end of words. The other is the almost exclusive use of church. Chirch was more typical of the Midlands, and may be found scattered about, such as in line 37 (chirche) and line 89 (chirche-dore). Also, i- for the past participle does appear in line 138: Ben ihonged (be hanged).

O written before nasals also characterizes west and southwest midland dialects, but those dialects also tend to use u for y and i, which is not present here, and they use they for they, not heo. Taken together, all these dialectic clues suggest that the original author came from the south central midlands, possibly near Oxford or Coventry.

## Form

"King Robert of Sicily" is composed of rhymed couplets. Only a few lines have obvious caesuras and alliteration. The meter here is iambic, with eight syllables in every line. Syllable count varies from seven to nine syllables per line, but most often the poet maintains tetrameter. Consider the following lines:

Wel i wot, || withoute doute,  
 The Kyng nis not || now withoute."  
 (ll. 107,8)

The alliteration (w in 107, n in 108) and the caesuras in each, show the continuing influence of Old English poetry.

The previous two lines are uncommon. In this transition period of English poetry, the accentual verse of Old English was being replaced by metered and rhymed verse as used in contemporary French works. More typical are lines 145 to 148:

What <sup>u</sup>art <sup>u</sup>thou?" seide the <sup>u</sup>an<sup>u</sup>gel.  
 Qwath <sup>u</sup>Robert, "thou <sup>u</sup>schal<sup>u</sup>t <sup>u</sup>wite <sup>u</sup>wel  
 That <sup>u</sup>i <sup>u</sup>am <sup>u</sup>kyng, and <sup>u</sup>kyng <sup>u</sup>wol <sup>u</sup>be!  
 With <sup>u</sup>wronge <sup>u</sup>thou <sup>u</sup>hast <sup>u</sup>my <sup>u</sup>dignite.

In order to tell his story, and report its dialogue, the poet must have a more flexible scheme than we saw

before. He maintains four feet throughout every line, except for the first, while alliteration and caesuras go out the window. The more "modern" iambic tetrameter prevails. 145 is clearly seven syllables. (The majority of occurrences of "seide" in the poem suggest that it is pronounced as one syllable). 146 returns to eight, if we pronounce "wite" as two syllables (which is most likely). Lines 147 and 148 are smooth, well metered lines which are clearly the poet's goal throughout the poem. (Although here the poet relies heavily on single syllable words).

Finally, in some cases, the poet resorts to what Hibbard calls "refrain lines:"

Though he uses throughout the short riming couplet, he falls occasionally into the use of refrain lines, as in the Angel's question, "Where is now thi dignite?" or the stricken king's piteous prayer, "Lord, on thi fol thou have pite," with almost liturgical dignity and obvious stanzaic effect. (Hibbard 60)

These liturgical qualities, along with the many detailed references to Holy Days and services, the knowledge of Scripture, the location of scenes in churches, and the limited number of talented lay writers would all combine to strongly suggest that the author was a cleric.

## Plot

The story opens with King Robert in church, listening to the Magnificat, (from Luke 1:46), which includes the lines "Deposuit potentes de sede, / Et exaltauit humiles" (ll. 40,41). A clerk translates this for the king into: "such is Godes miht / that he may make heyghe lowe / And low heighe, in luytel throwe;" (ll. 44-46). This opening characterizes a strain of the story which Varnhagen labelled the "Magnifikat" branch. Missing from both the Latin and French predecessors, this new church setting dominates the first scenes of the story and makes it unique. According to Varnhagen, all later German and Italian versions of the story start this way.

Now the king falls asleep in the church and the royal retinue leave with an imposter (an angel). The king awakens in poor clothes and must fight his way past various porters and gatekeepers to leave the church and get into the palace. There he is humiliated and the angel-king makes him the court fool. The king must live in a stone cell with an ape and eat his food off the floor with the dogs.

The king's pride has not abated when he sees an opportunity for relief. The angel-king visits Rome, where the king's two brothers, Pope Urban and Holy Roman Emperor Valmond, wait for him. Unfortunately, the king's brothers

do not recognize him and the king's ego collapses. When the king is truly repentant and he calls upon Christ for help, the angel finally relents and restores King Robert to his place. From then on, the king is quite humble, pious, and considerate.

To appreciate the importance of this tale to the people of the Middle Ages, we must realize how highly they valued piety and humility in their rulers. Kings, in return, would go to great lengths to prove themselves worthy and win the respect of their often independent followers. Consider one example: Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV fought with Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085). He attempted to depose the Pope, so the Pope excommunicated him.

The emperor was obliged to go in penitence to the Pope at Canossa (1077), and to await forgiveness for three days, clad in sackcloth and barefooted in the snow in the courtyard of the castle.

(H. Wells 691)

The "divine right of kings" often called for tangible proof of such divine support!

## Style and Substance

The author did not produce 444 lines just to exhort his readers with an exemplum. This work goes further. While teaching a lesson, this work often goes into great descriptive detail, the hallmark of good fiction. Such details also give us small pictures of medieval life.

The poem starts on a specific day. At night the church is locked, and the king must yell to be let out. The king's confrontation with the porters in the palace exemplifies the grotesque, a gory style typical of some romances. In the details of the fight we find out that:

He smot be porter whon he com in  
 That blod barst out of mouth and chyn.  
 The porter yeld him his trauayle:  
 Him smot ageyn, withouten fayle,  
 That neose and mouth barst a-blood;  
 (ll. 123-27)

We then find out about the fashions of fools and friars when the angel-king declares

That as a fool he schulde be schore  
 Al around, lich a frere,  
 An honde-brede boue either ere,  
 And on his croune make a crois. (ll. 170-73)

Some young boys who have shapes cut into their hair

today may be surprised to find out that the practice is 500 years old and is considered a symbol of piety or stupidity.

In line 184 the king cries out in despair, "With o drauht he was chekmat!" A similar expression appears in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseide. In Book Two, line 754, Criseide declares "Shal noon housbonde sayn to me 'Chekmat!'" (Donaldson 775). We owe the expression "checkmate" to the Arabic and Persian expression "shah mat," meaning "the king is dead." Many paintings, tapestries, and other medieval objects show their subjects playing chess. Apparently chess was quite popular in medieval Europe. Here we see that the game has crept into popular expression, and the king sees himself defeated in one move (drauht).

Modern readers may simply view King Robert's role as a fool as just an effective humiliation. However, some knowledge of medieval thinking reveals that the use of the character of the fool reinforces the poem's basic message. Sandra Billington, in A Social History of the Fool, points out that,

It was a popular joke to say that the state of King and Fool were the only ones to which you had to be born and could not otherwise attain, and Kings and the nobility frequently kept simpleton Fools to remind themselves of their own mortality



and imperfections. The church in Western Europe encouraged this practice and the moral implications seem to have been realized more strongly in Britain than elsewhere. (12)

Shakespeare still had this concept of the fool very much in mind when he wrote King Lear. His fool follows Lear everywhere, constantly reminding the distracted king of the reality of his situation. This character and his steadfast adherence to the truth causes the other character's actions to stand out in sharp relief. Only in recent years, as demonstrated in the movie The Court Jester, starring Danny Kaye, has the mythical archetype of the fool or trickster been reduced to a mere entertainer. As Joseph Campbell puts it:

The symbolic field is based on the experiences of people in a particular community, at that particular time and place. Myths are so intimately bound to the culture, time, and place that unless the symbols, the metaphors, are kept alive by constant recreation through the arts, the life just slips away from them. (59)

Despite their differences, the poet also seems to have myth and Christianity coexisting in the same fool.

A key difference between mythology and our Judeo-Christian religion is that the imagery of mythology is rendered with humor. You realize that the image is symbolic of something. You're at a distance from it. But in our religion, everything is prosaic, and very, very serious.

You can't fool around with Yahweh. (Campbell 220)

As the king lives the life of a fool, the poet puts humor into the detail. The king begins to starve because the dogs take his food. He eats only after learning to fight the dogs for his food. This contest between the king and the dogs originated in "Robert le Diable," the French romance that predates this poem. In a 14th Century play based on that story, two knights sit at the dining table and observe the fool's reaction when they throw food to the dogs: "Look, he grappled the dog by the throat and took the meat away" (Merwin 49). How far the king has fallen!

On the trip to Rome, the angel wears rich white silk adorned with pearls, while the king, as fool, must wear "lody" (loathly, loathsome) clothing, with flapping fox tails. Worse yet, the ape rides with him, wearing a matching outfit.

When his brothers fail to recognize him, King Robert finally recalls the Babylonian king Nebuchanezzar

(Nabugodonosor), showing that neither the king nor the poet have forgotten the basic religious myth in action here.

Alexandra Olsen points out a variation on a common myth which holds the whole story together:

The structure and imagery of the poem are organized around a double use of the mythic pattern which Mircea Eliade has called "the myth of the eternal return," defined by Michael N. Nagler as the "exceedingly common myth of the hero who departs, is vitally missed by his people while himself undergoing sore trials, and returns home in triumph. (Olsen 217)

But here the poet changes the myth. The people do not miss the king, because conditions improve under the angel:

The angel was kyng, him thoughte long;  
In his tyme was neuer wrong,  
Tricherie, ne falshede, ne no gyle  
Idon in the lond of Cisyle.  
Alle goode ther was gret plente:  
Among men loue and charite;  
In his tyme was neuer strif  
Bitwene mon and his wyf;  
Vche mon louede wel other:  
Beter loue nas neuere of brother

Thenne was that a ioyful thing

In londe to haue such a kyng; (11.207-218)

"The fact that the poem does not re-enact the expected mythic pattern emphasizes its Christian message" (Olsen 218). After a good and pious reign of two years, the angel returns to warn King Robert of his impending death. "We may safely assume that he has followed the angel to the joyful realm of Heaven, enacting the true pattern of a Christian hero whose life emulates that of Christ" (Olsen 218).

Modern critics clearly praised the qualities of the poem. Hibbard and Hornstein specifically call attention to its construction and artistry:

Few Middle English poets, however, tell their stories with more freshness and even poignancy of phrasing. The author was no minstrel with a repertoire of stock phrases and themes, but a poet in whom the best of monastic influences is discernible. Tender, devout, wistfully credulous about that blessed time when an Angel ruled upon earth, he tells the story with moving sweetness and unusual dramatic power. (Hibbard 60)

It is indeed an affecting and carefully wrought narrative, sensitive to the tragic ironies of the pious "reversal." Further study of this poem and

its close analogues reveals the superiority of the English version; and its skillful synthesis of themes from folklore, Biblical commentary, and history not only encompasses a discriminating artistry, but provides fresh evidence of the process by which Biblical exegesis was transmuted into legend and into romance.

(Hornstein, "Analogues" 13)

The story is very attractive. . . .

It proceeds directly and swiftly, growing in effect. The point of the piece is carefully held to, and kept forward throughout; and all the elements of importance are stressed fittingly with good proportion. The verse is fluent and spirited; the vocabulary and the arrangement of words, are unforced; the sense is frequently carried on from line to line, and the pauses are shifted, with remarkable control and success. The poem is a good example of truly artistic, large, sane handling of a moral story. One has to make little allowance for the fact that it is not a modern piece. (J. Wells 163)

Both modern and medieval readers are lured into this story by interesting details and both are carried along by

consistent, sustained poetry. Amused into a good humor, we finally find ourselves shown the way to heaven. We have just learned what we must do, and perhaps we have also learned the best way to write down a lesson.

## Chapter Three

## The Lost Years

A great, black void interrupts the history of "King Robert of Sicily." In the history of most works, as soon as Caxton brought printing to Britain, manuscripts were transferred to print, and published editions of many works may be found dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. Such is not the case for "King Robert." Only the ten medieval manuscripts exist. No printed editions can be found for the next 250 years. The poem disappeared.

References exist that indicate that during the period covered by the ten manuscripts, the work also was performed as a play. One such play was staged at Lincoln in 1452, and the other in Chester in 1529 (Walsh 191, Ward 170). After that date, the play moved to the continent, where a German version was produced by Johannes Romoldt in 1564 (Walsh 200) and a Latin version was performed in St. Omers, France, in 1623 (Walsh 191).

In addition, we have a reference to "King Robert of Sicily" in a poem by John Audelay. In "Psalmus de Magnificat," in a single manuscript dated 1426, Audelay writes:

thenke on Kyng Robart Sesel:

He went, ne lord had he bot he,  
yet sondenle doune he felle,

And was put into a folis degree

An Angel was set upon his se,

Fore he had these verse in his scornynge

Deposuit potentis de sede,

And sayd in heven ther was no kyng.

(Whiting 162)

The answer to the poem's disappearance may be found in the last 16th century English reference to the work, the play in Chester in 1529. J. Payne Collier, writing in Annals of the English Stage (1831), claims that he found a letter from the mayor of Chester to Thomas Cromwell in which the mayor describes the play Robert Cicill, referring to it as Kynge Robart of Cicylye (Ward 170). This letter, the date of the play and the content of the play all combine to suggest the reason for the demise of the story.

Thomas Cromwell became Henry VIII's counsellor after Cardinal Wolsey and Sir Thomas More. In 1529 Henry VIII was attempting to get out of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Soon afterwards, Henry would split England from the Catholic Church and form the Church of England, with him as its Supreme Head. Essentially, secular power would be placed above ecclesiastical power. The medieval order would be overthrown.



At the same time, Cromwell had begun the Dissolution of the Monasteries:

Cromwell began his survey of the first five houses in January, 1525, and for the next four years he was principally occupied in the business of dissolving the monasteries and building the college and school [Oxford]. (Beckingsale 16)

In contrast, "King Robert of Sicily," which may have been composed by a cleric, showed the dependence of kings on God for their power and portrayed the wickness of a king who was proud of his own power. Just as the Earl of Essex arranged for a particular performance of Richard II during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the performance of a play based on such a story may have been a deliberate protest against the behavior of King Henry VIII and his government. A nervous mayor of Chester may have sought help from the leader of the English equivalent of the Inquisition, Thomas Cromwell.

While Cromwell's reaction remains a mystery, the reaction of the Parliament is a matter of public record.

A Proclamation of the year 1533, and an Act of Parliament of 1543 (the first statute of the realm known to have taken notice of the stage), prohibited, among other manifestations of

misplaced independence of opinion, the former the playing of interludes 'concerning doctrines now in question and controversie,' the latter (more explicitly) the introduction into the same of any matter 'contrary to the doctrines of the Church . . .' (Ward 152)

So the play was probably stamped out. Printing of a work which would call Henry VIII's behavior into question was probably banned, and existing editions may have been destroyed. Cromwell's minions were reputed to have burned the contents of some monasteries. Ironically, however, Cromwell himself may have transferred one or more of the manuscripts we now have to the school that would preserve them.

The measure of his task was in part revealed, when he [Cromwell] handed over to the dean of the Oxford college thirty-four bags of documents, relating to suppressed houses [monasteries] in August, 1526. (Beckingsale 16)

Thus "King Robert of Sicily" disappeared from English literary history. No copy of it or reference to it may be found before 1778. In that year Thomas Warton published the second volume of his History of English Poetry. Warton was the first scholar to attempt to identify and describe all

English poetry ever written. Working with collection catalogs from schools and museums, he attempted to find and read each work that he described. Warton's efforts put parts of "King Robert of Sicily" into print for the first time, and exposed the poem to the British public after an absence of almost 250 years.

