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PARDUE, PATRICIA E. The Chançon de Willame: A Study of Theme and Style. (1971) Directed by: Dr. James Atkinson. Pp. 112.

Since its relatively recent discovery, the Old French Chançon de Willame has presented a number of problems to scholars of the chanson de geste. The composite nature of its manuscript, the unusual inconsistency of its tone, and many contradictions within its narrative have made the Willame an enigmatic and paradoxical example of the medieval epic.

In this study, however, we have set aside consideration of these irregularities and, by means of a close reading of the text and by study of previous Willame scholarship, we have looked beyond the surface features of the poem in order to determine if there may exist a guiding theme behind the façade of battle narrative. After presenting the details of its manuscript tradition, we have examined the Willame in depth by means of a close analysis of the battle of Archamp, using for this examination a number of the formulae of battle narrative. The theme which has emerged is that of a character study of the heroes and the non-heroes who are involved in the battle of Archamp, directly or indirectly.

We have next studied a number of the narrative procedures employed by the poet, with a concentration upon the motifs used to present and develop the characters. This portion of the study has revealed a consistent realistic approach by the poet and a focus upon the psychological aspects of epic warfare.

We have concluded, then, that the Chançon de Willame, although problematical, not only possesses a definite theme, or fond, but also an artistic unity in the poet's use of his motifs to develop his theme.

last & ont desir la
mille & de son
De deramed nufres
sara zunt s.

Dun p't guere ne
l'at nre
har dan
p't us lin
t'at q' oast el larchimp
ma' souer se q' hata a la get paen
s'ip di desef homes les mollurs
z' un nebor da vinen le sur
p' q' il out tuc tes al q' g'ne
l'inet di al uelque
ommal comere la charon d'willame

Reuhalte mer ou ad muse la flor
Amund grande eni ueni par force
Entred q' h' mal des cunetes
les marchez gaste le alues comere apud
le uent couseinz parre p' force del regne
le bonil cheualz en meime enchenes
z' en larchip z' hui fait cest damage
vn cheual z' estoery decel paes homes
C' il le nuncie atedalt de surges
l' loeq' ert redbald a celes hures
l' i mellez le tuad uerener abmges
z' esturmy h' q' n'ies z' da vinen le cunte
o' d' elz .vij. cent cheualz de uesue home
n' i ont al q' noue halbere z' broine
e' s' y le met q' les noueles ante

Godwald le ante reperout de nesp
z' hui ne uen est hui q' l' adestre
z' vinen i fu li bon mes willanne
z' od hui .vij. c. cheualz de la tere
t' edwald iert s'ure q' p' m' poer estre
z' est hui hui ne uen q' p' le poig la destre
e' s' y le met q' ante les noueles
d' en fait redbald al repener de nesp
d' ederamed z' di dures noueles
z' larchip z' vn mlt dolente guere
d' ederamed z' illu de cordes.

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APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

THE CHANÇUN DE WILLAME: A STUDY OF THEME AND STYLE

by

Patricia E. Pardue

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In offering a somewhat detailed introduction to the study of an Old French chanson de geste, we have followed standard procedure for treating generally a medieval literary work. This requires a review of the accepted facts and suppositions relating to the document itself: its source(s), dating, manuscript tradition, etc. Such information may appear on the surface extraneous to the substance of the succeeding chapters; in the case of the Chançon de Willame, however, the history of the text as a poem, as a manuscript, and as the subject of scholarly attention has had a direct bearing on the genesis of the present study. In dealing with a work of this antiquity, we recognize the fragile and ill-defined nature of the text itself, a problem compounded in the case of the Willame by evidences of primitive techniques, of composite authorship, and of irregular format, not to mention its survival in a single version. Out of these circumstances, which will be elaborated upon in the following pages, emerges a series of paradoxes which tempt the student of the genre to a closer reading of the poem: we refer to the manuscript itself, isolated yet executed with care as though it preserved an important, hence widespread, legend; we refer also to the

known sources, multiple in number yet combined skillfully into one piece as though announcing its unity; we refer to the Willame's emergence at the very dawn of the extant chansons de geste, a fact apparently at odds with the mature qualities scholars have attributed to it. Much as with the Roland, then, the essential data of its history collide with the stature of the product and justify, we feel, a thoughtful investigation of the substance and techniques of this geste.

The Chançon de Willame is one of eight twelfth-century gestes which compose the cycle of William of Orange, a subdivision of the cycle of Garin de Monglane, the largest and most thoroughly developed of the three groupings of Old French epic poems.

The poems of the William cycle relate the heroic exploits of the legendary William of Orange, a loyal vassal of King Louis I, who reigned as Holy Roman Emperor during the ninth century. The eight poems of the cycle, grouped according to their content, are: Le Couronnement de Louis, Le Charroi de Nîmes, and La Prise d'Orange, which develop the personage of William as Louis' most beloved count and relate the events leading up to his winning of the city of Orange and the pagan queen, Orable, who later became his wife under the Christian name of Guiburc; Les Enfances Vivien, La Chevalerie Vivien, and Aliscans, in which William's nephew Vivien becomes the central figure; Le

Moniage Guillaume, a later poem which describes the old age of William and Guiborc; and La Chançon de Willame, a composite work containing elements common to several of the others and generally regarded as the oldest and most problematical of the William cycle.

Unlike most other chansons de geste, which occur in several manuscripts long available to scholars, the Chançon de Willame survives in only one thirteenth-century manuscript, whose existence was unknown until 1901. In May of that year, several medieval manuscripts were offered for sale as part of a collection belonging to Sir Henry Hope Edwardes of London. The Chançon de Willame, with several other works, was purchased by a Mr. George Dunn, collector of old and rare manuscripts. Until 1913 the Willame was very closely guarded and its owner kept anonymous. Its existence was revealed only through Mr. J. A. Herbert, Keeper of the Manuscripts at the British Museum, who acted as a liaison between Mr. Dunn and Romance scholars. Upon the death of Mr. Dunn in 1913, the manuscript passed to the British Museum, where it now holds catalog number Add. 38663.

Since its discovery, seven editions of the Chançon de Willame have been published. The first was prepared in 1903 by Mr. Dunn and printed by the Chiswick Press in London. A quasi-diplomatic edition of the entire poem, it was released anonymously and limited to only two hundred copies.

Three early editions were prepared from the Chiswick Press edition: L'Archanz (La Chançon de Willame), by G. Baist, released first in 1904 and reprinted in 1908; Prolegomena und erster Teil einer kritischen Ausgabe der Chançon de Guillelm, a general study of the text done in 1909 by Franz Rechnitz; and La Chançon de Guillelme, französisches Volksepos des XI. Jahrhunderts, prepared by Hermann Suchier in 1911. These three editions omitted that portion of the poem after line 1980, which was considered to be a separate epic, La Chançon de Reneward. After the Chiswick Press release, the first successful effort to reproduce the entire 3,554 lines was made in 1919 by Elizabeth Stearns Tyler, under the direction of Raymond Weeks. This edition--La Chançon de Willame: An Edition of the Unique Manuscript of the Poem-- is especially significant because for the first time since the work of Mr. Dunn, the editor was able to have the manuscript at hand for actual study. By its completeness and accuracy the work of Miss Tyler was far superior to that of her predecessors.

All of these versions just mentioned, however, attempted to correct and "normalize" the manuscript. The first to appear which did not make these alterations but adhered strictly to the text in every way was that of Duncan McMillan, prepared for the Société des Anciens Textes Français (Paris, 1949-50). This edition, accompanied by a volume of critical notes, is the one now accepted as the

most useful for scholarly study. La Chançon de Willame (The University of North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 1952), is a recent critical edition of the entire poem, prepared by Nancy V. Iseley.

Early scholarship on the Willame was directed by Mr. J. A. Herbert, the only man to know the true owner of the documents of the Edwardes collection and who, "servant ainsi d'intermédiaire entre Dunn et les romanistes, à son tour les annonça au fur et à mesure par une série de communications parues dans la Romania."¹ He described all the Edwardes documents and defended their authenticity, since they were not available for firsthand examination. An article in Romania, "Compte-rendu: La Chançon de Willame," by Paul Meyer in 1903, singled out the Willame manuscript and introduced it to other Romance scholars. Numerous articles by noted medieval specialists soon appeared in various publications, proving a strong interest in the intriguing discovery.

But along with enthusiasm over the new work doubt also arose in the minds of some as to its authenticity. Such scholars as Emilio Tron, Pio Rajna, and Jean Acher found reason to question the validity of the manuscript, and it was even suggested by Tron that it was a trick played

¹ Duncan McMillan, La Chançon de Guillaume (Paris: A. & J. Picard & Cie, 1950), I, xii-xiii.

on Gaston Paris by an unknown philologist.² Not until 1913, when it finally became a possession of the British Museum and scholars could see and study it, was doubt dispelled as to the authenticity of the Willame manuscript.

Major studies of the Chançon de Willame have been done by Joseph Bédier, Jean Frappier, and Jean Rychner, all of whom rank among the foremost scholars of the chanson de geste. The first volume of Bédier's Les Légendes épiques is devoted to a study of the William cycle. Frappier's three-volume work, Les Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d'Orange, is a detailed analysis of each of the eight poems, with half of the first volume devoted to the Willame. Rychner, in La Chanson de geste: essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs, has chosen the Willame as one of the ten representative chansons de geste which he uses to demonstrate the evidence of oral composition and transmission of epic poetry.

The manuscript of the Chançon de Willame,³ bound originally among several other medieval vernacular pieces, consists of twenty-five sheets of vellum, measuring 9" by 6", grouped into two gatherings of eight sheets each and a third gathering of nine sheets. The writing is in two

² McMillan, I, xiv.

³ The reader is referred to the frontispiece for a microfilm printout of the first page of the Willame manuscript.

columns of 34 to 42 lines. A large ornamental initial of blue and red or red and green decorates the beginning of each laisse. The language of the scribe has been identified as thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman.

The copyist of the Willame manuscript was obviously careful and meticulous in his work. The writing is clear and consistent throughout, and it is even impossible to tell where one day's work ends and the next begins. The conscientiousness of the scribe is evident also in the relatively high number of corrections in the copy. There are many instances of expunctuations made by the addition of a dot over the extra letter. Letters are added above the line or even squeezed into the word itself. On one occasion three entire lines have been omitted then added at the bottom of the column with indications as to their place in the text. In the opinion of McMillan, "tous ces traits semblent démontrer que nous avons à faire à un manuscrit exécuté très soigneusement."⁴

There are, however, more serious defects in the text which often cause uncertainty as to interpretation. Proper names are confused several times, and other words and expressions are obvious scribal accidents. There are some lines which are almost impossible to interpret in their context, and it can only be assumed that they have been transposed or inserted at the wrong place or that preceding lines have perhaps been omitted. Most of these faults can

⁴ McMillan, I, xx.

be attributed to misreadings, lapses of visual memory, or misinterpretations of abbreviations or unfamiliar words in the original. The presence of this relatively high number of visual errors, in contrast to the otherwise conscientious execution of the manuscript, leads to the conclusion that the scribe is copying from a badly mutilated or poorly written original, whose abbreviations and errors he is often unable to interpret and correct and whose dialect differs from his own Anglo-Norman.

McMillan sums up the work of the scribe in the following passage:

S'il faut constater dans notre manuscrit des passages que le scribe ne semble pas avoir compris, d'autres qui comportent des lapsus qu'il n'a pas corrigés, le soin manifeste qu'il a apporté à l'exécution de son travail doit imposer à l'éditeur le plus grand respect pour le texte du manuscrit Add. 38663.⁵

In the versification of the Willame, however, there are problems much more difficult to explain and especially troublesome because of the lack of more than one manuscript.

The text is composed of 3,554 lines, divided into 189 laisses, if determined by the use of the multicolored initial of the scribe. Of these 189 laisses, however, fifty-three contain more than one assonance. These are called by McMillan, "laisses multirimes," a convenient term which we shall use for our discussion. If the laisses are determined by assonance, as is customary in the chanson de geste, the total number of laisses is 257.

⁵ McMillan, I, xxii.

Another troublesome irregularity is the breakdown of the decasyllabic line. Of the poem's 3,554 lines, approximately forty per cent contain other than ten syllables. In fact, lines varying in length from four to fourteen syllables can be found. This irregularity in line length is especially startling when compared with the Chanson de Roland, in which only 320 out of 4,000 lines contain other than ten syllables.

In the search for an explanation of these striking deviations from standard epic form, one basic fact must be acknowledged--the very early date of the poem itself and the late date of the manuscript. The poem has been dated by Hermann Suchier as early as 1080, and no philologist places it any later than the first half of the twelfth century. In fact, it is one of only two chansons de geste which have been dated possibly as early as, or even earlier than, the Chanson de Roland.⁶ Assumptions as to its antiquity are based on certain similarities to the Roland, its unusual refrain, and "la matière, le ton et la manière," as summarized by Jean Frappier.⁷

The manuscript, on the other hand, is dated by language as well as by certain external characteristics as definitely thirteenth-century. Consequently, a one hundred-year lapse

⁶ The other is Gormont et Isembart, whose manuscript is fragmentary.

⁷ Jean Frappier, Les Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d'Orange (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1955), I, 156.

must be posited between the original Chançon de Willame and the copy in the British Museum. This amount of time obviously gives ample opportunity for degeneration and contamination as the poem passes first from mouth to mouth and then from hand to hand. In view of this unusually long time lapse, reasonable explanations can be found to account for most instances of both the multi-rhyme laisse and the irregular line length.

Extensive study of both of the above problems has been done by Duncan McMillan. In brief, he attributes most of the multi-rhyme laisses to dialectal tendencies of the Anglo-Norman scribe and to the inclination of a remanieur to summarize and condense the action, causing fusion of several laisses with dissimilar assonance into one multi-rhyme laisse. The irregular line length can also be linked to these dialectal tendencies and to the addition by the scribe of non-essential adverbs, conjunctions, and pronouns. It is obvious in other instances that, as in the case of the multi-rhyme laisse, the scribe or jongleur has made a résumé of portions of the action or has created a new line to suit his purpose, knowing or perhaps caring little about epic style.⁸

⁸ There is no way to ascertain at what point, and by whom, these changes were made. References to the scribe, however, apply specifically to the copyist of the manuscript in the British Museum, whereas jongleur refers to one or more of many medieval troubadours who would have sung the Willame before an audience. Some of the errors belong obviously to the scribe, but others could have been the work of either

In addition to the multi-rhyme *laisse* and the irregular line length, there is a third characteristic of the Chançon de Willame which has caused much discussion--its unusual refrain. The refrain appears forty-one times in the poem between lines 10 and 3,553 and takes three different forms--Lunsdi al vespre (31 times), Joesda al vespre (7 times), and Lores fu mercresdi (3 times). The use of a refrain is not unusual in many old chansons de geste, but in the Willame it is the mention of the days of the week, independent of the context of the poem, which is especially puzzling.

In the first 900 lines, the refrain Lunsdi al vespre appears ten times at more or less regular intervals. It almost always precedes the final line of a significant laisse, with which it seems to form an assonated couplet. This final line usually describes a significant action, and often is a premonition of disaster. The refrain, then, would serve to draw the attention of the listener to the last line and perhaps even be used as a cue for the audience

scribe or jongleur. The remanieurs, intermediary poets often responsible for major alterations in medieval literary works during their passage from one generation to the next, may have played a role in the various mutations. The one hundred-year time lapse, the many hands through which the poem must have passed, and the difficulties inherent to oral transmission alone serve to account for many of the problems of the Willame.

to join in with the jongleur and sing the last line as a chorus.⁹

Between lines 900 and 1980, this suggested lyrical function of the refrain seems to break down. The forms Joesdi al vespre and Lores fu mercredidi are introduced, and a strong correspondence can be seen between the three forms of the refrain and "les trois actes de la tragédie épique," as expressed by Jean Frappier.¹⁰ It is quite probable that a later poet seized upon the refrain of the first part, easily composed the two others, using weekdays, and changed its function to denote large stages of the action.

The content as well as the form of the Chançon de Willame has caused much discussion among scholars, and it is generally recognized that the poem is actually several poems linked together, unified by the figure of William and the continuing battle at Archamp.¹¹

The first 928 lines tell of Vivien's battle. Vivien is the undisputed hero of this portion from his appearance at Bourges to his heroic death at Archamp. This portion is

⁹ Jeanne Wathelet-Willem, "Les Refrains dans la Chanson de Guillaume," in La Technique littéraire des chansons de geste (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1959), pp. 469-70.

