

‘A MIRROR FOR PRINCES?’ A
TEXTUAL STUDY OF INSTRUCTIONS
FOR RULERS AND CONSORTS IN
THREE OLD FRENCH GENRES

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Abstract

This study focuses on the literary subgenre of *Mirrors for Princes*. A number of twelfth-century works from three genres of Old French literature are examined in order to ascertain what forms any didacticism takes, and whether the texts can be read as *Mirrors for Princes*. The three genres studied are epic, romance and pseudo-historical chronicle. From epic, I discuss *La Chanson de Roland*, *Le Voyage de Charlemagne*, *La Chançon de Willame* and *Le Couronnement de Louis*. Chrétien de Troyes forms the study of *Mirrors for Princes* in romance, and for pseudo-historical chronicle I examine Wace's *Roman de Brut*.

The didacticism present in the studied texts assumes two forms. The first is direct didacticism, in which the narrator or a character portrays an instruction or moral lesson through “speech”. This gives extra emphasis to the message, whether addressed directly to the audience or to another character within the narrative. The second form is indirect didacticism, which is more common in these texts. It consists of exemplary characters, their actions, behaviour and reputations. The *Mirrors for Princes* aspects of these texts provide not only examples of successful kings, but also of excellent vassals and queens. The mirrors for the women involve virtuous characteristics, where they fulfil their wifely and noble duties. They are addressed to regents and

queens consort more so than to queens regnant, who were uncommon figures in the twelfth century.

As well as providing examples and lessons on what is optimal behaviour for the ruling class, there are characters who supply examples of behaviour that is to be avoided. With these ignoble characters, common methods of transmitting the didactic messages are through their lasting reputation, the consequences of their actions, or the nature of their deaths.

The study concludes that the examined texts can be read as *Mirrors for Princes*, despite most of them not being originally conceived as belonging to this subgenre. Lessons for vassals, noblemen and noblewomen, queens and kings are present to varying extents throughout these works using both forms of didacticism outlined above.

‘A Mirror for Princes?’ A Textual Study of Instructions for Rulers and Consorts in Three Old French Genres

INTRODUCTION

Didactic literature is a genre that is intended to teach its audience about a subject, particularly moral behaviour.¹ The subgenre of didactic literature known as *Mirrors for Princes* instructs kings, future kings, or the nobility on morality and acceptable governing.² The didactic content in *Mirrors for Princes* either involves direct instruction to the ruler or takes the more indirect approach of offering up a character whose traits and actions the rulers were to emulate or avoid. Direct instruction is included in characters’ speech or in the narrator’s comments on the content. The characters found in the indirect form of instruction are often famous figures in history or folklore, such as King Arthur or Charlemagne. The texts that involve direct instruction also sometimes use these figures as examples, but are more likely to address the princes or rulers, whether by referring to a specific monarch or giving general advice for all.

¹ ed. J. Pearsall, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Tenth Edition*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 2002) p. 398

² ed. A. Vanchez, tr. A Walford, *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages Vol II*, (James Clarke & Co., Cambridge, 2000) p. 959

Authors of didactic works employed a variety of *topoi* and *exempla* in order to portray their message, especially if they were using characters as mirrors. The *topoi*, according to Curtius, are “arguments which address themselves to the hearer’s mind or heart” and “intellectual themes, suitable for development and modification”, which developed from Antique rhetoric.³ The *topoi* include stereotypical portrayals of tyrants, “inexpressibility”,⁴ concluding formulae,⁵ “outdoing”,⁶ nostalgia for the past, the “World Upside-Down,” and the basic virtue of heroes.⁷ Wisdom and courage were also important aspects used in demonstrating the worthiness of a ruler.⁸

One of the earliest of the influential Latin didactic works is John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*, completed in 1159. As a political treatise, it involves many of the *topoi* found in Old French *Mirrors for Princes*. John of Salisbury includes the definitions of princes and tyrants,⁹ details on the law and how the

³ E R Curtius, tr. W R Trask, *European Literature and the Middle Ages* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London, 1953) p. 70

⁴ Where the poet cannot find words to fitly praise the person celebrated. [Curtius, p. 159]

⁵ The concluding formulae were developed from rhetoric; they revised the principle points and appealed to the emotions of the audience. [Ibid, p. 89] Variations of these were often, but not always, used in Old French texts.

⁶ The author establishes superiority of the ruler with extreme hyperbole [Ibid, p. 162]

⁷ Ibid, p. 167

⁸ *Sapientia et fortitudo*, developed form Antique literature [Ibid, pp. 175-6]

⁹ For example, John of Salisbury, tr. C J Nederman, *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990), Book

prince is to uphold it,¹⁰ and lessons on immoral and virtuous behaviour.¹¹ The themes and definitions Salisbury employs for his didacticism are the same used by Old French poets in their epics, ballades and romances to portray their characters, whether for the purpose of didacticism or to depict recognisable characteristics to which the audience could relate.

The work generally associated with the sub-genre *Mirrors for Princes* in Europe is *Il Principe*, written by Machiavelli in 1513. However, there was a wide range of vernacular *Mirrors for Princes* prior to Machiavelli. For example, the fourteenth century writings of Eustache Deschamps are typical of Old French *Mirrors for Princes*. Eustache wrote in the context of the Hundred Years' War, and was employed by two of the kings involved.¹² The Hundred Years' War provided an abundance of material for writers of political commentary and *Mirrors for Princes*, and several of Eustache's

IV, Chapter I – *On the difference between the prince and the tyrant, and what the prince is*, pp 28-9

¹⁰ For example, Ibid, Chapter II – *What law is; and that the prince, although he is an absolutely binding law unto himself, still is the servant of law and equity, the nearer of the public persona, and sheds blood blamelessly*, pp. 30-1

¹¹ For example, Ibid, Book III, Chapter IV, *That pride is the root of all evil and passionate desire a general leprosy which infects all*, pp. 17-18

¹² Eustache first served Charles V as a messenger, a role which took him to many different countries. He also had various administrative charges while serving Louis d'Orléans from his birth in 1372. He later served the boy king Charles VI, accompanying him to his campaign in Flanders and becoming the ambassador to Hungary. (ed. Bossuat, R., L. Pichard, & G. R. De Lage, *Dictionnaire des Lettres Françaises*, [Librairie Arthème Fayard, Paris, 1974] pp. 267-8) Eustache was thus able to observe a lot of the French kings' behaviour and their foreign

contemporaries wrote similar messages.¹³ Eustache's works often deal with the events of his time, thus making his commentary both useful historically and obvious as an instruction for his king. It involves the decline of morals, social satire and lessons for princes – content comparable to *Policraticus*, although in a different form.

Eustache's *Mirrors for Princes* advise on morality and princes' policies, and can display nostalgia for the great heroes and kings of the past, and the times they lived in. This is common in Old French didacticism, as seen

activity. This led to his being highly critical of Charles VI's politics, especially after his descent into madness.

¹³ For example, Pierre d'Ailly (1350-1420), chancellor of the University of Paris, *Le Tyran*. (ed. B Woledge, *The Penguin Book of French Verse Vol 1: To the Fifteenth Century*, [Penguin Books Ltd, Middlesex, 1961], xiv) Pierre here writes a negative account about a tyrant – reminiscent of the *Policraticus*. His image of a tyrant and his followers is hellish, and his message is obvious: to be the opposite, such as:

Par avarice sent douloureux martire,
Trahison doute, en nullui ne se fie,
Cuer a felon, enflé d'orgueil et d'ire,
Triste, pensif, plein de melancolie:
Las, trop mieux vaut de franc Gontier la vie,
Sobre liesse et nette povreté,
Que poursuivre par ordre glotonnie
Court de tyrant et riche maleurté. (vv. 25-32)

Pierre encourages his readers to avoid greed, and his comment on the tyrant wishing to seize an entire kingdom or empire [24] could also be reflecting the behaviour of noblemen in the Hundred Years' War.

Songs containing didacticism were popular before this era too, such as Colin Muset's recommendations to nobles in *Quant je le tens refroidir* that they be having fun instead of continually quarrelling. The idea is that if a person is content, they will not feel the need to attack. [*The Penguin Book of French Verse Vol 1: To the Fifteenth Century*, (Penguin Books Ltd, Middlesex, 1961), pp 163-4]

through the settings and heroic characters. Nostalgia for the famous figures of old—even the notorious ones, such as the tyrant Nimrod—is an important theme to Eustache. It represents a key feature of *Ou est Nembroth le grant jayant*, and provides the main content of the first three stanzas, for example:

Ou est David le combatant,
Judas Machabée et Urie?
Ou est Charlemaine et Rolant
Godefroy qui fut en Surie,
Baudouin, leur chevalerie,
Josué, Daires et Artus
Et ceuls qui conquirent le plus
Sarrazin, Juif et Crestien?
Ils sont mis en poudre et corrus:
Soufflez, nostre vie n'est rien.¹⁴

The ballade does not refer only to rulers, but also to other key persons of antiquity, such as Vergil and Hippocrates. It is not necessary to name all the great deeds committed by these characters: the impact is given by the sheer number of them. Eustache's message is that even with all their great achievements and notoriety, these famous people too are now dead and ashes. Great achievements in this world are nothing, but endurance is assured by what one does for the next world. The use of heroic rulers and figures of great renown highlights his *ballade* as a *Mirrors for Princes* all the more; as well as using direct instructions, Eustache uses the heroes of an era long gone to inspire the actions of the audience.

¹⁴ *Ou est Nembroth*, ed. André Mary, *La Fleur de la Poesie Française*, (Éditions Garniers Frères, Paris) pp. 497-8

This study will be a textual examination of Old French works from the twelfth century to investigate whether they contain any features of the *Mirrors for Princes* sub-genre, and if they could, as a whole, be read as such. I shall focus on texts from three literary genres: epic, romance and pseudo-historical chronicle. Any didacticism found will be assessed according to the quantity of it in the work and what form it takes. As much of the didacticism that is not directly addressed to the audience originates in the characters' actions, it will be necessary to include the plot in several areas. From epic, I shall discuss *La Chanson de Roland*, *Le Voyage de Charlemagne*, *La Chançon de Willame* and *Le Couronnement de Louis*. For romance and pseudo-history, I shall examine Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide* and Wace's *Roman de Brut*.

Vernacular romance and histories emerged in the twelfth century during a period of military expansion throughout Europe. This included the Crusades, and involved the aristocracy conquering places such as Spain, Palestine, Poland and England in order to settle and increase their fortunes.¹⁵ As stated by Roberts and Klosowska, the romances and histories that were produced during this time

¹⁵ A. Roberts & A. Klosowska, *Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts* (University Press of Florida, 1998), p. 59

manage[d] the anxieties – of both conqueror and conquered, the powerful and exploited – about the chaos that lies beyond what is known, during a period of expansion; during an era in which geographical, political, and social boundaries, both in England and abroad, [were] forming and reformed.¹⁶

While the fictive vernacular pseudo-histories and romances had many predecessors from Antique Greek and Latin literature,¹⁷ there were changes in themes and trends. An example of a predominant trend is the development of Arthurian legend in both genres. King Arthur was already a common figure in Celtic folklore,¹⁸ and the spread of Western Europeans to the British Isles lead to the newcomers adapting the material for their own use. These uses included crafting Arthurian tales in such a fashion as to accommodate didactic material for the audience. The development of this in pseudo-historical chronicles can be seen in Wace's *Roman de Brut*. Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide* also represents this trend, and it is claimed by some to be the oldest extant Arthurian romance.¹⁹

¹⁶ Roberts & Klosowska, p. 59

¹⁷ D. H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150-1220*, (Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 18-25

¹⁸ W. W. Comfort, *Arthurian Romances*, (J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, London, 1970), vii

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Essentially different from the romances,²⁰ the epic genre constitutes a vast array of poems, mostly produced in the twelfth century.²¹ The epics, or *chansons de geste*, portray a “picture of feudal society with its combination of idealism and brutality, its extremes of loyalty and treachery, such as no chronicle of the time can give”.²² The nature of their origins, which have spawned many theories,²³ is difficult to determine due to the many adaptations and variations by the *jongleurs*.²⁴ The background of the *chansons de geste* rests in the Carolingian empire, and the events surrounding the development of feudalism and the expansion of power.²⁵ One theory on their origin is that they are a “literary culmination of a long tradition of ‘heroic chanting’ in France, inspired originally by the historical deeds and legendary exploits of the great Frankish king and Western emperor Charlemagne”.²⁶ The texts examined in this study mostly appear to have formed from tales of historic events: *Le Couronnement de Louis* is an amalgamation of many adapted historic events by different authors, *Le Voyage de Charlemagne* is a likely satire of Louis VII’s pilgrimage to Constantinople, and *La Chanson de Roland* developed

²⁰ J. Crosland, *The Old French Epic*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1951) p. 5

²¹ Crosland, v

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, p. 1

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, p 2

from the ambush and annihilation of Charlemagne's rearguard by Basques in 778.²⁷

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRINCES IN EPIC: LA CHANSON DE ROLAND

The developments of didacticism in Old French *chansons de geste* can be seen emerging in *La Chanson de Roland*, part of the *Geste du Roi*, which contains brief didactic passages for both leaders and vassals. Although one of the earliest *chansons de geste*, composed circa 1100,²⁸ it shows some features resembling those found in *Mirrors for Princes*.²⁹ As explained by Crosland,

A certain didactic tendency which is to be detected throughout the poem would not repel the medieval hearer at a period when the lessons of the Bible and the Church had been taught by concrete examples.³⁰

Although a clear message of the *chanson* is the promotion of Christianity and the Crusades, this study will focus on the extracts promoting noble behaviour for kings and vassals. While the work cannot be seen as a

²⁶ M. Newth, *Heroes of the French Epic: A Selection of Chansons de Geste*, (The Boydell Press, United Kingdom, 2005) vii

²⁷ G. Burgess, *The Song of Roland*, (Penguin Books Ltd., England, 1990) p. 9

²⁸ D D R Owen, *The Legend of Roland: A Pageant of the Middle Ages* (Pahidon Press Ltd., London, 1973) p. 17

²⁹ As Busby states, "the *chanson de geste* does emerge alongside vernacular hagiography, historiography, and didactic literature in the first half of the twelfth century."²⁹ (K Busby, *Codez and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, [Rodopi, 2002] p. 375)

³⁰ Crosland, p. 74

Mirror for Princes, it includes extracts that contain the nostalgia for heroes of old and expectations of people's roles, similar to that found in Eustache's works. The characters' actions and speech are the major methods of portraying these, as they were conceived -

...in a medieval fashion, that is, as being motivated by a central virtue or vice, each of these traits being associated or in conflict with corresponding qualities or faults. Although this system of virtues and vices is firmly rooted in biblical and paristic sources, the mundane aspect of moral strength and weakness is also depicted.³¹

Most of the didacticism in *La Chanson de Roland* occurs through the speech of its characters, rather than through the narrator's commentary. The didactic passages mostly involve instructions to barons as vassals of the kings rather than to the monarchs themselves, although the characters of Charlemagne and Roland occasionally perform actions or deliver speeches that could be categorised as small *Mirrors for Princes*. Roland, for instance, defines the responsibility of a lord to protect his vassals:

'Barons franceis, pur mei vos vei murir,
Jo ne vos pois tenses ne garantir
Ait vos Deus ki unkes ne mentit!' [1863-1865]³²

³¹ G. J. Brault, *The Song of Roland: An Analytical Edition*, (The Pennsylvania State University Press, USA, 1978) p. 90

³² All line references and quotations are from *La Chanson de Roland* are from F. Whitehead's translation, *La Chanson de Roland*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1957)

The rest of the didacticism found in the work mostly concerns brief words aimed at the expected actions and attitudes of the vassals to their lords, such as suffering for one's lord [1010-12, 117-19], and giving one's lord good advice.³³ This can be summarised by another of Roland's speeches:

'Ben devuns ci estre pu nostre rei:
Pur sun seignor deit hom susfrir destreiz
E endurer e granz chalz e granz freiz,
Sin deit hom perdre e del quir e del peil.
Or guart chascuns que granz colps i empleit,
Que malveis chançon de nus chantét ne seit!' [1009-1014]

The important role played by vassals is apparent throughout the work, with references to the relationship between Charlemagne and Roland, Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers, the Saracens' nobles, and the nobles to their men. For example, the strong and successful relationship between Roland, his men and his lord can be seen through a discussion between Blancandrin and Ganelon:

'Par quele gent quiet el espleiter tant?'
Guenes respunt: 'Par la franceise gent,
Il l'aiment tant, ne li faldrunt niënt,
Or e argent lur met tant en present,
Muls e destreers e palies e guarnemenz,
L'emperere meïsmes ad tut a sun talent,
Cunquerrat li les teres d'ici qu'en orient.' [395-401]

³³ *Chanson de Roland*, 205-6 (reckless advice, but given nevertheless), 228 (Ganelon against Roland's advice)

Roland himself embodies the perfect tragic hero, whose fatal flaw amongst his prowess is immoderate pride. His role had great significance in the medieval world, as Hall explains:

Roland came to be viewed more and more as not only a warrior, but also a saint, combining the military heroism that must have been the first aspect of his legendary fame with the virtues of a defender of the Christian faith. The two conceptions of his role in history have given rise to conflicting assumptions concerning Roland's character and the psychological motivation of his acts.³⁴

Although van Emden argues that Roland's death is "the climax of a glorious disaster, not a defeat",³⁵ the defeat of the rearguard has most often been considered a tragedy. It was caused not only by Ganelon's betrayal and Charlemagne's trust of the Saracen's word,³⁶ but also by Roland's refusing to blow his horn for aid until it is too late.