Warton cites the Harleian 1701 ms. from the British Museum as his source text, with additions from the Vernon ms. After giving a short description of the poem, Warton quotes the first 94 lines of the poem. He then summarizes the middle of the poem up to the point where the angel-king is invited to visit Rome. Warton then quotes 42 more lines before he gives a synopsis of the remainder of the work. (Vol. II, section V, pp. 17 to 23).

Warton's great work would set off a chain reaction of additional work on "King Robert." This chain reaction would propagate well into the 19th century, when the work would come to the attention of Leigh Hunt.

After his death, Warton's work was republished in 1824. In 1839 Utterson published the first complete version of the poem, using the Harleian 525 ms. Unfortunately, this was a private printing. J. O. Halliwell published all of Cambridge ms. Ff II 38 in his book Nugae Poeticae in 1844, allowing the public to purchase a complete version of "King

Robert of Sicily" for the first time. George Ellis used the same manuscript along with Harleian 1701 to develop an entry for the poem in his Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances (1805). Halliwell edited and republished Ellis' work in 1848. The entry on "Robert of Cysille" from this edition is included here as Appendix E. Even though Ellis used only short quotes from the poem itself, Hornstein believes that Leigh Hunt used the abstract of the poem from this edition when he composed his own version ("Analogues" 13).

So, lost for centuries, the medieval work "King Robert of Sicily" and all its particulars fell into the hands of a professional writer who would forge the first new English version of the work since the Tudor era.

## Chapter Four

## Hunt's Sicilian Jar

## The Author

Why should Leigh Hunt be the first English writer to work with "King Robert of Sicily" and publish his own version of it after its long absence? Hunt, best known for his work as a newspaper editor, also promoted the works of his friends Keats and Shelley. Certainly Hunt worked in London as a professional writer when the full text of the work was finally published, but what should move a newspaper editor and literary critic to pick up and rework a medieval poem?

An examination of Hunt's circumstances reveals what the police would call the method, the motive, and the opportunity. Throughout his life, Hunt was constantly in need of money. Unlike many other British writers of his time, he did not derive income from an estate, or benefit from a particular wealthy benefactor, or work at any trade other than writing. He also had a wife and seven children to support. On top of these burdens was placed the added burden of government persecution. Hunt was frequently arrested and tried for treason, based on his "liberal" writings. (He advocated such things as universal suffrage). He spent two years in jail, 1813 to 1815, and was heavily fined.

So, unlike writers who wrote when the fancy struck them, Hunt had to write to earn money. Just as good actors often appear in poor films because they need the income, so too did Hunt crank out piece after piece just to keep his family fed.

By the time of the publication of A Jar of Honey from Mt. Hybla, (1848), Hunt's financial circumstances had greatly stabilized after years of poverty. Since 1844, he had been receiving an annuity of 120 pounds from the estate of Percy Shelley, thanks to Shelley's widow and son. In 1847 he began to receive a royal annuity of 200 pounds from the new queen, Victoria, along with a letter apologizing for "the severe treatment you formerly received, in the time of unjust persecution of Liberal writers" (Kent xxxix). Still, Hunt was reputed to be a spendthrift, and his family had not become any smaller.

Each year Hunt published at least one book of some sort. A Jar of Honey from Mt. Hybla stood in as the book for 1848, but it was rather slim. Hunt refers to Mt. Hybla as a sketchbook. Several of Hunt's biographers do not even mention this work. Hunt published Men, Women, and Books in the previous year. Usually considered his best book, this much larger work cast a large shadow over the following book, undoubtedly reducing its significance to anyone

examining Hunt's career.

In the introduction to Mt. Hybla, he goes to much trouble to connect most of the stories in the collection to Christmas. He even suggests that the circumstances of "King Robert of Sicily" befit the Christmas season, although the two holy days on which the story begins and ends occur in the spring and were not celebrated in his time. He unabashedly advises the reader to purchase additional copies of this work to give to friends as Christmas presents. Such obvious, sales-oriented comments must have lowered Hunt's literary reputation in the minds of his critics, but they also give a clear indication of Hunt's motive.

Hunt's opportunity to write about Sicily came from a trip he and his family took that scholars of the British Romantic poets know well. Invited by Shelley to come visit him and Lord Byron in Italy, Leigh Hunt sailed from Britain with his whole family in 1822. While the Hunts were staying at Byron's residence in Pisa, Percy Shelley drowned in a boating accident and Lord Byron went off to fight in the Greek war for independence (from the Ottoman Empire), in which he was killed. After these two tragedies, Hunt returned to London in 1825, and his family struggled to follow him as best they could.

Hunt's sojourn in Italy made him an "authority" on Italy, compared to English writers who had never been there.

For him Italy was "the soil in which every species of modern poetry seems to have originally sprung up." When he was in prison he bought a set of the Parnaso Italiano, and for the rest of his life Italian poetry was never to be out of his thoughts for long. (Jack 382)

He began publishing stories, essays, and poems about Italy or set in Italy, even if he had not acquired them from Italian sources. First was the poem "Bacchus in Tuscany," published in 1825, followed by A Legend of Florence: a Play in Five Acts (1840), Stories from Italian Poets (1846), and A Jar of Honey from Mt. Hybla (1848), a collection of stories set in Sicily during different time periods, intermixed with narrative chapters on the history and culture of Sicily.

Finally, Hunt was at the right place at the right time. As described in the previous chapter, the first complete printing of "King Robert of Sicily" in English was published in London in 1844. Of those authors now considered "major," Hunt was about the only one of his contemporaries still alive in 1844. His friends and acquaintances, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Lamb, and Hazlitt were all dead, as were



Samuel Coleridge and Sir Walter Scott. Only Wordsworth remained to wander lonely like a cloud over the English countryside.

Thus, in 1848, a remarkable set of circumstances came together: a writer used to publishing works about Italy, one who was also in need of new works to publish, and one with little competition from other well-known writers, came in contact with the first complete public printing of a medieval poem. The result is a remarkable 19th-century prose version of the story "King Robert of Sicily."

#### The Work

Hunt's version of "King Robert" covers only 12 pages, including a two and a half page introduction. Yet it includes all the key features of the plot, as well as embellishments that Hunt added himself. Such a work is ideal for what Hunt called a "Sicilian and Pastoral Sketch-book" (Hunt 69).

This prose story begins with King Robert in church, listening to a service which warns that the proud will be brought low. This follows the story of the poem almost exactly, and the narrative continues to do so until the king falls asleep in the church and then awakes. From this point on Hunt begins to add colorful details which are so

important to storytelling. The first examples come when the king awakens to the sound of "a great droneing [sic] fly in his ear" and sees "a deaf old woman who was turning up the cushions" (Hunt 71). Neither of these items come from the medieval poem. Both are inventions of Hunt's imagination.

Further, intentionally or not, Hunt begins to introduce 19th-century British culture, sensibility, and language into the story. While it is doubtful that medieval churches had seat cushions for their parishioners (noble or not), Hunt may have seen just such a woman at his local church.

When the king attempts to leave the church and argues with the sexton at the door, the language is hardly medieval. The sexton says: "You're a pretty fellow!" and "I see you there, said he, by the big lamp, grinning like a rat in a trap. How do you like your bacon?" (Hunt 71). In contrast, the sexton in the poem says: "What dost thou nouthe here, / Thou false thef, thou losenger?" (ll. 77,78). Likewise, the king says "Foule gadelyng, I am no thef, i am a kyng!" (ll. 81,12). The statements made by Hunt's king, such as: "Open the door for the king," and "Stand aside fellow!" sound more like those uttered by a character in one of Sir Walter Scott's romantic historical novels. Granted, some of the old vocabulary must be updated and the same idea and action are conveyed, but the medieval

mind set and speech are lost.

Hunt adds further interest to the story by giving characters specific names. The officer of the guards is Captain Francavilla. One of the nobles who laughs at the king in his fool costume is named Terranova. Although such references may make the story less universal, the addition of such specific detail is absolutely necessary for good prose fiction.

Often the details Hunt adds are peculiar and amusing. The captain of the guard "was going to visit his mistress, and had been dressing his curls at a looking-glass. He had the looking-glass in his hand" (Hunt 72). King Robert snatches the mirror and sees that he does not look like himself; something that never occurred in the poem. In fact, the poem suggests that Robert is not identified because he is so upset and filthy, and because nobles do not look carefully at commoners.

In some places, Hunt leaves out detail. For instance, in the medieval poem, the king fights with several men, drawing blood and ending up in a mud puddle. This was quoted earlier as an example of the tone of medieval writing. Hunt leaves out the entire brawl. Instead, the sexton faints from being hit by the door when the king kicks it open. How Victorian!

During Robert's humiliation, Hunt attempts to get inside the thoughts of the king-made-fool and describes the man's thoughts of rage, frustration, and revenge. He even dwells on the idea that the angel is a devil or an agent of the devil, rather than God's representative on earth. Most curious of all, Hunt describes how the king-made-fool attempts to form a relationship with the ape, his only companion.

These creative efforts by Hunt are used to fill a void in his story. In spite of the importance of religion to the story, and the presence of an angel and a pope, Hunt's version of "King Robert" has been stripped of almost all its religious feeling. Hunt has completely removed the discussion of the Old Testament stories of Nebuchadnezzar and Holofernes. He has also removed almost every reference to God. In fact, the story mentions God by name only once, in an exclamation of frustration given by King Robert. Only two generic references to "Heaven" add any other divine connection to events, beyond the presence of the angel. By comparison, the medieval poem mentions God, Christ, and Lord 30 times, and Christianity or Christendom several more.

Certainly Protestantism and humanism had a strong grip on liberal British society at this time, largely replacing the Catholic religious sentiment that was prevalent when the

poem was written. General 19th-century sensibilities might also have discouraged pronounced demonstrations of religious faith. Yet the extent of the changes cannot be explained by social factors alone. Hunt must have had some personal feelings which affected his writing. This is borne out by his Preface to his work Amyntas, a translation of Aminta, by Tasso. In a self-indulgent insertion unrelated to the book, Hunt attacks Christianity. "Hunt's slighting remarks about Christianity, abruptly obtruded into the Preface to the volume, occasioned some serious discussions" (Hayden 183).

This should not come as a surprise. Like William Blake, Hunt must have seen the Church and the State as two conservative establishments working hand in hand to perpetuate the society which he saw as unfair and repressive. Interestingly enough, then, when presented with a very religious poem to work with, Hunt still turns it into a story, to earn his daily bread, but he boils off much that must have offended him personally, leaving a king motivated by reason and a natural reaction to suffering, rather than by a true conversion to religious devotion.

The result could be termed a folk tale instead of a myth.

The folk tale is for entertainment. The myth is for spiritual instruction. . . . Civilizations are

grounded on myth. The civilization of the Middle Ages was grounded on the myth of the Fall in the Garden, the redemption on the cross, and the carrying of the grace of redemption to man through the sacraments. (Campbell 59)

All this is not to say that the resulting story is a poor one. It is interesting and sometimes amusing, and very readable. Still, it is no longer a true exemplum, and does not reflect the ultimate subservience of a feudal society to God. Instead, Hunt transformed the story of King Robert in Mt. Hybla into quite a 19th-century romantic tale, and one very much his own. From monetary necessity, a writer in a very secular society with a token monarch looks back on the story of Robert with a curiosity about things both quaint and Sicilian. The message of the story is still portrayed as reasonable and accurate, but it no longer seems particularly important.

## Chapter Five

## The King Comes to America

## The Author

In his popular image, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow appears as a thoughtful New England country gentleman who wrote quaint and somewhat patriotic or nostalgic poems that are best taught to elementary school children. So, anyone considering Longfellow merely as the author of "The Village Blacksmith," "Hiawatha," and "Paul Revere's Ride" may be at a loss to understand why this "Dr. Seuss of the 19th century" would take an interest in a medieval story.

Few people know that Longfellow earned his living as a professor of Modern Languages at Harvard. Even fewer people are aware of his reputation as a medievalist, or his ability to read and write Latin, Greek, Anglo-Saxon, Italian, German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Swedish, Danish, Finnish, and Dutch. He also made frequent trips to Europe to conduct research. Before he wrote his famous poetry, Longfellow was writing such articles as "Origin and Progress of the French Language," "History of the Italian Language and Dialects," and "Spanish Language and Literature" (Arvin 38).

Longfellow translated many old and new foreign works into English, including contemporary Scandinavian poetry and Dante's Divine Comedy. "The Song of Hiawatha" is structured

as a Norse edda. Just as Leigh Hunt developed a penchant for writing about things Italian, Longfellow wrote many works about a variety of European nationalities. Although his most well-remembered works all deal with North America, Longfellow wrote such works as "Amalfi," "Auf Wiedersehen," "The Belfry of Bruges," "Epimetheus," "The Falcon of Ser Federigo," "Gaspar Becerra," "Haroun al Raschid," "Helen of Tyre," "Keramos," "Mezzo Cammin," "Morituri Salutamus," The Spanish Student, Outre-Mer and many others.

Besides translating Dante, Longfellow also studied and wrote about Chaucer. Here in particular came the spark that would cause Longfellow to pick up and rewrite "King Robert of Sicily."

Around 1863 Longfellow decided to create his own version of the Canterbury Tales, which he first titled the Sudbury Tales. The book was eventually renamed Tales of a Wayside Inn, which indicates the main difference between Chaucer's work and Longfellow's. Whereas Chaucer's pilgrims tell their stories as they ride atop horses, Longfellow's characters gather at an inn and tell their tales sitting down indoors.

Longfellow based his description of an inn on the Red Horse Tavern in Sudbury, Massachusetts. The inn had been built in 1686 and Longfellow would go there when he rode out



into the country. While writing Wayside Inn, he noted in his diary that he rode out to the inn and found it closed and derelict. Soon after Tales of a Wayside Inn was published, however, the fame brought by Longfellow's book caused the inn to be reopened. It was eventually declared a historic landmark and can still be visited today.

#### The Book

Anyone familiar with the Canterbury Tales will immediately recognize the structure of Wayside Inn. In the 1863 edition, seven guests at the inn each tell a different story, all of which are set in a framing narrative. The inn's landlord plays the same role as he did in the Canterbury Tales, selecting each speaker and occasionally making comments on a story.

It remained for Longfellow in his middle fifties, and after the crushing blow of his wife's death, to hit upon the most fortunate plan--of an ambitious sort, that is--in his whole career as a poet, the plan of a series of tales in verse contained within a narrative frame. No literary undertaking could have made a happier or more fruitful use of his powers and his equipment than this--of his storytelling genius, his sense of

narrative form, his versatility, and the opulence of his literary erudition. (Arvin 205)

Unlike the Canterbury Tales, the stories told by Longfellow's guests do not have any sense of the situation in them. The guests do not use the stories to attack one another, nor do they make any reference to their present circumstances. Instead, each story is a pre-existing, complete tale, dropped into place in the framework. So each guest launches into his story immediately, without any comments about events earlier in the book.