¹⁰ Frappier, I, 156.

¹¹ The reader is referred to the Appendix, pages 104-12, for a résumé of the action of the Chançon de Willame.

considered by Frappier as an independent legend--a saint's life of Vivien, as it were, influenced by the Chanson de Roland. Vivien is "à la fois Roland et Olivier," possessing "la fougue du premier et la prudence du second."¹² Vivien's battle, without Tedbald and Esturmi, is the basis for the Chevalerie Vivien, a more fully developed tale of the hero's martyrdom.

From the death of Vivien in line 928 through the words "Ore out vencu sa bataille Willame" in line 1980, the poem is truly the Chançon de Willame. This portion relates the two battles of William, who came to Archamp first to help Vivien and then to avenge his death, as Charlemagne came to Roncevaux first to help and then to avenge the death of Roland. William is traditionally regarded as the hero of this portion since he surveys the battlefield as the conquering warrior. This part of the poem, appropriately enough, is the only part unique to the Chançon de Willame, and the entire first part of the manuscript (lines 1-1980), representing some fifty-five per cent of the whole, is termed G₁ by most scholars.

After line 1980 the poem changes drastically in content as well as in tone. Incongruities abound: Vivien, who has been mortally wounded, suddenly returns to life; Guiburc, who has been with William at Barcelona, appears without

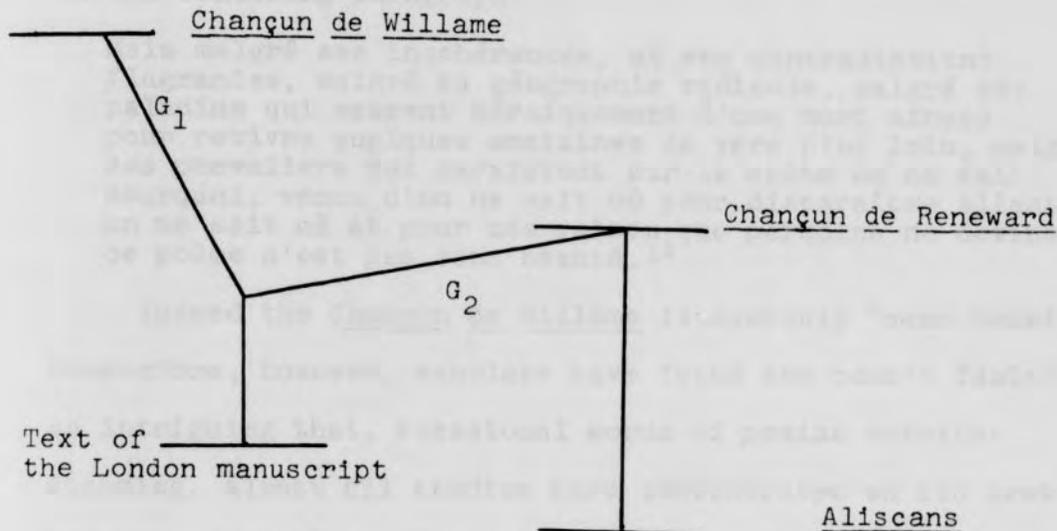
¹² Frappier, I, 185.

explanation at Orange; the pagans, who have been driven from Archamp, return to attack again. The list continues, but these few examples serve to illustrate the original independence of that part of the poem after line 1980. It is the appearance of the kitchen knave, Reneward, in line 2648 that gives to this last half of the poem a tone bordering on the burlesque. From this point on, it is no longer the heroic Vivien or the proud William who is the hero at Archamp but a lowly knave dressed in rags and armed with only a "tinel," or club.

These last 1,574 lines constitute the so-called G_2 portion of the manuscript, which was undoubtedly a separate poem attached somewhat awkwardly to the Chançon de Willame by a later poet. The content of this entire portion is found fully developed in Aliscans, of which many conclude that G_2 is only a condensation. Certain passages in G_2 which defy comprehension are logical and clear in Aliscans because of thorough development lacking in the Willame, again demonstrating a tendency to abridge and summarize on the part of an impatient jongleur or remanieur.

If the manuscript is a composite product, as it must surely be, the problem also arises as to the order of composition, not only of G_1 and G_2 , but also of Aliscans and an archetypal Chançon de Willame, from which the first 1980 lines were drawn. This question, like many others, has been heatedly debated by scholars but has remained inconclusive.

A possible line of filiation, illustrated systematically below, has been proposed by Jean Frappier:



As the preceding discussion has attempted to convey, the Chançon de Willame is in many respects a puzzling, frustrating, and elusive poem, "une oeuvre belle et irritante," as expressed by Rychner. Inconsistencies, irregularities, and gaucheries abound, and their explanation has been found only in speculation.

But despite its many deficiencies, the Willame is not without its merits. Bédier in fact has put it on virtually the same plane as the Roland in his judgment of epic poetry, saying, "Contemporaine peut-être de la Chanson de Roland,

plus ancienne en tout cas que les poèmes conservés du cycle, elle témoigne d'un art plus grossier, plus fruste, mais plus puissant."¹³ Duncan McMillan also recognizes the many positive qualities of the Willame and sums up his conclusions in the following paragraph:

Mais malgré ses incohérences, et ses contradictions flagrantes, malgré sa géographie ridicule, malgré ses paladins qui meurent héroïquement d'une mort atroce pour revivre quelques centaines de vers plus loin, malgré ses chevaliers qui paraissent sur la scène on ne sait pourquoi, venus d'on ne sait où pour disparaître allant on ne sait où et pour une raison que personne ne devine, ce poème n'est pas sans beauté.¹⁴

Indeed the Chançon de Willame is scarcely "sans beauté." Heretofore, however, scholars have found the poem's faults so intriguing that, occasional words of praise notwithstanding, almost all studies have concentrated on its problems and irregularities. The focus has generally seemed to be on what is wrong with the Willame, and why, instead of what may be good about it, and why.¹⁵ The fact must be recognized, however, that at least one person, the meticulous scribe of manuscript Add. 38663, accepted the Willame as a unified work, worthy of being copied and preserved--and in a most careful manner. Since no indications exist anywhere in the

¹³ Joseph Bédier, Les Légendes épiques (Paris: Librairie Ancienne H. Champion, Éditeur, 1926), I, 84-85.

¹⁴ McMillan, II, 8.

¹⁵ Several lesser studies on certain aspects of the Chançon de Willame have served in the preparation of this introduction and are listed in the bibliography.

external features of the manuscript that more than one poem is being reproduced, we must concede that this scribe, and probably others before him, were not perturbed by the variety of tone and action we find in the Willame and perceived, or perhaps created, enough coherence to present the poem as an unbroken narrative. Undoubtedly many jongleurs too sang the entire 3,554 lines to a rapt audience, unconcerned that their tale was truly several, sewn together often awkwardly, but as often skillfully, by an unknown remanieur.¹⁶

In the absence of other manuscripts for the Willame or for the archetypal G_1 and G_2 , we in our turn have accepted the poem as it stands and have been persuaded, on the strength of close readings, that it offers unique thematic and structural features. These we have attempted to define in this study of the content and form of the Chançon de Willame. The following chapters will treat systematically, though somewhat broadly, the extent to which this piece adheres to, or departs from, our traditional notions of a chanson de geste, first in the use of its subject to develop its theme and second in certain of the narrative procedures employed by the poet in the creation of his epic.

¹⁶ From this point on the term "poet" will be used to apply to the unidentified creator, or creators, of the Willame as we know it, whether he be scribe, remanieur, or jongleur.

CHAPTER II
THE STRUCTURE OF THE WILLAME

Most chansons de geste can be defined broadly, in terms of their major emphasis, as either religious epics wherein champions of the Christian faith wage war against the infidels, or as feudal epics, wherein kings, knights, and vassals strike blows one against the other in the interest of family, lands, or feudal rights. They can also be categorized as to historical fond: Carolingian, crusading, and, in the case of some very late ones, even semi-courtois. By and large, however, the subject matter of the chanson de geste was developed along one line, battle and heroism. This subject matter constitutes also the one overriding theme of most such poems, since battle tended to be recorded solely for the sake of extolling valor and conquest. A notable exception is the Chanson de Roland, wherein more psychological and ideological elements influence and in fact overshadow the purely battle-oriented subject matter. To what extent does the Chançon de Willame fit the above description of a chanson de geste? Is it a mere récit of the clash of arms, or has it other thematic directions which give it substance and dimensions beyond the ordinary scope of such a work? This is the first question which we shall consider.

On the surface the Willame seems to fit well our definition of the typical religious geste. As we are told in the prologue, it is the story of the epic hero Count William of Orange, who drives off the Saracen invaders at the battle of Archamp--an account of granz batailles et forz esturs. The development of the battle is logical and coherent from the first line of the poem through the victory of the Christians in line 1980, and although the poem changes drastically in tone after this point, it is still the battle of Archamp which is described.

The first laisse, serving as a prologue, summarizes the battle and in so doing gives a résumé of the major action of the poem itself. In these eleven lines the poet announces a tale of heroic combat between pagan and Christian forces-- a conventional chanson de geste:

Plaist vus oir de granz batailles e de forz esturs,
 De Deramed, uns reis sarazinurs,
 Çun il prist guere vers Lowis nostre empereur?
 Mais dan Willame la prist vers lui forçur,
 Tant qu'il ocist el Larchamp par grant onur.
 Mais sovent se cunbatî a la gent paienur,
 Si perdi de ses homes les meillurs,
 E sun nevou, dan Vivien le preuz,
 Pur qui il out tut tens al quor grant dolor.
 Lunesdi al vespre.
 Oimas comence la chançun d'Willame. (1-11)¹⁷

Beginning with the general announcement of great battles and lively skirmishes, the poet moves directly into

¹⁷ This and all subsequent quotations are from the McMillan edition of the Chançun de Willame.

the reason for the battle, the invasion of the Saracen king Deramed, and enumerates in descending order of rank the Christian leaders: the emperor Louis, Count William, and Count Vivien. The result of the battle likewise is told: the Saracen is killed, but at the expense of the Christian army and the valiant Vivien. The result of the battle is carried even further than its physical outcome by the poet's observation of the great grief caused by the death of Vivien. He uses the word sovent, implying that the battle is more than a single conflict, which indeed it is. The content of his poem announced, complete with causes and results, the poet names his poem--La Chançon de Willame--and moves directly into the action.

The prologue has announced a tale of battle, and an examination of the action of the poem reveals that it is indeed the battle of Archamp around which the epic is developed. The battle, as implied in the prologue, is in reality a series of conflicts, four in number, fought on the same field. These multiple encounters compose the four movements within the poem and provide its elementary structure. This structure can best be described by an examination of these movements into which the action falls.

The first corresponds to the first encounter at Archamp, the battle of Vivien. This portion, running 72 laissez: lines 12 to 928, begins immediately following the prologue and continues through the death of Vivien. The second large

block of action is the first battle of William, who with an army of thirty thousand comes to Archamp to aid his nephew. The army is destroyed, however, and William returns to Barcelona bearing the body of Guischart. This encounter is described in 32 laissez: lines 929-1484. The third movement and the third clash at Archamp is William's second battle. The Count goes again to the field; again the army is lost, but thanks to young Gui the Saracens are driven away, Deramed is killed, and William is the victor. This portion requires 25 laissez: lines 1485-1980. The fourth and final major division of the narrative is the Reneward episode, in which the battle of Archamp becomes largely a burlesque scene but nevertheless remains consistent with the other movements of the poem insofar as locale and major action are concerned. This portion, beginning with the entry of Reneward, is told in 30 laissez: lines 2648-3554.

Between the recognized end of the original Chançon de Willame in line 1980 and the entry of Reneward in line 2648, there is a portion of the narrative which is not specifically a part of any of the four major battles. This segment, most of which still takes place at Archamp, serves as a transition between the supposed victory of William and the entry of Reneward. It is here that many of the inconsistencies are seen between the G_1 and the G_2 portions of the manuscript and here too that many attempts have been made by the poet to link the two.

Obviously the battle of Archamp shapes both the form and content of the Willame and we are satisfied that it is, at least on the first level of analysis, the subject of the geste. At this point, however, we must return to our previously stated question, i.e., if there may not be beneath this surface action some thematic development which surpasses mere battle narrative and invites our attention to a deeper, and ultimately more complex, level. At the outset two major points should be considered: first, the spatial dimensions of the four movements our manuscript has crystallized into the particular poem we have before us and, second, the nature of the battle itself.

The first battle is undertaken with the smallest army, ten thousand men, led by the least important warrior, as defined by rank, Tedbald of Bourges. Although the army later is commanded by Vivien, he too is a relatively untried knight, ranking beneath William in authority. The second battle is led by William, a renowned hero, with his personal army of thirty thousand. The third encounter again finds William at the head of the Christian ranks, but the warriors this time have been drawn by Guiburc from throughout William's domain. The fourth battle is fought with the army of the emperor, Louis, who gives not only his blessing but also his men to his vassal William. It is evident that the scope of the battle increases with each conflict, reaching first only

the men at Bourges, then William at Orange, and finally Louis at Laon.

But concurrent with this increase in scope there is an unexpected decrease, followed by an increase, in the amount of space allotted by the poet to each of the conflicts. The number of lines diminishes with each battle from 914, to 555, to 495, and finally increases to 906 for the heroics of Reneward. The effect of this changing tempo not only upsets the balance and harmony of the parts but also minimizes the deeds of William to focus on the two youthful heroes, Vivien and Reneward. Thus we note even at this early stage that a pattern somewhat paradoxical in nature is beginning to emerge which may point beyond mere random narrative sequence. The structural unity of the manuscript, as noted in the Introduction, suggests that this pattern, as well as others we shall observe, is architecturally planned and not merely accidental.

The second of the two considerations mentioned above suggests the question: what in fact is the battle of Archamp? Battles described by those chansons de geste which pit Christian against pagan are usually connected with a holy crusade, such as the crusade into Spain with which the battle of Roncevaux is associated. If not actually a part of a definite crusade, the battles related by epic poetry are at least prepared for in some more or less carefully developed manner, i.e., the battles of William at Nîmes and

Orange¹⁸ where the fighting is the result of events told in the first part of the poem.

The battle of Archamp, however, is brought to Christian lands by the Saracens for no known reason. The question of religion is rarely mentioned and only as it affects individual heroes and not as the motivating force of the army. The poet never describes the invasion as part of a larger campaign of either Christians or Saracens. The pagans invade, and the Christians fight solely in defense of their lands. It is also worthy of mention that the pagans apparently mean to carry the invasion no farther than Archamp. Twice they actually win the battle, and twice they re-enter their ships intending to return home. They thus pass up two opportunities to oppress further the French, turning the invasion into a true war. Obviously the battle of Archamp is an isolated conflict, having no broader significance in the cause of Christian versus infidel.¹⁹

If the battle of Archamp appears isolated, it is also indecisive. As shown earlier it is really a series of encounters, two Saracen victories and two Christian victories. This indecisive quality detracts from the significance of the outcome at Archamp and lessens the impact of Christian

¹⁸ These conquests are the subjects of Le Charroi de Nîmes and La Prise d'Orange, respectively.

¹⁹ Note that the prologue accepts as fact an isolated tale of battle, mentioning neither preceding events nor ensuing results which might imply a larger significance.

heroism. Furthermore the obvious heroes are killed, captured, or ridiculed, and the victories truly are won by a child and a knave, making a mockery out of the Christian triumph promised in the prologue.

The battle of Archamp--isolated, indecisive, and finally burlesque--appears only a cadre for the creation of a poem whose true fond lies elsewhere. Although it clearly provides unity and a framework for the development of the action, it is difficult to accept the battle alone as the real substance of this geste. Whereas we can never hope to arrive at a categorical statement of the author's intentions in creating his work, the structure of the elements making it up in this particular unique version and the nature of the conflict both point to other possible concerns which have animated our poet. The thought arises inevitably that we may be dealing, as Bédier and Frappier have sensed, with a work which, like the Roland, transcends the basic confines of the chanson de geste to offer something less banal and more universally noteworthy.