Roland's *desmesure* and arrogance lead to a great tragedy for all concerned. The knight Oliver is important to the portrayal of the hero's character, as he describes the unfavourable and dishonourable aspects of Roland's actions. Oliver, although often seen as the stereotypical foil to the hero, makes one of the speeches that contain didacticism to vassals and leaders, which emphasises the importance of *mesure*:

³⁴ R. A. Hall Jr, "A Roland for an Oliver": *Their Quarrel Again* (ed. K Campbell, *Olifant Vol. 20 No.s 1-4*, [Société Rencesvals, 1995-6, pp 109-44], p. 113

³⁵ W. van Emden, *La Chanson de Roland*, (Grant & Cutler Ltd., London, 1995) p. 14

E il respond: ‘Cumpainz, vos le feïstes;
Kar vassalage par sens ne nest folie,
Mielz valt mesure que ne fait estultie.
Franceis sunt morz par vostre legerie,
Jamais Karlon de nus n’avrat servise.
Sem creïsez, venuz i fust mi sire;
Ceste bataille oïsum faite u prise,
U pris u mort i fust li reis Marsilie.
Vostre proëcce, Rollant, mar li ve[i]mes;
Karles li magnes de nos n’avrat aïe.
N’ert mais tel home des qu’a Deu juïse.
Vos i murrez e France en ert hunie.’ [1723-1734]

Roland repents of his *desmesure* before his death and blows the horn to “mitigate the consequences”;³⁷ at least this way they are ensured of a Christian burial. This in itself is argued, by Oliver, to be a dishonourable act: changing his mind at this point is cowardly and shameful.³⁸ Roland’s *desmesure* provides the necessary consequences of his death and the defeat of the rearguard as dictated by history. His all-important role as Charlemagne’s vassal is re-emphasised upon his death, as he will never again be able to provide feudal service for the king [1727, 2916-29], or, indeed, continue to encourage others to do so.

In *La Chanson de Roland*, the character of Charlemagne is generally portrayed as an ideal king, with a mix of human and divine characteristics. He

³⁶ Crosland, p. 71

³⁷ Van Emden, p. 64

³⁸ Hall, p. 177

contributes to the didactic aspect through displays of how he governs, and through reports of his reputation. For example, when Charlemagne first appears, his great victory over the pagans has left him and his men enjoying themselves in a plentiful state of leisure [Laisse VIII], and he deals wisely with the Saracen messengers. He also takes counsel with his barons, which is an important aspect of feudality that rulers would be expected to follow: “Par cels de France voelt il del tut errer” [167].

Another interpretation of Charlemagne, examined by Brault, is that he is a Messianic figure, which can be seen mostly through his many prophetic dreams. This theory is a little too extreme; however, he is portrayed in a human light with human sufferings alongside a “blind and spontaneous obedience to the strange promptings of the Almighty”.³⁹ This relationship with the Almighty in the context of a *Mirror for Princes* could serve to highlight the divine right of Charlemagne’s reign, legitimise the battle and emphasise Charlemagne’s status as an excellent emperor.

Charlemagne’s reputation is displayed through reports by other characters, whether his enemies or vassals. Marsile’s queen, Bramimonde, is an excellent example of this, as most of her speeches contain some reference

to the power of the Frankish king. This first happens after Marsile's hand is cut off, and he flees to Saragossa. In wailing about her fate, Bramimonde describes Charlemagne and the Franks as fearful men:

'Li amiralz i ferat cuardie,
S'il ne combat a cele gent hardie
Ki si sunt fiers, n'unt cure de lur vies.
Li emperere od la barbe flurie
Vasselage ad e mult grant estultie;
S'il ad bataillie, il ne s'en fuirat mie.
Mult est grant doel que ne nest ki l'ociet.' [2602-8]

The verses highlight Charlemagne's image as well as that of his vassals, adding to their exemplary depiction. Bramimonde repeats these traits again, this time applied only to Charlemagne:

'Li emperere est ber e combatant;
Meilz voel murir que ja fuiet de camp.
Suz ciel n'ad rei qu'il prist a un enfant,
Carles ne creint nulls hom ke seit vivant.' [2737-40]

Bramimonde now believes that, due both to these traits and her husband's imminent death, Charlemagne will be the overall victor.

Balanced with the excellent reputation is the apparent weak side of Charlemagne's character. Charlemagne has the negative reputation of being "velz...e redotez" [905], as in Marsile's conversation with Ganelon:

'De Carlemagne vos voeill oïr parler.
Il est mult vielz, si ad sun tens usét,

³⁹ Brault, p. 95

Men escient dous cens anz ad passét;
...Quant ert il mais recreanz d'osteier?'
Guenes respunt: 'Carles n'est mie tells,
N'est hom kil veit e conuistre le set
Tant nel vos sai ne presiser ne loër
Que plus n'i ad d'onur e de bontét:
Sa grant valor kil purreit acunter?
De tel barnage l'ad Deus enluminét,
Meilz voelt murir que guerpir sun barnét.' [522-36]

Despite references to his bravery, wisdom and strength throughout the epic, the picture of Charlemagne as an old and weakening king is the lasting image with which the audience is left. Such an ending displays use of the "conclusion *topos*,"⁴⁰ which was meant to "resume the principal points and then to make an appeal to the emotions of the hearer",⁴¹ and therefore contains the lasting impression the author wished to make:

Li emperere n'i volsist aler mie.
'Deus', dist li reis, 'si penuse est ma vie!'
Pluret des oilz, sa barbe blanche tiret.
Ci falt la geste que Tuoldus declinet. [3999-4002]

La Chanson de Roland, therefore, ends as Charlemagne's tragedy.⁴²

The Saracen enemy is an example of a feudal society which, due to its heathen nature, has formed into a formidable force of evil against the Christian

⁴⁰ Curtius, pp. 89-91 The "conclusion *topos*" often used the weariness of the author as a reason for completing the work. *La Chanson de Roland* interestingly uses Charlemagne's weariness instead.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 89

⁴² J. Kellogg, *Medieval Artistry and Exchange: Economic Institutions, Society, and literary Form in Old French Narrative*, (Peter Lang, 1989) p. 18

Franks. They adhere to many feudal values and traditions, such as the giving of gifts to a visitor at court [609-41]. Some of their characteristics are even noble, such as the emir from Balaguer:

 Mult se fait fiers de ses armes porter,
 De vassalage est il ben alosez;
 Fust chrestiens, asez oust barnét. [897-99]

The worst traits of the Saracens, apart from their being the enemies of the *chanson*'s heroes, are their treachery and their paganism. Their treachery, with the help of Ganelon's own deceit, is a major contributor to the plot of the narrative. A hint of the diabolical is also given in the description of the Saracen barons, where Chernubles of Munigre is reported to come from a hellish land. He himself has unnatural strength, and his country supposedly has devils living in it [975-83]. The Saracens, however, are mostly human characters; Baligant's grief over the fortune of Marsile is comparable to Charlemagne's over Roland [2788-89, 2839]. This is a great contrast from the monstrous appearance of them that develops in later epics. In *La Chanson de Roland*, the Saracens could be used to show the medieval audience a corrupt pagan version of their society, which is not as great as their own. As Roland summarises, "Païen unt tort e chrestiens unt dreit" [1015].

Although didacticism for princes in the *Chanson de Roland* is found mostly in the speeches of the characters, examples of both rash and exemplary

behaviour are shown through the *desmesure* displayed by Roland, emphasised by Oliver, and the passages where Charlemagne rules wisely. The importance of vassals, however, is the major theme in the directly didactic passages as spoken by Roland. *La Chanson de Roland* is not written as a *Mirror for Princes*, although aspects of it could be read as such. It is an important work to this genre, however, as it is likely that “the poet’s portrayals helped shape later conceptualisations of ideal conduct.”⁴³ The hero’s significance as an effective vassal is an essential aspect not only in *La Chanson de Roland*, but also in other *chansons de geste* such as *Le Couronnement de Louis*, which will be discussed further. These vassals can either complement an effective lord, or highlight their king’s incompetence.

LE VOYAGE DE CHARLEMAGNE – *IGNOBLE BEHAVIOUR*

As opposed to *La Chanson de Roland*, *Le Voyage de Charlemagne* holds little heroic status for the emperor; Charlemagne’s faults in the *Voyage* lie with his lack of noble behaviour. As summarised by Burrell,

The work has elements of bullying and brutality, degradation of women, vicious arrogance as well as cameo displays of covertousness, envy, lust and greed.⁴⁴

⁴³ Brault, p. 91

⁴⁴ M Burrell, *The Voyage of Charlemagne: Cultural Transmission or Cultural Transgression?* (ed. E Jeffreys, *Parergon*, No. 7, 1989, pp 47-53) p. 53

This *chanson* is a comical satire based on the heroic tradition,⁴⁵ which reverses the audience's expectations of their literary heroes.⁴⁶ While some scholars believe the comedy to be purely for entertainment purposes,⁴⁷ studies have also found it to be a political satire based on Louis VII's pilgrimage during the Second Crusade. This pilgrimage was disastrous, and many passages in *Le Voyage de Charlemagne* have parallels between Louis' behaviour and Charlemagne's antics.⁴⁸ As these parallels would have been recognisable to the work's audience in the 1150s, it is plausible that it not only offered entertainment, but a mirror for and of the nobility involved. The behaviour of the main characters can be seen as something for princes to avoid emulating in any circumstance.

The text largely exploits the *topoi* of hyperbole, the "World Upside-Down,"⁴⁹ and, most importantly, the "outdoing" *topos*. Charlemagne and his knights are ridiculous figures, and King Hugo, although the more desirable

⁴⁵ As well as being based on *chansons de geste*, it has been argued that this is a parody of a text which explains the existence of Saint-Denis' relics. (see U T Holmes Jr. *A History of Old French Literature from the Origins to 1300*, [Russell & Russell Inc., New York, 1962] pp 79-80, 334)

⁴⁶ Burrell, p. 53

⁴⁷ J. G. Picherit, *The Voyage of Charlemagne*, (Summa Publications Ltd., Alabama, 1984) iii and Horrent, cb. J. L. Grigsby, *A Note on the Genre of the Voyage de Charlemagne* (ed. Lacy, N. J. and J. C. Nash, *Essays in Early French Literature Presented to Barbara M. Craig*, [French Literature Publications Company, USA, 1982]) pp 1-2

⁴⁸ Newth, p. 146

model of kingship, has his Otherworldly⁵⁰ luxuries portrayed in such hyperbole that he too is rendered ridiculous. Even the queen is at fault, for it is her rash words about her husband's prowess that start the adventure:

Cele ne fud pas sage, folement respondeit:
'Emperere,' dist ele, 'trop vus pöez preiser;
Uncor en sai jo un ki plus se fait leger
Quant il porte corune entre ses chevalers:
Kaunt la met sur sa teste, plus belement lui set!
[12-16]⁵¹

It has been suggested that this represents Eleanor of Aquitaine's criticism of her husband Louis VII that he was more of a monk than a king.⁵²

Upon reaching Constantinople, Charlemagne is disrespectful to his host, seen especially through the boasts that he makes. Heroes of literature such as Roland and William of Orange are also encouraged by their emperor to make ridiculous boasts, as per the "outdoing" *topos*, much to the horror of King Hugo's spy [Laissez XXV-XXXVII]. The war-boast (*gab*) was a "convention of epic diction, allowing the *jongleur*-poet to display his rhetoric skills."⁵³ In *Le Voyage de Charlemagne*, the *gab* is given a new level of

⁴⁹ Curtius, p. 96

⁵⁰ L. H. Loomis & T. P. Cross, *Observations on the Pelerinage Charlemagne*, (*Modern Philology*, Vol. 25, No. 3, (Fen 1928), pp 331-354), p. 334

⁵¹ All quotations and line references are from Picherit's translation referenced above.

⁵² Newth, p. 146

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 145

comedy.⁵⁴ The reversed behaviour of all these common literary characters was undoubtedly designed in order to entertain the audience. These boasts were possibly a parody of the frustration of Louis' forces, who in 1147 requested an attack on Constantinople.⁵⁵ Grigsby refers to the *gabs* of *Le Voyage de Charlemagne* as “imaginative, inventive, mockery,”⁵⁶ where their outlandish suggestions replace the traditional series of threats, such as those found in *La Chanson de Roland*.⁵⁷ However, the characters retain their heroic status by actually being able to carry out their boasts, albeit with some trickery.

The pervasion of *gabs* throughout *Le Voyage de Charlemagne* shows how important they are to its structure. The tale begins with one: Charlemagne's boast to his queen. The queen insists, in order to save herself, that her retort is simply another *gab*, yet it is the catalyst for Charlemagne's “pilgrimage”. The bulk of the visit to King Hugo deals with the Franks' *gabs* and their consequences, then the resolution of the original *gabs* of the queen and Charlemagne. As Grigsby indicates, the entire work can be seen as a *gab*:

In macrocosm, the narrative mimics the microcosm of the *gab*: a knight brags; others try to better the boast; the leader threatens punishment; Charles petitions God; all are forgiven. The *gab* is the

⁵⁴ Newth, p. 145

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 147

⁵⁶ Grigsby, p. 3

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 2

mainspring of the entire narrative movement.... We can now justifiably claim that the *Voyage de Charlemagne* created its own genre, and that it is indeed a *gab*.⁵⁸

If *Le Voyage de Charlemagne* is to be considered as part of the *gab* genre, it does not preclude it from being read as a *Mirror for Princes*, given its clear examples of how not to behave. This reversal of the heroic tradition can be represented by Charlemagne's self-crowning at the beginning of the *chanson* [Laissez I, III]. Charlemagne sees his crown as highly important, and the idea that another king could wear it better makes him "mult ...curecez" [17]. His crown as a symbol of his reign becomes even more apparent at the end of the tale, where, having proved himself the mightier ruler, he wears a crown "fud graindre de plein ped et.III pouz" [811]. The crowning signifies the futility of Charlemagne's quest; the crown, giving Charlemagne an extra fifteen inches in height over Hugo, is the only symbol of his superiority over the Eastern emperor.⁵⁹ King Louis himself returned to Paris with his army after being forced to pay homage and swear fealty to Emperor Manuel of Constantinople.⁶⁰ His political humiliation of returning as the lesser king, with only some holy objects to show for his "pilgrimage", would have been substantial. The significance of the crown, and the entire story, is a parody of these events and of heroic literature inspired by the "geste du Charlemagne",

⁵⁸ Grigsby, p. 6

⁵⁹ Newth, p. 149

such as *Le Couronnement de Louis* and *La Chançon de Willame*, the two works from the William Cycle which will be discussed below.

LA CHANÇUN DE WILLAME

La Chançon de Willame is an epic that involves battles against Saracens, and follows the structure of *La Chanson de Roland* of the death of a hero then the subsequent revenge.⁶¹ It contains didacticism through examples of acceptable and contemptible behaviour. The characters are contrasted against one another, with the most notable example being the counts Tedbalt and Vivien, as “the *chansons de geste* are structured so as to set off the qualities of one warrior against another and to pit him against a whole society.”⁶²

Whereas Count Vivien fulfils the role of the hero in the first part of the *chanson*, Count Tedbalt is the ineffective ruler. Tedbalt is introduced as almost a farcical character, returning from vespers “si ivre que plus n’i poet estre” [32]. He is therefore in no fit state to deal with the problem of the Saracen King Deramed, who is plundering his kingdom. Although he does ask his

⁶⁰ Newth, pp. 146-7

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 38

⁶² P. E. Bennett, *La Chanson de Guillaume and La Prise d’Orange*, (Grant & Cutler Ltd., 2000) p. 24

household for advice [46], he disregards the advice that would guarantee his victory: sending for William. This counsel comes from the future hero, Count Vivien, who later has to deal with the consequences of Tedbalt's folly. Esturmi's argument that William could simply take all the glory for the battle [59-77]⁶³ wins Tedbalt over. Instead of sending for assistance, he continues drinking with Esturmi, with the intention of attacking before prime the next day [89-95], actions which again mark him out as an unwise leader.

Tedbalt's behaviour the next morning continues to bring disgrace to his position. With his lord sober and rightly fearful, Vivien has hope for a wise judgement:

Dist Vivien: 'C'est plaid soi jo assez!
Tedbalt fu ivre erseir de sun vin cler;
Or est tut sage, quant ad dormi assez.
Ore atendum nus Willame al curb niés!' [113-16]

However, Tedbalt chooses to listen to Esturmi's altered account of the night before, which has dire consequences for all involved. Despite their circumstances, he still decides not to send for the man that will guarantee their victory, thus proving himself to be foolish even when sober:

Respunt Tedbalt: 'Ai jo mandé Willame?'
'Nenil, bels sire, car il ne puet a tens estre.
Par mi le col t'en oras herseir dehé

⁶³ All line references and quotations are from P. E. Bennett, *La Chanson de Guillaume*, (Grant & Cutler Ltd., Spain, 2000)

Si tu mandoues Willame al curb niés.
Respunt Tedbalt: ‘Ore leissum dunc ester!’ [127-31]

Count Vivien’s character contributes to the didacticism in the work by reminding Tedbalt what his role as the leader in battle must be [162(a)-182]. His role as a vassal consists of advising and fighting for an ineffective ruler — the role Count William acquires with King Louis in both *La Chançon de Willame* and *Le Couronnement de Louis*. In this situation, Vivien’s advice once more calls for the presence of William, which is ignored again until it is too late. Upon seeing the enemy, Tedbalt forgets himself in fear [189]; displaying his cowardly nature, he wishes to flee and wait for William, although the enemy has already seen him. Vivien must therefore counsel him again on action befitting his role:

Dist Vivien: ‘Malveis conseil ad ci!
Tu les as veuz, et il tei altres.
Si tu t’en vas, ço ert tut del fuir:
Crestienté en ert tut dis plus vils
Et paenisme en ert plus esbaldi.
Combat t’en, ber! Sis veinteruns jolt e pelvis!
Al pris Willame te deis faire tenir!
Des herseir vespre le cunte en aatis.’ [202-9]

Nevertheless, when it comes to battle, Tedbalt continues his role in portraying traits to be avoided by proving himself to be a cowardly leader. He prefers the advice of Esturmi once more, possibly because it mirrors what he wished to do earlier:

Dunc dist Tedbalt: ‘Qu’en loez, sire Vivien?’

