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Article

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King Arthur as Villain in the Thirteenth-century
Romance Yder

King Arthur is generally regarded as representing the epitome of courtly virtues: the noble king, lord of the Round Table, a paragon of prouesse, largesce, and chevalerie. The poet Wace says in his Brut (vv. 9029 ff.): †

Tant com il vesqui e regna
tuz altres princes surmenta
de curteisie e de noblesce
e de vertu e de largesce.

He loves his knights and is venerated in return by them. Only the requirements of costume, the lore of the King's forefathers, can (as happens in the opening scenes of Erec et Enide) trouble the harmony that reigns between monarch and barony. Paradoxically this harmony seems to be largely guaranteed by the King's passivity: in Chrétien's romances he no longer appears, as he had in Wace's Brut, in the guise of a warrior; on the contrary, his function in the Arthurian feudal system is to send out his knights to redress misdeeds and to restore order, not to seek adventures himself.

The Arthurian lays and the French Arthurian verse romances of the thirteenth century not infrequently present a different picture of the King. Chrétien (who probably wrote his first Arthurian poem Erec for King Henry II and his entourage and whose reading public certainly consisted of those high aristocrats belonging to the maisnie of Henry and Eleanor on the Continent and in England) could not very well present King Arthur in a doubtful light, since he knew that the Anglo-Angevin monarch and his supporters promoted the idea of a symbolic identification of King Arthur with the kings of the new dynasty in Britain as an ideological means of establishing and consolidating their power on the island. Writers of Arthurian literature after Chrétien often had no such scruples; for after the literary and political equation of King Arthur with a reigning English monarch had been accepted by authors, royal household and a vast public, some poets saw an opportunity of criticizing their actual monarch by means of an unfavourable literary depiction of King Arthur.

During his short reign, King Richard I (the 'trobador') did his best to perpetuate the chivalrous ideals his barons cherished, and identified himself with what had by now become the 'Arthurian tradition' of his family. We know that he was present at the exhumation and translation of Arthur and Guenevere at Glastonbury, and that he gave a sword named Excalibur to the King of Sicily in 1191.² The poets' need to criticize arose during the reign of King John his brother, for John was not a man who could fulfil or wished

to fulfil baronial expectations of this kind.³ He refused to restore the old customs, forfeited the fiefs and heritage of his barons' elder sons on the Continent, and murdered young prince Arthur of Brittany whom Richard had designated as his heir instead of John, and who was regarded by his party (which included the King of Scotland) as a kind of Arthurian messiah, the future Arthur II. The more the barons interpreted the monarch as their enemy, the more they realized what a King of England should be: noble, just, courtly and chivalrous. They also wished him to consult them and to ask for their counsel whenever a problem arose, just as King Arthur had done.

Nor were clerical circles content with King John. Until 1214, the reign suffered under the Pope's interdict, a consequence of John's misconduct. Glastonbury Abbey, the traditional centre of royal Arthurian propaganda, suffered particularly under John. During the first years of the century, the King sided with Bishop Savary who wanted to gain power over Glastonbury contrary to the monks' wishes. The Abbey was besieged by royal and episcopal troops, and in order to defend themselves, the monks addressed a successful petition to the Pope.⁴

Under Henry II and later under the Edwards, who patronized everything Arthurian (from Round Table tournaments to French and English romances)⁵ the supporters of Arthurian literature and ideology were mainly to be found in the royal household. But at the beginning of the thirteenth century it comes as no surprise that the patronage of Arthurian literature shifts to the barons (who oppose monarchy in the guise of their bad King John) and to the clerics, especially of Glastonbury Abbey. These two parties tried to uphold Arthurian ideals and Arthurian tradition in the difficult years before 1215. They felt responsible for the welfare of the state: in their opinion, baronial power and influence formed the basis of a commonwealth, as had been the case under King Arthur and his knights.