We shall proceed then to examine in detail the battle of Archamp, using for our examination a number of the standard motifs of battle description as identified by scholars of the chanson de geste.²⁰ Through this close analysis we shall

²⁰ We shall use the term motif broadly to refer to a number of recurring elements found in the narrative to describe the stages of the battle. These motifs, or

attempt to bring into focus the theme and substance of the Chançon de Willame which may lie behind the recit of multiple clashes of arms at Archamp.

The scrutiny of the battle of Archamp which follows has been undertaken systematically. Each of the four separate conflicts has been examined in detail according to the methods outlined in this study, with the aim of isolating the patterns which emerge and any interests which need to be considered in their relation to the general situation. We shall have to maintain the continuity of the study of the conflict, drawing our conclusions at the end of the volume.²¹

The battle of Archamp is described in the Chançon de Willame and is naturally the preliminary stage of the battle itself. Each of the individual units and groups is listed in detail and the various actions are described in detail. The battle of Archamp is described in detail in the Chançon de Willame and is naturally the preliminary stage of the battle itself. Each of the individual units and groups is listed in detail and the various actions are described in detail.

The Chançon de Willame is a long and detailed account of the battle of Archamp. It is a valuable source of information on the battle and the lives of the participants. The Chançon de Willame is a long and detailed account of the battle of Archamp. It is a valuable source of information on the battle and the lives of the participants.

formulae, have been identified by scholars of the geste such as Nichols and Rychner in their discussions of battle description.

²¹ The reader is encouraged to review the Appendix on pages 105-112 in order to follow more closely this presentation.

CHAPTER III

BATTLE FORMULAE IN THE WILLAME

The scrutiny of the battle of Archamp which follows has been undertaken systematically. Each of the four separate conflicts has been examined in detail according to the motifs mentioned in the preceding chapter, with the aim of isolating any patterns which emerge and any interests which seem, by virtue of their persistence, to occupy our poet. We shall make minimal observations after the examination of each stage of the conflict, drawing our conclusions at the end of the discussion.²¹

The first motif by which battle is described in the chanson de geste is naturally the preliminary stage to the conflict itself--its reason for being. Each of the individual encounters within the large battle of Archamp has its own reason, or reasons, for being, which not only accumulate but also grow in scope as the action progresses.

The cause of the first encounter and in reality the basic cause of each of the four is stated clearly in the second laisse:

Reis Deramed il est issu de Cordres,
En halte mer en ad mise la flote;

²¹ The reader is encouraged to review the Appendix on pages 104-12 in order to follow more closely this presentation.

Armund Girunde en est venu par force,
 Entred que si mal descunorted.
 Les marchez gaste, les alués comence a prendre,
 Les veirs cor seinz porte par force del regne,
 Les bons chevalers en meine en chaenes;
 E en l'Archamp est hui fait cest damages. (12-19)

These lines tell explicitly how the battle has come into being. The poet follows the Saracen king from his point of departure in Cordova, through his entry up the Gironde, to his arrival at Archamp. The destruction done by the pagans is described, destruction both to the lands and to its inhabitants. No doubt is left that the pagans have done great wrong and that the French must come to the defense of their territory and people. The "who, what, where, when, and how" are defined with care; only the "why" is left unexplained. As we observed earlier, the poet never relates the clash at Archamp to any larger campaign, nor does he ever hint at a provocation for the attack. Clearly the recognition of the Saracens as evil and barbaric is sufficient to explain to the medieval audience their unprovoked invasion of Christian lands.²²

Deramed's attack is the cause not only of the first encounter but of the entire episode at Archamp and each of its components. More specifically, however, the second

²² This brings to mind the often repeated line from the Chanson de Roland and other gestes as well, "Païen unt tort e chrestiens unt dreit" (1015), which serves to account for many actions on both sides and which was surely accepted without question by the medieval mind.

encounter is brought about by the failure of the first. The message brought to Tedbald is repeated almost word for word by Girard to William and further expanded by a reference to the heroism of Vivien and to his plea to William for assistance.

"Reis Deramé est turné de sun pais,
 E est en la terre qu'il met tut a exil.
 Alez i furent Tedbald e Esturmi,
 Ensemble od els Vivien le hardi;
 Li uns se cunbat, les dous en sunt fuiz.
 -Deus," dist Willame, "ço est Vivien le hardiz."
 Respunt Girard: "Or avéz vus veir dit.
 Il te mande, e jo sui qu'il te di,
 Que tu le secures al dolerus peril." (969-77)

The failure of Vivien to achieve a Christian victory, therefore, brings William to Archamp: as an overlord he is bound by feudal code to come to the aid of his vassal, and as an uncle he is bound by lineage to come to the aid of his beloved nephew.

The outcome of each of the encounters introduces into the narrative a new element which gives rise to the subsequent meeting of the two armies. When William returns to Archamp for his second battle it is not only because of the Saracen invasion and another Christian defeat but more specifically for revenge of the death of the noble Vivien. In fact it is revenge alone which inspires the army of thirty thousand to return with the Count to the battlefield, for he dares not admit defeat to his men and is forced by

Guiburc to lie in order to urge them to fight. She herself in fact inspires them, saying:

Ja est venue Willame al curb niés
 Tut sains e salfs, solunc la merci Deu;
 Si ad vencu la bataille champel
 E ocis le paien Deramé.
 Mais d'une chose ad malement erré;
 Il ad perdu sun noble barné,
 De dulce France la flur et la belté;
 Ocis li unt Vivien l'alosé. (1366-73)

Reneward's battle, the fourth episode at Archamp, is again caused by the failure of the preceding encounter to rid the lands of the Saracens and is again brought about at the urging of Guiburc, who insists that William go to Louis for aid. Revenge also re-enters the picture, but this time it is for the revenge of the entire army that William begs assistance, as well as for that of Vivien:

--Sire," dist il, "jal savez vus assez;
 Jo aveie Espagne si ben aquitez,
 Ne cremeie home que de mere fust nez.
 Quant me mandat Vivien l'alosé
 Que jo menasse de Orenge le barné
 --Il fu mis niés, nel poeie veier.--
 Set mile fumes de chevalers armez.
 De tuz icels ne m'est un sul remés." (2510-17)

The examination of the causative factors for each of the encounters reveals that with each clash the reasons to fight accumulate and at the same time become more momentous. They grow from the concrete to the abstract and shift each time to a higher plane of moral purpose: from repelling an initial invasion, to a plea of help to an uncle and overlord, to revenge for the death of a hero, to revenge for the

defeat of an entire army. This growth recalls our earlier observation of the pattern of expanded rank associated with each battle.

It is worth noting also that personal considerations seem to play a key role in the narrative. Deramed's cruelty to the inhabitants, Vivien's heroism, William's dishonor in defeat, and Louis' obligations as emperor are stressed so strongly by the poet so as almost to overshadow the portrayal of a Christian-pagan religious clash. We begin to suspect then that people seem to be of primary importance in the battle of Archamp.

Once the motive for the fighting has been exposed the next stage in the development of battle is the decision whether or not to fight. In the case of the first conflict this decision, complicated by the question of whether or not to summon William, constitutes a major portion of the narrative. Drunk when the messenger arrives, Tedbald is unable to take a stand and turns to Esturmi and Vivien, asking, "Franche meisné ... que feruns?" (46). A heated debate ensues over the advisability of waiting for William, but Tedbald finally concludes that the Saracens should be met, and boasts:

"Ainz demain prime requerrun Arrabiz,
De set liwes en orrat l'em les criz,
Hanstes freindre e forz escuz croissir." (91-93)

Thus in the boasting tongue of a staggering drunkard is the decision made, and although the question later arises anew over the issue of awaiting William, the preparations are begun and the army makes ready to move to the battlefield.

In the case of William's encounters it is surprisingly not the Count himself but his wife who makes the decision to fight. When Girard arrives bearing the news of Vivien's plight, William has just returned from an exhausting campaign at Bordeaux. Reluctant to return to battle and realizing Guiborc's unwillingness to see him leave again so soon, William laments:

Guiborc apele, si li prist a mustrer;
 De sun corage l'i volt le bers espermenter,
 ... "Seor, dulce amie, pur amur Dé,
 Uncore n'en ad que sul treis jurz passez
 Que jo sui venu de bataille champel,
 Que ai fait grande a Burdele sur mer,
 S'i ai perdu mun nobile barné.
 ... Ben se combat Vivien l'alosé;
 A iceste feiz nel puis mie regarder,
 Ceste bataille pot ben sanz mei finer."
 Dunc començad Guiborc forment a plorer;
 Ele s'abeissad, baisa lui le soller;
 Willame apele, si li prist a mustrer:
 "Secor le, sire, ne te chaut a demurer."
 (1011-12, 1015-19, 1024-30)

Were it not for the one word espermenter (second line), we would tend to believe that William actually intends to leave Vivien alone to finish the battle, denying all feudal and family responsibility. This word, however, is our clue to the real situation--that William is subtly giving to his

wife the role of initiator.²³ This reversal of the roles of husband and wife introduces an interesting element of human frailty and marital psychology into the issue of deciding whether to prepare for battle.

William returns from this first meeting with the Saracens in utter defeat, and this time his lament is genuine. He refuses to return to Archamp, crying:

"Treis cenz anz ad e cinquante passez
 Que jo fu primes de ma mere nez;
 Veil sui e feble, ne puis armes porter,
 ... Si me unt paiens acullli a tel vilté,
 Pur me ne volent fuir ne tresturner.
 La bataille ad vencue Deramé,
 ... Ki qu'en peise jo sui tut sul remés;
 Ja mais en terre n'avrai honor mortel!"
 (1334-36, 1339-41, 1348-49)

These words, scarcely those of an epic hero, reveal William's acceptance of defeat and incite Guiburc to declare:

"E, marchis, sire, merci, pur amur Dé!
 Ore me laissez mentir par vostre gré." (1351-52)

Revealing in a subsequent speech her intentions to trick the army she has gathered into returning with William, Guiburc takes the responsibility for the entire third encounter at Archamp.

²³ This "experiment" could also have been undertaken to decrease the likelihood of friction between husband and wife over the question of being continually away from home. It has been suggested by Douglas Alexander, II, in the article "A Note on the Chançon de Willame," Romance Notes, 10, No. 2 (Spring, 1969), pp. 379-83, that this marriage was not an ideal one, and even that Guiburc was involved in an affair with Vivien.

The final battle is likewise inspired by the cunning of Guiburc. William had returned again disgraced, having been chased from the field by Saracens after the loss of his army, his companion Gui, and even his horse. Again he admits defeat and threatens to become a recluse in a monastery. Guiburc scorns his weakness, saying:

--Sire, ... "ço ferum nus assez,
Quant nus avrom nostre siecle mené!" (2420-21)

It is Guiburc who arranges for William to go to seek aid from Louis and who devises the threat to return their fief and live off the king for the rest of their days if he does not agree willingly to aid his vassal.

We note then that the decision of whether or not to do battle is never a simple one in the Chançon de Willame. Tedbald hesitates in a state of drunkenness, and the whole issue is clouded over by conflicting ideas on the wisdom of turning the defense, hence a share of the glory, over to William. The Count himself becomes progressively reluctant to take up arms and cedes more and more to Guiburc the initiative for sending forth an army to repel the pagan invaders.

The poet's realistic treatment of the question, with the emphasis always focused on such non-epic human conditions as drunkenness, quarreling, fatigue, and old age, distinguishes the issue of decision-making from a mere motif and shifts the focus to a portrayal of characters, a pattern we have already

seen emerging in the case of our first motif, the reason for the battle. The question of the unusual depiction of William which has begun to arise will be the subject of later discussion.

The causes for each encounter having been ascertained and the subsequent decisions to fight having been made, the leaders arm themselves, and the army moves to the battlefield. Our third motif, that of the arming of the leaders, will reveal again our poet's insistence upon the human elements which come into play during an episode of battle.

Before the first encounter, it is the arming of Tedbald which is depicted:

Armes demande, l'em li vait apoter.
 Dunc li vestent une broine mult bele e cler,
 E un vert healme li lacent en la teste;
 Dunc ceint s'espee, le brant burni vers terre,
 E une grant targe tint par manvele;
 Espé trenchant out en sa main destre,
 E blanche enseigne li lacent tresque a tere.
 ... Dunc s'en issid Tedbald de sa bone cité;
 Al dos le siwent dis mil homes armez;
 En l'Archanp requistrent le paien Deramed;
 Malveis seignur les out a guier. (132-38, 144-47)

Formulaic descriptions of preparing for battle²⁴ are employed until the line "Malveis seignur les out a guier." Upon hearing these words the listener realizes that the motif

²⁴ Such descriptive phrases as une broine mult bele e cler, un vert healme li lacent en la teste, and others found in this passage are often used in passages of this type which describe the preparation of the warrior for battle, and have become cliché, or formulaic in nature.

has been used for a dual purpose. Not only does the arming of Tedbald represent the preparation of the entire army, but it also gives the poet an opportunity to distinguish the leader from his men and to create a striking contrast to the shining armor with the reminder of the offensive personality of Tedbald. The line also is a subtle prediction of the outcome of the battle. Again we see human qualities emerge from the external trappings of battle, almost, but not quite, hidden by the formulaic treatment of a standard motif.

Preparation for the second conflict is described through the arming scene of Girard. This particular scene has a special significance since before this time Girard has been only an écuyer, and although he fought valiantly beside Vivien at Archamp, he has never been officially dubbed a knight. Again, as in the case of Tedbald, the actual scene is mechanical, or formulaic, in technique but conceals a deeper purpose of underscoring human qualities. The qualities this time, however, are not adverse but admirable, and the tone of the passage seems to forecast the heroism of Girard as the scene of Tedbald's arming suggested his future disgrace, however similar the formulaic descriptions seem to be.

Idunc a primes fu Girard adubé.
 Dunc li vestirent une broigne mult bele,
 E un vert healme li lacent en la teste.
 Willame li ceinst l'espee al costé senestre;
 Une grant targe prist par la manvele;
 Cheval out bon, des meillurs de la terre.

Puis muntad Girard par sun estriu senestre.
 Dame Guiburc li vait tenir la destre,
 Sil comande a Deu, le grant paterne. (1074-82)

On the occasion of the third battle it is William himself who is described in a passage which is followed immediately by the scene of the arming of Gui. A dual purpose is again suggested, for it is the contrast between these two scenes which provides the special interest to the listener. William is clothed with a "broine mult bele" (1498), while Gui dons a "petite broine" (1541). The Count bears a "grant targe" (1501), whereas Gui's is "une petite targe duble" (1544). William holds an "espé trenchante" (1502), while Gui's is a "petite espee" (1543). Although the two scenes are not parallel word for word, it is clear that the emphasis is upon the diminutive stature of Gui as compared with William's superior size and strength.

The description of arming for the final encounter is represented by a discussion between Guiburc and Reneward. The former declares she will arm the knave and dub him, presenting him with "chevals e armes" (2838). He refuses both but finally agrees to carry one small sword.

Dame Guiburc li aportad l'espee,
 D'or fu li punz, d'argent fu neelee.
 Ele li ceinst, e il l'ad mult esgardee. (2846-48)

This scene serves the specific purpose of further developing Reneward's non-knightly qualities. His heroism

also is brought out through the scene of his arming, since he is to rely only on his "tinel" and one small sword, scorning the heavy armor and swift horses used by the other knights.

The treatment of the arming of the warriors in the Willame illustrates clearly, we think, that the poet's battle motifs are but a skeleton around which the "flesh" of the poem is developed. As in the case of our first two motifs, the causes of battle and the decisions to fight, the real emphasis seems to lie outside of the realm of pure battle narrative. Tedbald's cowardice, Girard's emergence as a knight, Gui's small stature versus William's strength, and Reneward's coarseness are the qualities which emerge from a close scrutiny of these scenes. They are human qualities which are developed carefully and clearly throughout the poem by means of the standard narrative procedures of the chanson de geste.

Another observation which we should make at this point is that in the portrayal of the arming of the knights it always seems to be a minor character who is described: Tedbald, not Vivien; Girard, Gui and Reneward, not William. It is as if the focus were held firmly off-center. This curious emphasis on the non-heroic, sometimes undesirable, persons and qualities contributes to the realistic, if non-epic, spirit of the Willame.