'De la bataille! Car ore vienge ben!
 Aprof demande: 'Qu'en loez, Esturmi?'
 'Que chascuns penst de sa vie garir!
 Qui ore ne s'en fuit tost i puet mort gisir:
 Alum nu sent pur noz vies garir!
 Dist Vivien: 'Ore oi parler mastin!
 Respunt Tedbalt: 'Ainz est pres de mun lin,
 Ne volt enquire dunt mun cors seit honi,
 Ne engine, ne malement bailli.'
 'Esturmi niés, derump cest gunfanun,
 Ke en fuiant ne nus conuisse l'um;
 Car a l'enseigne trarrunt paen felun.'
 Et dist Esturmi: 'A la Deu beneiçun! [252-65]

Although Tedbalt has proceeded correctly in feudal law by asking his barons for counsel, his cowardly nature comes to the fore. He and his nephew Esturmi abandon their men, and destroy their standards so that the pagans will not target them; this is a highly dishonourable act, as seen through Vivien's speech to the knights:

'Genz sanz seigneur sunt malement bailli.
 Alez vu sent, francs chevalers gentilz,
 Car jo ne puis endurer ne souffrir
 Tant gentil home seient a tort bailli.' [287-90]

Following this incident are two verses that well represent a *Mirror for Princes* through Vivien's actions. Count Vivien behaves with the nobility that Tedbalt should have displayed; consequently, the knights swear their loyalty to him. Despite this, Vivien is concerned that the knights are not upholding the feudal laws, and informs them that they can still leave:

'Mias d'une chose i ad grant cuntredit:
 Vus n'estes mens, ne jo vostre sire ne devinc.

Sanz tuz perjures me purrez guerpir.’
Et cil respurent tuz a un cri:
‘Tais, ber, nel dire! Ja t’averum plevi
En cele lei que Deus en terre mist
A ses apostles quant entr’els descendit,
Ne te faudrum tant cum tu serras vifs!’
‘Et jo rafi vus de Deu le rei fort,
Et en cel esperit qu’il out en sun cors
Pur pecchurs quant il suffri la mort,
Ne vus faldrai pur destresce de mun cors.’ [302-13]

Vivien’s command is therefore seen as proper and legal, not usurping the role of Count Tedbalt. His vow and immediate commencement of battle also suggests that his leadership will be far more effective. His noble course of action is further enhanced in the narrative by his war cry, “Munjoie!” being referred to as Charlemagne’s own [327]. Although the cry is used elsewhere in the epic, this is the only situation where it is linked with the greatest French monarch [13-15].

Meanwhile, Tedbalt the coward meets with a humorous and ignoble fate, concluding his role as the epic’s ineffective ruler. His shameful exit from the tale is another indication of his unacceptable behaviour, as dishonourable rulers often meet dishonourable fates in *Mirrors for Princes*. Fleeing with the other cowardly knights who chose not to follow Vivien, he gets hit in the mouth by a hanged thief. Adding to his humiliation, the fright results in his soiling and discarding his richly adorned saddlecloth [344-51]. Encouraging

Girard to take up the saddlecloth and sell it brings him even more shame. Girard understandably rejects the offer of the saddlecloth, as it is covered in “conchie”, but proceeds to relieve Tedbalt of his fine arms. In a daze, Tedbalt flees through a flock of sheep on his packhorse. The only spoil of war that the cowardly count receives is the head of a sheep that became stuck in his stirrup and was dragged over hill and dale [395-404]. Count Tedbalt, after displaying unwise and cowardly behaviour for a ruler, leaves the epic as a figure to be mocked:

Une tel preie ne portad mes gentilz hom.
Lundi al vespre:
Li povres n’i eust tant a perdre! [402-4]

The didacticism decreases from this point until Count William, King Louis, and Guiburc enter as examples. William in this epic is reminiscent of Charlemagne in *La Chanson de Roland*, as the grand heroic figure who in his old age does not feel he can achieve the same feats that he could in his prime.

William is shown as being a nobler lord than both Count Tedbalt and the Emperor Louis. His character pertains to Crosland’s impression of the epic warrior:

powerful, warlike, irascible, pathetic in his many misfortunes, always ready to help his friends, devoted to his wife and

his horse, full of attention for his relations, consistently loyal to his king.⁶⁴

However, most of these qualities are tested throughout this epic, particularly his loyalty to the king. At the outset, William is contrasted with Tedbalt, and is also introduced to the tale by returning from vespers to hear the news of King Deramé's attack. However, there is a distinct difference in William's state compared to Tedbalt's—he is not drunk, but has just returned from another bloody battle in which he lost his men [933-9]. William's help in the battle against the pagans seems promising, given his prowess and his close ties with Vivien, but he, like Louis, does not wish to go to battle. He has already lost his war band, and does not think he can bear the strain of fighting just yet [1020-25], despite Vivien's faithful service. However, the author does not make this out to be weakness or cowardice, but good sense [1014]. William's wife Guiburc remonstrates with him, telling him to go to his nephew's aid [1027-36]. Guiburc here is acting in a similar way to a vassal in giving advice to do with war, such as what Vivien gave to Tedbalt.⁶⁵

William's actions and behaviour when he and his squires arrive at l'Archamp are comparable to Tedbalt and Vivien's behaviour at the first battle. In this section, William represents the opposite of Tedbalt: whereas

⁶⁴ Crosland, p. 92

Tedbalt destroyed the standards so he could flee, William makes a speech to the knights encouraging them into battle:

‘Ore succrez hui vostre gunfanuner!’
Et cil respudent: ‘Sire, mult volenters!
Ne vus faldrum tant cum serum sur pez.’
...Dunc laist les demeines quant l’orent afié;
As vavassurs en veit dan Willame parler,
A un conseil les ad tuz amenez. [1582-84, 1588-90]

The scene is much more reminiscent of Vivien before battle than of Count Tedbalt. William takes counsel with his men as Tedbalt had done, but with entirely different results. The comparison of and contrasts between the different rulers in the tale are features of a *Mirror for Princes*. However, those characters who exhibit correct noble behaviour do not necessarily have success, as in the case of Vivien’s and William’s defeats, and do not all maintain such behaviour consistently, as exemplified by King Louis.

The character of King Louis appears only briefly in comparison to the other major figures, but he is significant in that his actions provide another negative example for the epic. This is shown when William asks him for help in the war against the pagans:

‘Lowis, sire, mult ai esté pené,
En plusurs esturs ai esté travaillé.
Sole est Guiburc en Orange le see;
Pur Deu vus mande, que socurs li facez.’

⁶⁵ For a detailed discussion of Guiburc’s role, see pages 53-9 following

Ço dist li reis: 'N'en sui ore aisez;
A caste feiz n'i porterai mes piez.'
Dist Willame: 'Qui enchet ait cinc cenz dehez!'
Dunc traist sun guant, qui a or fu entaillez,
A l' 'empereree l'ad geté a ses piez.
'Lowis, sire, ci vus rend vos feez!
N'en tendrai mais un demi pé;
Qui que te plaist le refai ottrier.' [2526-37]

Louis fails in his duty to protect and assist his vassal, and so provides yet another example of how a king or overlord should not behave. William then follows his wife's advice to return his fief [2422-23]. It is not Louis but his barons who take action in defending the kingdom. Many of William's relatives are in Louis' court, and they pledge to bring their men to battle [2538-87]. All of them go to the king to plead William's case, describing that if William loses Orange, Louis will lose his own kingdom to the pagans. This incentive promptly makes Louis declare:

... 'Jo irrai mé meisme,
En ma compaignie chevalers trente mille.' [2588-89]

After a dispute with William's sister, the queen, Louis still agrees to help him; however, it is because he will have his army deployed regardless to what the king decides, and the number of men has suddenly diminished to twenty thousand:

Et fait li reis: 'Ben fait, par Deu le pere,
Car ele parole cum femme desvee.
Si jo n'i vois, si serrad m'ost mandee;
Vint mile chevalers od nues espees
Li chargerai demain a l'ajurnee.' [2630-34]

Despite deploying his men, Louis is once again revealed to be an ineffective leader by not attending the battle himself:

‘Ne vient il dunc?’ ‘Nun, dame.’ ‘Ço m’est laid!’
‘Malade gist a sa chapele a Es.’
‘Et dist Guiburc: ‘Cest vers avez vus fait!
S’il ore gist, ja ne releve il més!’ [2802-5]

Although this is a very small detail in the tale, it is significant. As the count must still proceed without his lord, the situation highlights the king’s lack of leadership and ensures that William will remain the high-ranking hero of this section of the *chanson*. The passage also demonstrates the importance of the actions of the vassal, as he —and others such as Vivien, the thousands of men lost in battle, and the future vassal Reneward —are the ones who are actively protecting the kingdom.⁶⁶

While there are no directly didactic passages, *La Chançon de Willame* can be read as a *Mirror for Princes* through the actions of its characters. Through their displays of true bravery and nobility, Vivien, William and Guiburc are the epic’s exemplary figures, whereas King Louis and Count Tedbalt are distinct examples of disreputable behaviour for feudal lords. The ignoble behaviour of Tedbalt is a far more effective image than the exemplary

⁶⁶ Cf. *La Chanson de Roland*, 1009-1014, as discussed above

actions of the other counts; however, most of the epic is dedicated to the heroics of noble vassals defending their and their king's lands.

LE COURONNEMENT DE LOUIS

The vassal as the mirror and hero, rather than the King, is crucial to the events of *Le Couronnement de Louis*, where William suffers years of battle and hardship to preserve the lands and throne of his lord. However, the work does not merely portray an ineffective king, but also contains a significant amount of direct didacticism through the speech of the ideal king, Charlemagne.

Le Couronnement de Louis, reputedly the most important of the Guillaume legends,⁶⁷ is a heroic tale about the exploits of Count William, as he fights to defend Rome from the Saracens and King Louis' throne from robber barons. Although the *chanson* focuses mainly on William's adventures, it contains verses which appear to be distinctly written as part of a *Mirror for Princes*. Bédier divides *Le Couronnement de Louis* into five parts, the first of which contains the greatest prospect of being a *Mirror for Princes*; the

⁶⁷ Crosland, p. 35

different episodes were composed by different Carolingian authors⁶⁸ and “retrace historical events which are chronologically distant and independent from each other.”⁶⁹ In addition, throughout the epic there are many royal characters —particularly Charlemagne, Louis, and Galafrez—who display qualities of both undesirable and effective rulers. The circumstances of the character of Louis also suggest that some of the *chanson* could be intended as a *Mirror for Princes*, which echoes the events and futile leadership of the day.

The first part of the *chanson*, particularly verses 7-10 and 13,⁷⁰ introduce the work as a *Mirror for Princes*. These sections involve Charlemagne attempting to crown his son Louis, while instructing him in the ruling of a kingdom. He discusses many aspects of good feudal kingship,⁷¹ including morals, laws, and war. The standards of kingship that he expects his son to execute will later highlight Louis’ ineffectiveness as a ruler. Through his introduction into the tale and through the instructions to his son,

⁶⁸ J. Frappier, *Les Chansons de Geste du Cycle de Guillaume d’Orange II* (Société D’Édition D’Enseignement Supérieur, Paris, 1965) pp. 48-9

⁶⁹ J. Bédier, *Les Legendes Epiques: Recherches Sur la Formation des Chansons de Geste Troisième Édition I*, (Librairie Ancienne H. Champion, Paris, 1926) p. 236

⁷⁰ Quotations and line references are from Langlois, E. *Le Couronnement de Louis – Chanson de Geste*, (Librairie de Firmin Didot Et Cie. Paris), 1925

⁷¹ A. Hindley & B. Levy, *The Old French Epic*, (Peeters, Belgium, 1983) p. 25

Charlemagne is displayed as an ideal king for Louis to emulate; thus he becomes an exemplary mirror for other rulers to imitate.

Charlemagne's status as the greatest of kings is set out at the beginning of the epic, and echoes contemporary praise of him:⁷²

Quant Deus eslut nonante et neuf reïames,
Tot le meïllor torna en dolce France.
Li mielldre reis ot a nom Charlemaine;
Cil aleva volentiers dolce France. [12-15]

The portrayal of Charlemagne as the finest monarch adds extra weight to the laws of kingship that he gives Louis. He also provides a contrast to his son, who will later prove to be unable to rule without the assistance of his vassal, William.

Charlemagne instructs his son on many aspects of good kingship, which are repeated over multiple verses. These are in accordance with the author's contemporary views of the feudal duties of kingship.⁷³ The advice can be divided into instructions on law, morality, knights, and war. The instructions Charlemagne gives on a king's moral and judicious behaviour are summarised in his final instructions to Louis:

⁷² Most notably Einhard, who described him as "that most outstanding and deservedly famous king" and "the most splendid and greatest of all men" [tr. P. E. Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier – The Complete Einhard*, (Broadview Press, Canada, 1998), pp 15 &16]

⁷³ Hindley & Levy, p. 25

‘Quant Deus fist reis por pueple justicier,
Il nel fist mie por false lei jugier,
Faire luxure, ne alever pechié,
Ne orfe enfant por retolir son fié,
Ne veve feme tolir quatre deniers;
Ainz deit kes torz abatre soz ses piez,
Encontre val et foler et pleissier.
Envers le povre te deis umeliier;
Se il se clame, ne te deit enoier,
Ainsceis le deis aidier et conseillier,
Por l’amor Deu de son dreit adrecier;
Vers l’orgoillos te deis faire si fier
Come liepart qui gent vueille mangier.’ [175-87]

Charlemagne’s instructions appear to be derived from, or based upon, the same principles as the Capitulary of Charlemagne, which was decreed in 802. This capitulary is the foundation charter of the Holy Roman Empire.⁷⁴ It is of extreme importance, as it establishes everyone as being accountable to the emperor, Charlemagne, in all aspects of law. The laws chiefly involve morality, with the majority of the content instructing those in the clergy or monasteries on correct behaviour and dispensing of justice. Almost every piece of advice that Charlemagne gives to Louis has a parallel in the capitulary, including the summary in its conclusion:

Likewise we wish our decrees to be known by laymen and in all places whether they concern the protection of churches or widows, or orphans or the weak; or the plundering of them, or the fixing of the assembly of the army, or any other matters.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ E. F. Henderson, *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages* (George Bell and Sons, 1896), cb. The Avalon Project <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/medieval/capitula.htm>

⁷⁵ Capitulary of Charlemagne, Chapter 2, 40 (*Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages*)

Both works mention repeatedly the necessity of caring for orphans and widows, and both deal with the dispensing of justice. The capitulary instructs on how others are to dispense justice fairly, while the Charlemagne of *Le Couronnement de Louis* exacts similar instruction upon Louis. The following table outlines some of the passages which, though certainly not translations, deal with similar subject matter:

Subject matter	<i>Le Couronnement de Louis</i>	The Capitulary of Charlemagne, 802 AD
Orphans, widows, justice	<p>Quant Deus fist reis por pueple justicier, Il nel fist mie por false lei jugier, Faire luxure, ne alever pechié, Ne orfe enfant por retolir son fié, Ne veve feme tolir quatre deniers; Ainz deit kes torz abatre soz ses piez, Encontre val et foler et pleissier. [175-81]</p> <p>...Ne orfelin son fié ne li toldrez [67]</p> <p>[se tu] Ne orfe enfant retolir le suen fié, Ne veve feme tolir quatre deniers, Ceste corone de Jesu la te vié. [83-5]</p> <p>Qu'a orfe enfant ja son dreit ne tolir, N'a veve feme vaillant un angevin; Et sainte eglise pense de</p>	<p>Chapter 1: And let no-one, though his cleverness or astuteness – as many are accustomed to do – dare to oppose the written law, or the sentence passed upon him, or to prevail against the churches of God or the poor, or widows, or minors, or any Christian man.</p> <p>...and thus, altogether and everywhere and in all cases, whether the matter concerns the holy churches of God, or the poor, or wards and widows, or the whole people, let them fully administer law and justice according to the will and to the fear of God</p>

	<p>bien servir, Que ja deables ne te puisse honir. [153-6]</p>	<p>Chapter 2</p> <p>5. That no-one shall presume through fraud to plunder or do any injury to the holy churches of God, or to widows, orphans or strangers; for the emperor himself, after God and his saints, has been constituted their protector and defender.</p> <p>14. ...The poor, widows, orphans and pilgrims shall have consolation and protection from them; so that we, through their good will, may merit, rather than punishment, the rewards of eternal life.</p>
<p>Judicious behaviour</p>	<p>Ainz deit kes torz abatre soz ses piez, Encontre val et foler et pleissier. Envers le povre te deis umeliier; Se il se clame, ne te deit enoier, Ainsceis le deis aidier et conseilier, Por l'amor Deu de son dreit adrecier; Vers l'orgillos te deis faire si fier, Come liepart qui gent vueille mangier. [180-7]</p> <p>Quant Deus fist reis por pueple justicier, Il nel fist mie por false lei jugier [175-6]</p> <p>Se tu deis prendre, bels filz, de fals loiers, Ne desmesure lever ne essalcier... [80-1]</p>	<p>Chapter 1:</p> <p>25. That counts and centenars shall see to it that justice is done in full; and they shall have younger men in their service in whom they can securely trust, who will faithfully observe law and justice, and by no means oppress the poor...</p> <p>26: That judges shall judge justly, according to the written law and not according to their own judgement</p> <p>27: We decree that throughout our whole realm no-one shall dare to deny</p>

		hospitality to the rich, or to the poor, or to pilgrims
Morals and religion	<p>Tort ne luxure ne pechié ne mener [65]</p> <p>[se tu] Faire luxure ne alever pechié [83]</p> <p>Et sainte eglise pense de bien servir, Que ja edables ne te puisse honir. [155-6]</p> <p>Faire luxure ne aleve pechié [177]</p>	<p>Lengthy passages involving this theme are in:</p> <p>Chapter 2: 3, 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23, 36,</p>

These passages indicate that Charlemagne's instruction to Louis was indeed composed with the principles of the Capitulary of Charlemagne in mind, and was probably a summary of the emperor's role and general principles from this document. Therefore, the passages that appear to be part of a *Mirror for Princes* are also the mirror of a specific prince.