The romance of Yder probably was written shortly after 1200.⁶ It presents a picture of a king who is greedy for power, cruel, unjust and villainous: an exemplum malum. The language of the only extant manuscript is Anglo-Norman, and it seems never to have left England.⁷ Various arguments support the hypothesis that Yder was written under the influence of Glastonbury Abbey: the personage of Yder is already mentioned in the context of the Abbey's history by William of Malmesbury, and an ancient tradition says that the hero is buried there.⁸

A short summary of the narrative stressing the conflicts between Yder and the King helps to show the unusual aspects of this poem which, with its strong polarization, stands out among all other Arthurian verse romances:

Without recognizing him to be King Arthur, Yder meets a knight in the wood who has lost his company and who is attacked by two other knights. Yder kills them and so saves the King's life. But back at court, Yder has to realize that the King has completely forgotten him. During the meal, a damsel comes to ask for help against an invader of her lady's lands, but Arthur refuses because he is engaged in a war with a knight, Talac, who does not wish to become his liege man. Yder, who had expected the famous monarch to conform to his widespread renown as a just and generous king, leaves court deeply disappointed. The quest he now engages in has two aims: being an illegitimate child, he wants to find his father whom he has never seen, and he also wants to prove worthy of a beloved demoisele, Queen Guenloie, who refuses to marry him because his lignage is unknown. Yder helps Talac against Arthur's unjustified siege and, during the battle, he repeatedly throws Keu from his horse. This arouses the seneschal's bitter enmity. He proposes to waylay Yder with thirty other knights and to kill him in an ambush. But Yder defends himself valiantly. Next, Keu tries to murder Yder by thrusting a lance through his back and turning it round several times. Yder falls from his horse and appears to be dead. The King, who had at first seemed to be glad about what had happened, suddenly repents of his evil thoughts and begins to accuse Keu of every villainous deed he has committed lately at the instigation of the seneschal. But Yder's wounds are healed by his amie Guenloie who secretly follows him everywhere. Now, Queen Guenevere asks Arthur to receive Yder into the Round Table community; the King, however, begins to feel jealous of the friendship and admiration Guenevere shows for the young knight. Reluctantly, he sends Gauvain to Yder as a messenger. Yder, after his bad experience with the King and his seneschal, refuses to accept the invitation. But Gauvain insists, so Yder gives in for friendship's sake. A little later, the hero rescues the Queen from a bear that had penetrated into the ladies' chambers.

Talac by now has become Arthur's man, and when he himself is besieged by another enemy, he asks the King for help. But his request is not granted, as Arthur prefers to engage his army in an unjust war with the Black Knight. Again, it is the King's greed for land and for power which prevents him from fulfilling his duties as a feudal overlord. Yder, as Talac's friend, is appalled; so are Gauvain and Yvain.

They leave court secretly in order to help Talac, without even telling Yder, because they fear his wounds may break open. Yder was not prepared for this new disappointment. He believes his friends to have forsaken him and loses the last bit of faith in the courtly values of the Round Table community. He goes away alone, finally finds his father (a German Duke) and, after a year, returns to court. All the knights rejoice except Arthur and Keu. The seneschal is envious of Yder's prowess, and Arthur is angry because now the young hero is worthy more than ever of Guenevere's esteem. One day, he insists upon asking her whom she would marry if he were dead. After trying in vain to evade the question, the Queen replies that her choice would fall upon Yder.

Now Arthur's most violent feelings of jealousy break out. When Yder's amie announces that she will take the one for husband who can kill two dangerous giants (hoping Yder to be the victor), the King sees his chance to send the young knight out on an adventure from which he hopes he will not return. During the fight, Gauvain and Yvain want to help their friend Yder when they hear him lamenting, but Arthur forbids it. Then Keu emerges before the assembled knights pretending that Yder was slain by the giants and that he himself has killed them. When Yder, however, to everybody's surprise, comes forth alive, he is very thirsty. Keu hurries to a distant well which he knows to contain poisonous water and brings him a drink. Yder swallows it and instantly shrinks into something resembling a piece of dry wood. Keu explains this as a consequence of the giants' fiery and poisonous breath. Full of fear, the company leaves the infested place and the remains of Yder are left in the wood. Two passing knights who recognize his unnatural state restore him to health and accompany him to Arthur's court. Meanwhile, Yder's friends mourn him; only Arthur and Keu are happy that their adversary is eliminated. When Yder suddenly appears in good health, everybody realizes at last what has happened and whose fault it is. Gauvain blames Arthur for his love of Keu and openly challenges the seneschal to fight with him should he deny his crime. Keu, whose cowardice is well-known, tries to escape, but is locked into a room of the tower. At last, Guenloie recognizes Yder as her promised husband. Now Arthur is glad because a married Yder will leave court and do his own wife Guenevere no harm.

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He even promises him a fief to make him an equal partner for Queen Guenloie. The marriage and coronation take place, and although Keu is so much afraid of Yder's thirst for vengeance that he asks some friends to escort him at the ceremony, the hero, in a final apotheosis of courtoisie and largesce embraces, kisses, and forgives him.