Once the army has moved onto the field of battle, the fourth standard motif used by most chansons de geste is that of a council. In a battle council the leader addresses his men, explains the approaching battle, and inspires them to fight courageously.

In the case of the first encounter the council evolves directly out of the action, more specifically out of one of our early manifestations of human weakness: cowardice. Tedbald and Esturmi have fled, and Vivien has been left alone at the head of Tedbald's army. A courageous warrior, he nevertheless feels unqualified to lead another's men into battle. Facing the men he sums up the situation:

"Franche meisné, que purrums devenir?
 En champ nus sunt nostre gunfanun failli,
 Laissé nus unt Tedbald e Esturmi.
 Veez paens qui mult sunt pres d'ici.
 Quant li nostre home i sunt u cinc u dis
 E li paen i sunt u cent u mil,
 Dunc n'avrun nus qui nus puisse tenir,
 Ne tel enseigne u puissum revertir;
 Genz sanz seignur sunt malement bailli!
 Alez vus ent, francs chevalers gentilz,
 Car jo ne puis endurer ne suffrir
 Tant gentil home seient a tort bailli.
 Jo me rendrai al dolerus peril,
 N'en turnerai, car a Deu l'ai pramis
 Que ja ne fuierai pur pour de morir." (279-93)

But the French reply, choosing Vivien as their leader. They cite his noble lineage and, placing themselves at his disposal, swear their allegiance. Promising to be worthy of their trust, Vivien raises the battle standard and leads

the army into battle with the cry of "Munjoie!" The council serves to clarify the situation of the army going into battle and to make the listener fully aware of the courage and nobility of Vivien, into whose lap the responsibility has suddenly fallen for the defense of the territory.

Before the second encounter the council is barely mentioned by the poet in a formulaic description: "Est vus Willame al conseil assené,/ Od trente mille de chevalers armez," (1098-99). The context of the council speech is omitted completely, which is perhaps an instance of condensation on the part of the poet. But before the third conflict the council is again used as part of the action. In the most fully developed of any council scene, William holds two councils, the first with his barons and the second with his vassals. During the first the Count declares his responsibility to his men as their overlord and asks for their help in the battle. The men, still thinking that they have returned to Archamp only to avenge the death of Vivien, cry "Munjoie" and, inspired with admiration for their leader, declare:

"De tel seignur deit l'um tenir terre,
E, si bosoinz est, morir en la presse!" (1586-87)

The question of the deception of the men by their leader does not arise. The men are ready to fight for their overlord, a fair and just man. Their attitude toward William makes an interesting contrast in the mind of the listener

to the deceit the leader has used to lure his men to the field of battle.

William now moves on to address the vassals, and at this point he admits his earlier defeat. But revenge for the loss of Vivien overshadows the shame of defeat, and the Count is able to elicit the steadfastness of his vassals by words of praise and flattery:

"Ore, entendez, frans chevalers provez;
 Ja n'ert ben faite grant bataille chanpel,
 Se vavassurs ne la funt endurer,
 E ne la meintenent les legers bachelers,
 Les forz, les vigrus, les hardiz, les menbrez."
 (1610-14)

Flattery and deceit combine to give an unsavory tone to these battle councils, and it is Count William who is put into a bad light in both situations. Again we see emerging the curious portrayal of the epic hero, and again we find evidence of non-heroic elements in the Willame.

Before the fourth and final encounter William gives to his men the opportunity to depart if they do not wish to fight. (We recall that these are not William's men, but knights conscripted by Louis.) Indeed, "tuz les cowarz" do turn away and leave, only to be brought back in short order by Reneward, who tells his leader:

"Ices couarz que vus ici veez,
 Ceste est ma torbe, mun pople, e mun barnez;
 E mei e els en la pointe metez
 Contre les lances aguz des Esclers." (2975-78)

It is an ironic twist of fate indeed for the most cowardly to be put where the battle will be the most dangerous.

The motif of council is used by the poet to advance the action of the narrative, and in almost every case a specific theme is developed during, or as a result of, the battle council. These themes, not unexpectedly, are associated again with the larger theme of character portrayal which we have seen emerging. Vivien's heroism, William's questionable methods of inspiring his men, and Reneward's mock heroism and trickery are the qualities which come into focus through these council episodes. The formulae of battle are there, but again readily give way to more human considerations.

The preparations having been made, the true battle now begins, but a close look at the treatment of the actual clashes of arms reveals one of the most striking aspects of the narrative, for in the Chançon de Willame there is no scenology of battle in the strict sense of the word. The listener never hears of blows struck by the army as a whole, nor of skirmishes back and forth across the battlefield, nor of ranks of combatants meeting gruesome and bloody deaths as is typical in the chanson de geste. The over-all view of battle in every instance is merely resumed, and quite hastily indeed. After listening to a multitude of details about the reasons for the conflict, the decisions to fight, the arming of the warriors, and the councils which precede the

meeting of the armies, the audience is never invited to witness the actual confrontation of Christians and Saracens but hears only a summary, greatly reduced, of what has taken place.

The first encounter, Vivien's episode, the preparations for which have been so elaborately developed and described in over five hundred lines, is summarized by a series of two-line statements which gradually narrow the focus of the narrative to the martyr Vivien and his death, in a manner reminiscent of the parallel scenes in the Roland. The poet first decimates the army, saying:

Paens les pristrent a merveillus turment;
De dis mil homes ne li leissent que cent. (553-54)

The hundred knights are reduced even further in the next laisse with another two line résumé:

Des cent n'i leissent que vint baruns,
E cil s'en vont lez le coin d'un munt. (569-70)

After attempting to flee, the twenty return to continue the fight, but the poet further reduces their number to ten. Finally, the attention of the listener is focused entirely on Vivien, with the following words:

Od sun escu remist sul en la presse. (759)

At this point the battle as such ceases to exist and the poet concentrates wholly on the character Vivien, his heroism and death.

The first of William's conflicts is likewise described in one laisse which some scholars assume to have been created by the poet to justify the changing refrains in this portion of the poem.

Cele bataille durad tut un lundi,
 E al demain, e tresqu'a mecresdi,
 Qu'ele n'alaschat ne hure ne prist fin
 Jusqu'al joesdi devant prime un petit,
 Que li Franceis ne finerent de ferir,
 Ne cil d'Arabe ne cesserent de ferir.
 Des homes Willame ne remist un vif
 Joesdi al vespre,
 Fors treis escuz qu'il out al champ tenir. (1120-28)

Here is a battle lasting for three days, in which thirty thousand men are lost, summed up in nine lines. The remainder of the narrative describes the parallel deaths of Guischard and Girard, and again we see the over-all battle tersely dispatched in order to concentrate on scenes of individual proofs of heroism.

Although the poet declares William's second battle a victory, he gives it no more thorough treatment than the two encounters preceding. In fact, the lack of any general description becomes even more striking, for this time there is not even a reduction of the French forces, but instead the entire thirty thousand simply disappear, and Gui alone is left to drive off the enemy surrounding his uncle:

Co fu grant miracle que nostre sire fist;
 Pur un sul home en fuirent vint mil.
 Dreit a la mer s'en turnent Sarazin. (1858-60)

Individual heroism has again been exposed at the expense of a general scene of battle, as the boy hero, Gui, repels the entire Saracen army with the strength and fury of a resurrected Vivien.

Reneward's episode, too, affords the poet an opportunity for displaying the particular qualities of the hero Reneward, and therefore consists of nothing more than an account of the individual combats between the knave and one grotesque Saracen figure after another. The poet does make one attempt to describe a general scene when he says:

E tute jur durad l'estur mortel,
 E tote nuit en ad l'enchalz duré,
 Tresqu'al demain que li jor aparut cler.
 Par mi l'Archamp corut un doit de sanc tel,
 Ben en peust un grant coissel turner. (2990-94)

The next line, however, shifts the focus abruptly to Reneward and his reaction to the battle, and never again do we witness fighting other than that of the kitchen knave and his monstrous partners.

This examination of the poet's treatment of battle scenology has again shown us that the real emphasis of the Willame narrative is upon the characters and the situations in which they act to reveal their personal qualities, be they good or bad. In each instance the over-all battle is hastily dispatched, and our attention is turned to a proof of individual heroism. The martyrdom of Vivien, the courage

of Girard vis-à-vis the fickleness of Guischarde, the super-human strength of Gui, and the rowdy heroics of Reneward compose the actual scenes in which blows are struck and Saracens killed. We should mention at this point too that it has now become clear that the Chançon de Willame is not at all a poem about the fabled William, but rather a series of situations in which a youthful knight is allowed to meet the enemy to prove his worth for the first time. It is the emergence of the four youths (Vivien, Girard, Gui, and Reneward) which seems to compose the true "meat" of the narrative, as each in a different manner proves himself worthy to be called a hero.

Since we have shown that it is individual combat that monopolizes the scenes of battle in the Willame, a survey of the poet's techniques in handling these scenes should reveal even more significant observations regarding the theme of the poem. This look at individual combat will thus be the final battle motif which we shall examine.

Vivien is naturally the character upon whom the emphasis is placed during the first encounter at Archamp. He strikes the first as well as the last blow, but upon close examination we find that it is not the actual blows and physical struggles of Vivien the warrior which monopolize the narrative, but the agony, spiritual and moral, of Vivien the martyr.

Alone on the field, Vivien first repels one hundred pagans, who return, wound the youth, and kill his horse. Turning on foot to face again the enemy, Vivien prays:

"Sainte Marie, mere genitrix
Si verrelement cum Deus portas a fiz,
Garisez mei pur ta sainte merci,
Que ne m'ocient cist felon Sarazin." (813-16)

He quickly regrets, however, this plea for deliverance and makes a promise to God that he will never flee the battlefield from fear of death:

"Defent mei, pere, par ta sainte bunté,
Ne seit pur quei al cors me puisse entrer
Que plein pé fuie de bataille champel." (901-03)

Twice more the youth is attacked, and each time he repeats his plea for deliverance, only to renounce it by a renewed covenant. He is finally dealt the death blow while kneeling to drink at a stream which flows through Archamp.

The death scene of Vivien, the only example of individual combat in the first encounter, is clearly more than simply a narration of physical struggle. Rather than the striking of blows, it is the agony of the martyr which is the center of attention during this episode. His physical agony is described in all its harsh and realistic details, but it is his mental and spiritual agony upon which is focused the reader's attention and sympathy.

Vivien's two prayers, repeated each time he finds himself near defeat and death, disclose the conflicting thoughts and

desires of a hero near his final moment. On the one hand he begs for deliverance, believing himself incapable of the task demanded of him. But on the other hand he is ashamed of this admitted weakness and pledges to God to remain true to the Christian cause until the end. This inner conflict of Vivien, hero and martyr, climaxed by his valiant death, is the true substance of the first encounter at Archamp.

William's first battle is also reduced to a scene of individual combat, in this case two parallel scenes. First Girard, the newly knighted écuyer, and then Guischarde, the young nephew of Guiburc, encounters, kills, and is wounded by a Saracen. These events occur in two almost parallel laisses, which contain no unusual emphases or motifs. It is in the scene which follows each of these laisses, however, that we note the true significance of these encounters.

As Girard lies wounded and dying, William appears at his side to inquire as to the seriousness of his wounds. Girard replies in the words of a noble knight:

"Ne finereie ja mais, par la fei que dei Dé,
Cher lur vendereie les plaies de mes costez." (1160-61)

Asking William to place him upon his horse so that he can re-enter the fray, Girard remains loyal to the Christian cause until his death, which follows immediately.

Guischarde likewise lies wounded and near death when he is approached by William. In reply to the Count's

inquiries, Guischarde uses language very similar to that of Girard until he says, just before dying:

"Puis m'en irreie a Cordres u fui né,
 Nen crerreie meis en vostre Dampnedé,
 Car ço que jo ne vei ne puis aorer." (1196-98)

Guischarde too asks to be re-seated upon his horse, but in his case it is not to continue against the Saracens, but rather to begin a retreat toward the pagan lands where he was born. His inconstancy comes as a mild shock to the listener after Girard's display of fidelity, and indeed it is this contrast, the opposing reactions of the two youthful warriors, which is stressed in this scene. Using parallelism at every stage until the dying words of the two knights, the poet makes his contrast all the more effective. He leaves no doubt that the underlying significance of this scene is the portrayal of the two antithetic responses of warriors mortally wounded in battle--again underscoring the human qualities which emerge from the motifs of battle.

Individual combat in the third movement at Archamp (William's second battle) is limited to a description of the Count himself face to face with the Saracens, and the heroic blows of young Gui. William is attacked while Gui is away from the battlefield, and he is unable to repel the enemy. He cries for his nephew, who hastily returns and drives off the entire army:

Quant Gui li enfes devalad le tertre,
 Si oit Willame crier en la press,
 Fiert un paié sur la duble targe novele;
 ... Mort le trebuche del cheval a terre,
 ... De cel colp sunt paien esmaiez;
 Dist li uns a l'autre: "Ço est fuildre que cheit,
 Revescuz est Vivien le guerreier!"
 Turnent en fuie, si unt le champ laissié.
 (1822-24, 1827, 1852-54)

The sole purpose of this scene seems to be the creation of the boy Gui as a warrior. William, the tried knight, falters and cries for help while Gui performs heroics possible only in the imagination. The recognition of the youth by the Saracens as the reincarnation of Vivien, coupled with the faiblesse of William, further emphasizes the central theme of this scene: the superhuman prowess of the boy-knight.

The individual combats of Reneward are too numerous to examine in detail, but it appears to us that the unique contribution of this battle is to demonstrate the burlesque nature of the kitchen knave, and perhaps even to mock the epic itself. The listener does not even realize that the rest of the Christian army plays virtually no part in the final encounter, so well does the poet capture our interest with the grotesque Saracen "monsters" and the unbelievably powerful Reneward.

We note, then, that even in the portrayal of individual combat the poet has continued his double-edged presentation. This motif, like the others we have examined, is common to the narrative of the battle scenes, but in the Chançon de Willame the emphasis is not on the combat itself but upon

certain qualities of the characters who are involved in the action and especially upon those four youths who prove their worth during the course of the epic. Human attributes, both good and bad, emerge from each scene, as if the hand-to-hand combat were a mask, hiding the true substance of the narrative.

A certain progression can be noted here too, from the sublime to the ridiculous. The heroes decline in rank, stature, and in tone of performance, if not in actual courage. Vivien the martyr, Girard the faithful, Gui the whirlwind, and Reneward the giant all display heroism, but each in his own manner. The poet runs the gamut of varying reactions of the courageous knight to adverse battle situations, lowering the tone of the narrative with each episode and demonstrating the declining heroic stance of the battle scenology.

From this examination of the six standard battle motifs represented in the Chançon de Willame, it is now evident that the theme of this geste lies separate from mere portrayal of battle and heroism. Like the Roland, the Willame has more to offer than a demonstration of the decimation of two armies.

The motifs which have served us in our study also served our poet, but only as the instruments with which he developed his narrative, not the substance of the narrative itself. This substance we can now identify as a study of men and their character, demonstrated within the framework of a

battle situation. In sum, when the news of the need for battle is brought, it is the reaction of the warrior which is noted. When the decision to fight is made, it is a certain quality of the personality of the leader of which we become aware. When the knights prepare for battle, the listener is shown, not the hero, but a lesser character whose particular traits emerge from the scene of preparation. The council is used as an integral part of the narrative and also reveals qualities of the leader as he speaks to his men. The battle itself seems to exist only to highlight the actions and reactions of an individual. Even hand-to-hand combat results in the singling out of some particular trait of a nascent hero, often at the expense of another character, i.e., William and Guischarde. Thus our tale of battle and heroism is seen rather as a tale of cowards and heroes--a study of the effect of battle on men, rather than on history.²⁵

As the battle of Archamp provides the structure, but not the substance of the Chançon de Willame, in a like manner the battlefield provides a central location for the development of the action but not the actual setting for over one-half of the poem. A back and forth rhythm permeates the geste, created by the constant movement to and from Archamp by the

²⁵ We note that the poet confines his development of the characters wholly to the Christians, and never develops any of the Saracens as individuals, as is done in many gestes, notably the Roland.

characters, whom we have observed to be the real interest of the poet. Shifting the action constantly from the field of battle to Bourges, Barcelona, or Laon, and back again, the poet uses his characters to link the action. This to and fro movement and the means by which it is smoothly effected affords an interesting study in one aspect of the poet's narrative technique.