The remainder of the epic, however, does not contain any character involved in the moral actions outlined by Charlemagne. Instead, the text depicts William upholding Charlemagne's military advice in the place of Louis:

'Tu puez en ost bien mener cent mile omes,
Passer par force les aives de Gironde
Paiene gent craventer et confondre,
Et la lor terre deis a la nostre joindre.' [74-7]

Et s'il te vuelt de neient guerrier,
Mandez en France les nobles chevaliers
Tant qu'en aiez dusqu'a trente miliers;
Ou mielz se fie la le fai assegiar,
Tote sa terre guaster et esseillier.
Se le puez prendre ne a tes mains baillier,
N'en aies onques manaide ne pitié,
Ainceis li fait oz les members trenchier,
Ardeir en feu ou en aive neier;
Car se Franceis te veient entrepiez' [188-97]

Louis does none of this; William is the one who fights the pagans and wages war on all the rebels. Charlemagne's advice on holding his knights is futile [157-9], for he cannot command them, and thus is not "loved and cherished throughout the land" [159].

Louis' ineffectiveness as a king is foreshadowed at the beginning of the epic, before he is introduced:

Reis qui de France porte corone d'or
Prodom deit estre et vaillanz de son cors;
Et s'il est om qui li face nul tort,
Ne deit guarir ne a plain ne a bos
De ci qu'il l'ait o recreant o mort:
S'ensi nel fait, donc pert France son los;
Ce dit l'estoire coronez est a tort. [20-6]

King Louis does fail in this aspect, and it becomes William's responsibility to take on the roles which he should fill as king, particularly

with regards to defence of the kingdom. Louis' first instincts in not taking the crown from his father appear to be correct; he is not yet able to live up to the standards of kingship that Charlemagne expects.

Louis' endless problems stem from his youth: he is weak, cowardly, uncertain of how to rule, and unable to control his barons:

'Et je sui juvenes et de petit eage,
Si ne puis pas maintenir mon barnage.
A il Franceis qui por mon cors le face?'
Quant c'il l'oïrent, s'embrochent lor visages.
Veit le li reis, a pou que il n'enrage;
Tendrement plore desoz le pels de martre. [2408-13]

He is completely reliant on William's assistance, and has no fortitude of his own. The incident where he does not take the crown from his father also indicates that he is aware of his own shortcomings. At the beginning of the epic, the barons are joyful that Louis, rather than a foreigner, is to be crowned [57-60]. Yet the joy does not last, with the barons being quick to rebel against him. Louis is too young and inexperienced to even control those who remain loyal to him [2405-28]. William shows exasperation at his weakness:

Et Looïs comença a plorer.
Veit le Guillelmes, le sen cuide desver:
'Hé, povre reis, lasches et assotez,
Je te cuidai maintenir et tensor
Envers toz cels de la crestienté,
Mais toz li monz t'a si coilli en hé
En ton servise vueil ma jovente user
Ainz que tu n'aies totes tes volentez.' [2247-54]

William must instruct Louis to send for his barons, which is something he should have thought of himself.

In addition, when it is time to go into battle, Louis stays behind at the camp, while William and the men set out. The king is ambushed by the Romans at the camp, and flees. His complete dependence on William is evident once more during his flight, while he tries to hide in the tents and calls for William and Bertrand. Yet when helping William don his arms, Louis suddenly becomes “li vaillanz” [2499]: this could signify approval that he is actually contributing in some way to keeping his throne by assisting his defender.

Louis is finally re-crowned after William successfully secures the kingdom:

Prent son seignor tost et isnelment,
En la chaire l’assiet de maintenant,
Sil corona del barnage des Frans.
La lui jurerent trestuit le sairement.
Tels li jura qui li tint bonement,
Et tels als qui ne li tint neient. [2643-48]

The second coronation appears to be a happy conclusion, as everyone swears their oaths. William now hopes that his work for Louis is done, and he can have a holiday from the fighting; however, the French revolt again, none

defending Louis. William is advised by his nephew to abandon the king “qui tant est assotez” [2671], but William had sworn to protect him, although he wasted his youth on Louis [2673-74]. It takes another year of fighting to secure Louis’ throne again. The epic concludes with King Louis, now grown and married to William’s sister, ruling over all of France and rightly being grateful to his hero [2689-95]. Louis has not been worthy of being the king of France, but now he is able to sit with his fifteen barons, who are not rebelling, and can actively watch over France [2690-94].

The characters of the Saracen kings Corsolt and Galafrez enhance the *Mirror for Princes* aspect of *Le Couronnement de Louis* through their roles as ‘anti-Charlemagnes’, and are unlike the more feudal enemy found in *La Chanson de Roland*. King Corsolt is the major example of the two, and is presented as a monstrous figure, being “lait et anchais, hisdos come aversier” [505]. His diabolic appearance is emphasised by him revealing himself to be the ultimate evil heathen; he has a personal agenda against God after a lightning bolt killed his father:

‘Je nel poeie sivre ne enchalcier,
Mais de ses omes me sui je puis vengiez;
De cels qui furent levé et baptisié
Al fait destruire plus de trente miliers,
Ardeir en feu et en aive neier;
Quant je la sus ne puis Deu guerreier,
Nul de ses omes ne vuel ça jus laissier,

Et je et Deus n'avons mais que plaidier:
Meie est la terre et suens sera li ceils.
Se je par force puis prendre cest terrier,
Quant qu'a Deu monte ferai tot esseillier,
Les clers quil servent as coltels escorchier.' [529-40]

This speech marks Corsolt out as a kind of human Devil, an impression which the Pope confirms to William: “Ce n'est pas om, ainz est uns aversiers” [563]. Corsolt is the adversary whom William must fight in order to conquer the pagans, and he intends to eat William upon his own victory [669]. To begin with, Corsolt attempts to convert William to be a follower of Mohammed instead of fighting him, but William repeatedly refuses and defends his faith to the 'devil' [800-66]. Their battle is long, both men being strong, but the hero Count William naturally wins the day. King Corsolt's role thus appears to be not only to provide good entertainment in the form of a terrifying foe, but to also enhance William's pious, brave, and battleworthy reputation. Furthermore, he is the means by which Count William becomes known as William Shortnose, having the tip of his nose cut off in the battle [1037-38]. Corsolt is the worst heathen the author could imagine, having not only a devilish appearance but also devilish behaviour in his vendetta against the Christian world and God Himself.

Le Couronnement de Louis therefore shows four kinds of people that can be used as examples: the monstrous pagan king, the excellent king, the

weak king, and the loyal vassal. The bulk of the narrative involves William's loyalty: without it, the kingdom of both kings would have crumbled. As Price says, "it is the unattractive character of the king that brings out so strongly the genuineness of William's loyalty".⁷⁶ The didactic elements in *Le Couronnement de Louis* divide the work into two parts. The first involves Charlemagne's attempt to instruct and crown Louis, which can be seen as a pseudo-historical *Mirror for Princes*. The second part is the remainder of the epic, where the didactic elements rely on the exemplary behaviour of Count William for vassals, King Louis as the example of an ineffective ruler, and the terrible pagan kings as reverse reflections of the great king Charlemagne.

DIDACTICISM THROUGH WOMEN IN EPIC

The women found in the *chansons de geste* can also provide didacticism through the ways they carry out their roles, through their speeches, or through their behaviour towards their husbands. The roles of ideal consorts in epic *Mirrors for Princes* can be summarised by the expected roles of queens of the time:

She was responsible 'for good order... for the presentation of the king in dignified splendour, for annual gifts to the men of the household' [*Vita.Ed*, p6]; she and the chamberlain saw to preparations for the household and activities, making gifts to

⁷⁶ G. Price, *William, Count of Orange: Four Old French Epics*, (J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., Great Britain, 1975) xiii

legations, freeing the king of concern for the household and palace. She was the organiser of the palace and of the royal dignity, a giver of gifts and provider for its magnificence.⁷⁷

Guiburc

La Chançon de Willame involves didacticism for prince's consorts through the figure of Count William's wife, Guiburc. Not only does Guiburc carry out the important roles that would have been expected from her, but the audience can also see that if it were not for her, William would not have eventually conquered the pagans. Guiburc's significance to the narrative and her active role in William's business is implied already in her first brief mention:

'Qu'ele m'enveit sur seignur en aie:
S'ele ne m'enveit le cunte, d'altre n'ai jo cure.' [687-688]

Guiburc is an unusual figure in that she often acts more powerfully than does her husband, the hero of the story. It is only because of Guiburc's persuasion that William ever takes any action to go to war in these circumstances. It is hard to measure to what extent this aspect of Guiburc offered a mirror for contemporary women. As discussed by H. M. Jewell:

The power of personal influence (even of women over men)
is almost impossible to assess from sources which give little

⁷⁷ P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith – Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh - Century England*, (Blackwell Publishers Ltd, UK, 1997), p. 107

psychological insight, but some medieval women may have manipulated affairs successfully behind their more visible menfolk.⁷⁸

Despite commanding authority in a way one would expect from a male heroic figure, she also embodies the role of an ideal female figure. She supports and serves her lord and their guests, most of her actions in *La Chançon de Willame* relate to her role as supporter and hostess. From this perspective, therefore, she could be seen as part of a *Mirror for Princes* for consorts.

Guiborc not only displays her power through her proactivity and influence over William, but also through the fact that she has thirty thousand men under her. She is able to take command and can even offer William's land to them. Guiborc's most effective act is so unusual that it cannot be considered as part of a mirror for women to imitate. She surpasses her role as a count's wife, by anticipating William's need and summoning her thirty thousand men—fifteen thousand of them armed [1229-39]—as well as persuading them to do battle for her husband. It has been argued that her operation outside of the realm of a female character, assuming a masculine role, effeminises William.⁷⁹ However, aside from her summoning and manipulating an army, her role is

⁷⁸ H. M. Jewell, *Women in Dark Age and Early Medieval Europe c. 500-1200*, (Palgrave MacMillan, UK, 2007), p. 81

⁷⁹ P. Black, *The Gendered World of the Chanson de Guillaume*, (ed. M. Harney, *Olifant Vol.21 No. 3-4*, 1997 pp. 41-63) pp. 43-4

one that many noblewomen with warring husbands could have assumed.⁸⁰ In William's absence, she acts as the ruler of their court, while also performing her usual duties of providing food, drink and entertainment, and of serving them wine herself. Upon William's tragic return, she manages to control her grief at her nephew's death, and is able to comfort her husband [1315-17] and take control of the situation again.

Guiborc shows great ability in speaking to the men, and knows how to persuade them into battle. She manages to make William's mostly disastrous battle sound positive [1365-73], and lures them with the ideas of plunder and rewards:

'Ki ore irreit en l' Archamp sur mer
Prendre icés dunt vus ai ci cunté
.....
Et mis sires ad mult larges heritez,
Si vus durrad volenters et de gré.
Et ki ne volt sanz femme prendre terres,
Jo ai uncore centet seisante puceles –
Filles des reis (n'ad suz cel plus beles),
Sis ai nurriz suz la merci Willame,
Qui mun orfreis ovrent et pailles a flurs a roeles –
Venge a mei et choisist la plus bele!
Durrat lui femme, et mun seignur li durrat terre,
Si ben i fert que loez poisse estre.' [1386-97]

⁸⁰ K. Pratt, *The Image of Queen in Old French Literature*, (ed. Anne Duggan, *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, The Boydell Press, United Kingdom, 1997, pp.235-259) p. 252

Guiborc has not consulted with her husband whether he is willing to give his lands away or not, but she has the power to do so as it is her men, not his, who are helping him.

The contrast between Guiborc's two roles is not quite as great as it first appears. Although her recruitment of an army is a typically masculine role, it is still done in the effort to serve her lord, much like when she feeds him enormous meals [1404-17]. Guiborc is therefore the ultimate consort for a hero because of her servitude and consideration of her husband:

Il n'i out tele femme en la crestienté
Pur sun seignur server et honorer,
Ne pur eshalcer sainte crestienté
Ne pur lei maintenir et garder. [1486-90]

This comment also reveals her as a possible mirror of appropriate religious devotion, as it deliberately praises her actions of servitude towards William, and reveals her to be pious. The revelation of her piety is both ironic and necessary: Guiborc was born a pagan, and she is later revealed to be related to many of William's foes on the battlefield.⁸¹ By being described as pious, she is assured of her reputation as an ideal wife, and cannot be criticised for having once belonged to the side of the enemy.

⁸¹ Rainouart says he killed thirty of his pagan relatives at l'Archamp, and Guiborc is promptly revealed (in lines 3545-3552) to be his sister

Guiborc is also portrayed as a good noble wife because of her wisdom. Her advice and actions lead to many of William's heroic acts. William himself admits that her advice is good:

'mais tun conseil en dei jo creire ben:
En plusurs lius m'ad eu mult grant mesters.' [2433-34]

Guiborc's words and ideas stir William to action when he is at home. When William hears of Vivien's plight, for example, Guiborc is the first one who wishes to help him:

Respunt Guiborc: 'Pur nient en parles!
Secor le, sire! Ne te chalt a demander:
Se tu li perz, n'avras ami fors Deu.' [1004-6]

Not only does she recommend action to him at every crisis, but she also reminds him of his family's honour when he is in despair:

'Marchis Willame, merci, pur amur Dé!
Il est grant doel que home deit plorer,
Et fort damage k'il se deit dementer.
Il fu costume a tun riche parenté,
Quant alters terres alerent purchacer
Et tuz tens morurent en bataille champel.
Mielz voil que moergez en l'Archamp sur mer
Que tun lignage seit par tei avilé,
Ne après ta mort a tes heirs reprove.' [1319-27]

Her speech could be interpreted as part of a *Mirror for Princes*, as it outlines both acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in a man. William displays unheroic behaviour when he mourns because he has acted as "un malveis fuieur, / un quart cunte, un malveis treisturnur / qui de bataille

n'ameine home un sul" [1307-9]. William's weeping for his lost honour is not abated by Guiborc's speech, but by her revealing the men in the hall. Because of Guiborc, William is able to take action again and consequently regain his status as an honourable hero.

Another of Guiborc's roles is to defend their home while William is fighting. This is a position in which many women would have found themselves during the many battles that were occurring at the time, and thus this aspect could also be a part of a *Mirror for Princes*. Guiborc carries the defence out vigorously; even her husband has difficulty entering and must prove himself by first killing pagans, then by showing his face [2212-2328]. Such conduct is a combination of her being a dutiful wife, and her disbelief at him returning without his men.

Guiborc therefore is an excellent didactic model for the wives of noblemen. Although the power she commanded over many men was uncommon, she presumably reflects the behaviour of real warring barons' and kings' wives. With her wisdom and sense she successfully carries out her expected household role and is the ultimate support for her husband.

Bramimonde

Guiborc's didactic role is much larger than that of female characters in other Old French epics discussed previously. Marsile's queen, Bramimonde, for example, the important female figure in *La Chanson de Roland*, enhances the *Mirror for Princes* aspect of the work but rarely appears. She, however, is not held up as an exemplary figure for other women to emulate. Rather, her role is to augment Charlemagne's reputation and help compare Christianity to her futile pagan religion, thus helping justify the Frankish cause: a role Pratt calls the "political helpmate".⁸² Her role is mainly portrayed through speeches where she is bemoaning her fate.

Bramimonde first appears within several verses where the pagans give gifts of immeasurable worth to the traitor Ganelon. This scene shows how the pagans in the story mostly abide by the feudal ideas of the Franks. Bramimonde is an accessory to the hyperbole of the pagans' wealth [Laisse L], while at the same time portraying the only aspect where she could be used as an example for princes' consorts:

'Jo vos aim mult, sire,' dist ele al cunte,
'Car mult vos priset mi sire e tuit si hume;' [635-36]

⁸² Pratt, p. 251

These words display Bramimonde's support for her husband, one of the criteria expected of her as a queen.⁸³ Because her husband and his men have decided to honour Ganelon, she supports them by honouring Ganelon's wife. This does not appear to be an unusual action, despite the nature of the presents, as "recent research has found women well enmeshed in the feudal chain, performing homage to overlords and receiving it as 'lords' of their own men."⁸⁴ The gifts Bramimonde gives are dramatic. The two necklaces, worth more than all of Rome's wealth, help show the extent to which she will honour someone, and the extent of the Saracens' overall wealth.