The somewhat detached nature of the stories results from Longfellow's use of existing works. The only story he wrote specifically for this book was "The Birds of Killingworth." (see Table I).

#### Table I.

##### The Characters and Their Tales

##### Longfellow's Tales of a Wayside Inn

The Landlord	"Paul Revere's Ride"
The Student	"The Falcon of Sir Federigo"
The Spanish Jew	"The Legend of Rabbi Ben Levi"
The Sicilian	"King Robert of Sicily"
The Musician	"The Tale of King Olaf"
The Theologian	"Torquemada"
The Poet	"The Birds of Killingworth"

(The musician tells a Norse saga because he is Norwegian). Also, unlike Chaucer, Longfellow does not include any female characters, but he does represent a variety of nationalities. He later admitted that all of the characters were based on real friends and acquaintances of his. Biographers have subsequently tracked down each real person who is portrayed in this book. The Sicilian, who tells the story of "King Robert of Sicily," was "Luigi Monti, who had been exiled after taking part in the Revolution of 1848, and had become, thanks to Longfellow's patronage, an instructor in Italian at Harvard" (Arvin 208).

The book probably owed much of its popularity to the first poem, "Paul Revere's Ride." This story in verse had recently been published in the Atlantic Monthly, but since millions of Americans did not subscribe to that magazine or had not bought it in that particular month, Wayside Inn was the first opportunity many people had to purchase and read the poem.

After publication of the first version of the book in 1863, Longfellow worked on expanding Tales of a Wayside Inn. He did this by having his characters stay at the inn for another day and tell another set of stories. This second day was published as part of a collection in 1872. Over the next year, Longfellow created a third day and a third set of

poems, which was published in 1873. Subsequent editions of Wayside Inn combine all 22 poems.

#### The Tale

Longfellow happened to have a Sicilian friend and had chosen to use him as a tale teller. So, he had to have a Sicilian story. Such a chain of events, combined with Longfellow's wide knowledge of European literature, led to the reworking and publication of an American version of "King Robert of Sicily."

Evidence in the poem itself indicates that he used both Leigh Hunt's story and a published version of the medieval text. Longfellow's diary entry of November 11, 1851 shows that he had read Hunt's A Jar of Honey: "Read Leigh Hunt's Jar of Honey, and think of Sicily and sunshine and the bees" (S. Longfellow 205). The tone of the entry suggests that the poet had already travelled to Sicily, and Hunt's book caused him to reminisce. Longfellow was also aware of Hunt's personal history, as indicated by his diary entry on November 29, 1851:

In the evening read Leigh Hunt's charming poem, "The Palfrey," an elaboration of one of the old French fabliaux. A beautiful poem, just long enough for an evening's reading. It quite

illuminated the room. It seems to have produced no effect in England. Leigh Hunt is there quite under a kind of ban. People evidently cannot forget his radicalism, and his connection with The Liberal,--though the ideas he then put forth seem common enough now-a-days. (S. Longfellow 206)

Since Wayside Inn would not come out for 12 years, Longfellow's exposure to Hunt's work did not cause immediate inspiration. However, these entries prove that Longfellow had access to Hunt's writings and that they may have planted a seed of an idea in the American's mind. Whatever the case, Longfellow could have easily retrieved A Jar of Honey when he began his proud king tale, whether he had to go to his book shelf, the library, or a friend.

Also, a man named Kenneth Walter Cameron has gone to the trouble to research and publish the record of what books Longfellow checked out from the Harvard library. On October 29, 1862, when Longfellow would have been assembling the material for Tales of a Wayside Inn, he appears to have checked out George Ellis' Specimens of English Metrical Romances (1805). Unfortunately, the checkout record uses short abbreviations which could also refer to a second book written by Ellis. So Longfellow may have instead checked out Ellis' Specimens of Early English Poets (1803) (Cameron

21). If he had checked out the romances, he would have had in hand a summary of most of the poem intermixed with several direct quotes from the Harleian 1701 ms. (see Appendix E).

Since the paper trail is inconclusive, we must rely on the story itself for answers. The first two lines, "Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane / And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine," immediately suggest that Longfellow had reference to the complete medieval work (H. Longfellow 46). In his synopsis, Ellis uses "Germany" instead, and Leigh Hunt never mentions Valmond's country. Only the original, medieval poem calls Valmond emperor of Allemaine. Likewise, Hunt completely leaves out the visit of the emperor's ambassadors to Sicily and the trip of the royal party to Rome. Longfellow reports this just as it is laid out in the medieval poem and in Ellis' summary. Clearly, Longfellow did not rely solely on Hunt's or Ellis' books when he prepared his version of the tale.

Conversely, evidence of Hunt's influence can be found. Hunt coins the expression "cap and bells" to refer to the jester's outfit, and Longfellow picks that up. Also in the area of attire, the old poem does not mention the king's clothing before he becomes a jester. Hunt, however, indicates that the king wakes up in the church without his

hat or cloak. Longfellow gives a similar description of the king at that point in the story.

The fact that only small bits and pieces of Longfellow's "King Robert" can be connected to other sources gives tribute to his originality and imagination. Even though he is working in couplets, like the original poem, he never gives in to the temptation to lift a pair of lines from the earlier work. At the same time, he uses Chaucerian pentameter lines, in keeping with the Canterbury Tales design of the book.

Longfellow's use of the medieval poem and his shift from tetrameter to pentameter can be seen in the two single lines that he does adopt from the medieval poem. "Thi counseyler schal ben an ape," (l. 157) becomes "Thine counsellor shall be an ape;" in Ellis (475) and "And for thy counsellor shalt lead an ape;" in Longfellow (48). "I am an angel, thou art kyng." (l. 414), ("I am an angel, thou art king" in Ellis (478)) becomes "I am an Angel, and thou art the King!" in Longfellow (58). Hunt does not use either statement in his story.

Longfellow does follow the same plot very closely, but he always finds a different way to say the same thing. For instance, when Robert and the angel confront each other and the angel passes judgement on Robert, the medieval version

says:

"Thow art my fol," seide the angel;  
"Thou schal be schoren, euerichdel,  
Lych a fool, a fool to be.  
Wher is now thi dignite?" (ll. 153-56)

Hunt's version reads:

"Since thou art royal-mad," said the new  
sovereign, "and in truth a very king of idiots,  
thou shalt be crowned and sceptered with a cap and  
bauble, and be my fool." (Hunt 74)

Longfellow writes:

The Angel answered, with unruffled brow,  
"Nay, not the King, but the King's Jester, thou  
Henceforth shalt wear the bells and scalloped  
cape,  
And for thy counsellor shalt lead an ape;"

(H. Longfellow 48)

Remarkably, Longfellow's version of this story contains even less violence than Hunt's version. Where Hunt had the sexton faint because he was smacked in the face with the church door, and he had King Robert knock down the palace porter, Longfellow makes sure his King Robert does not make physical contact with anyone. It is hard to say whether this reflects the attitudes of 19th Century New England, or



Longfellow's personal tastes, but one label that has been applied to Longfellow before is "American Victorian."

Longfellow veers away from Hunt in the tone of his poem. He approaches his subject much more seriously, giving the story a completely different, more reverent feeling. This, combined with the pacing created by the rhymed couplets, causes his version of the story to come back closer to the medieval version in its emotional effect.

Consider one scene described earlier. When the medieval sexton (sexteyn) hears the king inside the locked church, he suspects burglary, and reacts in anger, calling the king a "false thef" and "losenger" (lying knave), and declaring "Thou are her with ffelenye, / The holy churche to robbye!" (ll.79-80). In Hunt's version, when the sexton discovers King Robert locked in the church, he makes some very snide remarks, such as "pretty fellow," and "rat in a trap." Longfellow handles the same situation with anger, rather than ridicule: "The frightened sexton, muttering, with a curse, / `This is some drunken vagabond, or worse!'" (H. Longfellow 47).

Longfellow also does not shy away from references to God or religion. In the medieval poem, the crucial event, Robert's change of heart, takes place only after a long prayer (87 lines) in which Robert admits his wrongs, seeks

penitence, and begs forgiveness, followed by a long admonition by the angel.

Allas! allas! was al his song:  
 His heer he tar, his hondes wrong,  
 And euere he seide, "Allas, allas!"--  
 And thenne he thoughte on his trespas:  
 He thoughte on Nabugodonosore,  
 . . .  
 Now am i wel lowe ipult,  
 And that is riht that i so be!  
 Lord, on thi fool thow haue pite!  
 I hedde an errour in myn herte,  
 And that errour doth me smerte;  
 . . .  
 Blisful Marie, to the i crie,  
 As thou art ful of cortesy;  
 Preye thi Sone, that dyed for me;  
 On me, his fol, thow haue pite.

(ll. 305-09, 346-50, 365-68)

Hunt merely has Robert cry while praying, and has Robert agree to whatever the angel wants (which is more prayer).

Tears gushed into his eyes, and, to the astonishment of the court, the late brutal fool

was seen with his hands clasped upon his bosom in prayer, and the water pouring down his face in floods of penitence. Holier feelings than usual had pervaded all hearts that day. (78)

Longfellow reintroduces some of the lost medieval idea with Robert's words:

. . . Then, bowing down his head,  
King Robert crossed his hands upon his breast  
And meekly answered him: " Thou knowest best  
My sins as scarlet are; let me go hence,  
And in some cloister's school of penitence  
Across those stones, that pave the way to heaven,  
Walk barefoot, till my guilty soul be shriven!"

(H. Longfellow 52)

Newton Arvin makes the following comment on this subject:

Like some other New Englanders of his generation--Emerson, for example, and Hawthorne--Longfellow was as much attracted imaginatively by certain aspects of Catholicism--its liturgy, its aesthetic grandeurs, its spiritual and moral purity on one level--as he was skeptical of Roman Catholic and indeed Protestant dogma, and repelled by many of the abuses, political and otherwise, of which the

Church was guilty. How sensitive his feeling was for the loftier aspect of medieval faith is evident in such tales as "The Legend Beautiful," which the Theologian tells in Part Second, and "King Robert of Sicily," the Sicilian's tale on the first evening. (223)

Just as Hunt added new detail to embellish his story, Longfellow creates new scenes. He dwells upon the sights of Italy as the royal retinue returns to Sicily from Rome. Perhaps he was recalling a trip he had made through that region. He also illustrates the fool's residence: a bed of straw, next to the ape, in the back of a stable full of horses. One can almost hear the straw crinkling under Robert's head as he wakes up.

Whereas Hunt's work was virtually ignored, Longfellow's Tales of a Wayside Inn attracted much attention. He was already well-known internationally and received much attention from foreign as well as American authors. As a result, many books are available which research the backgrounds of the characters or the tales, or critically analyze the poetry. Wayside Inn certainly prompted Varnhagen's massive investigation into the origin of "King Robert of Sicily."

Newton Arvin probably gives the best analysis of Longfellow's "King Robert of Sicily:"

The emotion in the poem has an unmistakable personal vibration, though worldly pride, or indeed any other, would not seem to have been peculiarly a vice of Longfellow's. It is a vice, nevertheless, of which all men are said to be, and doubtless are, at least in potentia guilty; and just as the painful sense of this gave a moral tinge to the character of Prince Henry [Henry IV], so it does, but more penetratingly, to the character of King Robert. The story is told with admirable slowness of pace, but quite without diffuseness, and the sense of scene . . . is richly conveyed. . . . The humbling of Robert is rendered, . . . with surprising stringency, and the depth of his repentance at the end is suggested rather than labored, but its emotional quality is acute. (225)

With Tales of a Wayside Inn, Longfellow's career leapt forward, and King Robert returned to world attention, especially the attention of the English-speaking world. One can only wonder how many works in the following century would not have included Robert in their consideration of

medieval material if Longfellow had not brought him out into the sunshine. Certainly, Hunt also tried to introduce Robert to the public, but as Longfellow's diary entry suggests, there was a certain pall over anything that Hunt did. Only a trip across the Atlantic would rejuvenate the king. Even today, "King Robert of Sicily" is considered one of Longfellow's better poems, appearing in most of the selective modern collections of his work.

## Chapter Six

## Conclusion

This work has focused almost exclusively on the versions of "King Robert of Sicily" written in English. Up through the nineteenth century, the English and continental European traditions of the story of the proud king remained separate and quite different. After the publication of Longfellow's version of the story, the two traditions began to cross over. To understand this situation, we must first review the history of the proud king story on continental Europe.

The proud king stories on the continent had split up into two strains, called Magnifikat and Konig im Bade (King in the Bath) by German scholars. These labels refer to a fundamental difference in the plots when the angel replaces the king. In the "King in the Bath" version, which the Gesta Romanorum story follows, the angel takes the king's place while he is bathing. In the "Magnifikat" version, which the English "King Robert" story follows, the king has been listening to the Magnificat in church when he falls asleep and the angel takes his place. Figure 4 shows the divergence of the two story types.