The movement to and from Archamp begins as early as the prologue with the coming of Deramed to Christian territory, where he is confronted by William. There is physical movement indicated, but also, in terms of poetic composition, a constant passing back and forth of the emphasis from Deramed to William--from the pagans who attack to the Christians who defend and from the pagans who are defeated to the Christians who are decimated. The prologue, while summarizing the action of the poem, at the same time epitomizes the rhythm which characterizes every portion of the narrative.

Immediately after the prologue, we are told of the Saracen invasion which we are allowed to witness before moving with the messenger to Bourges to give the news to Tedbald. The next day we return with Tedbald's army to Archamp, only to flee soon thereafter with the leader, of whom we lose sight only when he nears Bourges. We return to the field with Girard and remain there with Vivien to witness the defeat of the French army.

It is in the company of Girard that we finally leave Archamp, for the listener is told of every step of the youth's agonizing journey to Barcelona to seek William. During Girard's journey the scene does shift back to the field and to Vivien. Although there is no character to link these scenes, the poet is nevertheless extremely adept at tying together the two. Girard's physical condition is described to the listener in detail, stated by the poet in the following manner:

Devers la mure si s'en vait apoiant.
 Cil nunciad a Willame de l'Archamp
 U Vivien se combat a dolerus ahan;
 Od sul vint homes fu remis en l'Archanp.
 Vivien lur fiert al chef devant,
 Mil Sarazins lur ad ocis el champ. (741-46)

By means of stating indirectly the message which Girard bears, the poet subtly returns to Vivien and his plight.

After Vivien's death we find ourselves again in the company of Girard, and this time the poet is more direct in turning our interest to the youth and his message, saying:

Des ore mes dirrai de Girard l'esquier,
 Cum il alad a Willame nuncier.
 Lunsdi al vespre.
 A Barzelune la le dirrad al cunte Willame. (929-32)

The next laisse continues with a description of William, who sees Girard approaching in the distance, so that again the focus has been shifted to a different character by means of an indirect reference to Girard's message. Through Girard we are introduced to William for the first time, and

the transition from battlefield to castle has been effected skillfully and concisely by the poet, using his characters and their roles in the narrative.

Similar techniques of linking the changing locations and the actual action of the narrative can be noted during the other three movements of the poem. With Girard and William we move again to Archamp, and with Guischart and William we return to Barcelona. With Gui we go another time to the field, returning to Orange with William who is closely pursued by pagans. With William we march to Laon to seek aid of Louis, and in the company of the Count, the king's army, and Reneward we return first to Orange, and then again to Archamp. In the final lines of the poem we watch the French turn in triumph toward the city through the eyes of a forgotten Reneward, before returning ourselves with the burly knave to be honored by William.

The care the poet takes to remain always with his characters and to shift the focus of the narrative only when a character himself is en route demonstrates again the emphasis which is put upon the people and their involvement in the narrative rather than upon the surface action of the geste.

CHAPTER IV
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES AND MOTIFS

Having determined that the Chançon de Willame possesses a definite thematic emphasis beyond the façade of battle narrative and having identified the real thrust of the poem as a portrayal of human attributes, we shall move to the second of our two considerations stated in Chapter II: the examination of certain specific techniques and motifs used by the poet in the development of his epic.

It is scarcely possible to address ourselves to all of the literary techniques employed in a 3,554-line poem. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to those which seem particularly pertinent to the theme we have isolated. Since in our view it is the portrayal of a certain number of varied human qualities which composes the substance of the Willame, we shall begin our discussion with an examination of those procedures which present and develop the poem's personalities. We shall look first at the actual introduction of the characters into the narrative before isolating and examining several motifs used repeatedly to demonstrate certain behavior patterns.

A preliminary cataloguing of the Willame's characters reveals nine major personages: Tedbald, Esturmi, Vivien, William, Girard, Guischarde, Gui, Guiburc, and Reneward.

Eight of these are introduced before line 1980, while the ninth, Reneward, does not enter into the action until line 2648, two-thirds of the way through the poem. There are, in addition, many minor characters who are undeveloped and often even unnamed. Only three of these--Deramed, the messenger, and the porter--are introduced in G_1 , while the G_2 poet fills entire laissez with names of Christian and Saracen warriors, some of whom do play a minor role in the narrative and some of whom are never again mentioned. This difference in proportion of major characters to minor in the two parts, plus the fact that, except for Deramed, every named character in G_1 is rather thoroughly developed while in G_2 only Reneward among the newcomers is developed at all, reveals a distinct difference in the literary style between the two archetypal poems. This fact has often been cited as one of the definitive proofs of the separate composition of the two parts.²⁶

The nine major characters whom we have named above are introduced into the narrative by a number of different techniques, which seem to vary according to the type of character being presented. Vivien, the hero of the first part of the Willame, is identified in the prologue as "dan Vivien le preuz," who was killed at Archamp, thereby causing

²⁶ There is one laisse in G_1 , CXV (lines 1705-29), in which a host of Saracens are listed. This laisse, which seems very much out of context, is considered by scholars to have been purposely inserted into the geste at this point as an attempt to link the two portions. (Frappier, I, 146-47).

great grief to his uncle, Count William. He is again characterized by the poet in the third laisse as "le bon niés Willame." Having been already assigned certain qualities (bon, preux), Vivien then speaks for himself, demonstrating his honorable intentions and high ideals when, in reply to Tedbald's inquiry, "que feruns?", he replies without hesitation, "Nus ne frum el que ben" (49).

From this point on, it is his own speech which reveals Vivien's character. Deeds always follow to demonstrate his faithfulness to ideals expressed orally, but the listener is made constantly aware of his courage and noble aims through Vivien's own discourse, quite above the plane of overt actions. He wisely advises the postponement of battle until William has been summoned; he defends the honor of William who is disparaged by Tedbald; he advises the carrying through of battle plans once Tedbald has been seen by the enemy; he scorns the flight of Tedbald and Esturmi and speaks at length to the army to explain the gravity of the Christians' situation. The famous covenant, a spoken pledge, is but the culmination of a series of speeches through which Vivien reveals his character and prepares for the scene of his martyrdom.

Exhibiting from the beginning the wisdom of Olivier, Vivien later demonstrates the fortitude of Roland, and this combination of wise speech with courageous action will come

to a climax in his final moments, when the noble covenant stands in bold contrast to his actual scene of death, with its gruesome, realistic detail.

The entry of Vivien into the narrative, therefore, demonstrates a variety of procedures, from the announcement in the prologue of his key role in the narrative, to his characterization as to merit as well as to lineage by the poet, through his own physical entry by means of the spoken word, to his actual heroism in action.

In contrast to his introduction of Vivien, the poet first mentions Tedbald and Esturmi only with respect to rank and lineage, leaving aside any attempt at characterization. These two cowards are left to reveal their own traits, and this revelation comes not through noble speech, as in the case of Vivien, but by base actions. They are first seen in a physical state, the state of drunkenness. When the messenger arrives at Bourges Tedbald and Esturmi are returning from vespers:

Tedbald i ert si ivre que plus n'i poet estre,
E Esturmi sun nevou que par le poig l'adestre. (32-33)

Tedbald and Esturmi continue to be characterized almost exclusively by their actions as long as they remain in the poem. It is Tedbald who climbs to the top of the hill to survey the Saracen army, thereby giving away the position of the French. It is Esturmi who tears the Christian gonfalon from its staff and stamps it into the ground. And it is

Tedbald who flees to Bourges, his exit ridiculed by the poet who describes how the head of a gray sheep has become lodged in his stirrup.

The contrast of Vivien's noble speech with the cowards' ignoble actions is evident then from the entry of each into the narrative and brings sharply into focus the difference in the two types of warriors being portrayed. Vivien the hero manifests constantly his visions of future glory by words, followed by deeds, of noble tenor, while the two cowards act upon impulse, betraying their lack of heroic stature by their shameful and foolish actions. The latter finally merely disappear from the geste, having neither expressed nor fulfilled any worthy ideal.²⁷

The three young warriors Girard, Guischard, and Gui, the latter two of whom, like Tedbald and Esturmi, are unique to the Willame, enter into the narrative each in a slightly different manner, their entries in each case corresponding to the extent of heroism they will later display.

Girard emerges from the nameless group of knights who flee with Tedbald. He is first named when the latter calls

²⁷ It is possible that we could suppose a purpose, moral or aesthetic, in the poet's allowing the characters to vanish, rather than seeing this as a mere textual flaw. This facet of character treatment has been debated with regard to the Roland, for example, by Maurice Delbouille in Sur la genèse de la Chanson de Roland (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1954), pp. 1-22, in connection with Jules Horrent, La Chanson de Roland dans les littératures françaises et espagnoles au moyen âge (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1951).

out to the youth "qui siwi en la rute" (349). After tricking Tedbald into stopping, Girard knocks the coward from his horse which he then steals and mounts in order to return to the battlefield. Upon meeting Vivien he relates his recent prowess and is permitted by the leader to ride at his right hand, a position of high honor. We note that Girard is never really identified by the poet, and his precise status remains a puzzle.²⁸ He was probably an écuyer in the service of Tedbald, but his external attributes seem irrelevant to the role he is to assume in the narrative. He begins as one of a nameless group of cowards, an unknighthed youth, and emerges as one of the four true heroes of the poem. The fact that he enters through his own initiative, later to demonstrate valor far beyond his youth and status, overshadows the vagueness of his identity.

Guischard may be viewed as the counterpart to Girard, and the method by which he is introduced into the action is the first step in the creation of a contrast which emerges little by little during this portion. Unlike Girard, Guischard enters the poem not by his own doing but by the hand of another. He is presented to William by his aunt,

²⁸ We know that Girard did not enter the battle as a knight. When he returns to Archamp he is asked by Vivien, "Cosin Girard, des quant iés chevaler?" (459), to which the latter replies, "de novel, nient de veilz." (460). He has, at least in his own mind, won the honor of fighting as a knight by his courageous desertion of his immediate overlords, Tedbald and Esturmi.

Guiburc, on the eve of the Count's first venture to Archamp, as one of Guiburc's encouragements to her husband to undertake the battle. Guischard is the least developed of the three young heroes of G_1 , and his non-voluntary entry into the poem is a premonition of his non-heroic exit: his denial of God and Christianity before death.

Gui, like Girard, enters the narrative of his own accord and proves himself worthy of knighthood by noble deeds. Gui is named first by Vivien, who calls, in the message given to Girard, for his young brother to come with William's army to Archamp. He physically enters the action, however, only after William's first defeat. Amidst his uncle's laments in the castle Gui arises "del feu" and is thoroughly identified by the poet in the following manner:

Cil fud fiz Boeve Cornebut le marchis,
 Neez de la fille al prouz cunte Aemeris,
 Nevou Willame, al bon cunte marchis,
 E fud frere Vivien le hardiz. (1437-40)

Gui's physical characteristics, especially his diminutive stature, are described by the poet, and then, like Vivien, the youth reveals his character by his own words:

"A la fei, uncle," ço dist li emfes Gui,
 "Si tu murreies jo tendreie tun país;
 Guiburc ma dame voldreie ben servir;
 Ja n'averad mal dunt la puisse garir,
 Pur ço qu'ele m'ad tant suef nurri." (1446-50)

Gui's determination to protect the lands and wife of his uncle despite his youth and physical immaturity and the manner in which he thrusts himself into the narrative despite William's rebukes, again, as in the case of Girard, prepare the listener for his subsequent emergence as a hero on the field of battle.

Consistent with the pattern we have established above, Reneward too enters the action by his own doing, again overriding the scorn of Count William, to voice and later to prove his valor as a champion on the field of battle. His introduction is surely less skillful than that of the characters already mentioned, however, and in fact may come as a jolt to an unsuspecting listener or reader. The lines immediately preceding the entry of Reneward are quite elevated in tone. We are told how the emperor Louis has called together his barons, has had orders drawn up and his men assembled into an army of twenty thousand. He has given his blessing to William, who withdraws to Mount Leun to await the readiness of the troops. Suddenly,

De la quisine al rei issit un bachelor,
 Deschalcez e en langes, n'out point de solders;
 Granz out les piez e les trameals crevez,
 E de sur sun col portat un tinel. (2648-51)

This sudden introduction of such a crude personage following closely a portion so elevated in tone is indeed a surprise. The abrupt change in tone, combined with the fact

that Reneward is not named for several lines and is never actually identified as to lineage until the final lines of the poem, distinguishes this character introduction from those preceding as to technique, again providing evidence for the independence of the G₂ manuscript.

As in the case of Vivien, Girard, and Gui, however, the listener must wait for only a few lines before Reneward himself reveals his own character through speech:

"Si me menez en l'Archamp sur mer,
Plus valdrai que quinze de voz pers,
De tuz les meillurs que i avrez asenblees." (2661-63)

Reneward's strength and prowess as well as his value to William, although appearing exaggerated at this point, certainly live up to his boasts, so that again we have been made immediately aware of the qualifications of the young hero through his own words.²⁹ Although differing in actual technique, then, from those of the G₁ manuscript, the presentation of Reneward parallels that of similar characters insofar as the self-identification and the self-introduction into the narrative is concerned.

Count William, ostensibly the hero of this geste, is introduced into the narrative in a manner quite different

²⁹ We make the distinction here between the formulaic epic boasts, or vantances, which are common to the chanson de geste, and the boasts of Reneward. In contrast to the hollow, bragging speeches, highly exaggerated, of the vantances, Reneward's words prove to be true, and thus the boast is here a true revelation of character.

from that of any of the preceding characters. He is cited in the prologue as the one who conquered Deramed and is identified as the central figure by the name of the poem itself. His first actual characterization, however, is not by the poet but by Vivien, who advises Tedbald:

"N'obliez mie Willame al cur niés;
Sages home est mult en bataille chanpel,
Il la set ben maintenir e garder;
S'il vient, nus veintrums Deramed." (55-58)

We realize by these words that William is already a fabled hero with an established reputation for wisdom and strength on the battlefield. He is recognized as the overlord of the knights at Archamp, much as Charlemagne is recognized as the overlord of the army at Roncevaux. He is the subject of the first controversy in the poem (the difference of opinion as to whether he should be summoned to the battlefield). The lack of his presence at Archamp, moreover, is brought constantly to the attention of the listener by Vivien, who prays time after time:

"Tramettez mei, sire, Willame al curb niés;" (906)

Although he hovers over the narrative so closely that the listener is scarcely aware that he has never entered the action and that indeed he does not even know of the tragedy at Archamp, William's actual appearance is dramatically postponed until line 938, over one-fourth of the way through the poem.

It is through Girard, one of our young heroes, that we are finally brought to William. The listener travels with Girard on his agonizing journey to bear Vivien's message and thus first sees the Count as the youth himself first perceives him--standing at the side of Guiburc on a balcony at the castle at Barcelona. The suspense created by the long wait for the physical appearance of William, reinforced by our actual movement toward him in the company of Girard, is climaxed by the forceful visual impact of the Count and Countess in this elevated position, from whence they spot the suffering messenger, the lone survivor of a massacre brought about in part by the absence of the very man whose presence is now to become a reality.

The introduction of William in the Chançon de Willame, then, comes as a dramatic climax to a series of events in which the Count participates only indirectly. Although William is unaware of the invasion of Deramed, of the defeat of the French, and of the death of Vivien, the listener is aware of William and almost breathes a sigh of relief when at last he steps into the action at the end of a long series of events in which only his reputation participates. We note too that he enters as the object of an appeal from his vassals, an altogether appropriate means of entry for a renowned overlord.³⁰

³⁰ We have not mentioned Guiburc in this discussion, although she parallels closely William in the method of her introduction. She too is known to the listener and enters the poem in line 938 after being previously characterized by

From this somewhat detailed look at the introduction of some individual characters into the narrative of the Willame, we note several significant patterns: first, that the procedure differs according to the listener's familiarity with the character being presented; second, that those characters whom we have identified as our four youthful heroes (Vivien, Girard, Gui and Reneward) who prove themselves in this geste are allowed to take the initiative for their entry into the action and are allowed to express their intentions by noble speech before proving themselves by deed; third, that the character's human attributes, which are the substance of this geste, are immediately discernible by word, deed, or posture upon his entry into the narrative.