However, Bramimonde's more important role as part of a *Mirror for Princes* is to enhance Charlemagne's reputation to the audience by providing a pagan's point of view, as discussed in the previous chapter on *La Chanson de Roland*. Her eventual survival and baptism by Charlemagne can be foreseen in the passages where she praises the emperor [for example, 2737-40]. Her character is thus set up as not being a completely evil pagan, but one with promise. Her rejection of the Saracen gods is a precursor to this. Rebuffing her religion is important for illustrating the righteousness of the Franks' war and beliefs, as well as foretelling her future baptism. The turning point for her is

⁸³ Stafford, p. 107

⁸⁴ Jewell, p. 93

seeing Marsile wounded at Saragossa, and subsequently she and twenty thousand men destroy the images of the three Saracen gods, Apollo, Mohammed, and Tervagant. The whole principle of war is captured in the crucial line “Ki mult te sert, malveis lüer l’en dunes” [2584]. Bramimonde spreads this message not just to the men who helped her, but also later in the narrative to messengers and Marsile. Being a pagan herself, her message against the foolishness of paganism gains in significance:

Dist Bramimunde: ‘Or oi mult grant folie.
Cist nostre deu sunt en recreantise.’ [2714-15]

Bramimonde’s roles in glorifying Charlemagne and assisting with the negative portrayal of paganism lead to her having a relatively good outcome. Despite her having lost her husband, having to surrender her city, and being taken prisoner, she comes to no harm: “Mais n’ad talent que li facet se bien nun” [3681]. She is exposed to Christianity, and wishes to convert. This occurs at a large noble gathering, and she is renamed Juliana. No more is said of her, but the audience understands that she will be treated well, especially now that “Chrestiene est par veire conoissance” [3987].

Ignoble Wives in Epic

Negative portrayals of women in the above epics are brief, and therefore only possess minor didactic possibilities. These nameless women are

Charlemagne's queen from *Le Voyage de Charlemagne*, and Louis' queen, William's sister, in *La Chançon de Willame*.

Charlemagne's queen serves to provide the reason for the emperor's voyage. Her inflaming speech [12-16] leads to immediate repentance [32-38]; this does not stop her husband from threatening her with death if he discovers she has lied. Any lessons originating from these opening passages of *Le Voyage de Charlemagne* are to be wise, to not think ill of your husband [56], and to not make foolish or spiteful speeches.

Louis' consort in *La Chançon de Willame* has merely one line, in which she attempts to prevent her husband from giving any aid to her brother William, lest he and Guiborc attempt to usurp the throne. Her foolish jealousy leads to Louis reducing the amount of men he sends for William. It also provokes a furious, and somewhat humorous, rage in her brother, who abuses her at length. The debauched picture William paints of her appears to be supported by their father, who thinks it is a shame she was ever born [2629]. Black argues that she is portrayed as being beyond reason because expressing herself publicly in this way means that she has "assumed a role of equality

with men.”⁸⁵ Whatever the reason for her vicious condemnation, the queen’s small part is effective, and again serves to show the consequences of foolish speech in a woman: it is possible that, had she not spoken, Louis would have sent the original number of men, and indeed himself, leading to a potentially different outcome in the battle.

Queens and Princes’ Consorts

These epics show that royal women have an important role to play, even if that role is not central or heroic. The roles of women in epic, and didactic literature in general, are mostly praiseworthy ones where the women are fulfilling the duties set out for them in Medieval life. These women of literature often stretch beyond their more traditional roles for the sake of the plot, as seen with Guiborc summoning an army for her husband.

These traditional roles of the noblewoman varied depending on the power which she held, and whether her position was queen, regent, royal consort, or noblewoman. There is historical evidence that some women held a lot of power, although, as reflected in medieval fiction, these women were

⁸⁵ Black, p. 52

exceptional.⁸⁶ For example, a woman was not automatically recognised as a queen when marrying a king and the majority of queens were consorts, not queens regnant:⁸⁷ it was extremely unusual for a queen to rule alone.⁸⁸ Jewell summarises the power available to medieval queens:

The power queens wielded came to most of them either as a particular king's wife – ending with his death not theirs – or as the next king's regent mother – usually meaning their power was terminated by the son's coming of age, or soon after. To some degree there was always an element of a king allowing his wife a certain role, or delegating certain areas to her, and if by contrast he chose to constrain her activities, even to imprison her or repudiate her, he usually succeeded.⁸⁹

It is not possible to discover how common it was for a king to consult his wife,⁹⁰ but some of the texts in this study do include it as an important element, such as Guiborc and *Erec et Enide*'s Guinevere. It is clear, however, that the kings' wives played a vital part at court through forming and maintaining relations with the nobility,⁹¹ a role which is also represented in these texts by Guiborc, Bramimonde, and Chrétien's Guinevere. Another role

⁸⁶ It has been argued that medieval women suffered a decline in their power, and subsequently their roles, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; however, further studies have indicated that this was certainly not the case for a large number of noblewomen, as seen through the studies completed in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (ed. Theodore Evergates, University of Pennsylvania, 1999). Although there was a decline for many women, the number of exceptions is great enough, and the specific queens discussed in this text are exceptional enough, to discuss the roles of aristocratic women as continuous.

⁸⁷ Jewell, p. 82

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 83

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 83

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 84

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 91

was the supervision of the women at court, but her capacity to assist and command them depended on her power.⁹² Her care for the household was vital, as previously discussed in relation to Guiborc. The aristocratic woman's household roles included:

...supervising the rearing and marriage of children, dispensing patronage and gifts, receiving visiting dignitaries, assisting husbands with lordly responsibilities (as at court), performing lordly functions in their husbands' absence, and serving as guardians and regents.⁹³

The women in the epics discussed previously are depicted as taking on many of these specific functions of the noble household. However, they are not seen carrying out the most important task of an aristocratic woman: the providing of heirs.

Along with their courtly roles and wifely duties, there was a certain expectation that the morals and behaviour of medieval queens and consorts would be exceptional. As Stafford describes,

...the woman... was to be faithful, chaste, disciplined, modest, blameless... Blessing was called down upon *her*, that she might be loving and peaceful, faithful and chaste, an imitator of holy women, as loving to her husband as Rachel, as wise as Rebecca, as long-lived and faithful as Sarah. Joined in one marriage bed she was to flee illegal contact, strengthen her weakness with discipline, be

⁹² Stafford, p. 63

⁹³ Evergates, p. 4

shyly grave, worthy of respect in her modesty, knowledgeable in heavenly doctrines, fruitful in offspring, worthy and blameless.⁹⁴

These virtues, along with the expected roles of royal women, can be found in all the major women of the texts in this study. This strongly implies that the female characters are being purposefully offered as *exempla* for the noble female audience. Given that many works were dedicated to women, and there were many vernacular *Mirrors for Princesses*,⁹⁵ it can be safe to assume that works containing didacticism for noblemen can equally have didactic examples aimed at their wives. It is not possible to know how the female audience reacted to the didactic portrayals and stereotypes of their gender,⁹⁶ but Old French literature developed, through romances, a more prominent position for women's interests than was found in the *chansons de geste*.⁹⁷

DIDACTICISM IN ROMANCE: CHRETIEN DE TROYES' EREC ET ENIDE

Chrétien de Troyes in *Erec et Enide* makes much use of Queen Guinevere and the future queen Enide to promote the didactic aspects of this romance. The work can be seen as being a *Mirror for Princes* to a great extent,

⁹⁴ Stafford, p. 68

⁹⁵ Pratt, p. 235 ff.

⁹⁶ R. Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance*, (Cambridge University Press, 1993) p. 251

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, xi

and is “read as an exemplary ascent to monarchy.”⁹⁸ It has also been argued that *Erec et Enide* can be seen as a model for marriage.⁹⁹ Through the figures of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere, and the adventures of the main protagonists, Erec and Enide, the audience is shown the necessary values of both a desirable king and the ideal consort. Conversely, the audience is also shown, through the same characters, how an unwise ruler and spouse acts. Although the didactic aspects of the tale are shown mostly through the development of Erec and Enide, many other characters appear who act as reflections of what the characters should become, could have become, or once were: namely, Guivret le Petit, Count Galoain, Count Oringle of Limors, King Evrain, Mabonagrain, and Enide’s cousin. The didactic elements of *Erec et Enide* will be shown through the separate characters, their actions, and their reactions in the narrative, as these display the development of each person. The appearances and roles of the other characters will also be described, as they affect the adventure and highlight the transitions that Erec and Enide make. The content and structure of the tale suggest that Chrétien de Troyes did have a moral purpose in mind. As Glyn Burgess notes,

Does Chrétien have any purpose other than entertainment?
The presence of the motifs of knowledge, study and thought suggests

⁹⁸ N. Lacy, and J. T. Grimbart, *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, (DS Brewer, Cambridge, 2005) p. 112

⁹⁹ M. Burrell, *Tel seit la lei de mariage: Fact and Fiction in Models of Twelfth-Century Marriage*, (*Parergon*, Vol. 18, No.2, January 2001), pp. 7-15

that he does. Wisdom and sensible behaviour are in fact important elements throughout the text. But the prologue and perhaps the entire romance are dominated by the need for *bien*, for good and right actions ('por ce fet bien', v.4), for *bien* as a goal for one's energies and application ('atorne a bien', v.5; var *atorne a san*), for elegant expression as an authorial ideal ('bien dire' v.12) and for a didactic purpose animating the act of creativity ('bien aprendre', v.11). All readers or listeners approach a literary work with a set of assumptions about form and a certain amount of moral and social conditioning from the environment in which they live.¹⁰⁰

The structure of *Erec et Enide* shows it to be highly likely that this romance is a *Mirror for Princes* that was also intended to be a truly entertaining story. Not all of the events or characters serve as *exempla*, but the tale is interspersed with both moral examples and entertaining adventures. Most of the didactic content occurs during Erec and Enide's adventure in the forest, yet there are also significant components found in the sections on the Hunt for the White Stag and in character descriptions.

Queen Guinevere

The figure of Queen Guinevere in *Erec et Enide* is, like Bramimonde, not a major character in the romance. However, she is of great importance as an *exemplum* for both the audience and for Enide, and she is an important figure at court. As Noble argued,

the Queen is presented as more than just a stereotype. She emerges as a mature, active woman, full of sense and ingenuity

¹⁰⁰ G. Burgess, *Chrétien de Troyes: Erec et Enide*, (Grant & Cutler Ltd, 1984) p. 14

whose advice is listened to and respected. She is clearly meant to be an exemplary woman, morally as well as in every other way.¹⁰¹

Guinevere's role as a model consort is displayed through her courteous actions towards Erec and Enide, her activities within the court, and the virtues with which Chrétien endows her. In this tale there is no suggestion of any betrayal of Arthur, as found in many other Arthurian legends; in several parts of the romance she and Arthur appear together as symbols of the ultimate royal partnership.

Although Guinevere's role is mostly that of a figurehead rather than a ruler of a kingdom, the episode of the Hunt for the White Stag, which will be discussed in detail alongside Arthur, demonstrates how "the Queen is not without influence at court and her advice is sought by Arthur"¹⁰². Her actions show how a queen or noblewoman can influence her husband's court with her wisdom; Guinevere displays more wisdom than her husband, which marks her out as the perfect consort for him, as her negotiations and tact rescue Arthur from impending disaster. Firstly, she delays a decision on who is the fairest woman at court – the impending result of which is causing chaos at court – by suggesting that they wait until Erec returns. Upon Erec's arrival, she then

¹⁰¹ P. Noble, *The Character of Guinevere in the Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, (*The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 67, No. 3, Jul. 1972, pp 524-535) p. 528

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 527

resolves the problem of who is to be the recipient of Arthur's kiss, claiming that it should be awarded to Enide. The fact that everyone is satisfied with her recommendations shows not only Enide's extraordinary beauty, but also how Guinevere can rescue her husband from situations initiated by his obstinacy, and how much her opinion is valued at court.

The audience first sees her role as an inspiration for the knights at court, particularly for Erec.¹⁰³ During the Hunt for the White Stag, Erec rides with Guinevere as he does not have any lady present to champion; it is in this episode that the audience sees their mutual affection [107-14].¹⁰⁴ Guinevere's affection and respect continues after Erec has found a bride, Enide, and the Queen takes on the role as example and mentor for her favourite's wife.¹⁰⁵

As Erec at the end of his journey is raised to sit as if equal with Arthur, Enide must rise and be worthy of being his wife and a celebrated queen. Guinevere has many important qualities that Enide should acquire if she does not already hold them: she is generous [1365-1640], kind, wise, loving towards loyal vassals, shows concern for her handmaidens [192-203], and can

¹⁰³ Noble, p. 524

¹⁰⁴ Quotations and line references are from M. Rousse, *Erec et Enide*, (Flammarion, Paris, 1994)

counsel her husband in important decision-making [1765-1820]. Guinevere's interaction with Enide reveals both her generous nature and her role of carrying out feminine household tasks, for example, when she clothes Enide in her own gown. Enide even shares a bed with the Queen while Erec's wounds are being healed during their adventure [4276-80], showing that Enide's honour has been elevated even more at this stage of the journey. For the coronation, Guinevere herself dresses Enide: "Quanque pot, d'Enide atillier / Se fu la reine penee" [6824-25]. The audience then sees that Enide's journey in learning her role as a prince's – and now king's – consort has been completely successful, for Arthur shows her the honour he showed Erec, rising and bidding her sit beside Erec on the other wondrous throne, at the level of Guinevere.

Enide

Much of the didacticism in this romance is portrayed through Enide's learning what her role ought to be as a prince's consort. This is also an aspect that shows *Erec et Enide* is intended as a *Mirror for Princes*, with the narrative instructing both sexes on royal behaviour. Her role also corresponds to Leyerle's theory of the lady of chivalric literature, who was "often presented as the preceptor of honour, the one who transmitted to the hero the ideals of

¹⁰⁵ Pratt, p. 253

chivalric life.”¹⁰⁶ There has been a lot of interest in Enide’s internal journey as a wife and consort, with many theories about her behaviour, and Erec’s reaction to it, being expounded.¹⁰⁷ A key component of the discussions is her initial inability to speak wisely and appropriately according to the situation. It is Enide’s words that cause strife between her husband and herself, and she must learn wisdom, decorum, and statesmanship through the *avanture*. When she does speak in the tale, she begins by being very self-centred and self-deprecating, not looking beyond her own environment. Thinking of Erec and his own situation rather than simply of the effect on herself is an important thing for her to learn as a prince’s consort. Enide’s actions also result in Erec’s transformation being revealed through his reactions to her.

Chrétien tells us at the beginning of the narrative, through his own or the characters’ commentary, that Enide already possesses most of the qualities of an excellent princess. Upon arriving at court, Queen Guinevere shows her approval of Enide by giving her beautiful and expensive garments, and promising that she will receive more gifts [1562-1623]. As Enide becomes a favourite of the Queen, and is treated royally by her each time they meet, it can

¹⁰⁶ J. Leyerle, *Conclusion: The Major Themes of Chivalric Literature*, (ed. L D Benson & J Leyerle, *Chivalric Literature: Essays on Relations Between Literature & Life in the Later Middle Ages*, Medieval Institute Publications, Michigan, 1980, pp. 131-146), p. 141

be assumed that the Queen can perceive her good qualities and that Enide is worthy of the attention. The following passage has Chrétien describing all these qualities, many of which have been previously mentioned in her first appearances. They are in Erec's homeland, where he will be king one day; and his new bride proves to be a great success as a consort in all appearances:

Mout plus grant joie ancor menerent
D'Enide que de lui ne firent,
Por la grant biauté qu'an li virent,
Et plus ancor por sa franchise.
A un chamber fu assise
Dessor une coute de paile
Qu'aportee fu de Tessaile.
Antor ot mainte bele dame;
Mes aussi con la clere jame
Reluist dessor le bis chaillo,
Et la rose sor le pavo:
Aussi iere Enide plus bele
Que nule dame ne pucele
Qui fust trove an tot le monde,
Qui le cerchast a la reonde;
Tant fu jantis et enorable,
De sages diz et acointable,
De buen ester et de buen atret.
Onques nus ne sot tant d'aguet,
Qu'an li poïst veoir folie
Ne mauvestié ne vilenie.
Tan tot d'afeitemant apris
Que de totes bontez ot pris
Que nule dame puisse avoir
Et de largesce et de savoir.
Tuit l'amoient por sa franchise:
Qui li pooit feire servise,

¹⁰⁷ For example, E. J. Burns, *Rewriting Men's Stories – Enide's Disruptive Mouths* (ed. T.S. Fenster, *Arthurian Women – A Casebook*, Garland Publishing Inc., New York & London, 1996) and

Plus s'an tenoit chiers et prisoit.
De li nus rien ne mesdisoit;
Car nus n'an pooit rien mesdire.
El reaume ne am l'anpire
N'ot dame de tant buenes mors. [2402-33]

However, the audience has little evidence of this – her courtesy and beauty are often seen, but she does not speak and therefore the audience does not know what wisdom or intelligence she truly possesses. Her virtues are, however, slightly more in evidence than those Erec is reputed to have. During their *aventure* it is her loyalty, fidelity and trust of Erec that is tested. Her reported wisdom and intelligence are also put to the test as she faces perilous situations. These trials will help her grow into being an ideal princess and the ideal wife for a king.

Enide's first test is one of trust and obedience to Erec, which results from her undermining her husband's reputation. The first time the audience hears her speak, it does not match her described character. She does not speak with wisdom or tact, and is even insulting, recalling Charlemagne's queen in *Le Voyage de Charlemagne*, for example:

Or se vont tuit de vos gabant,
Vieil et juene, petit et grant;
Recreant vos apelent tuit. [2553-55]

However, her speeches to Erec and to herself are very self-centred; she focuses on blaming herself and bemoaning her own fate, not on what the consequences of the revelation could be for Erec and his life:

‘Cuidiez vos donc qu’il ne m’enuit,
Quant j’oi dire de vos despit?
Mout me poise quant l’an le dit;
Et por ce m’an poise ancor plus
Qu’il m’an metent le blasme sus’ [2556-60]

As Burland indicates,¹⁰⁸ this speech is surprising given that the narrator has just described Enide as being a person that no-one could speak ill of [2430-1]. Enide’s excessive self-criticism shows that another aspect to her journey towards being an excellent prince’s consort will be her self-perception. Apart from Erec’s reprimands in the woods, she is the only character who speaks ill of herself, and must therefore learn to trust in her good qualities, and learn to trust that her husband has no cause to abandon her:

Since praise has not convinced her to think highly of herself, the only way to recognise her own good qualities will be to put her supposed bad qualities to the test. In order to gain an appreciation of her own value, Enide will have to experience criticism and learn to judge its validity for herself: this is exactly the treatment she will experience during her adventures with Erec.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ M. J. Burland, *Chrétien’s Enide: Heroine or Female Hero? (On Arthurian Women: Essays in Memory of Maureen Fries*, Scriptorium Press, USA, 2001) p. 176

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 176

Thus her self-perception will be an important aspect of her learning the wisdom necessary for her future role as a queen.