Although the Magnifikat branch of tales shared a common literary heritage with "King Robert of Sicily," it died out on continental Europe about the same time that the English

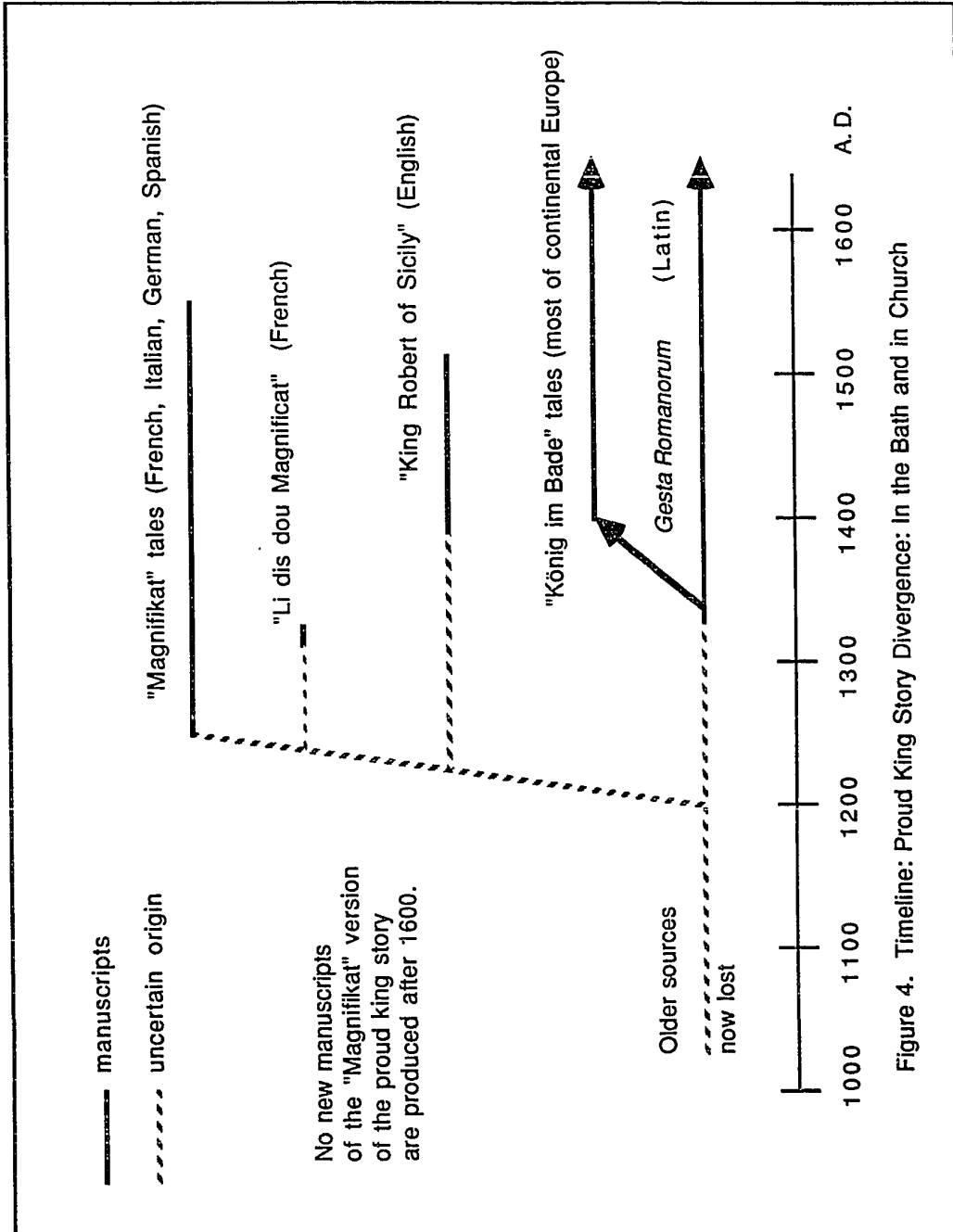


Figure 4. Timeline: Proud King Story Divergence: In the Bath and in Church



story disappeared. These versions of the tale in other countries probably did not perish from any royal disfavor. Instead, they may have simply lost out to the Konig im Bade version, which continued to circulate in Europe up to the 19th century. The major continental works which constitute the Magnifikat branch of the proud king tales are given in Table II. Even though many of these works predate the English poem, Varnhagen argues, and later scholars have agreed, that these works and the English poem share a common, older source, which has been lost.

Li dis dou Magnificat comes closest to the English story, being the only continental tale to call the protagonist the King of Sicily. Hornstein, in "Analogues and Origins" gives a detailed comparison of the two stories. None of the continental stories shows the influence of the "Robert le Diable" story that the English work does. Still, the most important point here is that this story branch died out, leaving a distinctly different proud king story tradition outside of England.

Longfellow enjoyed enormous international popularity during his lifetime. As soon as each of his works was published, it would be immediately translated into a great variety of languages. The American professor received fan mail from all over the world. One incident serves as a

Table II.

## Proud king stories with "Magnifikat" plots from continental Europe

Type of Work	Title	Language	Author	Date	Modern Reference
poem	—	German	Der Stricker	1240	von der Hagen
story	<i>Der Nackte Kaiser</i>	German	Herrard von Wildonie	late 13C	Kümmel
poem	"Li dis dou Magnificat"	French	Jean de Condé	early 14C	Scheler
story	<i>El Conde Lucanor</i>	Spanish	Don Juan Manuel	1335	Knust-Hirschfeld
story	—	Italian	Giovanni Sercambi of Lucca	1374	Varnhagen
play	—	Italian	anon.	15th C	d'Ancona
story	—	Latin	Antonius Archbishop of Florence	15th C	Varnhagen
play	—	German	John Römoldt	1563	Varnhagen

(Hibbard 59,60)

striking example of his international reputation. "In 1866, he was offered by Victor Emmanuel II [King of Italy] the title of Cavaliere in the Order of SS. Maurizio and Lazzro" (Arvin 223). He declined the offer, writing that "he did not think it appropriate to a republican and a Protestant to receive a Catholic Order of Knighthood" (Arvin 223).

Although the single story "King Robert of Sicily" may not have influenced the King of Italy's offer, Longfellow's story did have a dramatic impact on the proud king literature. His work revived interest in the story in both Europe and the United States. Some authors and scholars worked with the English Magnifikat-type tale which Longfellow's work sprang from, while others continued to develop the old Konig im Bade-type tale still circulating in Europe.

In 1868 William Morris published Earthly Paradise in Britain. In the "Spring" section of the work he tells the story of "The Proud King," taken directly from the Gesta Romanorum. Since the plot's creation in the Middle Ages, Morris was the first author ever to reshape the Konig im Bade version of the tale into English (not counting direct translations). In 1876, Rudolph Schmidt staged the play Den Forvandlede Konge (The Transformed King) in Copenhagen, using the English "King Robert" version of the story.

In 1882, Anthony Hope published Stories of Old Renown. For one of these stories, Hope took the medieval English story and crafted his own prose version of it (just as Hunt did). Hope, unfortunately, was not a writer of renown, like Hunt or Longfellow, so his effort attracted little attention.

Back in America, Grace Livingston Furniss was influenced by Longfellow. She wrote a four act play called Robert of Sicily, which was published in New York in 1900. The script specifically states that the play was "suggested by the leading incident in Longfellow's . . . 'King Robert of Sicily'" (Hixon 151).

In 1907 Jean Aicard produced an opera in France based on the story called Le Manteau du Roi. The famous Jules Massenet supposedly wrote the music for this work (Andrae 58). Massenet may have done this work as a favor to a friend or to earn some money, but even the most extensive lists of Massenet's works do not mention Le Manteau du Roi. (Andrae relies upon a theater notice in a 1907 German newspaper).

Finally, the most recent and most bizarre version of "King Robert of Sicily" also appeared as an opera. In 1926, in Warsaw, Polish composer Karol Szymanowski premiered his opera King Roger (Harewood 1594). Szymanowski based his

work on the religious conversion of the King of Sicily, but he made two changes to the basic story, one small and one large. First, he changed the name of the king back to the historically correct Roger. (Robert had ruled only Southern Italy, not Sicily). Second, Szymanowski stripped out most of the plot and replaced it with Euripides' play The Bacchantes. (Also called The Dionysians).

In The Bacchantes, a stranger leading a group of Greek women from Asia comes to Thebes and tries to convert the women there to their religion based on nature and revelry. Pentheus, the king of Thebes, tries to suppress this religious movement, but dies in the attempt when the stranger reveals himself to be the god Dionysus. In King Roger, when the King of Sicily goes to church, he finds everyone talking about a shepherd. This shepherd promotes the same hedonistic sort of religion and Roger also fails to suppress it. After his people and his queen are led away by this new movement, Roger renounces his throne, casting aside his crown and cloak. At the end of the opera, "through his trials the King has grown and it is with confidence, indeed rapture, that he greets the rising of the sun in a splendid paean of thanksgiving" (Harewood 1598).

Szymanowski has clearly subverted the Christian message of the story with one that is older and which he seems to

feel is more important. Apparently he believes that when we amend our ways we should not return to Christian humility, but that we should step back even further to a more natural state, an older way of life that was lost to the onslaught of the Apollonian discipline of Christianity and Islam.

The history of "King Robert of Sicily" has become a story itself, with characters and a plot. This story reveals how basic ideas present in all myths and legends form the foundation for many of western civilization's most common tales. This story also reveals the nature of each era and each author as each tries to shape the old idea into his or her own words. The anonymous medieval author showed himself not only to be pious, but also very adept at crafting a plot and very competent with English verse.

This story of a story also tells us how popularity may spread a tale, and how the ill winds of political change may blow it away. It also reveals the rise of literary research and the resurrection of works because of the efforts of researchers. Finally, the story tells of a century of writers looking for entertainment and wisdom in the tales of the past. Their personal needs and abilities display themselves against the unchanging backdrop of the basic motif of the proud king. Since the protagonist could be any

ruler, the resulting stories tell us as much about ourselves and the authors as they do about the nature of royal pride.

A good tale behaves like a living organism, striving to advance and propagate itself. These stories have lives unto themselves. Even though authors will reshape works in their particular styles, the basic story lives on, using each author as a host to carry it further along and spread copies of itself.

Anyone writing a creative work knows that you open, you yield yourself, and the book talks to you and builds itself. To a certain extent, you become the carrier of something that is given to you from what have been called the Muses . . .

This is no fancy, it is a fact. (Campbell 58)

If "King Robert of Sicily" had not been a good tale, if it had nothing important to say, nothing to capture the imagination, it would have died a quiet death. Instead, its appeal to its readers gives it a vitality which allows it to continue.

Such works make literature worthwhile. They enrich our lives. Although a fresh version of "King Robert" has not been produced recently in this century, we must not deny that the old works may have further offspring. When the time is right, when the readers are receptive, someone will

rework the story again, and the king will live on.



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## Appendix A

## Manuscripts of "King Robert of Sicily"

1. Bodleian College Oxford 3938      444 lines    (1370-1390)  
    (ms. English Poetry A.1 ms. Vernon)
2. Trinity College Oxford D 57      440 lines    (c. 1375)
3. British Museum Additional 22283    454 lines    (c. 1400)  
    (Simeon ms.)
4. British Museum Harley 1701      486 lines    (1425-1450)
5. British Museum Harley 525      472 lines    (1450-1475)
6. Cambridge Univ. Library Ff II 38    516 lines    (1475-1500)
7. Cambridge Univ. Library Ii IV 9    374 lines    (c. 1450)
8. Caius College, Cambridge 174      470 lines    (1475-1500)
9. Trinity College, Dublin 432 B      79 lines     1458-1461  
    (a severely abridged version)
10. British Museum Additional 34801    46 lines    (early 15C)  
    (a fragment)

(Hornstein, "A New Ms." 453,4)

Appendix B

"Robert of Sicily"

Vernon ms. Bodleian ms. English Poetry A 1

(French and Hale, 933-46)

## ROBERT OF SICILY

Strictly speaking, this is a pious legend, told to edify rather than to amuse. It is included in a volume of romances as an example of a literature that borders on fiction and often uses its methods, but differs from it in being supposedly founded on fact. Its style is simple, severe, and reverent.

The writer's original is unknown, although many analogues have been discovered. For these, see Hibbard 38, and Wells 162. The poem was composed before 1370, probably in the south midlands. The scribe frequently writes *ou* for *you*, and uses *-i-* for *-i-* (*gult, guilt*).

Through the kindness of the authorities of the Bodleian Library, it has been possible to prepare the text from a photograph of the Vernon Manuscript, MS. English Poetry A.1, fol. 300 ff. The divisions in the poem are as marked in the manuscript.

Princes proude þat þep in pres,<sup>1</sup>

I wol ou telle þing not lees.<sup>2</sup>

In Cisyle was a noble kyng,

fair and strong and sumdel yng;

He hedde a broþer in grete Roome,

Pope of al Cristendome;

Anoþer he hedde in Alemayne,<sup>3</sup>

An emperour, þat Sarazus wrouyte paync.

þe kyng was hote Kyng Robert;

Neuer mon ne wuste him fert.<sup>4</sup>

He was kyng of gret honour,

For þat he was conquerour;

In al þe world nas his peer,

Kyng ne prince, fer ne neer;

And for he was of chivalric flour,

who are proud amid the throng. <sup>1</sup>false. <sup>2</sup>Germany. <sup>3</sup>afraid.

Heading. The MS. has, *Her is of Kyng Robert of Cicyle, Hou þride*

*dude him begyle.*



- His brother was mad emperour;  
 His oþer brother, Goddes vikere,<sup>2</sup>  
 Pope of Rome, as i seide eye.  
 Þe pope was hote Pope Yrbau;  
 He was good to God and man.  
 Þe emperour was hote Valenounde;  
 A strengur weorour nas non founde  
 After his brother of Cisyde,  
 Of whom þat i seiað telle a while.  
 Þe Kyng þroughe he hedde pryde,  
 And in his þoughe he hedde pryde,  
 For he was noumpe<sup>6</sup> in vch a syde.  
 At midsonne, a<sup>7</sup> Seynt Ioues Nihit,<sup>8</sup>  
 Þe Kyng to churche com ful riht  
 For to heeren his ouensong.  
 Hym þouhte he dwellde þer ful long;  
 He þouhte more in worlde's honour  
 þen in Crist, yr saueour.  
 In *Magnificat* he herde a vers;  
 He made a clerk hit him rehers  
 In language of his owne tonge;  
 In Latyn he muste what heo souge.  
 Þe vers was þis, i telle þe:  
 "Deposuit potentes de sede,  
 Et exaltavit humiles."<sup>9</sup>  
 Þis was þe vers, withouten les,  
 Þe clerk seide anon riht,  
 "Sire, such is Goddes niht,  
 Þat he may make heȝe lowe  
 And lowe heȝe, in huytel þrowe;<sup>3</sup>  
 God may do, withoute lyȝe,  
 His wil, in tynklyng of an eȝe."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> vicar. <sup>3</sup> unprofite, judge in despous; hence a person of importance. <sup>4</sup> on.

<sup>5</sup> June 24, St. John's Night. <sup>6</sup> gave.

<sup>7</sup> 35. The Magnificat (Lanke 1: 16) was a psalm sung by the Virgin Mary. It is used in the vesper service.

<sup>8</sup> 41. "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree" (Isa. 60:1).

- Þe Kyng seide, wiþ herte vustable,<sup>10</sup>  
 "Al for song is fals and fable;<sup>11</sup>  
 What non hap such pouwer  
 Me to bringe lowe in daunger?"<sup>12</sup>  
 I am flour of chivalry;  
 Myn enemys i may distruye;<sup>13</sup>  
 No non lyueþ in no fonde  
 þat me may wiþstoude;  
 þen is þis a song of nouht!"<sup>14</sup>  
 þis erroure he hedde in þoughe,  
 And in his þoughe a sleep him tok  
 In his pulpit,<sup>15</sup> as soþ þe bok.  
 When þat euensong was al don,  
 A kyng ihc<sup>16</sup> him out gan gon,  
 And alle men wiþ hym gan wende;  
 Kyng Robert lafte out of mynde.<sup>16</sup>  
 Þe newe kyng was, as i ou telle,  
 Goddes angel, his proude to felle.  
 Þe angel in halte iȝe made,  
 And alle men of hym weore glade.  
 Þe Kyng wakede þat lay in churche;  
 His men he þouhte wo to worche  
 For he was laft þer alon  
 And derk niht him fel vppon.  
 He gan crien after his men:  
 Þer nas non þat spak axen;  
 But þe sexteyn, atton ende,<sup>17</sup>  
 Of þe churche to him gan wende,  
 And seide, "What dost þou nouþe's her,  
 þou false þef, þou losenger?"<sup>18</sup>  
 þou art her wiþ fteleyne,  
 Holy churche to robbery!"<sup>19</sup>  
 He seide, "Foule gadelyng,<sup>21</sup>  
 I am no þef; i am a kyng!"