The young knight Yder in the thirteenth-century poem is a paragon of courtly and baronial virtue. When he realizes that Arthur neglects him and shows him no gratitude for his services, although Yder has saved his life, the hero is bitterly disappointed. After he has witnessed several other instances of the King's injustice and lack of loyalty, he does not wish to have anything further to do with such an uncourtly lord. 9

How is the extraordinary behaviour of the King narrated in the text? Arthur offends Yder several times. Each time he repents of his unjust and uncourtly conduct, but only after Gauvain, the leader of the baronial party, has upbraided his uncle with his villainous deeds. Gauvain is on Yder's side, and he can neither understand nor approve of the King's hatred for the hero and his love for his treacherous counsellor, Keu. This attitude is sharply articulated in lines 6635 ff.:

"Boens reis", dist il, "gentil e francs,
Mult devriez Keis tenir vil,
Car fels et traitres est il;
Vos l'amez, si l tienc en damage,
De vos prover l'en vos tent mon gage,
Qu[e] il est traitres mortels,
Se il le nie, e il est tels,
Li fel traitres ramposnos,
Qu'il ne deit converser od nos ...

Arthur recognizes that he has committed vilanie and so betrayed his own personal ideals and those of the community (vv. 2447 ff.):

"Allas", dist il, "mal[ce] soit l'ure
Ke jo le Rogemont assis.
La vilanie que jo fis,
Quant jo failli a la pucele
Qui m'envea sa demoisele,
M'a chargié grieve penitance.
Ki par vilanie s'avance
De suen bien et [de] son prou feire,
Al chief del tor en a contraire.
El s'ert mise en ma garantie;

Je nuls ne fera vilanie
 Qu'il ne .l compert ou loins ou prez.
 Cest siege pris trop a engrés;
Et po fist Quois qui .l conseilla,
 Qui onques bien n'aparailla;
Maudit seit il de Chesu Crist,
 Ke onques bien pur bien ne fist,
 E Deu maudie il suen sen."
 Assez i ot qui dist amen. 10

But although Arthur repents, his contrition is only momentary. There is no indication whatsoever in the text about any sort of permanent reform. Keu, after several attempts to murder the hero, feels humiliated because he has been found out; his hatred for Yder, however, is by no means changed into love. The problem of the King's jealousy (a topos of many Arthurian texts, although nowhere so strongly developed as here) is solved, so it seems, by Yder's marriage. The hero leaves court as a consequence, but if he had stayed, the King (the reader feels) would again have tried to eliminate him. The text, at any rate, makes it perfectly clear that the King is not villainous by his own initiative: it is Keu's negative influence which brings ruin upon the kingdom. This is how Arthur himself explains his conduct, and this is how the barons see the situation (vv. 6628 ff.):

Mult tenoient Keis por metable
 D'armes, s'il fust de bones mors,
 Mes onques hoen ne .s ot peiors.

A great number of telling epithets inserted into the text whenever Keu is mentioned show that the author or narrator himself is no neutral towards Keu:

A poi de mos vos ai conté
 Quanqu'il out [en] lui bonté,
 Tot tient a cest la bone somme:
 Il n'out onques amor vers home,
 Tot dis fu fels e enuios,
 Il ert culvert et rampounous,
 De femmes di[s]t volentiers honte,
 Vos n'orres ja son los en conte,
 Se il n'est de chevalerie.
 Cel perdi il par felonie,
 Molt en fu fame abatue.
 Chevalerie est melz perdue,
 Quant ele en tel home s'aloce
 Ke ambléure en malveise oie. (vv. 1145 ff.)

Or s'en fuit Quois, qui Deus doint mal.
 "Deus", dist Gaugains, "q'or n'ai cheval,
 Tant siwisse le trahitor,
 Qui nos ad fet la deshoner
 E le damage et la pesance;
 Com jo preïsse grant vengeance." (vv. 2344 ff.)

Quois fu de felonie saive ... (vv. 2327)

La felonie a parcëue
 A la plaie qu'el a vëue,
 Que li treïstres purpensa ... (vv. 2746 ff.)