During the *aventure* with Erec, she continues to berate herself for her decisions while he attempts to regain the honour he has supposedly lost so thoroughly. Her instructions are to not turn and speak to him as he rides behind her, no matter what may happen. This makes Enide lament to herself further about her misfortune, believing this instruction to mean that her husband has turned against her [2782-95]. She does not consider why he might have told her this, and she therefore fails his instructions repeatedly – always out of concern for Erec and the danger that is rapidly approaching them both. Exactly what Erec’s treatment of her signifies is a topic of much debate; for example, he could be testing her obedience and trust, or he could be simply acting insensitively towards the woman who just destroyed his self image of knightly prowess. Burland’s argument that the *aventure* could actually be Erec making it possible for Enide to “understand her true identity as a person who is allowed to make mistakes and as a wife who will be protected and loved ‘no matter what happens’”¹¹⁰ only works if Enide is the main protagonist. However, as the title suggests, *Erec et Enide* is equally about the two; the *aventure* in the forest must serve to improve both of them. Their journey is

constructed so as to test their love and trust for each other, which has been thrown into doubt in their opinions; therefore, Erec's actions are a combination of his testing Enide's love and trust of him through obedience, re-establishing his prowess for his own satisfaction, curtness towards his wife due to his own mistrust of her feelings from her harsh words, and allowing Enide to develop as a wife and prince's consort.

Enide repeatedly fails Erec's tests of obedience and trust in him by always warning Erec of danger when he has instructed her not to speak. Her speeches to herself and to Erec are important not only as they provide much of the narrative content, but also as the audience can thus witness her development and her reasons. Obedience, however, is an essential aspect of being a good wife according to Erec's behaviour; in failing this she fails his test of trust, but proves her loyalty and love. As Burns puts it, it is a "loyal and loving *disobedience*, as well as an assertion of real female prowess."¹¹¹

Although not at all assertive of her female prowess in the first adventure, or in many to follow, she is highly concerned when Erec is outnumbered. As she thinks that he will be killed or made prisoner, she

¹¹⁰ Burland, p. 177

¹¹¹ Burns, p. 64

believes that not warning him will make her a coward, and thus disobeys him [2833-44]. On the next adventure, Enide is once again concerned with her own situation when faced with the double danger of attack and her husband's threats. She is so terrified of attack that she warns him again. This time, his ire at her blatant disobedience intensifies, and thus he treats her worse; he believes she is alerting him because she does not trust him to notice the danger, and does not have confidence in his fighting prowess – the very prowess he is trying to prove he still possesses – to save them both. It is revealed to the audience that Enide's loyalty and love are intact, but Erec has yet to realise it, and she has yet to learn to trust and obey him.

After the adventures with the robber-knights, Enide faces perils which test and display her fidelity, cunning, and tact. The first of these is the proposal of Count Galoain, where the audience is shown all three of these qualities. Enide shows exemplary loyalty and uses the intelligence the audience was told about, but not shown, earlier in the tale. Erec was angry with her when she tried to warn him, and has been treating her badly: their life on the road is highly unpleasant for her, and she is fearful that she will be abandoned by him. Therefore, the offer of a rich count to take her in as his lover, and his fine promises to her, would be a serious temptation to a woman of fewer moral standards than those Enide was described of possessing.

After Enide learns that Galoain is dangerous [3357-9], she, believing it no real sin to lie when its purpose is to save her husband, cunningly deceives him by pretending her refusal was only her test to see if he truly meant his proposal. Enide schemes with him: Galoain is to wait until the morning as Erec is rising and then do what he chooses with him, with his knights and squires “kidnapping” Enide so her honour is not destroyed [3360-3401]. This cheers the count, and gives Enide plenty of time to warn the oblivious Erec, something that has been her major role in their *aventure* so far. Upon warning Erec, she is finally full of concern only for her husband, and has done all she can to protect him. Although Enide did not appear to trust her husband to deal with the situation himself, Erec now learns how loyal she is, and they escape.

The audience is also able to see a little of Enide’s reputed wisdom and fidelity in the next adventure. In her reasoning, she decides that she will lose no matter what happens, and that it is best that he is warned and she incurs his wrath rather than risk his death but gain a little more of his approval [3739-64]. It has been argued that this repetition of speaking disobediently is justifying her earlier speech.¹¹² However, the audience can see that Enide still

¹¹² N. Lacy, *Thematic Analogues in Erec*, (*L’Esprit Créateur*, Vol IX. No. 4, pp 267-274), ps. 269 & 274

does not have confidence in her own judgement or in her husband's love for her, as this time she has a much greater debate with herself: whether to risk his death or injury, or to warn him and risk him abandoning her in the woods, both consequences of which she is immensely afraid. Erec threatens her, only this time it seems to be more out of habit than of real anger, having learned that she loyal and loves him above anything [3765-9]. Although it is still important to Erec for Enide to obey him, he can finally see that when she disobeys it is only out of love for him and wishing to protect him; thus one essential quality of a prince's consort is sacrificed for another which is more powerful.

Enide's fidelity and love are best portrayed in the encounter with Count Oringle of Limors. This episode also reveals her to have developed confidence in herself and her own judgements. Enide shows that she has truly been learning on this *aventure*, and has gained some wisdom and perspective on herself:

'De mon seignor sui omecide,
Par ma parole l'ai ocis.
Ancor fust or mes sire vis,
Si je come outrageuse et fole
N'eüsse dite la parole
Por quoi mes sire ça s'esmut.
Ainz teisirs a home ne nut,
Mes parlers nuist mainte foiiee.
Ceste chose ai bien essaiee
Et esprovee an mainte guise.' [4624-4633]

Her behaviour shows that her loyalty to Erec is strong even after his supposed death. The episode is comparable to the adventure with Count Galoain, yet her loyalty in the face of a count's violence here is all the more laudable, as she now thinks that she is an unprotected widow. She vehemently refuses the count's wishes to be married to her. Despite Oringle commanding her to cease her grieving, she disobeys him:

Cele respond: 'Sire, fuiiez!
Por Deu merci, leissiez m'ester!
Ne poez ci rien conquerer.
Riens qu'an porroit dire ne feire,
Ne me porroit a joie atreire.' [4710-14]

This is a brave act given her dangerous position being alone in the woods, facing many men on horseback. She continues grieving throughout her abduction and forced marriage, and stays strong and defiant when he admonishes her for still grieving. She holds his threats in slight esteem, yet still defies him after he beats her:

'Ha! fel' fet ele, 'ne me chaut
Que tu mes dies ne ne faces!
Ne crime tes cos ne tes menaces.
Assez me bat, assez me fier!
Ja tant net e troverai fier
Que por toi face plus ne mains,
Se tu or androit a tes mains,
Me devoies les iauz sachier
Ou trestote vive escorchier.' [4844-52]

This speech shows how brave Enide has become – she is willing to defend herself, and is not afraid to speak out even when confronted with great

threats to her safety. It may not be the wisest response for her safety's sake, but it shows she has great integrity, being steadfast in her loyalty and love, and being unafraid to show it. Due to her demonstrating how she has finished learning how to be an excellent prince's consort both in appearance and on the inside, Erec revives. Her loyalty, trust, love, and self-confidence have been proven, and Erec can see this:

Or ne li set que reprochier
Erec, qui bien l'a esprovee;
Vers lui a grant amor trovee. [5138-40]

Despite her having learned her lessons, Enide's didactic role is not yet complete. Immediately after the Count of Limors episode comes a passage in which Enide's pardoning is tested, and Enide provides the audience with a didactic passage on chivalric behaviour. As Burns argues, in this encounter with Guivret le Petit, she appears to be the only character who knows "how knights should behave."¹¹³ Enide instructs Guivret and the audience on appropriate and dishonourable behaviour for a knight:

'Chevaliers, maudiz soies tu!
Qu'un home foible et sanz vertu,
Doillant et prés navré a mort,
As anvaï a si grant tort
Que tu ne sez dire por quoi.
Se ici n'eüst fors que toi,
Que seus fusses et sanz aïe,
Mar fustfeite ceste anvaïe
Mes que mes sire fust heitiez.

¹¹³ Burns, p. 33

Or soies frans et afeitiez,
Si leisse ester par ta franchise
Ceste bataille qu'as anprise;
Car ja n'an vaudroit miauz tes pris,
Se tu avoies mort ou pris
Un chevalier qui n'a pooir
De relever, ce puez veoir;
Car d'armes a tant cos soferz
Que toz est de plaies coverz.' [5029-46]

Although she is continuing her role of disobeying and protecting Erec with her speech, this passage also shows how Enide is no longer speaking from her own pessimism, but as part of a chivalric society.¹¹⁴

The final display of how Enide has developed during the *aventure* is her behaviour after the adventure of the *Joie de la Cor*. In this she is not only contrasted with a couple which is now the opposite of her relationship, but she is also shown to be taking on a womanly role similar to that portrayed by her example, Guinevere. After Erec and Mabonagrain have fought each other, Enide takes it upon herself to comfort the lady, who lost her lover to knightly pursuits:

Mout fist Enide que cortoise;
Por ce que pansive la vit
Et sole seoir sor le lit,
Li prist talanz que ele iroit
A li parler, si li diroit
De son afeire et de son estre,
Et anquerroit s'il pooit estre,

¹¹⁴ Burland, p. 180

Qu'ele del suen li redeist,
Mes que trop ne li desseist. [6198-6206]

Through this act, Enide shows she has learned many things from her trials: she has learned tact, which she shows through not wanting to take anyone with her to approach and comfort the lady; she has learned through her own experiences how it feels to lose a loved one and can therefore kindly comfort the lady accordingly; she can speak frankly and honestly with no drama or exaggeration; and she can show genuine respect for her husband through praising him, describing their love, and explaining their gratitude for him [6192-6318]. Enide now can speak without incurring anyone's wrath, and does so in a way fitting for a royal woman. This is also displayed upon their bidding farewell to their hosts:

Enide ne rest mie mue
Au congie prandre des barons.
Toz les salue par lor nons,
Et il li tuit comumnemant. [6404-7]

This action shows how Enide is now actively taking the role of a prince's consort, rather than merely passively fitting the role. Her character provides didacticism in the romance by showing the audience both what is unacceptable for a noble consort, and what exemplary behaviour for a prince's consort should be. Enide's speech is an important part of this, as it shows her inner development and its importance, narrates parts of the story, and provides a directly didactic passage in response to ignoble courtly behaviour. Her speech

and final actions display how the *aventure* has been successful for her; she is rightly confident in her judgement, and completely trusts Erec to be a loyal husband to her. Enide has also lived up to Guinevere's example and treatment of her, symbolised by her coronation throne being placed upon the same level as that of Arthur's wife.

Erec

In order for Erec to be raised to the status of a symbolic equal to Arthur, he first has to go through a series of adventures in order to learn how to be a good knight, husband, and prince; only then will he be worthy to inherit his kingdom. Erec's personal journey is the major component of *Erec et Enide* which enables it to be interpreted as a *Mirror for Princes* tale. He goes through two transitions: firstly, a lapse from great renown into a phase where he lacks noble behaviour, and secondly, his growth into a state that completely surpasses all his previous fame and nobility.

When Erec first appears, he is already a highly praiseworthy knight, having won great favour at court:

De la Table Reonde estoit,
Mout grant los an la court avoit
De tant come il i ot esté,
N'i ot chevalier plus loé;
Et fu tant biaux, qu'an nule terre

N'esteüst plus bel de lui querre.
Mout estoit biaux et preuz et janz,
Et n'avoit pas vint et cinc anz.
Onques nus hon de son aage
Ne fu de greignor vassalage.
Que diroie de ses bontez? [83-93]

This question of Chrétien's is significant in that he does not follow it with a description of his virtues; instead, he describes Erec's appearance in fine, rich clothes when about to set out on the hunt. Chrétien here could be using these questions as a shortcut to describe exaggerated virtues, but it is more likely that he cannot comment at this stage in the narrative as Erec's virtues are undeveloped. Rather, at the time of his marriage, his virtues are all to do with his battle prowess, handsomeness, and noble appearance. These are promising for a future king, especially as he also has the generosity of Alexander, making him comparable to Arthur himself:¹¹⁵

Or fu Erec de tel renon
Qu'an ne parloit se de lui non,
Ne nus n'avoit si buene grace:
Il sanbloit Assalon de face,
E de la langue Salemon,
Et de fierté sanbloit lion,
Et de doner et de despandre
Fu parauz le roi Alixandre. [2263-70]

Erec thus appears to be the perfect noble vassal and prince. However, these qualities still only “seem” to be present, based on his renown after being

¹¹⁵ King Arthur is shown to surpass Alexander in generosity at Erec's coronation [6673-6]

the victor of a great tournament. He still has much to learn about proper noble conduct, and is not an exemplary husband yet.

Erec's behaviour in the Hunt for the White Stag is a precursor of the problems in his character which will need to be altered in his journey. For example, it shows him willingly choosing the company of a lady over seeking adventure, which will be repeated after his marriage to Enide.¹¹⁶ Yet, as Burgess indicates, "The white stag adventure will also indirectly lead to Erec's marriage and thus his discovery of the true values of chivalry and the nature of the outside world, all of which prepares him for the responsibilities of kingship."¹¹⁷ The importance of this event for Erec is ironic in that he does not truly participate in it. While the king and the other knights ride off, Erec is last at the scene and accompanies Guinevere to find the hunters [82-ff.], presumably because he has no lady to kill the stag for. He is also ill-equipped for defending himself and the women. Although his appearance is noble and handsome, with expensive finery, he is inadequately attired as a knight. His honour, and the queen's, is lost through his inability to defend them against the insults of Yder and his dwarf, and therefore he must follow them and avenge his disgrace. It is interesting to note here that he sees the disgrace as his own,

¹¹⁶ Lacy, *Thematic Analogues in Erec*, p. 273

¹¹⁷ Burgess, p. 18

and does not think of the shame suffered by the queen and her handmaiden, who have been equally dishonourably treated:

‘Mes itant prometre vos vuel
Que, se je puis, je vangerai
Ma honte ou je l’angreignerai.’ [244-6]

As suggested by Burgess, this serves as a precursor to his treatment of Enide after her revelation of his new reputation.¹¹⁸ He does not think of his wife’s humiliation, but must immediately avenge his own; however, Enide, who also only thinks of the repercussions for herself, mirrors this. Throughout the journey it is also his own pride and prowess that he always thinks of, and not what Enide suffers. In both cases, it is a woman and her shame that prompts him to prowess and *aventure*.

After his marriage, Erec’s men perceive a decline in the knightly virtues that Chrétien had previously described. As Nightingale describes, the previously exemplary Erec is failing to provide a mirror for his peers by spending his time immoderately with Enide.¹¹⁹ The oblivious Erec is literally awakened to the fact that his reputation as a knight has deteriorated because of Enide’s tactless speech on his loss of prowess, which has thus ruined his

¹¹⁸ Burgess, *Erec et Enide*, p. 22

¹¹⁹ J. A. Nightingale, *Erec in the Mirror: The Feminization of the Self and the Re-invention of the Chivalric Hero in Chrétien’s First Romance (Arthurian Romance and Gender)* p. 134

chivalric identity.¹²⁰ As previously discussed, there have been many theories expounded on why he chose to react to this knowledge with a quest in the forest and harsh treatment of Enide. Erec's most obvious goal is undoubtedly the reclamation of his lost honour and reputation. This is demonstrated not only through his testing of Enide's trust in his prowess, but also by his repeated refusals to return to court until he has sufficiently proved himself. Whether it is part of the character's conscious reasoning or not, the journey through the forest also serves to teach Erec to recognise and trust in his wife's love. The series of adventures gradually teach the couple about each other, each one being equally about the two.

Upon setting out into the forest, he immediately tests Enide's confidence in himself and his prowess, forbidding her to speak to him no matter what:

'Alez,' fet il, 'grant aleure,
Et gardez, ne soiez tant ose,
Se vos veez nes une chose,
Que vos m'an diiez ce ne quoi.
Gardez, ja n'an parlez a moi,
Se je ne vos aresne avant.
Grant aleüre alez devant
Et chevauchiez tot a seür' [2768-75]

¹²⁰ Burns, p. 32

Nevertheless, she warns him of approaching danger, thus somewhat diminishing his purpose. Erec's anger is roused by this, and he does not see that it is her love for him which makes her fail his test. After his battle, he harshly warns her not to speak again [2918-21]. This adventure has not taught Erec or Enide anything, as seen by a repeat situation with the next band of robber-knights. Erec is angrier, and the audience can see that it is because he believes that Enide's disobedience shows that she does not respect him or trust his abilities:

Erec respond: 'Mar le pansastes
Quant ma parloe trespasastes,
Ce que deffandu vos avoie.
Et neporquant tres bien savoie
Que vos gueires ne me prisiez.' [2997-3001]

He then proves that he still has exceptional abilities by defeating the five knights. Erec is thus regaining his pride in his abilities, but is not yet balancing it with being a husband.