After the characters have been introduced the particular human attributes of each are developed largely by the use of certain motifs, or certain recurring narrative elements or themes. The first of these to be found in the Willame applies to virtually every major character in the poem, as well as to many of the minor ones, and so overshadows every other single motif that it merits a rather detailed discussion. This is the motif of flight. The idea of flight permeates the very structure of the poem and indeed provides a natural framework for the heroic/non-heroic scheme of the geste

Vivien in his message to William. Further mention will be made of the role of the women in the geste in the final pages of this chapter.

which has emerged from our look at the battle structure (Chapter III) and from our preceding examination of the entry of the characters into the narrative.

The first battle at Archamp is developed almost exclusively within the framework of flight. The opening scenes of the struggle, Vivien's assumption of the leadership, and the first blows struck are brought about by and viewed within the framework of Tedbald and Esturmi's retreat to Bourges. The final stages of the encounter are again viewed within the concept of flight: Vivien's covenant, which is essentially a refusal to flee from the field of battle. Between the opening scenes of the struggle and Vivien's death we witness the heat of the battle, which is also closely connected with the idea of flight, although not cowardly flight: the departure of Girard to Bourges. The manner in which the entire clash is structured around the framework of flight can be demonstrated specifically in the following manner:

The flight of Tedbald and Esturmi <u>Laisses</u> XXII-XXXII
First stages of battle, the council and first blows struck <u>Laisses</u> XXV-XXVII
Vivien's covenant <u>Laisses</u> LXVI-LXXIII
Final stages of battle <u>Laisses</u> LXIV-LXXIII
The journey of Girard <u>Laisses</u> L-LXXXII
Heat of battle <u>Laisses</u> XXXIV-XLIX

The question of flight pervades not only the framework of this one battle but serves also as a link between this encounter and the next and indeed between each clash within the poem and the subsequent one. Girard's "flight" mentioned above is the means by which the news of Vivien's predicament is brought to William, thereby necessitating his journey to Archamp for his first battle. William is unable to bring this encounter to a successful conclusion because of the need to return Guischarde's body to Guiburc, and although the poet is careful to say, "N'en fuit mie Willame, ainz s'en vait" (1225), the Count nevertheless turns his back on the field of battle, requiring a subsequent return to Archamp to finish the task of expelling the Saracens. Although William's second battle is declared a victory, he is forced, nevertheless, to flee in disguise to Orange after killing the pagan Alderufe. The Count is resigned to accepting the shame of this flight, but Guiburc refuses to allow him to retire in disgrace and sends him to Louis to prepare for the final battle. The motif of flight, then, is a major factor in tying together the individual encounters at Archamp, demonstrating its pervasion into the structure of the poem as a whole as well as into the structure of individual episodes.

This motif is, moreover, of primary importance in the portrayal of the characters with regard to their heroic or non-heroic stance in the geste. Warriors in the Willame are

consistently judged and categorized by their courage in the face of battle and their decision to flee or remain to fight. Tedbald's flight is a striking example of this polarizing of characters by means of the question of flight.

Tedbald has been depicted as weak and indecisive since his entry into the poem and has been called by the poet a "malveis seignur" and a "cuard cunte." His first action, however, takes place when

As premerains colps li quons Tedbald s'en turne,
Vait s'en fuiant a Burges tote la rute. (338-39)

Tedbald's flight from Archamp is the first major event of the poem. By this action the noble are distinguished from the cowardly as evidenced by the words:

Li couart s'en vont od Tedbald fuiant,
Od Vivien remistrent tuit li chevaler vaillant.
(330-31)

We note that the poet has polarized the entire army, as well as its leaders, into those who flee and those who remain. The conciseness and simplicity of the above statement as well as its parallelism (couart, Tedbald, fuiant; chevaler vaillant, Vivien, remistrent) leave no doubt as to the standards by which the heroes at Archamp will be judged.

Tedbald's flight is not only scorned by the poet but mocked as well, to the extent of creating a burlesque scene. One of the few amusing portions of the G₁ narrative is that

of Tedbald's flight to Bourges, the head of a gray sheep stuck in his stirrup.

The flight of Tedbald, in addition to determining the valiant at Archamp, serves also to bring Girard into the narrative. We have already noted the circumstances of Girard's encounter with Tedbald, but Esturmi too is faced by the young écuyer, who reveals his intentions to rank among the noble at Archamp in the following dialogue:

"Ço que pot estre, chevaler Esturmi?"
 Ic'il respunt: "Menbre del fuir."
 --Turnez arere, pensez del renvair;
 Si ore ne returns, tost i purras mort gisir.
 --Nu frai ja." ço li dist Esturmi.
 Ço dist Girard: "Vus n'en irrez issi!" (412-17)

Girard's violent reaction to the flight of the knights with Tedbald is the listener's first insight into his character, and a very revealing insight it is.

We can see, then, that the motif of flight enters early into the poem as a means by which the characters are assigned their various qualities, both good and bad. Not only the major characters but whole segments of the army as well are qualified by their reaction to the perils of battle and their position on the question of flight.

The flight of Tedbald and Esturmi and the emergence of Girard during an instance of flight are examples of the physical aspects of flight in the Chançon de Willame. Esturmi's tearing of the banner from its standard preceding

his and Tedbald's exit from the scene of battle, their burlesque ride to Bourges, and Girard's actual unseating of both cowards are physical actions, serving, as we have noted above, to polarize the characters on the battlefield. The motif of flight in the Willame is found not only on this physical level, however, but on the spiritual level as well. It is the question of flight, in fact, which constitutes virtually the entire basis for the martyrdom of Vivien. In this case it is obviously not the act of fleeing which is stressed but the idea of flight, for Vivien never leaves the field of battle.

We have noted already that Vivien is the leader of the courageous segment of Tedbald's army, but his concern with the flight issue is carried much farther than this. When the army is lost and the young leader is alone at Archamp he makes the following promise to God:

"Jo me rendrai al dolerus peril,
N'en turnerai, car a Deu l'ai pramis
Que ja ne fuierai pur pour de morir." (291-93)

This pledge, the famous covenans Vivien which has been the subject of much scholarly discussion³¹ and is the substance of La Chevalerie Vivien, identifies the knight as

³¹ The reader is referred to Frappier, Les Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d'Orange (I, 183-97) for a thorough discussion of Vivien's role in the Chançon de Willame. The various features of Vivien's agony which recall the passion of Christ are treated also by Martín de Riquer in Les Chansons de geste françaises (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1968), pp. 146-47.

a true martyr, one who enacts the will of God even to the point of death. We have noted the impact of the scene of martyrdom, wherein the lofty ideal of the covenant contrasts sharply with the gruesome facts of his physical death, and we note further that it is the question of flight on the spiritual level which actually creates Vivien's dilemma and stands at the base of this entire dramatic portion of the narrative.

The deaths of Girard and Guischarde likewise demonstrate the use of the flight issue on the spiritual level. Neither of the youths physically leaves the field, but while Girard the hero asks to be reseated upon his horse in order to fight until death, Guischarde the traitor asks to be reseated and headed in the opposite direction, toward the lands of the Saracens. Mortally wounded, neither is able to move physically in either direction, but the two are nevertheless clearly categorized by the above requests. Guischarde yearns to flee and spiritually does so, denying God and Christianity. But Girard remains true to the Christian cause, showing the same determination as Vivien to die holding steadfast to the cause for which he is fighting.

The motif of flight is used again in the case of the last of our young heroes, Reneward. It is this issue, in fact, which gives Reneward his first chance to prove himself to William and thus earn the right to fight at Archamp. Upon the arrival of the army at the battlefield, William in

a brief council gives his newly conscripted warriors a chance to return to their homeland if they are not courageous enough to face the Saracens, and indeed,

Tuz les cowarz sunt une part turnez;
 ... Vont a Willame le cungré demander,
 E il lur dune, ne lur deignad veer.

(2954, 2957-58)

As in the case of Vivien's encounter the army is again polarized, and those not courageous enough to fight are excused from the *melée*. Reneward, however, refuses to allow this desertion, and despite the fact that William has given the warriors permission to leave, the knave meets them at a stream, urges them to return, and, after killing fourteen, escorts the group back to the ranks. Their ironic punishment is spelled out by Reneward who declares to William:

"Ices couarz que vus ici veez,
 Ceste est ma torbe, mun pople, e mun barnez;
 E mei e els en la pointe metez." (2975-77)

Reneward, then, like Vivien and Girard, abhors the very idea of flight from battle and enacts a very concrete demonstration of his reaction to those who turn away from bloody conflicts. The valor which he demonstrates over the knights of William's army is a surprising reversal of values, contributing to the mock-heroic nature of this latter portion of the poem.

The most puzzling example of the flight motif in the Willame is its occurrence in conjunction with William himself.

In this case it is the enigma of William's role in his own geste which is brought out. We have noted above the scene of William's departure from Archamp before the battle is won in order to carry to Guiburec the body of Guischarde. The poet denies that William actually flees: "N'en fuit mie Willame, ainz s'en vait"; yet upon his return to Orange the Count himself actually admits to flight, calling himself a "malveis tresturner." Although he has a justifiable reason for leaving the field of battle, he obviously feels that a dishonor has been done and does not deny that he, the leader, has turned his back upon battle before fighting to the end.

After killing the pagan Alderufe William is again forced to flee, this time in disguise. Surrounded by Saracens, he puts on the armor and mounts the horse of the dead pagan king in order to escape through their ranks. He even resorts to speaking their languages to deceive them further.³² Thus flight becomes even more ludicrous as the fabled and honored leader is forced into disguise in order to leave a battle of which he has already been declared the winner.

Upon his return home after each of the encounters mentioned above, William's posture in flight becomes even

³² These lines (2169-73) are unclear in the text of the Willame as no explanation is even given as to why William begins suddenly to speak in numerous tongues. In the parallel scene in Aliscans, however, it is clear that the use of pagan tongues is part of his disguise.

more enigmatic because of the question of identity. In the first case it is Guischart whose identity is questioned. Informed that William has been sighted, carrying the body of a man before him on his horse, Guiburc asks:

"Ki serreit il, dunc, pur Deu merci, seignur,
Ke ja Willame aportast de l'estur,
Se ço n'ere Louis, sun seignur,
U Vivien le hardi, sun nevou?" (1253-56)

Guiburc, who had herself asked that the body of her nephew, whether alive or dead, be returned to her, strangely fails to realize the identity of the youth. The pathos of the scene is further stressed by the mention of Louis and Vivien. A suggestion of the non-heroic aspect which we have noted is again apparent in the fact that the body is that neither of Louis, the emperor, nor of Vivien, the hero, two characters certainly worthy of William's attention, but rather that of a traitor to the Christian cause.

William's second return to the city after battle is again clouded by the question of identity--this time his own. The porter fails to recognize his master, who is dressed in the armor of a pagan chief. He informs Guiburc of the stranger at the gate who claims to be the Count, and she too fails to recognize her disguised husband, declaring:

"Si vus fuissez Willame al curb niés,
Od vus venissent set mile homes armez;
Des Frans de France, des baruns naturels."³³ (2244-46)

³³ The tone of this passage and Guiburc's continuing failure to recognize her own husband suggests possibly that

To prove his identity, William is forced by Guiburc to kill a host of Saracens who are riding toward the city, but even after this feat the cautious woman is unconvinced and has the Count raise his helmet, exposing the deformity on his nose.³⁴ His position is awkward in many respects: he is in disguise, he is pursued by the enemy instead of being followed by his own victorious army, and he is not recognized by his own wife, even after a great demonstration of bravery and strength. He is forced into the revelation of a physical deformity before he is allowed into his own city, another indication of the non-heroic tone often seen in the Willame.

This problem of identity magnifies the disgrace of a leader in flight and enters also into the issue of the paradoxical nature of William's role in the geste. We note

there is more here than failure to recognize, perhaps a kind of "rubbing it in." It is almost as if Guiburc were ridiculing or punishing William for his failure on the battlefield.

³⁴ The injury, or deformity, on William's nose is the source of the epithet, Willame al curb niés, by which he is as well known as by the name Willame d'Orange. The explanation of the deformity is found in Le Couronnement de Louis, wherein William's nose is virtually cut off by the giant Corsolt. Through contamination or misinterpretation inherent in oral tradition the cort, or short, was transformed into curb, or crooked. The poet of Le Charroi de Nîmes tried to reconcile the two by explaining that a careless doctor who treated William after the accident set the nose wrong, causing it to become crooked. Thus both expressions, William al curb niés and Willame al cort niés are found, and both are correct.

also that Guiburc each time seems to enter into the enigma, partially causing William's dilemma by her demand for Guis-
chard's body and her role in the identity question. Both
times she has the upper hand and represents the strength and
stability which William seems to have temporarily lost.

Out of the flight motif the poet creates some of the
most poignant scenes in the poem. Upon William's return to
Orange (after his second battle) he and Guiburc lament
together the disgrace caused by his defeat and flight and
the loss of the French army. A portion of this lament
serves to illustrate the tenderness with which the two mourn
this loss of pride and youth:

"Ohi, bone sale, cum estes lung et lee!
De totes parz vus vei si aurné,
Beneit seit la dame qui si t'ad conreié.
Ohi, haltes tables, cum estes levees!
Napes de lin vei desure getees,
Ces escuiles emplies e rasees,
De hanches e d'espalles, de niueles e de obleies.
N'i mangerunt les fiz de franchises meres,
Qui en l'Archamp unt les testes colpees!"
Plure Willame, Guiburc s'est pasmee. (2399-2408)

The use of the scene of the empty banquet hall and the
tables at which no knights will sit adds a visual impact
to the idea of shame which has caused this emptiness.

In the next laisse we find yet another instance of the
flight question, when William threatens:

"Ore m'en fuierai en estrange regné,
A Saint Michel al Peril de la Mer." (2414-15)

Disheartened by the tragic results of the battle and the

shame of his disgraceful flight in disguise, William threatens another kind of flight, which will be final: his retirement to a monastery. Again, however, it is Guiburc who remains firm, dissuading her husband from this final renunciation and providing the scheme by which he will obtain forces to return to Archamp and gain the final victory.

Thus we see that the motif of flight penetrates into the very structure of the Chançon de Willame and enters into virtually every aspect of character portrayal that we have found to be essential to the fond of this geste. It is basic to the disgrace of Tedbald and Esturmi, the martyrdom of Vivien, the contrast between Girard and Guischarde, the proving of Reneward, the forceful role of Guiburc, and the paradoxical role of William. It polarizes as well the entire Christian army, convincing the listener that our poet found of primary significance the reaction of his characters to the possible consequences of battle.

A second motif which is used repeatedly in the Willame and which again affects the characters and their attributes stressed by the poet is the issue of youth versus old age. This dual motif concerns primarily the characters William and Gui, the aging hero and the boy knight.³⁵

³⁵ We recall here the puer senex topos, which was popular in medieval literature. The Latin origins of the topos are discussed by E. R. Curtius in European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), pp. 98-101.

It is William himself who in his own words decries his old age. After losing his first battle he laments to Guiburc:

"Treiz cenz anz ad e cinquante passez
 Que jo fu primes de ma mere nez;
 Veil sui e feble, ne puis armes porter,
 Co est failli que Deus m'aveit presté,
 Le grante juvente, que ne poet retourner." (1334-38)

Although this is the only time in the poem that William's actual age is mentioned, his feebleness and declining strength are portrayed throughout in an indirect manner. He is recognized from the beginning of the poem by the poet, by Vivien, and even by Tedbald as a mighty hero, but the surprising fact remains that he is never developed as such in the epic that bears his name. As we have seen, Vivien, Girard, Gui and Reneward are the true heroes of the Willame, while Count William himself seems always to hover in the background. He is forced twice to leave the field in defeat, and this dishonor is heightened by Guiburc's failure to recognize him at the gates of the city. He does take part in two victorious battles, but both of these are truly won by youths, Gui and Reneward. He even forfeits the killing of Deramed to Gui, and we recall that his victory over Alderufe is short-lived.