<sup>10</sup> instant. <sup>11</sup> a lie. <sup>12</sup> power. <sup>13</sup> destroy. <sup>14</sup> royal Jew. <sup>15</sup> like. <sup>16</sup> was quite forgotten. <sup>17</sup> at last. <sup>18</sup> now. <sup>19</sup> lying knave. <sup>20</sup> rob. <sup>21</sup> rascal.

60. The book is unknown.

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## ROBERT OF SICILY

Fort<sup>27</sup> he þe þe nome of kyng forsake."  
 þe porter com to þe ȝate,  
 And him he called, in to late.<sup>28</sup>  
 He smot þe porter when he com in  
 þat blod barst out of moup and chyn.  
 125 þe porter ȝeld him his trouayle;<sup>29</sup>  
 Him smot ȝeyn, wijpouten fayle,  
 þat neose and moup barst a-bloud;  
 þeure he semed almost wou.  
 130 þe porter and his men in haste  
 kyng Robert in a podel<sup>30</sup> caste;  
 Vnsenely heo maden his bodi þan,  
 þat he nas lyk non oper man,  
 And brouht him bifore þe newe kyng  
 135 And brouht him bifore þe newe kyng  
 And seide, "Lord, þis gadelyng  
 Me hap snyte withoute deceit."<sup>31</sup>  
 He seip he is vr kyng apert.<sup>32</sup>  
 Þis barlot<sup>33</sup> ouȝte, for his sawe,<sup>34</sup>  
 Ben thonged and todrawe,  
 For he seip non oper word  
 140 Bote þat he is boþe kyng and lord."  
 þe angel seide to kyng Robert,  
 "þou art a fol, þat art not ftert  
 Mi men to don such vilenye;  
 þi gult þou most wele abyue.  
 145 What art þou?" seide þe angel.  
 Qwath Robert, "þou schalt wite we  
 þat i am kyng, and kyng wol be!  
 Wip wronge þou hast my dignite.<sup>35</sup>  
 þe Pope of Roome is my broþer,  
 150 And þe Emperour myn ober;  
 Heo wol me wreke, for sob to telle;  
 I wol heo melle not longe dwelle!"  
 "þow art my fol," seide þe angel;  
 "þou schal þe schoren,<sup>36</sup> euerichedel,  
 155 Læch a fool, a fool to be.

<sup>27</sup> until... <sup>28</sup> let... <sup>29</sup> requid him for his pains... <sup>30</sup> puddle... <sup>31</sup> deserving...  
<sup>32</sup> openly... <sup>33</sup> vagabond... <sup>34</sup> speech, assertion... <sup>35</sup> dignity; i.e., usurp my state...  
<sup>36</sup> shaved.

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## MISCELLANEOUS

Opene þe churche-dore anon,  
 þat i mowe to my palais gon!"  
 þe sexteyn bouhte anon wif-þan<sup>37</sup>  
 þat he was sun woud man,  
 And wolde þe churche dilyuoret were  
 Of hym, for he heddle fere,  
 And openede þe churche-dore in haste.  
 þe kyng bygon to renne out faste,  
 As a non þat was woud.  
 At his paleys ȝate he stood,  
 And heet þe porter gadelyng,  
 And had hym come in hijing.<sup>38</sup>  
 Anon þe ȝates vp to do.  
 þe porter seide, "Ho clepeþ so?"  
 He ouswerde anon þo,  
 "þou schalt witen ar i go:  
 þi kyng i am: þou schalt knowe!  
 In prison þou schalt ligge lowe,  
 And ben anthonged and todrawe  
 As a traytur bi þe lawe.  
 þou schalt wel witen i am kyng!  
 1 Open þe ȝates, gadelyng!"  
 þe porter seide, "So mot i þe,  
 We i wot, wijpoute doute,  
 þe kyng nis not now wijpoute."  
 þe porter com into halle,  
 Bifore þe newe kyng aknes<sup>34</sup> gan falle,  
 And seide, "þer is atte ȝate  
 A nyce fool<sup>35</sup> icome late;<sup>36</sup>  
 He seip he is lord and kyng,  
 And clept me foule gadelyng,  
 Lord, what wol ȝe þat i do:  
 Læten him bi, or leten him go?"  
 þe angel seide in haste,  
 "Do him come in swiþe faste,  
 For my fol i wolle him make

<sup>37</sup> thereupon... <sup>38</sup> haste... <sup>39</sup> on his knees... <sup>40</sup> silly fool... <sup>41</sup> just now.

When is now bi dignité?  
 bi counseyler schal ben an ape,  
 And o elobing ou worp iselapre;<sup>37</sup>  
 I schal him elobien as bi brogher  
 Of o elobing; hit is non oþer.<sup>38</sup>  
 He schal beo þin owne feere;  
 Sum wit of him þou miht lewe!  
 Houndes how so hit falle,  
 Schullen eten wip þe in halle;  
 þou schalt eten on þe ground;  
 þin assaynour<sup>39</sup> schal ben an hound,  
 To assaye bi mete bifore þe,  
 Whether is now bi dignité?<sup>40</sup>  
 He heet a barbur him bifore,  
 þat as a fool he schulde be schone  
 Al around, lich a frere,  
 An hounde-brede,<sup>41</sup> þoue eþer ere,  
 And on his eroune make a crois.  
 He gan ere and make nois;  
 He swor þei schulde alle abaye,  
 þat him dude such vileynye;  
 And eoure he seide he was lord,  
 And velle mon scorned him for þat word,  
 And velle mon seide he was wof;<sup>42</sup>  
 þat proued wel he couþe no good;<sup>43</sup>  
 For he wende in noné wyse  
 þat God Abmihti couþe deuyse  
 Him to bringe to lower stat;<sup>44</sup>  
 Wip o draught he was chekmat!<sup>44</sup>  
 Wip houndes euert miht he lay,  
 And ofte he criþede weylaway  
 þat he eoure was ibore,  
 For he was a mon forlore.  
 þer was in court gromm ne page

<sup>37</sup> the same sort of clothes shall be made for both of you, <sup>38</sup> it shall not be otherwise. <sup>39</sup> taster (to provide against treason or food poisoning). <sup>40</sup> hand-breadth. <sup>41</sup> had no wisdom. <sup>42</sup> state. <sup>43</sup> move; he was chokhearted.

<sup>44</sup> An assayer was also one who placed the food before the diner. Probably both functions are included in the term here.

þat of þe kyng ne made rage;<sup>44</sup>  
 For no mon ne mihte him knowe:  
 He was defygured<sup>45</sup> in a browe.  
 So lowe er þat was neuer kyng;  
 Alias, her was a deouful<sup>46</sup> þing,  
 þat him scholdte for his pryde  
 Such hap among his men betyde!  
 Hunger and þurste he hedde grete,  
 For he ne moste no mete etc  
 But houndes eten of his disch,  
 Whether hit wore flesch or ffisch.  
 He was to deþe neiz ibrouht  
 For hunger, ar he miht eten ouht  
 Wip houndes þat bep in halle;  
 How miht him hardore bifalle?  
 And whom hit wolde non oþur be,<sup>47</sup>  
 He eet wip houndes gret plenté.  
 þe angel was kyng, him þhougþte long;<sup>48</sup>  
 In his tyme was neuer wrong,  
 Tricherie, ne falsheede, ne no gyle  
 Ikon in þe lond of Cisyle.  
 Alle goode þer was gret plenté;  
 Among men loue and charité;  
 In his tyme was neuer strif  
 Bitwene mon and his wyf;  
 Velle mon louede wel oþer:  
 Beter loue nas neuer of brogher.  
 þenne was þat a toyful þing  
 In londe to haue such a kyng;  
 kyng he was þreo 3eer and more.—  
 Robert 3eode as mon forlore.  
 Schippe hit fel yppon a day  
 A luytel bifore þe monep of May,  
 Sire Valenound, þe Emperour,  
 Seude lettres of gret honour

<sup>44</sup> sport. <sup>45</sup> altered in appearance. <sup>46</sup> sorry. <sup>47</sup> would not be otherwise. <sup>48</sup> it seemed long to him; cf. 107. He wishes to return to heaven.

195. MS. *þat he*.

<p>To his broþer, of Cisyle Kyng,  And bad him come withouten lettyng,  þat heo mihten beo boþe isone  Wif þeore broþer, Pope of Rome.  Hym þhoughte long heo wore atwinne,<sup>19</sup>  He bad him lette for no wynnne,<sup>20</sup>  þat he neore of good aray.<sup>1</sup>  In Roome an Holy þorseday,<sup>2</sup>  þe engel welcomeþe þe messagers  And ȝaf hem cloþes riche of pers,<sup>3</sup>  Furred al wif ermyne;  In Cristendom is non so fyne;  And al was chouched mid perré.<sup>4</sup>  Better was non in Cristianté.  Such cloþ, and hit wore to dihte,  Al Cristendom hit make ne mihte.  Of þat wondre al þat lond,  Hou þat cloþ was wrouyt wif hond;  Wher such cloþ was to selle,  Ne ho hit maade, coupe no mon telle.  þe messagers wenten with þe Kyng  To ȝete Rome, wipoute lettyng.  þe ffool Robert also went,  Cloþed in lodly garment,<sup>5</sup>  Men miht him knowen in þe route!  þe engel was cloþed al in whit;  Nas neuer seȝe such samyt,<sup>6</sup>  And al was chouched<sup>7</sup> myd perles riche:  Neuer mon seȝ none hem liche.  Al was whit, aȝyr and steede;  þe steede was feir þer he ȝede;</p>	<p>So feir a steede as he on rod  Nas neuer mon þat euer bistrod.  þe engel com to Roome sone,  Real, as fei a kyng to done,<sup>8</sup>  So real kyng com neuere in Rome;  Alle men wondre whicheþ he come.  His men wore realliche<sup>9</sup> diht:  Heore richesse com seȝe no wiht.  Of cloþus, furteles, and oþer þing,  Eueriche seȝer þhoughte a kyng,  And alle rihte of riche aray  Boþe Kyng Robert, as i ow say:  Alle men on him ȝou pyke,<sup>10</sup>  For he rod al oþer vnlyke:  An ape rod of his cloþing,<sup>11</sup>  In tokne þat he was vnderlyng.  þe Pope and þe Emperour also  And oþer lordes mony no  Welcomeþe þe engel as for kyng,  And made ioȝe of his comyng.  þeose þre broþeren made cumfort,<sup>12</sup>  þe engel was broþer maad bi sort,<sup>13</sup>  Wel was þe Pope and Emperour  þat heiden a broþur of such honour!  Forþ com sturte Kyng Robert  As ffol and mon þat nas not fert,  And cryȝede wif ful eȝre spreche  To his broþeren to don him wreche  Of him þat hap with queynte gyle<sup>14</sup>  His corone and lond of Cisyle.  þe Pope ne þe Emperour nouþer  þe ffol ne kneȝ not for heor broþer.  More þen er a þousend folde,  To cleyme such a breþerhede:</p>	<p>260</p> <p>265</p> <p>270</p> <p>275</p> <p>280</p> <p>285</p> <p>290</p>
<p>þe angel com to Roome sone,  Real, as fei a kyng to done,<sup>8</sup>  So real kyng com neuere in Rome;  Alle men wondre whicheþ he come.  His men wore realliche<sup>9</sup> diht:  Heore richesse com seȝe no wiht.  Of cloþus, furteles, and oþer þing,  Eueriche seȝer þhoughte a kyng,  And alle rihte of riche aray  Boþe Kyng Robert, as i ow say:  Alle men on him ȝou pyke,<sup>10</sup>  For he rod al oþer vnlyke:  An ape rod of his cloþing,<sup>11</sup>  In tokne þat he was vnderlyng.  þe Pope and þe Emperour also  And oþer lordes mony no  Welcomeþe þe engel as for kyng,  And made ioȝe of his comyng.  þeose þre broþeren made cumfort,<sup>12</sup>  þe engel was broþer maad bi sort,<sup>13</sup>  Wel was þe Pope and Emperour  þat heiden a broþur of such honour!  Forþ com sturte Kyng Robert  As ffol and mon þat nas not fert,  And cryȝede wif ful eȝre spreche  To his broþeren to don him wreche  Of him þat hap with queynte gyle<sup>14</sup>  His corone and lond of Cisyle.  þe Pope ne þe Emperour nouþer  þe ffol ne kneȝ not for heor broþer.  More þen er a þousend folde,  To cleyme such a breþerhede:</p>	<p>260</p> <p>265</p> <p>270</p> <p>275</p> <p>280</p> <p>285</p> <p>290</p>	
<p>þe angel com to Roome sone,  Real, as fei a kyng to done,<sup>8</sup>  So real kyng com neuere in Rome;  Alle men wondre whicheþ he come.  His men wore realliche<sup>9</sup> diht:  Heore richesse com seȝe no wiht.  Of cloþus, furteles, and oþer þing,  Eueriche seȝer þhoughte a kyng,  And alle rihte of riche aray  Boþe Kyng Robert, as i ow say:  Alle men on him ȝou pyke,<sup>10</sup>  For he rod al oþer vnlyke:  An ape rod of his cloþing,<sup>11</sup>  In tokne þat he was vnderlyng.  þe Pope and þe Emperour also  And oþer lordes mony no  Welcomeþe þe engel as for kyng,  And made ioȝe of his comyng.  þeose þre broþeren made cumfort,<sup>12</sup>  þe engel was broþer maad bi sort,<sup>13</sup>  Wel was þe Pope and Emperour  þat heiden a broþur of such honour!  Forþ com sturte Kyng Robert  As ffol and mon þat nas not fert,  And cryȝede wif ful eȝre spreche  To his broþeren to don him wreche  Of him þat hap with queynte gyle<sup>14</sup>  His corone and lond of Cisyle.  þe Pope ne þe Emperour nouþer  þe ffol ne kneȝ not for heor broþer.  More þen er a þousend folde,  To cleyme such a breþerhede:</p>	<p>260</p> <p>265</p> <p>270</p> <p>275</p> <p>280</p> <p>285</p> <p>290</p>	

<sup>19</sup> apart. <sup>20</sup> gain; i.e., consideration. <sup>1</sup> clothing; i.e., festival attire. <sup>2</sup> Ascension Day, ten days before Whitsunday. <sup>3</sup> It usually comes in May (c. 222). <sup>4</sup> set with jewels. <sup>5</sup> fine, precious clothing. <sup>6</sup> rich and adorned.

285. MS. *Al wif aȝyr was*. Horstmann's emendation.  
286. Another MS. has *place for steede*.

<sup>8</sup> royally as befit a king. <sup>9</sup> royally. <sup>10</sup> peer. <sup>11</sup> i.e., clad as he was. <sup>12</sup> meritment. <sup>13</sup> destiny. <sup>14</sup> through a clever trick.