The reader, on the other hand, realizes that only a very weak character with additional flaws such as jealousy and greed, injustice and ingratitude, can succumb to bad influence to such an extent as does Arthur. And the reader who has a knowledge of other Arthurian texts of the period recognizes that these character traits form part of a general trend towards an unfavourable representation of King Arthur in these years, not only in romances like the Perlesvaus or the Lancelot en prose but particularly in some other instances of Arthurian poetry. The authors of the burlesque-satirical lays Cort Mantel and Cor, which according to the latest dating are probably contemporaneous with Yder,¹¹ and also contes arthuriens like La Mule sans Frein and Le Chevalier à l'Epée similarly stress the negative aspects of the presumed ideal of the Round Table community.¹² Apart from the tremendous shame brought upon the assembly by the horn test, in the Lai du Cor, Arthur even seizes a knife to stab his queen when he is revealed as a cuckold in public, and his barons blame him:

"Sire, ceo dist Juwains,
 Ne soïez si vilains ... (Cor, v, 307 f.)

And in a short fragment of another early thirteenth-century romance, the so-called Vallet a la Cote Mautaille,¹³ the King's vilanie plays as prominent a role as in Yder. Here the King ridicules a young knight, the hero, who offers him his services, and sends him away because he is poorly dressed:

"Por chevalier de ma maisnie,
 Amis, ne vos retenrai mie."
 Li vallés l'ot, molt fu dolens,
 Et de respondre ne fu lens.
 En haut li dist par grant franchise:
 "Rois, tu n'as soing de mon servise.
 Ne te dirai honte grignour,
 Mais j'irai querre autre signour." (Vallet, vv. 17ff.)

Again it is Gauvain in his well-known function as the wise counselor and spokesman of the barons who blames and criticizes his uncle for his uncourtly behaviour which he interprets as a sign of decadence:

O le roi est tournés Gauvains
 Qui a pié n'a cheval n'est vains;
 Molt bel le prist a chastoier:
 "Rois, or te voi affaibloier
 Et ta grant court et ta poissance.
 Encor avras tu pesance
 Quant le vallet n'as retenu
 Qui devant nous s'est contenu
 Molt belement dedans ta court.
 Ja soit ce qu'il ne s'atourt
 A nostre us, mes, par aventure,
 Telx est ses us et sa coustume.
 Es dras ne gist pas la proeuce.
 Rois, sel retien par ta largece,
 Car trop avez mal exploitié
 Quant vous l'aves si eslongié." (Vallet, vv. 47ff.)

This is no longer the same atmosphere as that in the first scene of Erec et Enide where Gauvain's tone was one of gentle warning.

It seems that in a particular stage in the evolution of the genre (and under specific historical circumstances) texts such as these can serve to hold up a mirror to the monarchy and to articulate the needs and wishes of the barony more openly and in a less general way than they normally do. Expressing and solving problems between king and knights is probably the most important constituent of the genre. In the earlier French Arthurian verse romances conflicts of this kind were symbolically solved by victories over enemies and villains belonging to the outer world.¹⁴ But in the texts mentioned above, grave conflicts arise between divergent forces of the Arthurian community itself. It is King Arthur himself who acts as enemy and villain. In Yder and the Vallet a la Cote Mautaille we recognize two representative heroes who cannot identify themselves with the moral corruption and the false ideals of a degenerate monarchy. As exponents of the barony, they long for a restitution of the old order. Their disappointment and aggression are temporarily directed against one particular king who has destroyed this order, a King Arthur who is temporarily influenced by evil forces. But this does not undermine the fundamental loyalty of these barons towards monarchy, and especially towards a monarchy which fulfils the Arthurian ideals of justise, cortoisie and chevalerie. On the contrary, in hard times the barons do their best to prove that they are and always will be the pillars of the kingdom.