But even more than a lack of heroic deeds it is William's emotional reactions which betray his weakness in the geste. Three times he laments his fate in being

obliged to go to Archamp, and each time he actually pleads to be left in peace to spend the rest of his days quietly.³⁶ He finally begs to be allowed to retire,

A Saint Michel al Peril de la mer,
 U Saint Pere, le bon apostre Deu,
 U en un guast u ja mes ne seie trové.
 La devendrai hermites ordené,
 E tu devien noneine, si faz tun chef veler. (2415-19)

It appears by now that William's role in this geste is not that of a heroic warrior but rather that of a patriarch who provides the opportunity for the development of young and untried knights. He takes virtually no initiative in the action and is constantly viewed as tired, disheartened, and disgraced. We have noted also that he is quite often placed in awkward situations by other characters, especially Guiburc. This further detracts from any heroic status he might acquire.

Gui, by contrast, is the youngest and smallest character in the poem, but the one depicted as the most heroic. None of the other three youthful heroes can match Gui in sheer courage and disproportionate strength. Both Vivien and Girard are finally killed, and Reneward's superior size and might account for his prowess. Gui, however, overcomes his physical shortcomings to put on one of the mightiest

³⁶ We recall the lament of Charlemagne in the Roland when, at the end of the poem, he is called to prepare again for battle, and he replies, "Deus ... si penuse est ma vie!" (4000).

displays of strength in the poem and finally remains alone with William to survey the battlefield in victory.

From his entry into the narrative it is Gui's youth and slight stature which characterize him. The first descriptive words pertaining to the youth reveal this particular emphasis:

N'out uncore quinz anz, asez esteit petiz,
N'out point de barbe ne sur le peil vif
Fors icel de sun chef dunt il nasqui. (1441-43)

First scorned by William because of his age and size, Gui retorts with a phrase which will be often repeated:

"Pur petitesce que m'avez a blasmer?
Ja n'est nul si grant que petit ne fust né." (1464-65)

On the battlefield Gui's size is stressed repeatedly, from the scene of his arming (described in Chapter III), to the final scene when he is seen "desqu'al genoil el sanc." He is viewed always in contrast to the strength of the more mature knights, who nevertheless disappear quickly from the action, leaving Gui with William to walk the field and survey the destruction.

It is during this portion when the Count and his nephew walk the field at Archamp that we find an extremely touching and visually effective scene based on the contrast of size between the youth and his uncle. William's horse has been killed, and he is left to travel on foot. Gui offers him his horse, which the Count mounts willingly.

It is, however, a small animal given especially to Gui by Guiburc, and naturally William is much too large for the tiny beast. The poet describes him as he rides: "Les pez li pendent desuz les estrius a l'enfant" (1882). Gui is later given Deramed's horse and asks his uncle to stop so they may change saddles, since that of the pagan is far too large for the tiny youth. The two "descent a terre pur les seles remuer" (1960). This scene realistically emphasizes the discrepancy in size between the boy and the aging Count and lends a moving visual emphasis to the size/age question.

In his description of William's journey to Laon to beg aid from Louis, the poet creates a similarly effective scene based on the motif of youth and old age, although this time it is not Gui who is involved but another young squire. He is carrying William's heavy armor, and the Count is touched by the effort of the youth to bear this great load:

Veit le Willame, merveillus duel l'en prent;
Totes les armes ad pris de l'enfant. (2460-61)

When they arrive at a town or a castle, however, William returns the armor to the boy so as not to be seen bearing his own armor, a disgrace for such a renowned warrior. Again we see William in a less than heroic posture, and although we may sympathize with his efforts to aid the youth, we realize that again the poet has detracted from the Count's role as a mighty hero in order to portray him as a more realistic and human character.

The youth/age motif can also be viewed as a standard by which wisdom is measured in the Willame, for if the poet equates old age with declining prowess in the case of William, he likewise equates youth with wisdom in the case of Gui. Several times the words "sage" and "senez" are used to describe the words and actions of the boy, and finally the entire matter is summed up by William's final judgment of Gui, which becomes almost a motif in itself:

"Cors as d'enfant e raisun as de ber." (1637)

Gui's size and age are immaterial to his strength, courage, and wisdom, and we find that he is judged by the poet, as well as by William, on the truly relevant criteria.

This issue of wisdom portrayed through youth is concretely demonstrated by the scene of the killing of Deramed. William attacks the pagan and wounds him seriously but foolishly leaves him alive. Gui, however,

... vit le rei travailler sur l'erbe;
Trait ad s'espee, si li colpad la teste. (1962-63)

He is reprimanded by William for this action, but Gui explains that were the king left alive, he would father more pagans to return to Christian lands and cause more wars. William acknowledges the wisdom of this observation and declares to Gui:

--Niés ... sagement t'oi parler!
Cors as d'enfant e raisun as de ber.
Aprés ma mort ten tote ma herité." (1976-78)

Gui's wisdom here is demonstrated at the expense of William, who certainly appears careless and imprudent and lacks the foresight of a true epic hero.

The motif of youth/old age, which encompasses the problem of wisdom in the young and folly in the old, serves then especially to characterize William as the non-hero. The poet uses Gui, the very young and small, to highlight the non-heroic elements in the makeup of William's character. As his disgrace, discouragement, and fatigue are made clear through the flight motif, foolishness and non-heroic compassion are demonstrated through the motif of size and age, rounding out the enigmatic role of William in his own geste.

One particularly interesting feature of the Chançon de Willame is the strong role played by the two women who appear in the narrative: Guiburc and the queen. Typically the early chanson de geste largely ignored the role of women, but in the Willame the two mentioned above have a definite effect on the development of the action and especially upon the men with whom they are most closely associated, their husbands, William and Louis. The role of the women is pertinent enough, we feel, to justify its inclusion at this point in our discussion.

The role of Guiburc has already been noted. She plays a vital part in the narrative, for without her efforts the second, third, and fourth battles at Archamp would not have

come about. After each encounter William returns home discouraged and declares that he is defeated. Each time it is Guiburc who inspires his return to battle, and in fact she once even provides the army.

When Girard arrives at the castle bearing Vivien's message, William laments the fact that he must go to Archamp so soon after returning from another major campaign. We have noted that in this instance he seems to be testing his wife to see her reaction to his departure. She reacts bravely, offering Guischarde to help fight with the army. She tends to the physical needs of the weary Girard, preparing the banquet and staying with him until he is able to fall asleep.

When William returns from this first battle, he finds that his wife has brought together an army of thirty thousand to return with him to Archamp in case he fails to return victorious. William does indeed return in defeat, lamenting, as we have seen, a flight which even the poet excuses. Guiburc scolds him for this attitude, saying,

"Il est grant doel que home deit plorer,
E fort damage k'il se deit dementir;
... Mielz voil que moergez en l'Archamp sur mer
Que tun lignage seit per tei avilé,
Ne après ta mort a tes heirs reprové."
(1320-21, 1325-27)

Guiburc not only inspires William by threats of shame to be brought upon his lineage and heirs and by the sight of the army she has prepared, but she also devises the trickery

by which he will encourage them to fight. Knowing that the warriors will not wish to go to Archamp if they are aware that their leader has already lost one battle there, she suggests that William tell his soldiers that a return is necessary only to avenge the death of Vivien. Thus inspired, the army sets out for Archamp. We note that it is also Guiborc who is responsible for Gui's joining William at the battlefield. Having been denied his uncle's permission to accompany the army, Gui begs so to go with the warriors that Guiborc finally gives in and is fully responsible for arming the boy and sending him off. She is again a partner in deceit, for she agrees that Gui should tell William that he has escaped her watchful eye, thereby relieving her from the responsibility of letting him proceed into danger.

Guiborc's role in the final encounter has also been mentioned. It is she who convinces William that the time has not yet come for their retirement and that he must yet go to Louis for an army in order to bring victory to the Christians. Again it is she who devises a scheme--a scheme to convince Louis to conscript this army. She instructs William:

"Dreit a Loun pense de chevalcher
 A l'emperere qui nus solt aver chiers,
 Qui del socurs nus vienge ça aider.
 E s'il nel fait, si li rendez sun fee." (2424-27)

Guiborc demonstrates her strong role in the Willame on many other occasions, such as the scenes at the gate of

the city, her arming of Reneward and her later recognition of him as her brother, her offer to guard the castle with the help of seven hundred virgins who will mount the battlements (since there are no men left in the kingdom to remain with her while William goes to Aix to seek help from Louis), and her care of the warriors upon their return from the battlefield, providing each time food and quarters. She truly plays an essential role in the poem, demonstrating much of the wisdom and valiance found lacking in her husband. Her strong role in the narrative highlights even more the enigmatic role of William, and is another ingredient in the reversal of values theme which we have noted earlier.

The queen enters the geste only one time, but she too has a definite effect upon the progress of the action. The queen, who is William's own sister, refuses to permit Louis to go personally to William's aid. She accuses Guiburc, a former pagan, of witchcraft and tells Louis that if he aids her brother, William and Guiburc will attempt to take over the throne. To this accusation William retorts with a tirade of insults and accusations directed at his sister, which Louis interrupts with words of compromise: he will give William the army he has requested, though greatly reduced in size, but he himself will remain at Laon. The queen is appeased, but we note again that the direction of the action has been affected by the influence of a wife over a husband.

In addition to the motifs of flight and youth/old age and the unusual role of the women in the Willame, there appears often in the narrative the mention of several basic human functions, primarily eating and sleeping, which are foreign to the elevated tone of most early chansons de geste. Upon close examination, however, we find that the appearance of these issues can almost always be related to our established theme of character portrayal.

During William's second battle, for instance, the Count notices that Gui is weeping and asks, "Ço que pot estre ...?" (1735), to which the boy replies:

"Mar vi Guiburc que suef me norist,
 Qui me soleit faire disner si matin!
 Ore est le terme qu'ele le me soleit offrir;
 Ore ai tel faim ja me verras morir." (1737-40)

Despite his determination to fight with William at Archamp, the youth betrays his young age and lack of experience by his inability to do without nourishment for long periods. This fault further emphasizes his immaturity and brings again into focus the contrast between his extreme youth and his performance as a warrior.

We note too that his departure from Archamp in search of food is fundamental to the sheer mechanics of his moment of heroism. William, left alone on the field, is unable to

drive off his aggressors single-handedly and is dependent upon the swift return of his nephew to be saved. Thus it is not only Gui's furious display of strength but also his sudden appearance from outside the arena of battle that astonishes the pagans and gives rise to their exclamation:

... "Co est fuildre que cheit;
Resvescuz est Vivien le guerreier!" (1853-54)

Reneward, also a mere youth, is likewise overcome by hunger as well as by sleepiness in the midst of battle. On the third day of fighting he notices the sun high in the sky and declares:

"Si jo fusse a Loun la cité,
En la cuisine u jo soleie converser,
A cest hure me fuisse jo digner;
Del bon vin cler eusse beu assez,
Si m'en dormisse juste le feu suef." (3000-04)

In the case of Reneward it is his coarseness and lack of preparation for the role of a knight which are continually stressed. The motif of hunger in this scene again reminds the listener that Reneward is inexperienced, as is Gui, in battle, and although strong and courageous he suffers from the deprivation of physical needs. Trained only as a kitchen knave (hence another dimension of the food/hunger motif?) he lacks the self-control and polish of a well-schooled chevalier. The momentary turn of his thoughts at the peak of combat to the basic human requirements of food and sleep

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... "Co est fuildre que cheit;
Resvescuz est Vivien le guerreier!" (1853-54)

Reneward, also a mere youth, is likewise overcome by hunger as well as by sleepiness in the midst of battle. On the third day of fighting he notices the sun high in the sky and declares:

"Si jo fusse a Loun la cité,
En la cusine u jo soleie converser,
A cest hure me fuisse jo digner;
Del bon vin cler eusse beu assez,
Si m'en dormisse juste le feu suef." (3000-04)

In the case of Reneward it is his coarseness and lack of preparation for the role of a knight which are continually stressed. The motif of hunger in this scene again reminds the listener that Reneward is inexperienced, as is Gui, in battle, and although strong and courageous he suffers from the deprivation of physical needs. Trained only as a kitchen knave (hence another dimension of the food/hunger motif?) he lacks the self-control and polish of a well-schooled chevalier. The momentary turn of his thoughts at the peak of combat to the basic human requirements of food and sleep

betrays his simplistic behavior as Gui's lament betrays his youth.

Vivien and Girard, our other two heroes, also suffer the pangs of hunger. Vivien's suffering during his final moments is made more realistic by the poet's usage of his great hunger and thirst. (We recall here our earlier note, 31, on the subject of the Vivien/Christ agony.) He is suffering spiritually, as observed earlier, because of his determination to remain true to his covenant, but he suffers physically as well because of a cruel wound and also because he is simply feeling the effects of the lack of food and water during the long battle.

Girard feels the discomfort of hunger and thirst during his long journey to bear Vivien's message to William as well as the heat of the May sun and the weight of his heavy armor:

Grant fu li chaud cum en mai en esté,
 E lungs les jurz, si out treis jurz juné,
 E out tele seif qu'il ne la pout durer;
 De quinze liwes n'i out ne dut ne gué
 Fors l'eve salee que ert tres lui a la mer. (709-13)

We are again reminded that we are dealing with knights of extreme youth whose physical needs are not easily forgotten, despite their valiance in battle.

In addition to the sympathetic treatment of our four young heroes through the food motif, the poet uses this feature also to create pathos of another sort. Upon

William's return to the castle after his second battle, he and Guiburc lament the loss of the many youths who had sat at the tables in the banquet hall, as they survey the room:

"Ohi, bone sale, cum estes lung e lee!
 De totes parz vus vei si aurné,
 Beneit seit la dame qui si t'ad conreié.
 Ohi, haltes tables, cum estes levees!
 ... N'i mangerunt les fiz de franchises meres,
 Qui en l'Archamp unt les testes colpees!"
 (2399-2402, 2406-07)

This use of the banquet hall and its empty tables to symbolize defeat is one of the most touching scenes in the geste and demonstrates another of the varied uses of the food motif.

We should mention also Reneward's despair at the end of the poem when he is not invited to join the victory feast at the castle, another touching scene. His heroism is forgotten by William but not by the listener, who consciously sympathizes with the knave and becomes, through William's careless oversight, more aware than before of his great service to the kingdom.

The poet several times varies his use of the motif to create a comic effect, as we might expect in a work where gravity and levity go hand in hand. When Girard arrives at Barcelona weary, hungry, and near collapse, Guiburc immediately tends to his needs by serving him water and seating him at a banquet table laden with a veritable feast. Girard truly does justice to this meal:

Girard mangat le grant braun porcin,
 E a dous traiz ad voidé le mazelin
 Que unques a Guiburc mie n'en offrit
 Ne ne radresçat la chere ne sun vis. (1049-52)

Guiburc, noting the youth's enthusiasm for the meal and his complete absorption in the act of eating, says jokingly to William, "Par Deu, bel sire, cist est de vostre lin." Accusing Girard of being of William's side of the family because of his tremendous appetite, Guiburc makes one of the few jokes in the poem.

Another example of the food motif used to create humor is found at the beginning of William's second battle. The French arrive at the battlefield to find the Saracens enjoying a feast spread upon the ground. Suddenly William appears:

Es vus Willame al manger asené
 Od trente mile de chevalers armez
 Qui un freit mes lur ad aporté. (1691-93)

The freit mes the Count serves to his enemies is a clever pun indeed, for upon this occasion William does mete out a "cold dish" in the form of a defeat for the Saracens.

Humor again is seen when William returns to the castle after his first encounter. He is shamed by flight, as we have noted, and disheartened by defeat. Guiburc, however, dispels his depression not only by words but also by her presentation of the warriors she has gathered for a new army. William, greatly encouraged, sits down to a banquet and demonstrates his change of mood with a hearty appetite, in

a scene very similar to that of Girard's feast. The poet enumerates the items he consumes and notes Guiburc's reactions:

Mangat Willame le pain a tamis,
 E en après les dous gasteals rostiz;
 Trestuit mangat le grant braun procin,
 E a dous traiz but un sester de vin,
 ... Veist le Guiburc, crollad sun chef, si rist,
 Pur quant si plurat d'amedous des oilz del vis.
 (1412-15, 1419-20)

Guiburc finds extremely amusing the fact that William can eat heartily so soon after bewailing his fate so despairingly and says that any man who can eat that way "ne deit de chanp fuir" (1431).