The first sign of a turning point for Erec in his personal quest for glory comes after Enide proves herself loyal to him, despite the amorous Count Galoain offering her an easier life than the one he has been so far providing. Enide's constant disobedience of Erec's orders to keep quiet has made him believe that she cannot trust his prowess and abilities to defend them. However, on this occasion he:

...la menace,
Mes n'a talant que mal li face,
Qu'il aparçoit et conoist bien
Qu'ele l'aimme sor tote rien,
Et il lit ant que plus ne puet. [3765-69]

Erec's threats are becoming ritualistic, rather than signifying any anger at his wife. The fact that he did not punish Enide for her other transgressions suggests that they were empty threats from the beginning, despite genuine anger behind them.

His next opponent in the forest is a nobler one; Guivret le Petit is the powerful king of the region, and is a match for Erec on the battlefield [3834-48]. This episode does not improve Erec's abilities or attitudes, but introduces a character who can be used as an example of noble chivalry, and who will be useful later in the narrative. At this stage of his journey, Erec does not yet feel he has proven himself, and refuses both accompanying Guivret to his court, and rejoining with King Arthur's court in the forest. Erec only joins with Arthur unwillingly, after being tricked by Gawain into resting with them and having his wounds healed.

Erec's next quest in the pursuit of knightly prowess is to relieve the distress of a damsel, by rescuing a knight who was taken by two giants [4281-4579]. It shows how Erec is an exceptionally brave and powerful knight, as he

manages to defeat the two of them by himself. This magnificent feat, however, is not the climax of his achievements, as the giants nearly kill him. The lady's distress at losing her lover at the hands of the giants will be mirrored by Enide upon Erec's tragic return.

It takes the deathly experience caused by the giants for Erec to truly realise his wife's love, loyalty and value:

L'estraint et dit: 'Ma douce suer,
Bien vos ai del tot assaiiee!
Ne soiez de rien esmaiiee,
Qu'or vos aim plus qu'ains mes ne fis,
Et je resui certains et fis
Que vos m'amez parfitement.
Tot a vostre comandement
Vuel ester des or an avant,
Aussi con j'estoie devant.
Et se vos rien m'avez mesdite,
Jel vos pardoing tot et claim quite
Del forfet et de la parole.' [4920-31]

Although his "resurrection" is a drastic event, it finally leads him to change his attitude towards his wife. His pride and prowess have been restored, with his prowess increasing even more in his following adventures.

The episode of the *Joie de la Cor* marks the completion of his growing experience. He and Enide are able to help two people who show what they themselves could have become, if not for their *aventure*, for "the exile of

Mabonagrain and his lady from their social functions recalls, in a grotesquely exaggerated way, the reclusive newlyweds in Carrant.”¹²¹ Erec can act with wisdom when dealing with the knight Mabonagrain who, like Erec had, lost his knightly virtues through being tied rashly so long to his love. The *Joie de la Cor* shows how Erec can now use his prowess to self-rehabilitate, help others, and provide service to society;¹²² his regained prowess is therefore not simply on the battlefield, but also as a part of courtly society. The episode demonstrates that Erec and Enide have taken the right direction in their lives, that they are ready to end their journey, and that they are able to live and behave in a truly noble way.

After this *aventure*, Erec is finally ready to seek out King Arthur willingly. He has proved to himself that he is worthy of it, and has risen above his previous faults. Erec’s trials earned him the rich coronation provided by Arthur. The coronation, and being put on the same type of throne as Arthur’s, is symbolic of how he is now truly worthy of being a good king. The coronation is a didactic event in itself, as it rewards the new behaviour of the couple, making it obvious to the audience what the qualities necessary for being good rulers and spouses. Without this journey, Erec and Enide might

¹²¹ D. Maddox & S. Sturm-Maddox, *Erec et Enide: The First Arthurian Romance*, (Lacy & Grimbart, *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes* pp.103-119) p. 114

have ended in a situation similar to that of Mabonagrain and his lady; however, “Or fu il rois si con dut estre” [6886].

Other noblemen as examples

However, it is not only Guinevere, Enide, Erec, and Arthur who provide opportunities for didacticism in this story. There are other royal personages in the narrative who show both the audience and Erec and Enide what royal behaviour should be. The first of these is Guivret le Petit, who displays, for the most part, excellent courtly manners. A rich and powerful king who is the fear of his neighbours, he first appears as a foe of Erec [3784-93]. When he discovers who Erec is, he shows him great generosity, offering him his physician and himself as vassal whenever Erec is in his realm [3891-3904]. Erec refuses these, but Guivret promises that he will come to Erec’s aid whenever he should hear of him being in peril. The little king is extremely noble and gracious in his defeat, and the two of them part affectionately [3663-3930]. Guivret honours his promise, coming to Erec’s aid when he hears of the strife he is in with the Count of Limors. Unfortunately, though he has good intentions, he unwittingly does battle with Erec. The battle is dishonourable for

¹²² Maddox & Sturm-Maddox, p. 118

Guivret, for Erec is so badly wounded that he cannot fight properly. Enide's intervention involves asking him to show qualities that he had shown previously [5029-46]. Once their identities are revealed, the two knights are friends again, and Guivret takes Erec to a nearby castle of his [5108-72]. When Guivret's sisters have healed Erec, the small king gives them valuable gifts such as rich clothing, escorts them to King Arthur's court, and is by their side during the *Joie de la Cor* adventure. In *Erec et Enide*, Guivret le Petit shows what friendship a king can offer to others, and embodies noble and generous behaviour.

Another exemplary monarch is King Evrain of Brandigant, a powerful, rich king whose relatively small kingdom is strong and prosperous, and cannot be threatened by France and England due to its fortifications [5389-5414]. He is a well-loved, gentle and courteous king, who has appealed to his people to welcome all travellers and host them [5485-92]. On Erec, Enide and Guivret's arrival, he is properly courteous [5549-63]; he also treats Enide correctly and with honour, and does not try to take advantage of her as counts Galoain and Oringle had done:

Quant il vit Enide venant,
Si la salue maintenant
Et li cort eidier a desçandre.
Par la main qu'ele ot blanche et tandre,
L'an mainne anz el palés amont

Si con franchise le semont,
Si l'enora de quanqu'il pot;
Car bien et bel feire le sot
Sanz folie at sans mal panser. [5555-63]

They are given a decadent room to stay in [5564-74], and are given a great feast. When Evrain hears of Erec's wish to attempt the *Joie de la Cor*, he is saddened and thoroughly counsels him against it [5608-43]. However, when Erec succeeds, Evrain is host to three days of celebration:

Li rois a son pooir l'enore,
Et tuit li autre sanz feintise.
N'i a nul qui de son servise
Ne s'aparaut mout volantiers.
Trois jorz dura la Joie antiers
Ainz qu'Erec s'an poïst torner. [6388-93]

Although Erec and Enide have now fulfilled their quest and learned their lessons, Evrain can still teach them – and the audience – about being a generous host and is an example of a rich powerful king who does not need to be a tyrant over his realm.

Ignoblemen

In contrast, Count Oringle of Limors is the main ruler who shows the audience and characters how not to behave. The elements of courtly behaviour he displays are negated by his dishonourable treatment of Enide. His role in the narrative is comparable to being a king of the Underworld, as evoked by the name of his realm, Limors. The Count is only defeated when Enide defies

him and the living Erec appears to resurrect himself; Erec then kills the Count, thus symbolically defeating death, and the others flee from the “corpse” [4871-8]. Count Oringle himself lives in a realm where courtly behaviour is expected to be upheld. This is shown through the behaviour of his own barons, who behave with more honour than their lord does. For example, the Count must be reminded by his barons what his proper conduct should be when he strikes Enide:

Cele s’escrie, et li baron
Le cont blasment environ.
‘Ostez, sire,’ font il au conte;
‘Mout devriiez avoir grant honte,
Qui cests dame avez ferue
Poe ce que ele ne manjue.
Trop grante vilenie avez feite:
Se caste dame se desheite
Por son seignor qu’ele voit mort,
Nus ne doit dire qu’ele et tort.’ [4829-36]

Count Oringle does not heed the words of his barons when they proclaim his wrongdoing, but rather asserts his position of power over them and Enide [4837-9], reminiscent of what Arthur does when Gawain advises him not to continue the hunt. The barons’ conduct portrays how the values of a noble court could still be upheld there if Count Oringle did not choose to distort them. This situation is a clear sign to Erec, Enide and the audience of how the courtly behaviour in a ruler can be altered to everyone’s detriment.

Count Galoain provides didacticism about how a nobleman should not behave, by directly addressing his knights – and therefore also the audience – on his own folly. His pursuit of the two heroes shows him coming to his senses about the deeds he is committing:

Bien aperçoit que mauveise oevre
Avoit ancomancié a feire.
...
'Exploitié ai vilainemant:
De ma vilenie me poise
Mout est preuz et sage et cortoise
La dame qui deceü m'a.
Sa biautez d'amor m'aluma:
Por ce que je la desiroie,
Son seignor ocirre voloie
Et li par force retenir.
Bien m'an devoit maus avenir:
Sor moi an est venuz li maus.
Que fel feisoie et deleaus
Et traîtres et forsenez!
Onques ne fu de mere nez,
Miaudre chevaliers de cestui.
Ja mes par moi n'avra ennui
La ou jël puisse destorner.
Toz vos comant a retourner.' [3632-3633, 3640-3656]

The adventure with Count Galoain can, like the Hunt for the White Stag, show how chivalric society can be damaged by female beauty.¹²³ His self-criticism about the damage he has caused, while outlining the unacceptable behaviour for a count, also serves to show that Erec's reputation as a valiant knight is mending.

¹²³ Lacy, *Thematic Analogues in Erec*, p. 110

King Arthur

Erec's major *exemplum* is King Arthur, as the sheer scale of his kingship is something for the future rulers to aspire to. However, he is not such a good role model for Erec as Queen Guinevere is for Enide. In *Erec et Enide*, the figure of King Arthur still embodies many of the qualities that are essential for a favourably viewed king; yet, in the context of a *Mirror for Princes*, some of his behaviour can be interpreted as that of an ineffective monarch. He is not immortal, all-conquering, and an ideal king, but is instead often presented as a somewhat impotent ruler. Despite being vastly wealthy and having hundreds of kings and barons beneath him, his impulses betray a reign not quite worthy of being considered the greatest that Britain will ever see.

Chrétien portrays an Arthur who appears not to be the predominant power in terms of his actions, although he tries to wield power as if he were so; with the exception of the Hunt for the White Stag, it is his knights who have the heroic adventures and successes. King Arthur is more of a figurehead than an active ruler – he is “never a true sovereign; he is the symbol of an ideal feudal state, the guarantor of a perfect human order.”¹²⁴ His role is to be more

¹²⁴ E. Köhler, *L'Avanture chevalresque* (Paris, Gallimard, 1974, p. 26) cf. D. Gilbert, *Erec and Enide*, (University of California Press, 1992) p. 25

of an accessory, by assisting Erec in becoming the ideal king that he is at his coronation.

What power King Arthur has seems only to be effective while his knights and barons are at court with him. Despite his lavish displays and appearance of being a powerful king, the events in this tale show that not all is well with his reign. This becomes apparent in the first appearance of Arthur in the beginning of the narrative. It is Easter time, and at Cardigan Arthur is holding the most dazzling court that has ever been seen, “Ains si riche ne fu veüe,” [30] complete with brave, proud knights and beautiful women [31-4]. This rich court, however, is about to be plunged into discord. Arthur wishes to revive an ancient custom of the Hunt for the White Stag.

This episode of the hunt provides the most didacticism centred on King Arthur, as it includes a didactic passage on the role of kings, and shows Arthur acting as an ineffective king through his lack of wisdom. As Gawain explains to the king, restoring this tradition may seem harmless, except for the fact that the man who kills the stag must offer a kiss to the loveliest girl at court. This will automatically cause strife amongst the men at court: all knights with a lady will be willing to fight the others to prove that his is the most beautiful. Reviving this custom will create disaster and enmity amongst men who should

all be *amis chevaliers* [39-58]. Despite Gawain's alarm and subsequent warning, Arthur replies:

... 'Ce sai je bien,
Mes por ce n'an leirai je rien.
Car ne doit estre contredite
Parole, puis que rois l'a dit.
Demain matin a grant deduit
Irons chacier le blanc cerf tuit
An la forest aventureuse.
Ceste chace iert mout deliteuse.' [59-66]

This displays qualities of an unwise ruler; Arthur disregards the advice of his high-ranking knight, and continues with an action that could tear apart his court, seemingly out of determination to prove that, as king, he embodies absolute power and can do what he chooses. This is not at all what a praiseworthy ruler should do in a *Mirror for Princes*. An ideal feudal king should always listen to the advice of his barons and take it into account, as has been seen in *Le Roman de Brut*. As protector and dispenser of justice for his vassals,¹²⁵ he should also make decisions and act in a way that benefits his kingdom and his own court. Creating discord such as that generated from the Hunt of the White Stag only weakens his command over the court. Brigitte Cazelles is of the opinion that the Custom of the White Stag "discloses the presence of intercentine violence, a violence heretofore contained but that now threatens to consume the knights of King Arthur's court and Arthur

¹²⁵ M. Bloch, tr. L. A. Manyon, *Feudal Society (volumes 1 and 2)*, (The University of Chicago Press, 1964) p. 224

himself.”¹²⁶ However, the violence that is disclosed here is the violence of courtly adventures, where knights fight each other for honour and nobility. Arthur’s mistake is in bringing this sort of battle into the court itself.

Arthur later states that he re-establishes the custom because he wishes to adhere to tradition, and must do so despite the consequences. This statement shows why he proceeded with the custom despite Gawain’s warning, but not why he failed to think of a solution:

‘De ce vos devroit il peser,
Se je vos voloie alever
Autres costumes, autres lois,
Que ne tint mes pere, li rois.
L’usage Pandragon, mon pere,
Qui fu droiz rois et anperere,
Doi je garder et maintenir,
Que que il m’an doie avenir.’ [1807-14]

In this instance, his role as king is as the lawgiver, who “acts as legatee of the juridical heritage of his forebears”.¹²⁷ The Hunt for the White Stag is not a formal requirement of court, but a legal act of continuity between his father’s reign and his own.

¹²⁶ B. Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail: A Social Reading of Chrétien de Troyes’ Conte du Graal*, (Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 65

¹²⁷ D. Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: Once and Future Fictions*, (Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1991) p. 31

King Arthur himself catches the white stag, with his men helping with the kill [278-84], showing that he is still superior in noble activities and strength. However, his prowess in the hunt does not assist him with controlling the discontent amongst his men. Just as Gawain predicted, when the time comes for the kiss to be bestowed, the knights and barons turn from jovial feasting to being heated, and determined to prove even by using their lances or ashwood spears that their lady is the loveliest:

“Par la cort an font grant murmure:
Li uns a l’autre dit et jure,
Que ce n’iert ja fet sanz desresne
D’espee ou de lance de fresne.
Chascuns viaut par chevalerie
Desresnier que la soe amie
Est la plus bele de la sale;
Mout est caste parole male.” [291-8]

Gawain immediately becomes concerned that the place will erupt into battle, and now, with the consequences looming directly in front of him, Arthur is finally willing to hear Gawain:

Et li rois le respond par san:
‘Biaus niés Gauvains, conseiliez m’an
Sauve m’enor et ma droiture!
Car je n’ai de la noise cure’ [307-310]

Arthur has not thought of a solution to the obvious problem since Gawain’s warning and he cannot come up with one now. Only in an hour of desperation, when his court is beginning to erupt into chaos, is he willing to accept his man’s advice and even ask him for the solution which he, were he

an effective ruler, should have thought of or predicted earlier.¹²⁸ Thankfully, the queen makes a timely arrival and suggests delaying the decision and further conflict until Erec's return, a suggestion that everyone, including a presumably relieved Arthur, agrees with [321-40]. This episode, according to Cazelles, demonstrates that King Arthur's rule is even more fragile than what Chrétien is directly telling the audience:

[The Custom of the White Stag] was one paramount for the confirmation of the *right* of the king's rule, in both the legal and political sense of the term, its enactment in the temporal setting of the romance serves primarily to confirm the fragility of Arthur's kingship in the face of his knights' contentious dispositions....That any claim regarding the superior beauty of a lady friend can be either right or wrong ... is a measure of the inability of Arthur's legal system to maintain the cohesion of his court.... Not only is the king no longer the guarantor and orchestrator of justice (any one of his knights can now arrogate the privilege of determining what is right and what is wrong), but the determination of right is itself exclusively based on one's capacity to claim, i.e. contest by means of force, one's prerogative over and above any other member of the court, including King Arthur. If right was ever the source of the king's might, as was allegedly the case in the bygone world of Uther Pendragon, this equation now appears to be reversed: in the age of Arthur, might makes right.¹²⁹

However, this theory is a somewhat exaggerated version of the situation. The Hunt for the White Stag does present a problem for Arthur and his court, yet as Arthur states he is merely continuing his father's tradition, and

¹²⁸ For example, as the King himself won the hunt he could have simply bestowed the kiss on his wife Queen Guinevere.

¹²⁹ Cazelles, p. 65

Pendragon presumably faced the same issue. King Arthur was eager to maintain what he inherited from his father, despite this custom requiring revision.¹³⁰

The problem of whom to bestow the kiss upon is also resolved by Queen Guinevere. Upon her suggestion that the kiss is awarded to Enide, Arthur makes a speech which shows him behaving as an excellent king, and shows that Chrétien had in some way intended the text as a *Mirror for Princes*:

‘Et vos, seignor, qu’an volez dire?
Poez i vos rien contredire?
Se nus i viaut metre deffanse
Si die or androit ce qu’il panes.
Je suis rois, ne doi pas mantir,
Ne vilenie consantir,
Ne fausseté ne desmesure:
Reison doi garder et droiture.
Ce apartienta leal roi
Que il doit maintenir la loi,
Verité et foi et justise.
Je ne voudroie an nule guise
Feire desleauté ne tort,
Ne plus au foible que au fort.
N’est droiz que nus de moi se plaigne
Ne je ne vuel pas que remaigne
La costume ne li usages
Que siaut maintenir mes lignages.’ [1789-1806]

Devoting such a passage to how a king should behave is a strong indication that this tale is a *Mirror for Princes*. It also shows how Arthur can

¹³⁰ Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 31

be a good example to Erec, and outlines behaviour that he must aspire to in order to become king. This passage also demonstrates that Arthur has learned to consult his knights, rather than dismissing their opinions as he did before. However, he has only asked his barons for advice after making it impossible for them to disagree with him. He also never solves the problem for future white stag hunts, and it appears that a repeat of the custom will bring about the same discord.