281. MS. *com*.

Hit was holde a fotes dede,  
 Kyng Robert bigon to maken care,<sup>15</sup>  
 Muche more þen he dude are,  
 When his breþeren molde him knowe;  
 "Allas," quath he, "nou ann i lowe!"  
 For he hopede, bi eny þing,<sup>16</sup>  
 His breþeren wolde bi maad him kyng;  
 And when his hope was al aggo,  
 He seide allas and wellawo!  
 He seide allas þat he was bore,<sup>17</sup>  
 For he was a mon forlore;  
 He seide allas þat he was maad,  
 For of his lyf he was al sad,<sup>18</sup>  
 Allas! allas! was al his song;  
 His heer he tar,<sup>19</sup> his hondes wrong,  
 And euer he seide, "Allas, allas!"  
 And þenne he bouyte on his trespass;  
 He bouyte on Nabugodonosor,<sup>20</sup>  
 A noble kyng was him bifore;  
 For he world nas his peer,  
 For he accounte,<sup>21</sup> for he neer.  
 Wilþ him was Sire Olyferne,<sup>22</sup>  
 Pringe of knihtes stout and steorne,  
 Olyferne swor euermor  
 By God Nabugodonosor,  
 And seide þer nas no God in londe  
 But Nabugodonosor, ich vnderstonde;  
 þerfore Nabugodonosor was glad  
 þat he þe name of God had,  
 And louede Oloferne þe more;  
 And seþþe hit greued hem boþe some,  
 Oloferne dlyede in dolour;  
 He was slaye in hard schour,<sup>23</sup>  
 Nabugodonosor lyuede in desert;  
 Dirst he nouȝtwher þen apert;<sup>24</sup>

<sup>15</sup> be sorrowful. <sup>16</sup> in any event. <sup>17</sup> born. <sup>18</sup> weary. <sup>19</sup> tore. <sup>20</sup> Nabugodonosor. <sup>21</sup> according to record. <sup>22</sup> Holofernes. <sup>23</sup> pain. <sup>24</sup> openly.  
 315. See the Book of Judith, vi.

Eysteine ȝer he hinede þare,  
 With rootes, gras, and euil fare,  
 And al of mos<sup>25</sup> his cloþing was;  
 "Al eunn þat bi Godes gras:  
 He cryede meret with deifful chere:  
 God him restored as he was ere!  
 Nou ann i in such caas,  
 And wel worse þen he was.  
 When God ȝaf me such honour  
 þat i was clepet conquerour,  
 In eueri lond of Cristendome  
 Of me men speke wel þomme,<sup>26</sup>  
 And seiden nouȝtwher was my peer  
 In al þe world, for me neer.  
 For þat name i hedde pride:  
 And angels þat gonne from ioȝe glyde,<sup>27</sup>  
 And in awykylyng of an eȝe  
 God binom<sup>28</sup> heore maystric,  
 So haþ he myn, for my gult;  
 Nou ann i wel towe ipite,<sup>29</sup>  
 And þat is riht þat i so be!  
 Lord, on þi fool þow haue pitte!  
 I hedde an errour in myn herte,  
 And þat errour doþ me sherte;  
 Lord, i leued not on þe.  
 On þi fol þou haue pitte!  
 Holy Writ i hedde in dispyt;  
 For þat<sup>30</sup> is reued my deȝyt—  
 For þat is riht a fool i be!  
 Lord, on þi fool þou haue pitte!  
 Lord, i am þi creature;  
 þis wo is riht þat i dure,<sup>31</sup>  
 And wel more, ȝif hit may be.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> moss. <sup>26</sup> often. <sup>27</sup> i. e., angels who fell from heaven. <sup>28</sup> took away.  
<sup>29</sup> brought down. <sup>30</sup> therefore. <sup>31</sup> endure. <sup>32</sup> i. e., greater suffering would be  
 justified, if it were possible.

313. The reconstruction is faulty; the sense clear. Nussk read *As in*.  
 351. In all MSS. the lines begin as here or with *Therefore*; the second  
 For *þat* is here correct.

Lord, on þi fool þou haue pité!  
 Lord, i haue igit<sup>33</sup> þe sore!  
 Merrei, Lord: i nul no more;  
 Euere þi fol, Lord, wol i be.  
 Lord, on þi fol [þou] haue pité!  
 "Blisful Marie, to þe i erie,  
 As þou art ful of cortesy;  
 Preye þi Sone, þat dyvd for me;  
 On me, his fol, þow haue pité.  
 Blisful Marie, ful of graas,  
 To þe i knowe<sup>34</sup> my trespass;  
 Prey þi Sone, for loue of þe,  
 On me, his fool, he haue pité!"  
 He seide no more, "Allas, allas!"  
 But bonked Crist of his gras,  
 And þus he gon himself stille,<sup>35</sup>  
 And bonked Crist mid good wille.  
 þen Pope, Emperour, and Kyng  
 Eyue wikes<sup>36</sup> made heore dwellyng.  
 Whon fyue wykes weore agon,  
 To heore owne lond heo wolden anon,  
 Boþe Emperour and þe Kyng;  
 þer was a feir departyng.<sup>37</sup>  
 þe angel com to Cysyle,  
 He and his men in a while.<sup>38</sup>  
 Whon he com into halle,  
 þe fool anon he bad forþ calle;  
 He seide, "Fool, art þow kyng?"  
 "Nay, sire," quap he, "wipoute lesyng."  
 "What artou?" seide þe angel.  
 "Sire, a fol; þat wot i wel,  
 And more þen fol, ȝif hit may be;  
 Kep<sup>39</sup> i non oþer dignité."  
 þe angel into chaumbre went,  
 And after þe fol anon he sent;  
 He bad his men out of chaumbre gon:  
 þer latte no mo but he alou

<sup>33</sup> aimed against. <sup>34</sup> acknowledgment. <sup>35</sup> calm. <sup>36</sup> weeks. <sup>37</sup> leave-taking. <sup>38</sup> at  
 the time. <sup>39</sup> assume.

And þe fol þat stod him bi.  
 To him he seide, "þou hast merrei:  
 þenk, þou weore lowe ipult,<sup>40</sup>  
 And al was for þin owne gult.  
 A fool þou weore to Heuene-kyng;  
 þerfore þou art an vnderlyng.  
 God haf forgyuen þi mysdede;  
 Euere herafter þou him drede!  
 I am an angel of reuow,  
 I sent to kepe þi regnour;  
 More ioye me schal falle  
 In heuene, among my feren alle,  
 In an houre of a day,  
 þen in corþe, i þe sáy.  
 In an hundred þousand ȝeer,  
 þeȝ al þe world fer and neer,  
 Weore myn at my lyknyng!  
 I am an angel, þou art kyng."  
 He went in twynklyng of an eye;  
 No more of him þer nas seȝe.  
 Kyng Robert com into halle;  
 His men he bad anon forþ calle.  
 And alle weore at his wille  
 As to heore lord, as hit was skille.<sup>41</sup>  
 He bouede God and holi churehe,  
 And euere he þouhte wot to worche.  
 He requed after two ȝer and more,  
 And bouede God and his lore.  
 þe angel ȝaf him in warnyng  
 Of þe tyme of his dnyng.  
 Whon tyme com to dýȝe son,  
 He let write hit rit anon —  
 How God myd his murehel miht  
 Made him lowe, as hit was rit.  
 þis storie he sende eueridel  
 To his breþeren vnder his seel;<sup>42</sup>  
 And þe tyme whon he schulde dýe

brought down, thrust. <sup>41</sup> i. e., as if he had been their (true) lord, as was right.  
 seal.

And þe fol þat stod him bi.  
 To him he seide, "þou hast merrei:  
 þenk, þou weore lowe ipult,<sup>40</sup>  
 And al was for þin owne gult.  
 A fool þou weore to Heuene-kyng;  
 þerfore þou art an vnderlyng.  
 God haf forgyuen þi mysdede;  
 Euere herafter þou him drede!  
 I am an angel of reuow,  
 I sent to kepe þi regnour;  
 More ioye me schal falle  
 In heuene, among my feren alle,  
 In an houre of a day,  
 þen in corþe, i þe sáy.  
 In an hundred þousand ȝeer,  
 þeȝ al þe world fer and neer,  
 Weore myn at my lyknyng!  
 I am an angel, þou art kyng."  
 He went in twynklyng of an eye;  
 No more of him þer nas seȝe.  
 Kyng Robert com into halle;  
 His men he bad anon forþ calle.  
 And alle weore at his wille  
 As to heore lord, as hit was skille.<sup>41</sup>  
 He bouede God and holi churehe,  
 And euere he þouhte wot to worche.  
 He requed after two ȝer and more,  
 And bouede God and his lore.  
 þe angel ȝaf him in warnyng  
 Of þe tyme of his dnyng.  
 Whon tyme com to dýȝe son,  
 He let write hit rit anon —  
 How God myd his murehel miht  
 Made him lowe, as hit was rit.  
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 And þe tyme whon he schulde dýe

brought down, thrust. <sup>41</sup> i. e., as if he had been their (true) lord, as was right.  
 seal.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Dat tyme he didele as he gon seye,  
 Al þis is writen, withouten lyge,  
 At Rome, to ben in memorie  
 At Seint Petres Chirehe, i knowe;  
 And þus is Godes milite isowe,<sup>43</sup>  
 Dat heige broþ lowe, þeiȝ hit be ille,<sup>44</sup>  
 And lowe heige, at Godes wille.  
 Crist, þat for vs gon dye,  
 In his kynereche let vs ben heige,  
 Euermore to ben aboue,  
 Þer is ioye, cumfort, and loue.      AMEN.

<sup>43</sup> Dissiminated. . . though they dislike it.

<sup>44</sup> The "Gesta Romanorum," which has a story like this, was long thought to have been compiled from Roman records. Probably this allusion is to the "Gesta," although it is not the immediate source. Cf. Miss Rieker's "Pinaré," xviii, n.2.  
439. MS. *ben*.

Appendix C  
"King Robert of Sicily"  
(Hunt 68-79)



not without reason, to have given rise to much of the gigantic fable of the Orlando and other peers of Charlemagne, who were all Frenchmen.

As an old ruin, therefore, standing in some spot surrounded by architecture of different orders, will sometimes be found to be the sole representative of a former age, we shall make the good old legend of King Robert, in this our Sicilian and Pastoral Sketch-book, stand for the whole Norman portion of its chronology. It is not military, except in the *brusque* self-sufficiency with which the character of King Robert sets out; but it is emphatically what we understand by Gothic; which, in modern parlance, implies the character of the interval between ancient and modern times. The Greek Sicilian poets, could they have foreseen it, would have loved it; and their successors, the pastoral writers of modern times, of whom we have afterwards to speak, unquestionably did so, whenever they met with it among their old reading. Shakespeare would have made a divine play of it, for it is very dramatic. Fancy what he would have done with the angel, and the court fool, and the puthos! Oh, that we had had but time to try even to dramatise it ourselves.

Who King Robert of Sicily may have been, in common earthly history—whether intended to shadow forth one of the aforesaid Norman chieftains who obtained possession of that island, or one of the various dukes who contend for the honour of being called Robert the Devil, or whether he was Robert of Anjou, bright Robert the Wise, the friend of Petrarch and Boccaccio, and father of the culminated Joanna—we must leave to antiquaries to determine. Suffice to say, that in history unfeigned, and in the depths of one of the very finest kinds of truth, he was King Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urban,

## CHAPTER VI.

### NORMAN TIMES—LEGEND OF KING ROBERT.

HOW KING ROBERT OF SICILY WAS DISPOSSESSED OF HIS THRONE: AND WHO SAT UPON IT.—HIS WEALTH, SUFFERINGS, AND REPENTANCE.



**I**N the glance at the ancient history of Sicily in our third chapter, we have seen that the Greek and Roman sway was succeeded by that of the Saracens. They were masters of the island for the space of two hundred years, but have left no memorials, with the exception of a building or two, and traces of Arabic in the Sicilian tongue. The island was then conquered by a handful of Norman gentlemen, who had obtained possession of Naples, and whose history would be ro-

mantic enough to be worth repeating, if it were anything but a succession of wars. Their wonderful ascendancy, and no less extraordinary personal prowess, are supposed by some,

After some lapse of time, the royal "sitter in the seat of the scornful," owing, as he thought, to the sound of the organ, but in reality to a great droneing fly in his ear, woke up in more than his usual state of impatience; and he was preparing to vent it, when, to his astonishment, he perceived the church empty. Every soul was gone, excepting a deaf old woman who was turning up the cushions. He addressed her to no purpose: he spoke louder and louder, and was proceeding, as well as rage and amazement would let him, to try if he could walk out of the church without a dozen lords before him, when, suddenly catching a sight of his face, the old woman uttered a cry of "Thieves!" and shuffling away, closed the door behind her.

King Robert looked at the door in silence, then round about him at the empty church, then at himself. His cloak of ermine was gone. The coronet was taken from his cap. The very jewels from his fingers. "Thieves, verily!" thought the king, turning white for shame and rage. "Here is conspiracy—rebellion! This is that sanctified traitor, the duke. Horses shall tear them all to pieces. What ho, there! Open the door for the king!"

"For the constable, you mean," said a voice through the key-hole. "You're a pretty fellow!"

The king said nothing.

"Thinking to escape, in the king's name," said the voice, "after hiding to plunder his closet. We've got you."

Still the king said nothing.

The sexton could not refrain from another jibe at his prisoner:

"I see you there," said he, "by the big lamp, grinning like a rat in a trap. How do you like your bacon?"

and of the Emperor *Valemond*. A like story has been told of the Emperor *Jovinian* (whoever that prince may have been); and we shall not dispute, that something of the kind may have occurred to him also; since very strange things happen to the most haughty of princes, if we did but know their whole lives; not excepting their being taken for fools by their people. We shall avail ourselves of any light which the histories of the king and the emperor may serve to throw on each other.

Writers, then, inform us, that King Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urban and of the Emperor *Valemond*, was a prince of great courage and renown, but of a temper so proud and impatient, that he did not choose to bend his knee to Heaven itself, but would sit twirling his beard, and looking with something worse than indifference round about him, during the gravest services of the church.

One day, while he was present at vespers on the eve of St. John, his attention was excited to some words in the Magnificat, in consequence of a sudden dropping of the choristers' voices. The words were these: "*Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles.*" (He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.) Being far too great and warlike a prince to know anything about Latin, he asked a chaplain near him the meaning of these words; and being told what it was, observed, that such expressions were no better than an old song, since men like himself were not so easily put down, much less supplanted by poor creatures whom people call "humble."

The chaplain, doubtless out of pure astonishment and horror, made no reply; and his majesty, partly from the heat of the weather, and partly to relieve himself from the rest of the service, fell asleep.

Now, whether King Robert was of the blood of that Norman chief who felled his enemy's horse with a blow of his fist, we know not; but certain it is, that the only answer he made the sexton was by dashing his enormous foot against the door, and bursting it open in his teeth. The sexton, who felt as if a house had given him a blow in the face, fainted away; and the king, as far as his sense of dignity allowed him, hurried to his palace, which was close by.

"Well," said the porter, "what do *you* want?"

"Stand aside, fellow!" roared the king, pushing back the door with the same gigantic foot.

"Go to the devil!" said the porter, who was a stout fellow too, and pushed the king back before he expected resistance. The king, however, was too much for him. He felled him to the ground; and half strode, half rushed into the palace, followed by the exasperated janitor.

"Seize him," cried the porter.

"On your lives," cried the king. "Look at me, fellow!—who am I?"