After King John's death, the Kings of England together with their loyal barons and the Church once again became the patrons of Arthurian literature. They continued to ask poets from the Continent like Guillaume le Clerc (the author of *Fergus*), or Girart d'Amiens (the author of *Escanor*), or Jean Froissart (the author of *Meliador*) to write Arthurian romances for them - poems which all reflect British territorial, political and social problems. ¹⁵ It is only during the first years of the thirteenth century that Arthurian literature is directed against its natural and traditional patrons, in the form of a symbolic literary representation of King Arthur as a villain, which is meant to encourage the King to repent and reform and at the same time glorifies the unswerving loyalty and the outstanding qualities of the English barony. Never again in later French or Middle English Arthurian verse poetry is King Arthur represented as a villain, but Middle Scots texts such as *Golagros and Gawane*, *Lancelot of the Laik*, or the *Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*, and most Scottish Chronicles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries revert to much the same technique as the texts which were written in King John's time; they emphasize King Arthur's bad character, show how unjust, greedy and uncourtly he is, how he has no right to reign over Scotland because he is an illegitimate son, how he usurps land from Scottish barons and gives it to English barons (to Gauvain, for example), only to show in the end that he repents, gives in, learns to be generous, and restores the Scottish fiefs to their rightful owners. ¹⁶ All these are narrative motifs which are already to be discerned in what could be called the 'English Arthurian verse romances in French'. The Scots use the same literary device as the malcontent barons under King John, because (due to the unending border conflicts and the problems of vasselage between the Scottish and the English King) their situation is in some ways analogous. This ideological warfare which employs the literary character of King Arthur - either a villain or an ideal and noble king; this depends entirely on the perspective - as a means of political controversy, seems to be typically British. Although it is and has always been possible to read these fictional texts merely for their aesthetic and poetic value, Arthurian verse romance (other than the prose) has often been a means of driving home a claim for the supremacy of the English throne over the French, the Welsh, the Scots or the Bretons. Those who suffered from it apparently hit back with the same weapon. This strong political function may explain why in Great Britain Arthurian literature continued to live longer than anywhere else in Europe, although it is certainly not the villainous Arthur who still survives, but the 'Once and Future King' as an exemplum bonum for future generations.

NOTES

A version of this article was given as a paper at the meeting of the British Branch of the International Courtly Literature Society in Cambridge, 4 January 1979.

1. La partie arthurienne du Roman de Brut par Wace, ed. I. Arnold and M.M. Pelan, Bibl. Française et Romane B - I, Frankfurt/Main, Paris 1962. Arthur's attitude towards his knights is very well expressed in Durmart le Galois, ed. J. Gildea, 2 vol., Villanova, 1965/66:

Li rois se prent a esjoir;
 Ne se puet de parler tenir
 Cant il voit sa chevalerie
 Par cui il maintient saignorie.
 "Dex! dist li rois a Saigremor,
 Com est riches de bial tresor
 Qui bons chevaliers a o lui!
 Mout riches et mout manans sui,
 Quar j'ai les millors chevaliers
 Que puist avoir rois ne princiers.
 Ja vers eaz ne tenrai avoir,
 Car rois ne puet onor avoir
 Se de chevaliers ne li vient.
 Quant del roi Daire me sovient
 Qui les chevaliers avilla
 Et les vilains tos ensaucha,
 Mout sui joians quant on me conte
 Qu'il en fu mors vïement a honte.
 Il ensaucha sers et vilains,
 Et cil l'ocisent de lor mains.
 Mar avilla les chevaliers;
 Rendus l'en fu ses drois loiers.
 Mout doit on riche home biamer
 Qui chevaliers ne vuet amer." (Durmart, vv. 8153 ff.)

2. Cf. G. Ashe, The Quest for Arthur's Britain, London 1971, p.7.
3. For the much discussed character of King John cf. C. Brooke, From Alfred to Henry III 871-1272, 'A History of England', 2, London 1967, 216; D.M. Stenton, English Society in the Middle Ages, The Pelican History of England, 3, London 1965, 46ff. The wickedness of King John is treated in such pseudo-historical

literary texts as Wistasse le Moine and Fouke Fitz Waryn. In Wistasse which seems to be written from a French point of view, John gives Wistasse, the Count of Boulogne's outlaw vassal and enemy, a house in London and rich presents, whereas Fouke has aroused the King's hatred when they were both children in the royal household. John deprives him of his heritage after he has become King of England and Fouke, as an outlaw, has many of the barons on his side.