Hunger then aids significantly in character portrayal in the Willame. In the case of this motif perhaps more than any other we are made aware of the realism in the techniques of the poet. Like drunkenness, cowardice, youth, age, and flight, hunger touches men in a variety of ways. The fact that here it affects especially the heroic makes its use even more natural and reveals, perhaps even more clearly than our other motifs, the humanity of otherwise faceless, stock characters. Basic human needs and physical necessities, although discreetly treated in many chansons de geste, are especially pertinent to the Willame. Since the very theme we have isolated concerns men, we are allowed to view men from every vantage point, including their elemental physical wants.

This survey of some of the techniques and motifs employed to introduce and portray characters in the Chançon de Willame has illustrated even more definitively, we think, the focus of this geste upon the human drama behind battle narrative. We note that the poet seizes every opportunity to remind the listener of those particular attributes assigned to each of his characters. He allows each one to enter the narrative in a manner befitting the role he will assume and continues to highlight his strengths and weaknesses through recurring motifs. The characters are always of primary importance, and the poet presents and describes each one in an interesting and varied manner through a number of techniques which we find both skillful and appropriate. He surrounds the characters with humor, disgrace, pathos, courage and a number of other qualities, permitting each to play a well-defined role in the Willame narrative.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

"La Chanson de Roland ... peint les héros comme ils devraient être, la Chançon Willame les peint tels qu'ils sont."³⁷ Thus Siciliano has clearly and succinctly differentiated between the two earliest monuments of the Old French epic.

As implied in the above statement, it is realism which especially characterizes the Willame, a realism which is perhaps unexpected and unheralded in a geste thought to be contemporary with the idealistic Roland. But the realism to which we refer is not a historical realism, for we acknowledge the many uncertainties surrounding the battle of Archamp and its significance. Nor is it a realism in the development of the narrative itself, for we have taken into account the contradictions, incongruities, and inconsistency of tone found throughout the poem. It is rather a realism that reaches inward instead of outward, inward into the reactions, worthy or unworthy, of men involved in the rigors of battle rather than outward toward the effect of this battle on France and Christendom. It is a psychological realism, often primitive and harsh, ranging the gamut of human emotions

³⁷ Italo Siciliano, Les Chansons de geste et l'épopée (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1968), p. 372.

from agony to buffoonery, from a martyrdom which has been compared to that of Christ to a burlesque involving monsters and giants.

The motifs used repeatedly in the narrative have most clearly revealed this realism. Men do suffer from fear, cowardice, despair, and humiliation when faced with trying circumstances, as on a more elemental level they suffer from hunger, thirst, and fatigue. Men must even reckon with their wives, as do the two most distinguished leaders in the Willame.

In addition to realism, we have noted a certain simplicity of approach on the part of the poet. The characters, clearly defined with the exception of William, reveal their inner qualities through overt action, and postures and concepts are illustrated symbolically in bold black and white. William and Guiburc move from the "halte table" to the "plus basse table," reflecting the loss of the battle and of all the young men of the territory. Girard and Guischarde request that their horses be headed in opposite directions to represent their opposing reactions to dying for the Christian cause. William and Gui are always shown as the big and the little, their horses and armor symbolically reflecting the contrast. Thus intangible qualities are revealed through overt symbols: youth/old age to depict wisdom/imprudence; large/small to emphasize declining strength/emerging heroism; high tables/low tables to symbolize victory/defeat. Every

character, again with the exception of William, is depicted as clearly noble or base, with no shades of gray to make his portrayal more complex.

This use of contrasts and symbolism is not unique to the Willame, and indeed in this respect the poet has used techniques common to other gestes. We must recognize, however, his originality and again his realistic (i.e., non-idealistic) approach in showing undesirable qualities in the Christians, rather than assigning these traits exclusively to the pagans while allowing the French to be always pure and undefiled.

The atypical nature of the Willame as an early chanson de geste is shown clearly by the off-center focus of the narrative, by the poet's concentration upon seemingly secondary characters who often manipulate and overshadow the primary personages. We have come to realize that the Chançon de Willame is rather the chançon of four youths who prove their worth only after emerging from ignoble circumstances: Vivien steps forward after the cowardly retreat of his leaders, Girard turns his back upon his overlords, Gui impudently shames his uncle into reckoning with him, and Reneward joins the army only after cracking the skull of his master with his mighty tinel.

But surely the most striking and disturbing feature of the geste is the role played by William of Orange himself. Giving his name not only to this poem but indeed to an entire cycle, recognized as the fabled hero of epic legend

even by Dante who names him, along with Reneward, as one of the elect of the Paradiso,³⁸ the anti-hero we have met here falls far short of the standards we have come to expect for such a personage. In his own geste William is tired, old, and discouraged. He twice leaves the battlefield before the battle is won, and he twice allows a mere boy to win the day for him. He is belittled by Tedbald, renounced by Guischard, addressed disrespectfully by Gui, and put on the defensive by Reneward. He is slandered by his sister, the Queen, and mistaken for a Saracen by his own wife.

The picture of William which emerges through these adversities stands in sharp contrast to his dramatic entry into the narrative, i.e., his appearance upon the castle balcony after nine hundred lines of suspense. This introduction suggests the strength and wisdom of a mighty leader, the very qualities shown to be lacking throughout the remainder of the poem.

We can only speculate as to the implications of the enigmatic qualities of this geste. Do we have at hand an extremely primitive poem, as evidenced by its lack of complexity mentioned above, or are we rather confronted by a later poem, whose irregularities become comprehensible in the light of degeneration and contamination? A third

³⁸ Canto XVIII, 46.

possible explanation of the Willame's curious characteristics has been presented by Howard S. Robertson, who says:

. . . the Chanson de Willame has all the appearance of a late composite version of many elements of the William of Orange legend arranged to explode the myth of the superhuman heroes of chivalry by showing the fundamental contradiction of the theory of epic warfare and its practice. The elements of this theme, found throughout the poem, reveal a pattern which argues strongly for the artistic unity of the Chanson de Willame, whatever its sources may well have been.³⁹

Mr. Robertson's position is of a special pertinence to us since his definition of the poem's qualities closely parallels ours. He has, however, proceeded to draw a conclusion of auctorial intent and of historical dating based on these characteristics. Although it is not within the scope of our study to deal with questions of purpose and dating, the theme of the Willame as we have seen it, a realistic portrayal of men in battle, does indeed point to the possibility of the anti-epic described above, providing relief from idealistic and unrealistic feats of chivalry. A very late dating, as suggested by Robertson, combined with the Anglo-Norman provenance of its manuscript, would seem to argue for the Willame's creation at a time when the medieval audience was beginning to tire of chivalrous deeds performed by knights in shining armor, a time post-dating Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes and the flowering of the courtly romance. The poem would then be an intentional

³⁹ Howard S. Robertson, La Chanson de Willame: A Critical Study (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 17.

parody of the chanson de geste, as well perhaps as of its later courtois counterpart, instead of a true epic in its own right.

We shall limit ourselves to the conclusion that there is a recognizable artistic unity in the poet's use of his motifs to develop a consistent theme. Admittedly an atypical chanson de geste, the Willame nonetheless possesses its own measure of harmony and beauty. Removed from the shadow of the Chanson de Roland, with which we have been so often tempted to compare it, the Chançon de Willame can stand apart as an intriguing example of literary endeavor in the Middle Ages.

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APPENDIX

A RÉSUMÉ OF THE ACTION OF LA CHANÇUN DE WILLAME

In a ten-line prologue the jongleur announces that he will tell of Deramed, a Saracen king who made war against the emperor, Louis I, and how he was met and conquered at Archamp by Count William, who lost the best of his men, including his nephew, Vivien le preux. Here begins the Chançon de Willame.

King Deramed has come from Cordova, laid waste to the land, and taken many prisoners. One has escaped, however, and has arrived at Bourges to announce the invasion and ask help of Count Tedbald.

When the messenger arrives a very drunk Tedbald is returning from vespers, leaning on the arm of his nephew, Esturmi. With them is Count Vivien, nephew of William of Orange. Tedbald hears the news of the messenger and asks advice of Esturmi and Vivien. Vivien counsels him to send for William, but Esturmi scorns the Count and advises Tedbald to face the invaders alone. Finally Tedbald retires, declaring that in the morning they will attack the Saracens without the help of William.

But when morning comes, Tedbald is puzzled when he sees ten thousand men preparing for battle, for he has no recollection of the preceding night's events. Vivien again

advises against attacking without William, but Tedbald requests his armor and leads the army from the city to face the forces of Deramed.

Having arrived at the field, Tedbald mounts a hill to view the Saracens. Realizing at last their superior strength, he declares that he will now send for William. But Vivien recognizes that it is too late, for the pagans have already seen Tedbald at the top of the hill. Terrified at the thought of a hopeless battle, Tedbald and Esturmi turn and flee from Archamp.

On the road to Bourges, Tedbald is pursued by Girard, a young écuyer. The latter knocks Tedbald from his horse, berates him for his cowardice, and takes his arms and horse. Tedbald continues toward Bourges mounted on Girard's pack-horse. Riding through a pasture where sheep are grazing, he becomes entangled with the animals. One gray sheep becomes lodged in his stirrup and by the time he reaches the city only the head is left, still hanging near his foot as he rides. Girard returns to battle and fights valiantly. He finally rejoins Vivien and rides at his right hand.

The battle is going badly for the French, and finally only one hundred men are left out of the ten thousand. Faced with a hopeless situation, Vivien advises his men to flee, but when they turn to go they are unable to pass through the mass of Saracens. Returning to Vivien, they pledge to remain at his side until the battle is finished. At this

point Vivien turns to Girard and beseeches him to go to Barcelona and ask for help of Count William.

Girard leaves the field, but his horse is soon killed beneath him. On foot he continues and, overcome with heat and thirst, staggers on to Barcelona. Piece by piece he sheds his armor until only a sword is left, with which he supports himself.

Vivien meanwhile fights on with twenty men, then with ten, until at last he is left alone on the battlefield. The Saracens kill his horse and wound him in the back, but the hero fights on. Overcome by thirst he makes his way to a stream, but when he leans down to drink he is attacked and supposedly killed. He is dragged off and left under a tree so that the French will not find his body. With the death of Vivien the first part of the Chançon de Willame comes to an end.

The narrative now returns to Girard, who is stumbling toward Barcelona. William has just returned from fighting at Bordeaux and is filled with grief when he sees a chevalier approaching the castle, for he guesses only too well his purpose. Hearing Girard's message, William laments to Guiburc and declares that this time Vivien will have to finish the battle alone. The noble woman, however, begs her husband to go to Vivien's aid and commends to him Guischarde, her nephew.

Girard is served a great feast, after which Guiburc lulls him to sleep. At sundown he arises and dresses for

battle. William's army travels all night and arrives at Archamp the next morning. The pagans have not been able to sail for lack of wind, and when the French arrive they have left their ships and are surveying the land. The French attack, and the Saracens return to the ships to get their arms.

This battle lasts for three days until William, Girard, and Guischarde are left alone. Girard is attacked by thirty pagans and mortally wounded. William comes to his aid, kills ten pagans, and scatters twenty. Girard dies and is lamented by William. Guischarde also is attacked by thirty pagans, and again William kills ten and scatters twenty. Before he dies, Guischarde denies God and Christianity.

William now leaves the battlefield bearing before him the dead body of Guischarde, whom he has promised to return to Guiburc, whether dead or alive.

In William's absence Guiburc has assembled thirty thousand new chevaliers. They are feasting when Guiburc is informed that William has been spotted returning alone, bearing the body of a dead man. Opening the door for William, Guiburc cries aloud when she recognizes the body of Guischarde. William relates the grievous news of his defeat but Guiburc, ever ready with a new plan, describes how with lies and bribery she will send forth the new thirty thousand men to avenge the death of Vivien, hiding the shameful fact of defeat.

They then sit down to a feast, but William again begins to lament. Who will inherit his lands and carry on his lineage now that Vivien is dead? Up from beside the fire arises Gui, a fifteen-year-old nephew of William, who declares he will be his uncle's heir. At first scornful, the Count at last agrees that Gui shall be his successor.

In the evening the army leaves the city. Gui and Guiborc watch the departure. Gui begs to join William, and finally his aunt agrees. She arms the boy with helmet, sword, and armor and gives him her horse, Balçan. When William discovers that Gui has joined the troops he is very angry, but he finally softens and allows the youth to enter the battle.

Again the Saracen ships are becalmed, and the army has prepared a meal on land which they are eating when the French appear. The battle again goes badly for the Christians. The pagans capture several French leaders and kill the rest of the army, except for Gui and William. Overcome by hunger, Gui sets out to find some left-overs of the Saracen feast. During his absence William is attacked. He calls for his nephew, who appears immediately and fights with such fury that the pagans believe that he is Vivien returned from the dead.

The pagans flee, and Gui and William wander through the battlefield. Deramed, lying wounded, rises up to kill William, who strikes the Saracen and cuts off his leg. But Deramed

is not dead, and when Gui sees him move again he pulls out his sword and cuts off the king's head.

Ore out vencu sa bataille Willame. (1980)

With the declaration of William's victory, the second part of the poem comes to an end. These first two parts are considered to be the original Chançon de Willame, the G₁ manuscript.

Count William rides through the field with Gui at his right hand. Near a stream under an olive tree he finds the dead Vivien. William mourns his nephew, who suddenly opens his eyes and asks for the sacrament, which his uncle administers. After partaking of it, the young hero again closes his eyes, and his soul departs.

The pagans attack Gui and take him prisoner. William, alone, is suddenly confronted by the Saracen king Alderufe. After an exchange of insults the two fight, and William kills Alderufe. Mounted upon the pagan's horse, William flees to Orange, pursued by a group of Saracens who mistake him for their leader, whose armor he wears. At the gate of the city William is not recognized by the porter, who brings Guiburc to identify her husband. But she also refuses him entry until he has proven himself by killing the Saracens who have followed him. Even after this feat has been accomplished, the stubborn woman still refuses William entry until he has lifted his helmet to reveal the deformity on his nose.

William again laments the results of the battle and declares that he plans to renounce his fief and become a monk. But Guiborc insists that he go to the emperor for a new army to avenge the loss of sixty thousand men. The Count finally agrees and sets out for Laon, leaving Orange in the hands of Guiborc and seven hundred maidens.

At Laon, Louis at first refuses William any assistance. The Count throws down his glove and returns his fief to the king. The nobles, however, recognize the worth of William's cause and offer him their help. The emperor changes his mind and declares that he himself, with thirty thousand men, will go to Archamp. Now the Queen, William's sister, lashes out with accusations and insults directed at her brother and Guiborc. William retorts harshly, and finally Louis, to break up the argument, declares that he will compromise by sending only twenty thousand men with William, but that he himself will remain at Laon. After eight days the army is assembled.

Here begins the Reneward "episode," the final part of the poem, and the most incongruous. Out of the kitchen comes a ragged knave, Reneward, bearing a large "tinel," or club. He wishes to join the army, but William insists that he is too young and unable to endure the hardships of battle. When the chief cook tries to detain him, Reneward beats him with the tincl and finally manages to escape to join the army.

When the troops depart the next day, Reneward forgets his tinsel and has to return to the castle for it. At Orange, William introduces his wife to the youth, whose name Guiborc recognizes as being the same as that of her long-lost brother. Feeling especially tender towards Reneward, Guiborc tries to give him a horse and arms, of which he refuses all but one small épée. In the morning the knave is the first one up and in his effort to arouse the others strikes the pillars so hard that the floor of the castle almost falls in.

When the army arrives at Archamp, William gives leave to all who do not wish to fight. The cowards turn away but are met by Reneward, who brings them back to fight with him at the forefront of the forces. The battle lasts all day and all night, and finally Reneward enters the pagan ships and frees the French prisoners. Upon returning to land he faces the three most ferocious warriors of the pagan kingdom and kills all three.

At last the pagans flee, and the French return to a great feast at Orange. Reneward, after all his great services, is forgotten and left on the battlefield. Deeply hurt, he renounces Christianity and declares that he will flee to pagan lands, returning only to fight against the Christians.

Hearing of Reneward's anger, William sends for the knave and has him brought to the castle to be baptized. As a fief he is given the lands of Vivien. Reneward then reveals his identity as the son of King Deramed, and Guiborc at last

realizes that this knave is her own brother. The poem ends with the statement by Reneward that if he had known of their relationship, he would have fought harder for William at Archamp.