"A mad beast and fool; that's what you are," cried the porter; "and you're a dead man for coming drunk into the palace, and hitting the king's servants. Hold him fast."

In came the guards, with an officer at their head, who was going to visit his mistress, and had been dressing his curls at a looking-glass. He had the looking-glass in his hand.

"Captain Franceavilla," said the king, "is the world run mad? or what is it? Do your rebels pretend not even to know me. Go before me, sir, to my rooms." And as he spoke, the king shook off his assailants, as a lion does cubs, and moved onwards.

Captain Franceavilla put his finger gently before the king to

stop him; and then looking with a sort of staring indifference in his face, said in a very mincing tone, "Some mad man."

King Robert tore the looking-glass from the captain's hand, and looked himself in the face. *It was not his own face.* It was another man's face, very hot and vulgar; and had something in it at once melancholy and ridiculous.

"By the living God!" exclaimed Robert, "here is witchcraft! I am changed." And, for the first time in his life, a sensation of fear came upon him, but nothing so great as the rage and fury that remained. All the world believed in witchcraft, as well as King Robert; but they had still more certain proofs of the existence of drunkenness and madness. The royal household had seen the king come forth from church as usual; and they were ready to split their sides for laughter at the figure of this raving impostor, pretending to be his majesty *changed!*

"Bring him in—bring him in!" now exclaimed other voices, the news having got to the royal apartments: "the king wants to see him."

King Robert was brought in; and there, amidst roars of laughter (for courts were not quite such well-bred places then as they are now), he found himself face to face with *another King Robert*, seated on his throne, and as like his former self as he himself was unlike, but with more dignity.

"Hideous impostor!" exclaimed Robert, rushing forward to tear him down.

The court, at the word "hideous," roared with greater laughter than before; for the king, in spite of his pride, was at all times a handsome man; and there was a strong feeling at present, that he had never in his life looked so well.

Robert, when half way to the throne, felt as if a palsy had smitten him. He stopped, and essayed to vent his rage, but could not speak.

The figure on the throne looked him steadily in the face. Robert thought it was a wizard, but hated far more than he feared it; for he was of great courage.

It was an Angel.

But the Angel was not going to disclose himself yet, nor for a long time. Meanwhile, he behaved, on the occasion, very much like a man; we mean, like a man of ordinary feelings and resentments, though still mixed with a dignity beyond what had been before observed in the Sicilian monarch. Some of the courtiers attributed it to a sort of royal instinct of contrast, excited by the claims of the impostor; but others (by the angel's contrivance) had seen him, as he came out of the church, halt suddenly, with an abashed and altered visage, before the shrine of St. Thomas, as if supernaturally struck with some visitation from Heaven for his pride and unbelief. The rumour flew about on the instant, and was confirmed by an order given from the throne, the moment the Angel ceased himself upon it, for a gift of hitherto unheard-of amount to the shrine itself.

"Since thou art royal-mad," said the new sovereign, "and in truth a very king of idiots, thou shalt be crowned and escorted with a cap and bauble, and be my fool."

Robert was still tongue-tied. He tried in vain to speak—to roar out his disgust and defiance; and half mad, indeed, with the inability, pointed with his quivering finger to the inside of his mouth, as if in apology to the beholders for not doing it. Fresh shouts of laughter made his brain seem to reel within him.

"Fetch the cap and bauble," said the sovereign, "and let the King of Fools have his coronation."

Robert felt that he must submit to what he thought the power of the devil. He began even to have glimpses of a real though hesitating sense of the advantage of securing friendship on the side of Heaven. But rage and indignation were uppermost; and while the attendants were shaving his head, fixing the cap, and jeeringly dignifying him with the bauble-sceptre, he was racking his brain for schemes of vengeance. What exasperated him most of all, next to the shaving, was to observe, that those who had flattered him most when a king, were the loudest in their contempt, now that he was the court-sany. One pompous lord in particular, with a high and ridiculous voice, which continued to laugh when all the rest had done, and produced fresh peals by the continuance, was so excessively provoking, that Robert, who felt his vocal and muscular powers restored to him as if for the occasion, could not help shaking his fist at the grinning slave, and crying out, "Thou beast, Terranova!" which, in all but the person so addressed, only produced additional merriment. At length, the king ordered the fool to be taken away, in order to sup with the dogs. Robert was stupidified; but he found himself bungry chucked away by his nobles.

The proud King Robert of Sicily lived in this way for two years, always raging in his mind, always sullen in his manners, and subjected to every indignity which his quondam favourites could heap on him, without the power to resent it. For the new monarch seemed unjust to him only. He had all the humiliations, without any of the privileges, of the cap and bells, and was the dullest fool ever heard of. All the notice

the king took of him, contained in his asking, now and then, in full court, when everything was silent, "Well, fool, art thou still a king?" Robert, for some weeks, loudly answered that he was; but, finding that the answer was but a signal for a roar of laughter, he converted his speech into the silent dignity of a haughty and royal attitude; till, observing that the laughter was greater at this dumb show, he ingeniously adopted a manner which expressed neither defiance nor acquiescence, and the Angel for some time let him alone.

Meantime, everybody but the unhappy Robert blessed the new, or, as they supposed him, the altered king: for everything in the mode of government was changed. Taxes were light; the poor had plenty; work was reasonable; the nobles themselves were expected to work after their fashion—to study, to watch zealously over the interests of their tenants, to travel, to bring home new books and innocent luxuries. Half the day throughout Sicily was given to industry, and half to healthy and intellectual enjoyment; and the inhabitants became at once the manliest and tenderest, the gayest and most studious people in the world. Wherever the king went, he was loaded with benedictions; and the fool heard them, and began to wonder *what the devil* the devil had to do with appearances so extraordinary. And thus, for the space of time we have mentioned, he lived wondering, and sullen, and hating, and hated, and despised.

At the expiration of these two years, or nearly so, the king announced his intention of paying a visit to his brother the Pope and his brother the Emperor, the latter agreeing to come to Rome for the purpose. He went accordingly with a great train, clad in the most magnificent garments, all but the fool, who was arrayed in fox-tails, and put side by side with an ape,

dressed like himself. The people poured out of their houses, and fields, and vineyards, all struggling to get a sight of the king's face, and to bless it; the ladies srewing flowers, and the peasant wives holding up their rosy children, which last sight seemed particularly to delight the sovereign. The fool, bewildered, came after the court pages, by the side of his ape, exciting shouts of laughter; though some persons were a little astonished to think how a monarch so kind and considerate to all the rest of the world, should be so hard upon a sorry fool. But it was told them, that this fool was the most perverse and insolent of men towards the prince himself; and then, although their wonder hardly ceased, it was full of indignation against the unhappy wretch, and he was loaded with every kind of scorn and abuse. The proud King Robert seemed the only bit of disgrace upon the island.

The fool had still a hope, that when his Holiness the Pope saw him, the magician's arts would be at an end; for though he had had no religion at all, properly speaking, he had retained something even of a superstitious faith in the highest worldly form of it. The good Pope, however, beheld him without the least recognition; so did the Emperor; and when he saw them both gazing with unfeigned admiration at the exalted beauty of his former altered self, and not with the old faces of pretended good-will and secret dislike, a sense of awe and humility, for the first time, fell gently upon him. Instead of getting as far as possible from his companion the ape, he approached him closer and closer, partly that he might shroud himself under the very shadow of his insignificance, partly from a feeling of absolute sympathy, and a desire to possess, if not one friend in the world, at least one associate who was not an enemy.

It happened that day, that it was the same day on which, two years ago, Robert had scorned the words in the Magnificat. Vespers were performed before the sovereigns: the music and the soft voices fell softer as they came to the words; and Robert again heard, with far different feelings, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble." Tears gushed into his eyes, and, to the astonishment of the court, the late brutal fool was seen with his hands clasped upon his bosom in prayer, and the water pouring down his face in floods of penitence. Holier feelings than usual had pervaded all hearts that day. The king's favourite chaplain had preached from the text which declares charity to be greater than faith or hope. The Emperor began to think mankind really his brothers. The Pope wished that some new council of the church would authorize him to set up, instead of the Jewish Ten Commandments, and in more glorious letters, the new, *eleventh*, or great Christian commandment,—"**Behold I give unto you a new commandment, LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**"

In short, Rome felt that day like angel-governed Sicily. When the service was over, the unknown King Robert's behaviour was reported to the unsuspected King-Angel, who had seen it but said nothing. The sacred interloper announced his intention of giving the fool his discharge; and he sent for him accordingly, having first dismissed every other person. King Robert came in his fool's-cap and bells, and stood humbly at a distance before the strange great charitable unknown, looking on the floor and blushing. He had the ape by the hand, who had long courted his good-will, and who, having now obtained it, clung to his human friend in a way that, to a Roman, might have seemed ridiculous, but to the angel, was affecting.

"Art thou still a king?" said the Angel, putting the old question, but without the word "fool."

"I am a fool," said King Robert, "and no king."

"What wouldst thou, Robert?" returned the Angel, in a mild voice.

King Robert troubled from head to foot, and said, "Even what thou wouldst, O mighty and good stranger, whom I know not how to name,—hardly to look at!"

The stranger laid his hand on the shoulder of King Robert, who felt an inexpressible calm suddenly diffuse itself over his being. He knelt down, and clasped his hands to thank him.

"Not to me," interrupted the Angel, in a grave, but sweet voice; and kneeling down by the side of Robert, he said, as if in church, "Let us pray."

King Robert prayed, and the Angel prayed, and after a few moments, the king looked up, and the Angel was gone; and then the king knew that it was an Angel indeed.

And his own likeness returned to King Robert, but never an atom of his pride; and after a blessed reign, he died, disclosing this history to his weeping nobles, and requesting that it might be recorded in the Sicilian Annals.



Appendix D

"King Robert of Sicily"

(H. Longfellow 46-58)

## THE SICILIAN'S TALE.

KING ROBERT OF SICILY.

ROBERT of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane  
 And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,  
 Apparell'd in magnificent attire,  
 With retinue of many a knight and squire,  
 On St. John's eve, at vespers, proudly sat  
 And heard the priests chant the Magnificat.  
 And as he listened, o'er and o'er again  
 Repeated, like a burden or refrain,  
 He caught the words, "*Deposuit potentes*  
*De sede, et exaltavit humiles*;"  
 And slowly lifting up his kingly head  
 He to a learned clerk beside him said,  
 "What mean these words?" The clerk made answer meet,  
 "He has put down the mighty from their seat,  
 And has exalted them of low degree."  
 Thereat King Robert muttered scornfully,  
 "T is well that such seditious words are sung  
 Only by priests and in the Latin tongue;  
 For unto priests and people be it known,  
 There is no power can push me from my throne!"  
 And leaning back, he yawned and fell asleep,  
 Lulled by the chant monotonous and deep.

When he awoke, it was already night;  
 The church was empty, and there was no light,  
 Save where the lamps, that glimmered few and faint,  
 Lighted a little space before some saint.

He started from his seat and gazed around,  
 But saw no living thing and heard no sound.  
 He groped towards the door, but it was locked;  
 He cried aloud, and listened, and then knocked,  
 And uttered awful threatenings and complaints,  
 And imprecations upon men and saints.  
 The sounds réechoed from the roof and walls  
 As if dead priests were laughing in their stalls.

At length the sexton, hearing from without  
 The tumult of the knocking and the shout,  
 And thinking thieves were in the house of prayer,  
 Came with his lantern, asking, "Who is there?"  
 Half choked with rage, King Robert fiercely said,  
 "Open: 't is I, the King! Art thou afraid?"  
 The frightened sexton, muttering, with a curse,  
 "This is some drunken vagabond, or worse!"  
 Turned the great key and flung the portal wide;  
 A man rushed by him at a single stride,  
 Haggard, half naked, without hat or cloak,  
 Who neither turned, nor looked at him, nor spoke,  
 But leaped into the blackness of the night,  
 And vanished like a spectre from his sight.

Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane  
 And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,  
 Despoiled of his magnificent attire,  
 Bareheaded, breathless, and besprent with mire,  
 With sense of wrong and outrage desperate,  
 Strode on and thundered at the palace gate;  
 Rushed through the courtyard, thrusting in his  
 rage  
 To right and left each senechal and page,



And hurried up the broad and sounding stair,  
 His white face ghastly in the torches' glars.  
 From hall to hall he passed with breathless speed;  
 Voices and cries he heard, but did not heed,  
 Until at last he reached the banquet-room,  
 Blazing with light, and breathing with perfume.

There on the dais sat another king,  
 Wearing his robes, his crown, his signet-ring,  
 King Robert's self in features, form, and height,  
 But all transfigured with angelic light !  
 It was an Angel ; and his presence there  
 With a divine effulgence filled the air,  
 An exaltation, piercing the disguise,  
 Though none the hidden Angel recognize.

A moment speechless, motionless, amazed,  
 The throneless monarch on the Angel gazed,  
 Who met his look of anger and surprise  
 With the divine compassion of his eyes ;  
 Then said, " Who art thou ? and why com'st thou  
 here ? "

To which King Robert answered with a sneer,  
 " I am the King, and come to claim my own  
 From an imposter, who usurps my throne ! "  
 And suddenly, at these audacious words,  
 Up sprang the angry guests, and drew their  
 swords ;

The Angel answered, with unruffled brow,  
 " Nay, not the King, but the King's Jester, thou  
 Henceforth shalt wear the bells and scalloped  
 cape,  
 And for thy counsellor shalt lead an ape ;

Thou shalt obey my servants when they call,  
 And wait upon my henchmen in the hall ! "

Deaf to King Robert's threats and cries and  
 prayers,  
 They thrust him from the hall and down the stairs  
 A group of tittering pages ran before,  
 And as they opened wide the folding-door,  
 His heart failed, for he heard, with strange alarms,  
 The boisterous laughter of the men-at-arms,  
 And all the vaulted chamber roar and ring  
 With the mock plaudits of " Long live the King ! "

Next morning, waking with the day's first beam,  
 He said within himself, " It was a dream ! "  
 But the straw rustled as he turned his head,  
 There were the cap and bells beside his bed,  
 Around him rose the bare, discolored walls,  
 Close by, the steeds were champing in their stalls,  
 And in the corner, a revolting shape,  
 Shivering and chattering sat the wretched ape.  
 It was no dream ; the world he loved so much  
 Had turned to dust and ashes at his touch !

Days came and went ; and now returned again  
 To Sicily the old Saturnian reign ;  
 Under the Angel's governance benign  
 The happy island danced with corn and wine,  
 And deep within the mountain's burning breast  
 Enceladus, the giant, was at rest.

Meanwhile King Robert yielded to his fate,  
 Sullen and silent and disconsolate.

Dressed in the motley garb that Jesters wear,  
 With look bewildered and a vacant stare,  
 Close shaven above the ears, as monks are shorn,  
 By courtiers mocked, by pages laughed to scorn,  
 His only friend the ape, his only food  
 What others left, — he still was unsubdued.  
 And when the Angel met him on his way,  
 And half in earnest, half in jest, would say,  
 Sternly, though tenderly, that he might feel  
 The velvet scabbard held a sword of steel,  
 "Art thou the King?" the passion of his woe  
 Burst from him in resistless overflow,  
 And, lifting high his forehead, he would fling  
 The baughty answer back, "I am, I am the King!"