4. Cf. G. Ashe, King Arthur's Avalon, London 1957, pp.283 ff.
5. Cf. R.S. Loomis, 'Edward I, Arthurian Enthousiast', in Speculum, 28, 1953, 114-127; 'Arthurian Influence on Sport and Spectacle', in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R.S. Loomis, Oxford 1969, pp.553-559; M. Powicke, The Thirteenth Century 1216-1307, Oxford History of England, Oxford 1953, p.516; (on Edward I) 'He doubtless believed in the story of Arthur and had opened the tomb at Glastonbury in all good faith. He saw more than a symbol in his Welsh trophy, the crown of Arthur, just as he did in the cross of Neath or later in the stone of Scone ... Yet Edward was a political realist. He lived in an age of political propaganda and he knew the value of it'. See also p.429.
6. Der altfranzösische Yderroman, nach der einzigen bekannten Handschrift mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen und Glossar zum ersten Male herausgegeben von Heinrich Gelzer (Gesellschaft für Romanische Literatur, Band 31), Dresden 1913; all italics in the quotations are mine.
7. It is now in Cambridge University Library, Ms. Ee. 4. 26.
8. The part concerning Yder in William of Malmesbury's work may be an interpolation in the interest of Glastonbury, cf. R.M. Fletcher, The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, New York 1973, App.326; see also Migne, PL 179, S.1701: 'De illustri Arturo'. Yder is mentioned on the Modena archivolt (Ysdernus) together with Winlogee who is probably not Guenevere but Guenloie, his amie in the romance.
9. It can rightly be argued that the author of Yder only developed a possibility of criticism which had been inherent in the genre from its very beginnings. Chrétien himself sometimes views the Arthurian world and the conduct of king and knights with irony and humour. This applies particularly to Yvain as has recently been shown by P. Noble, Irony in 'Le Chevalier au Lion' in BBSIA XXX, 1978,

- 196-208; in Yvain, the poet is contrasting the idealized reputation of Arthur's court with his own portrayal of it: 'In a very discreet way Chrétien seems to be suggesting that perhaps the heroes and heroines of Arthur's court were not such courtly paragons after all' (op.cit., p.207). But in Yder there is no ironic or comic distance at all; the criticism is serious, not benevolent. A comparison of Keu's character, reputation and conduct in the two texts, for example, reveals the fundamental difference of attitude.
10. A. Adams and A.J. Kennedy, 'Corrections to the Text of Yder', in Beiträge zum Romanischen Mittelalter, ed. K. Baldinger, Sonderheft zum 100 jährigen Bestehen der ZrPh, Tübingen 1977, pp.230-236; the authors propose for this quotation the reading euea for envea, preu for prou, loinz for loins, le suen sen for li suen sen.
 11. Mantel et Cor. Deux Lais du XIIe siècle, p.p. P. Bennett, Collection Textes Littéraires, 16, Exeter 1975, Introduction.
 12. Two Old French Gauvain Romances: Le Chevalier à l'Épée and La Mule sans Frein, ed. R.C. Johnston and D.D.R. Owen, Edinburgh/London 1972; in Espee it is the easily enamoured and as easily disappointed Gauvain who is ridiculed, whereas in Mule the whole Arthurian court is mocked for its vital need of adventures by a damsel who incites Keu and Gauvain to look for her frein which she herself has hidden.
 13. 'Fragment du Vallet a la Cote Mautaille', ed. P. Meyer and G. Paris, in Romania, 26, 1897, 276-280. 'Cil a la cote mautaille' is mentioned in the prologue to Le Bel Inconnu, v.49 and in Les Merveilles de Rigomer, vv.7075, 10391 and 13596 which apparently was not known to Meyer and Paris. The hero's story is incorporated in the Tristan en Prose where his name is Brunor. These various reminiscences can only mean that our fragmentary verse romance was rather well known in its time.
 14. Cf. E. Köhler, Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik, Beiheft zur ZrPh 97, Tübingen 1970, 18ff., 89ff.
 15. The first version of Meliador was probably written when Froissart lived with Queen Philippa of Hainault at the English court, cf. A.H. Diverres, 'The Geography of Britain in Froissart's Meliador', in Mél. R. Lejeune, Gembloux 1969, II, 1399-1409; 'The Irish Adventures in Froissart's Meliador', in Mél. J. Frappier, Geneva 1970, I, 235-251. Escanor was composed for or commissioned by Eleanor of Castile, Queen of Edward I. She probably met Girart

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d'Amiens in his home town in 1279, when she came to do homage to the King of France for the county of Ponthieu, which is mentioned in v. 18882 ('Pontiu'). Fergus was probably commissioned by Dervorguilla and John de Balliol about 1240, cf. B. Schmolke-Hasselmann, 'Le Roman de Fergus: technique littéraire et intention politique', paper presented at the XIIth Congress of the International Arthurian Society in Regensburg, August 1979.

16. For details cf. K.H. Göller, 'Konig Arthur in den schottischen Chroniken', in Anglia, 80, 1962, 390-404; König Arthur in der englischen Literatur des späten Mittelalters, Göttingen 1963.