Almost three years were ended; when there came  
 Ambassadors of great repute and name  
 From Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,  
 Unto King Robert, saying that Pope Urbane  
 By letter summoned them forthwith to come  
 On Holy Thursday to his city of Rome.  
 The Angel with great joy received his guests,  
 And gave them presents of embroidered vests,  
 And velvet mantles with rich ermine lined,  
 And rings and jewels of the rarest kind.  
 Then he departed with them o'er the sea  
 Into the lovely land of Italy,  
 Whose loveliness was more resplendent made  
 By the mere passing of that cavalcade,  
 With plumes, and cloaks, and housings, and the  
 stir  
 Of jewelled bridle and of golden spur.  
 And lo! among the menials, in mock state,

Upon a piebald steed, with shambling gait,  
 His cloak of fox-tails flapping in the wind,  
 The solemn ape demurely perched behind,  
 King Robert rode, making huge merriment  
 In all the country towns through which they went.

The Pope received them with great pomp and blare  
 Of bannered trumpets, on Saint Peter's square,  
 Giving his benediction and embrace,  
 Fervent, and full of apostolic grace.  
 While with congratulations and with prayers  
 He entertained the Angel unawares,  
 Robert, the Jester, bursting through the crowd,  
 Into their presences rushed, and cried aloud,  
 "I am the King! Look, and behold in me  
 Robert, your brother, King of Sicily!  
 This man, who wears my semblance to your eyes,  
 Is an impostor in a king's disguise.  
 Do you not know me? does no voice within  
 Answer my cry, and say we are akin?"  
 The Pope in silence, but with troubled mien,  
 Gazed at the Angel's countenance serene;  
 The Emperor, laughing, said, 'It is strange sport  
 To keep a madman for thy Fool at court!'  
 And the poor, baffled Jester in disgrace  
 Was hustled back among the populace.

In solemn state the Holy Week went by,  
 And Easter Sunday gleamed upon the sky;  
 The presence of the Angel, with its light,  
 Before the sun rose, made the city bright,  
 And with new fervor filled the hearts of men,  
 Who felt that Christ indeed had risen again.

## INTERLUDE

And through the open window, loud and clear,  
They heard the monks chant in the chapel near,  
Above the stir and tumult of the street:  
"He has put down the mighty from their seats,  
And has exalted them of low degree!"  
And through the chant a second melody  
Rose like the throbbing of a single string:  
"I am an Angel, and thou art the King!"

King Robert, who was standing near the throne,  
Lifted his eyes, and lo! he was alone!  
But all appalled as in days of old,  
With ermined mantle and with cloth of gold;  
And when his courtiers came, they found him there  
Kneeling upon the floor, absorbed in silent prayer.

## INTERLUDE.

AND then the blue-eyed Norseman told  
A Saga of the days of old.  
"There is," said he, "a wondrous book  
Of Legends in the old Norse tongue,  
Of the dead kings of Norrøway, —  
Legends that once were told or sung  
In many a smoky fireside nook  
Of Iceland, in the ancient day,  
By wandering Saga-man or Scald;  
'Heimskringla' is the volume called;  
And he who looks may find therein  
The story that I now begin."

And in each pause the story made  
Upon his violin he played,

## 62 TALES OF A WAYSIDE INN

Even the Jester, on his bed of straw,  
With haggard eyes the unwonted splendor saw,  
He felt within a power unfelt before,  
And, kneeling humbly on his chamber floor,  
He heard the rushing garments of the Lord  
Sweep through the silent air, ascending heaven-  
ward.

And now the visit ending, and once more  
Valmond returning to the Danube's shore,  
Homeward the Angel journeyed, and again  
The land was made resplendent with his train,  
Flashing along the towns of Italy  
Unto Salerno, and from thence by sea.  
And when once more within Palermo's wall,  
And, seated on the throns in his great hall,  
He heard the Angelus from convent towers,  
As if the better world conversed with ours,  
He beckoned to King Robert to draw nigher,  
And with a gesture bade the rest retire;  
And when they were alone, the Angel said,  
"Art thou the King?" Then, bowing down his  
head,  
King Robert crossed both hands upon his breast,  
And meekly answered him: "Thou knowest best  
My sins as scarlet are; let me go hence,  
And in some cloister's school of penitence,  
Across those stones, that pave the way to heaven,  
Walk barefoot, till my guilty soul be shriven!"

The Angel smiled, and from his radiant face  
A holy light illumined all the place,

Line 12. Unto Salerno, and from thence by sea.

Appendix E  
"Robert of Cysille"  
(Ellis 474-79)

close of day; was much astonished by the darkness of the church, and not less so by the softude which surrounded him. He began to call loudly for his attendants, and at length attracted the notice of the sexton, who, conceiving him to be a thief secreted in the church for the purpose of stealing the sacred ornaments, approached the door with some precaution, and transmitted his suspicions through the key-hole. Robert indignantly repelled this accusation, affirming that he was the king; upon which the sexton, persuaded that he had lost his senses, and not at all desirous of having a madman under his care, readily opened the door, and was glad to see the supposed maniac run with all speed to the palace. But the palace gates were shut; and Robert, whose temper was never very enduring, and was now exasperated by rage and hunger, vainly attempted by threats of imprisonment, and even of death, to subdue the contumacy of the porter. While the metamorphosed monarch was venting his rage at the gate, this officer hastened to the hall, and, falling on his knees, requested his sovereign's orders concerning a madman who loudly asserted his right to the throne. The angel directed that he should be immediately admitted; and Robert at length appeared, covered with mud, in consequence of an affray in which he had flattened the porter's nose, and had been himself rolled in a puddle by the porter's assistants.

Without paying the least attention to these accidental circumstances, or to the clamours of the wounded man, who loudly demanded justice, he rushed up to the throne; and though a good deal startled at finding not only that, and all the attributes of royalty, but even his complete set of features, in the possession of another, he boldly proceeded to treat the angel as an impostor, threatening him with the vengeance of the rope and of the cupperor, who, he thought, could not fail of distinguishing the true from the fictitious sovereign of Sicily.

"Thou art my fool!" said the angel;  
 "Thou shalt be shorn, every deal,  
 Like a fool, a fool to be:  
 For thou hast now no dignity.  
 'Thine counsellor shall be an ape;  
 And o' clothing you shall be shape.—  
 He shall ben thine own fire:  
 Some wit of him thou might lore.

## ROBERT OF CYSILLE.

A copy of the following romance is preserved in the Public Library at Cambridge,<sup>1</sup> and another in the Harleian MSS. 1701, from which my transcript was made. It was never printed. Warton having already analysed it, I have compressed the following abstract as much as possible, and have avoided a repetition of such extracts as were already before the public.

Mr. Warton has justly observed, that the history of the Emperor Jovianus, in the 99th chapter of the *Gesta Romanorum*, is nearly identical with this romance. The incidents, however, are not exactly similar, and in some of these the Latin prose has a manifest advantage over the minstrel poem.

ROBERT, king of Sicily, brother to Pope Urban and to Valermond, emperor of Germany, was among the most powerful and valorous princes of Europe; but his arrogance was still more conspicuous than his power or his valour. Constantly occupied by the survey of his present greatness, or by projects for his future extension, he considered the performance of his religious duties as insufferably tedious; and never paid his adorations to the Supreme Being without evident reluctance and disgust. His guilt was great; and his punishment was speedy and exemplary.

Once upon a time, being present during vespers on the eve of St. John, his attention was excited by the following passage in the Magnificat; "deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles." He inquired of a *clerk* the meaning of these words; and, having heard the explanation, replied that such expressions were very foolish, since he, being the very flower of chivalry, was too mighty to be thrown down from his seat, and had no apprehension of seeing others exalted at his expense. The clerk did not presume to attempt any remonstrance; the service continued; Robert thought it longer and more tedious than ever, and at last fell fast asleep.

His slumber was not interrupted, nor indeed noticed by any of the congregation, because an angel having in the mean time assumed his features, together with the royal robes, had been attended by the usual officers to the palace, where supper was immediately served. Robert, however, awaked at the

<sup>1</sup> MSS. Cantab. Ff. ii. 38. This version is printed in Halliwell's *Nugæ Poeticæ*, 1844.

Hounds, how so it befalle,  
 Shall eat with thee in the hall.  
 Thou shalt eaten on the ground;  
 Thy seyer<sup>1</sup> shall ben an hound,  
 To assay thy meat before thee;  
 For thou hast lore thy dignity!

He cleped a barber him before,  
 That, as a fool, he should be shore,  
 All around like a frere,  
 An hand-brede<sup>2</sup> above the ear;  
 And on his crown maken a cross.<sup>3</sup>  
 He gan cry and make noise;  
 And said they should all aby, e,  
 That did him swich villainy!

Thus was Robert reduced to the lowest state of human degradation; an object of contempt and derision to those whom he had been accustomed to despise; often suffering from hunger and thirst; and seeing his sufferings inspire no more compassion than those of the animals with whom he shared his precarious and disgusting repast. Yet his pride and petulance were not subdued. To the frequent inquiries of the angel whether he still thought himself a king, he continued to answer by haughty denunciations of vengeance, and was increased almost to madness when this reply excited, as it constantly did, a general burst of laughter.

In the mean time Robert's dominions were admirably governed by his angelic substitute. The country, always fruitful, became a paragon of fertility; abuses were checked by a severe administration of equal justice; and, for a time, all evil propensities seemed to be eradicated from the hearts of the happy Sicilians—

Every man loved well other;  
 Better love was never with brother.  
 In his time was never no strife  
 Between man and his wife:  
 Then was this a joyful thing  
 In land to have swich a king.

At the end of about three years arrived a solemn embassy from Sir Vailemond the emperor, requesting that Robert would

<sup>1</sup> Taster.

<sup>2</sup> The custom of shaving fools, so as to give them in some measure the appearance of friars, is frequently noticed in our oldest romances.

<sup>3</sup> A hand's breadth.

join him, on Holy Thursday, at Rome, whither he proposed to go on a visit to his brother Urban. The angel welcomed the ambassadors; bestowed on them garments lined with ermine and embroidered with jewels, so exquisitely wrought as to excite universal astonishment; and departed in their company to Rome.—

The fool Robert also went,  
 Clothed in lonthly garment,  
 With fox-tails riven all about;  
 Men might have knowen in the rout.  
 An ape rode of his clothing;  
 So fool rode never king.

These strange figures, contrasted with the unparalleled magnificence of the angel and his attendants, produced infinite merriment among the spectators, whose shouts of admiration were enlivened by frequent peals of laughter.

Robert witnessed, in sullen silence, the demonstrations of affectionate regard with which the pope and the emperor welcomed their supposed brother; but at length, rushing forward, bitterly reproached them for thus joining in an unnatural conspiracy with the usurper of his throne. This violent sally, however, was received by his brothers, and by the whole papal court, as an undoubted proof of his madness; and he now learnt for the first time the real extent of his misfortune. His stubbornness and pride gave way, and were succeeded by sentiments of remorse and penitence.

We have already seen that he was not very profoundly versed in Scripture history, but he now fortunately recollected two examples which he considered as nearly similar to his own; those of Nebuchnessar and Holofernes. Recalling to his mind their greatness and degradation, he observed that God alone had bestowed on them that power which he afterwards annihilated—

"So hath he mine, for my guilt;  
 Now am I full lowe pult;  
 And that is right that I so be:  
 Lord, on thy fool have thou pité!  
 That error hath made me to smart  
 That I had in my heart;  
 Lord, I leved not on thee:  
 Lord, on thy fool have thou pité.

<sup>1</sup> Put.—See Halliwell's Dictionary, p. 651.

Holy writ I had in despite;  
Therefore reaved is my right;  
Therefore is right a fool that I be.

Lord, of thy fool have thou pitié," &c.

The sincerity of his contrition is evinced, in the original, by a long series of such stanzas, with little variation of thought or expression; but the foregoing specimen will, perhaps, suffice for the satisfaction of the reader.

After five weeks spent in Rome, the emperor, and the supposed King of Sicily, returned to their respective dominions, Robert being still accoutred in his fox-tails and accompanied by his ape, whom he now ceased to consider as his inferior. When returned to the palace, the angel, before the whole court, repeated his usual question; but the penitent, far from persevering in his former insolence, humbly replied, "that he was indeed a fool, or worse than a fool; but that he had at least acquired a perfect indifference for all worldly dignities." The attendants were now ordered to retire: and the angel, being left alone with Robert, informed him that his sins were forgiven; gave him a few salutary admonitions, and added,

"I am an angel of renown  
Sent to keep thy reignum.

More joy me shall fall

In heaven, among mine feren all,

In an hour of a day,

Than here, I thee say,

In an hundred thousand year;

Though all the world, fur and near,

Were mine at my liking:

I am an angel; thou art king!"

With these words he disappeared; and Robert, returning to the hall, received, not without some surprise and confusion, the usual salutations of the courtiers.

From this period he continued, during three years, to reign with so much justice and wisdom that his subjects had no cause to regret the change of their sovereign; after which, being warned by the angel of his approaching dissolution, he dictated to his secretaries a full account of his former perverseness, and of its strange punishment; and, having sealed it with the royal signet, ordered it to be sent, for the edification of his brothers, to Rome and Vienna. Both received, with due respect, the important lesson: the emperor often

recollected with tenderness and compassion the degraded situation of the valiant Robert; and the pope, besides availing himself of the story in a number of sermons addressed to the faithful, caused it to be carefully preserved in the archives of the Vatican, as a constant warning against pride, and an incitement to the performance of our religious duties.

### SIR ISUMBRAS.

The following romance is abridged from the MS. copy in the library of Caius College, A. ix., collated with the printed copy in Mr. Garrick's plays. It consists of 130 six-lined stanzas.<sup>1</sup>

THERE was once a knight, who from his earliest infancy appeared to be the peculiar favourite of fortune. His birth was noble; his person equally remarkable for strength and beauty; his possessions so extensive as to furnish the amusements of hawking and hunting in the highest perfection. Though he had found no opportunity of signalizing his courage in war, he had borne away the prize at numberless tournaments; his courtesy was the theme of general praise; his hall was the seat of unceasing plenty; it was crowded with minstrels, whom he entertained with princely liberality, and the possession of a beautiful wife and three lovely children completed the sum of earthly happiness.

SIR Isumbras had many virtues; but he had one vice. In the pride of his heart he forgot the Giver of all good things, and considered the blessings so abundantly showered upon him, as the proper and just reward of his distinguished merit. Instances of this overweening presumption might perhaps be found in all ages among the possessors of wealth and power; but few sinners have the good fortune to be recalled, like Sir Isumbras, by a severe but salutary punishment, to the pious sentiments of Christian humility.

<sup>1</sup> This romance is printed from a MS. at Lincoln, in the Thornton Romances, edited by Halliwell, 1841. No French original of it has been discovered, but it is most probable that it was derived from the Anglo-Norman.