Towards the end of the tale, Arthur is found in a state of depression and diminished honour. The cause of this is almost farcical; it shows that the command Arthur has is extremely large, that it is diminishing, and that he is a king who does not actively take charge in times of his own distress. Once Erec has finished his adventures in the forest and becomes a worthy prince, husband and knight, he, along with Enide and Guivret le Petit, returns to King Arthur's court from that of Evrain's. Here, in complete contrast to the glory and celebrations after the *Joie de le Cor aventure*, he finds Arthur lonely and depressed. The king has only five hundred of his barons with him, a number so small that he has never felt so lonely:

Ansanble o lui ot solemant
Cinc çanz barons de sa meison.
Onques mes an nule seison
Ne fu trovez li rois si sens,

Si and estoit mout angoisseus,
Que plus n'avoit jant sa cort. [6418-6424]

The appearance of Erec, Enide and King Guivret gives Arthur hope of rejuvenating his honour and serves to alleviate his depression, which he had only the day before been bled for. The arrival of the trio grants his wish for some more people, who are so noble and brave that their presence would increase the honour of his court:

Le jor devant estoit seigniez
An ses chambers priveement;
Ansanble o lui ot solemant
Cinc çanz barons de sa meison.
Onques mes an nule season
Ne fu trovez li rois si seus,
Si an estoit mout angoisseus,
Que plus n'avoit jant a sa cort. [6416-23]

... 'Bien veignant soient
Come baron vaillent et preu!
Mellors d'aus dues ne sai nul leu.
D'aus iert mout ma corz amandee.' [6434-37]

Arthur's relatively small court could indicate many things. Having five hundred barons present would presumably be a large gathering for any other king; the number thus emphasises the immense size and power of King Arthur's reign. However, something must have happened at Arthur's court or in his kingdom for there to be such an unprecedented low number. The king is lonely and highly concerned about the absence of so many: he feels the honour of his court is threatened by it. It is unclear whether his urging Erec and

Guivret to stay is part of his renowned kingly generosity or a means of ensuring he has honourable friends at court long-term. It can also be seen to emphasise Erec and Enide's renewed reputations, honour, and marriage. King Arthur's problem is highlighted all the more through the direct contrast with King Evrain's court, where the mood is euphoric after Erec's successful *aventure*, and the resulting celebrations last for four days. The scene at Evrain's court is one that the audience might expect to see at King Arthur's, with lords and barons from all the surrounding country joining in the *Joie de la Cor* as soon as possible, along with people of every class. More instruments "qu'an poist dire ne nomer" [6385] are struck up, and offer an example of hyperbole that is usually reserved for the greatest of kings and their events. King Evrain showers as much honour upon Erec as he can, with others doing likewise [6364-95]. King Arthur, when displayed in such a destitute manner directly after another king's lavish celebration, would seem to represent a lesser figure, were it not for the fact that he considers five hundred men with him to be a small number. His behaviour in this episode is much more reminiscent of an example for the audience of how not to behave.

Nevertheless, despite his seeming lack of court stability and wise command over his people, Chrétien's Arthur strongly displays some of the good qualities of a king that are found in *Mirrors for Princes*. The most

dominant of these is generosity, or *largesce*. Arthur's generosity knows no bounds, and he is therefore highly lauded for it; he even surpasses Alexander the Great, who is the *topos* of royal generosity and a great warrior [6673-85].

It is at Erec's coronation where Arthur displays himself to be one of the greatest kings who ever lived, surpassing even the famous kings of folklore with his generosity and wealthy displays. The Christmas coronation is the climax of the story, when Erec after his *aventure* is finally worthy of becoming a king, having learned the good qualities of one, and Arthur has the opportunity to demonstrate how powerful a king he really is, or can be:

Alixandres, qui tant conquest
Que soz lui tot le monde mist
Et tant fu larges et tant riches,
Vers cestui fu povres e chiches.
Cesar, l'anperere de Rome,
E tuit li roi que l'an vos nome
An diz et an chançons de geste,
Ne dona tant a une feste
Come li rois Artus dona
Le jor que Erec corona;
Ne tant n'osassent pas despandre
Antre Cesar et Alixandre,
Come a la cort ot despandu. [6673-85]

Arthur's generosity takes the form of extremely expensive gifts for all attendees of the coronation. The four hundred knights that he dubs at the coronation all receive magnificent cloaks of expensive materials such as silks and gold trimmings, and Chrétien stresses that Arthur does not deign to give

cloaks made merely of wool, rabbit fur or serge [6660-72]. The king also has cloaks spread through all the rooms so that the guests can choose whichever they like best to keep:

Li mantel furent estandu
A bandon par totes les sales,
Tuit furent gité fors des males;
S’an prist qui vost, sanz contredit. [6686-9]

Then, on a carpet in the middle of the court, he has thirty bushels of white sterling; each of the guests can take as much as they can carry home with them [6690-7]. Providing for his hundreds of guests’ warmth and comfort at this winter ceremony is also an act of extreme generosity and thoughtfulness. Arthur’s *largesce* is so great that the tale even ends on it: he distributes horses, arms, silver, cloths and many types of brocade amongst his guests before they leave the celebrations, “Por ce qu’il est de grant franchise / Et por Erec qu’il ama tant” [6956-7]. The sheer expense of these gifts and of distributing the money shows how wealthy and powerful Arthur truly is, which is not often displayed in his earlier actions. Here, through the guests, the audience gets to see the huge influence King Arthur has; every person summoned by Arthur obeyed him and attended – a great contrast to the lonely Arthur before Erec’s arrival. Also shown through the guest list of the earlier wedding of the title characters, the sheer number of guests and the range of kingdoms they hail from indicate the true power and renown Arthur possesses:

De mainte diverse contree
I ot contes et dus et rois,
Normanz, Bretons, Escoz, Irois;
D'Angleterre et de Cornoaille
I ot mout riche baronaille,
Que de Gales jusqu'an Anjo
Ne el Mainne ne an Peito
N'ot chevalier de grant afeire
Ne jantil dame de bone eire
Que les mellors et les plus jantes
Ne fussent a la cort a Nantes,
Si con li rois les ot mandez. [6644-55]

King Arthur's immense wealth and stature make the following act all the more generous. He has two beautiful thrones made, both identical and created only from gold and ivory. Arthur, seating himself on one of the marvellous chairs, shows Erec extraordinary honour by bidding him to take the other beside him [6713-34]. Thus Erec and King Arthur are seated as if equals in the realm – a privilege no ordinary new king is given in Arthurian romances.

Erec et Enide can be read as being a *Mirror for Princes* due to the plot's centring on two people's journey to be suitable monarchs. The whole structure of Erec and Enide's journey displays the transformation and difference between merely having renown – which they possess to begin with – and actively being a superlative monarch and spouse. The changes in attitude required for such a transformation is a major component of their *aventure*. In

addition, consequences of both improper and correct actions for nobility are seen through most of the noble characters in the tale. These characters are used as examples for Erec and Enide or for the audience, who would be expected to recognise which behaviour is appropriate. However, not every aspect of the tale relates to the moral content of a *Mirror for Princes*, which represents the focus of this study. Chrétien de Troyes created his tale not solely to provide honourable examples, but also to entertain his audience with a finely crafted version of a story that was already being told “devant rois et devant contes.” [20] Whether those accounts were intended as *Mirrors for Princes* or not, Chrétien’s adaptation is filled with lessons for the nobility, and, in accordance with the boast in his prologue [23-6], is the version that lasted the test of time.

The development of didactic romance and historical chronicles

As outlined in the introduction, the spread of Western Europeans to the British Isles led to different adaptations of local Celtic folklore. King Arthur was the most popular of these legendary figures, and he was incorporated into new romances and pseudo-historical chronicles. The tales derived from the legends of King Arthur were often adjusted to accommodate didactic material, as can be seen Wace’s *Roman de Brut* in the previously discussed *Erec et Enide*.

The authors of romances had a great deal of liberty in their subject material, and did not have to subscribe to others sources as being authoritative or truthful.¹³¹ Instead, they were free to provide their own meaning through creating their own structures, events and views on existing tales,¹³² such as Chrétien announced he would do in his prologue to *Erec et Enide*:

D'Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes,
Que devant rois et devant contes
Depecier et corronpre suelent
Cil qui de conter vivre vuelent.
Des or comancerai l'estoire
Qui toz jorz mes iert an memoire
Tant con durra cretiantez;
De ce s'est Crestiens vantez. [19-26]

His prologue expresses vehement distaste for the liberties others have taken with the pre-existing romance. In doing so, he highlights the trends of both performing fictitious works to the nobility, and of authors personalising their adaptations. The various versions of the tales produced, especially those written for performance to the nobility, could thus be easily transformed into *Mirrors for Princes*, or at least add occasional didactic content.

The twelfth-century writers of history were not expected to take such liberties with their texts. In the Middle Ages, history was supposed to denote the truth, with phrases such as *veritas historiae* and *veritas rerum* being

¹³¹ Green, p. 94

common terms.¹³³ Authentic historiography was differentiated from fictional romance by its vernacular composers, as had also been done by its Latin predecessors.¹³⁴ However, as Green indicates,

...what counts as a historical truth must be what medieval authors, as distinct from modern historians, regarded as such. In medieval historiography past events can be distorted and adapted to a later historical situation, but thereby still retain a historical function and be regarded as true.¹³⁵

The distortion and adaptation is what allows didactic material to be introduced into histories. The events could be altered according to the political situation at the time of writing. They could also be adjusted to suit the intended audience and those to whom the work was dedicated. The contexts in which the historical chronicles were written opened up the possibility of *Mirrors for Princes* forming under the guise of historical truths.

¹³² Green, p 94

¹³³ Ibid, p. 135

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

DIDACTICISM IN PSEUDO-HISTORICAL CHRONICLES: WACE'S

ROMAN DE BRUT

One such work of adjusted didactic historiography is Wace's *Roman de Brut*. It is the earliest surviving account of Britain's history written in the vernacular, although, at least to a modern audience, it is a work of fiction. It was completed in 1155, shortly after the long civil war that followed the death of Henry I in 1135,¹³⁶ and within two years of the accession of Henry II. According to Layamon, it was presented to Henry's queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine;¹³⁷ yet, as Jean Blacker notes, there is no other evidence to support this.¹³⁸ Adapted and amplified according to contemporary criteria¹³⁹ from

¹³⁶ The war was due to problems with his succession; after the death of his son William, Henry's daughter Matilda, along with her husband Geoffrey, count of Anjou, had been declared his heirs in 1126-7. (E. M. Hallam, *Capetian France 987-1328*, [Longman Group Ltd., England] p. 43) However, Henry's nephew Stephen of Blois seized the throne from Empress Matilda, ruling until 1154. [Ibid, pp. 47 & 53] During his reign there was constant civil war; Matilda and Geoffrey naturally battled to reclaim their throne, with the aid of Theobald II of Blois and Champagne, who had also been a strong contender for the succession. [Ibid, p. 49] On the foundation of Geoffrey and Matilda's work, along with his own battles, their son Henry finally attained a legitimate kingship in 1154. Henry II increased his power with his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine, leading to a large combined kingdom.

¹³⁷ Layamon, tr. D. G. Bzdył, *Layamon's Brut: A History of the Britons*, (Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, New York, 1989), p 33

¹³⁸ J Blacker, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Volume 56*, (Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 631

¹³⁹ There was little written about amplification when Wace was writing. An example of an extant document is Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria* in 1175. It contains techniques of description, which are similar to the techniques of amplification used by Wace, such as, "...one must decide whether or not to describe the character about whom he is writing. In many cases , a description of the person is fitting, in many superfluous." [I, 38]

Wace's adaptation of Geoffrey's work has been analyzed by many, including F. H. M. Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace* (D.S.Brewer, Cambridge, 2005), and R. A. Caldwell, *Wace's*

Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*HRB*),¹⁴⁰ the work refers to over a hundred kings, several powerful female rulers, and many noble heroes.¹⁴¹ Geoffrey's stated purpose in writing the *HRB*, was to outline the history of Britain through many famous or remarkable figures of the Britons, from Brutus to Cadwallader.¹⁴² His approach, however, is highly patriotic; although dealing with the subject of how Britain lost her power, it also tells of the times that Britain was at her greatest.¹⁴³ I shall henceforth refer to the *Roman de Brut* solely as Wace's work. Although the history appears to have been created, or at least compiled, by Geoffrey, Wace's *Roman du Brut* is not a direct translation. Despite its following the same storyline, with many parts of it being the direct rhyming translation of the *HRB*, Wace has added his own opinions, embellishment, and language to make the text his own. Echoes of Geoffrey's patriotism remain, especially with regards to Arthur's rule, but aspects such as extra details in the monarchs' lives and moral commentary set

Roman de Brut and the Variant Version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historium Regum Britanniae (*Speculum*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Oct 1956) pp 675-682)

¹⁴⁰ The two main sources which Wace used were the *Variant* and the Vulgate – see Caldwell's article.

¹⁴¹ With the exceptions of King Lear, King Arthur, and Queen Guinevere, whose names are commonly known as such in the English language, I shall keep the names of the characters as they appear in the Anglo-Norman text, not as the variations found in some English translations.

¹⁴² *HRB*: Geoffrey of Monmouth, tr. L. Thorpe, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, (Penguin Books Ltd, Great Britain, 1966), p. 33

¹⁴³ Despite the patriotism, the work does not appear to be a *Mirror for Princes*. Most likely a Welshman given the content of his works, [*HRB*, p. 15] Geoffrey had access to the old legends and was able to collate them for his Norman patrons.

it apart. The omissions from and compression of Geoffrey's text "ensure a certain ideological clarity in the depiction of power struggles: the audience has to be aware of where his sympathies should be."¹⁴⁴ The narrator also directs the audience's sympathies;¹⁴⁵ Wace's few didactic asides and opinions form most of the direct didacticism found in the *Roman de Brut*, and provide the most important difference between his work and the *HRB*.

The original purpose of writing the *Roman de Brut* is merely a vernacular version of the popular tale for Norman readers of history; Wace, in compiling his version of the work, did not have a specific patron to dedicate it to until he neared completion. He appears to have only gained royal support after gifting his *Roman de Brut* to the new queen, despite claiming in the *Roman de Rou* to have had royal connections to Henry I.¹⁴⁶ However, many aspects of the work, including Wace's embellishments and clear view of which characteristics make an excellent ruler, mark the *Roman de Brut* as having a double purpose: a history and a *Mirror for Princes*. Wace's particular emphasis on generosity as an exemplary quality is an indication of the didactic intent, given that he was searching for royal patronage.

¹⁴⁴ Le Saux, p. 96

¹⁴⁵ For a more detailed study on the narrative style, see Le Saux, pp. 102-3

¹⁴⁶ *Roman de Rou*, ed. J. E. Weiss, *Wace's Roman de Brut – A History of the British*, (University of Exeter Press, UK, 1999), xii

Attributes and Categories of Kings

Wace's *Roman de Brut* was written in the style of a pseudo-historical chronicle, and it does not contain any direct didacticism addressed to a specific ruler such as found in Eustache's works or the *Policraticus*. Rather, it instructs indirectly through the attributes of the kings, and through the final outcome of their actions, such as horrible and dishonourable deaths of many evil rulers. Wace employs many *topoi* in order to define the characteristics that make good kings and leaders, and those that make unacceptable rulers. Many of these characteristics relate to the virtues and crimes of rulers, and so are the same as those applied in works that contain didacticism, such as the epic.

The *topoi* that Wace employs include those discussed in the introduction; however, they do not merely use character description, but also give a general description of their lives. These pertain to subdivisions of Cicero's sources of proof: "race, citizenship, family, wondrous events at the moment of birth, early upbringing, education, body, soul, profession, deeds; relatives, friends, riches, household, fortune and similar things; length of life, kind of death, and events after death."¹⁴⁷ The *topoi* also concern Matthew of

¹⁴⁷ A. M. Colby, *The Portraiture in Twelfth-Century French Literature: An Example of the Stylistic Originality of Chrétien de Troyes* (Librairie Droz, Genève, 1965) p. 91.

Vendôme's adaptation of Cicero's sources, his list being more to do with the "inner man": "reason, faithfulness, patience, honesty, double-dealing, arrogance, or prodigality... which are set forth either for praise or censure."¹⁴⁸ These ideas are seen in many character descriptions of the rulers. Of Cicero's sources, deeds, race, length of life, kind of death, events after death, and fortune are the most prominent; the important, wondrous, and devastating events during a monarch's reign also represent important aspects. These events and the monarchs' reactions to them can often influence what sort of rulers they are perceived to be.

In the *Roman de Brut*, the *Mirror for Princes* genre is portrayed through its three basic categories of rulers: those who are efficient or well-regarded, those who are ineffective or simply bad, and those that rate only a very brief mention, even to the point of merely appearing in a list. These types are mostly stereotypical – be they kings, lords and dukes, or queens – and embody a set of regular characteristics which will be further discussed below, along with the categories they belong to. It is these characteristics, placed alongside a ruler's reputation, that enable it to be read as a *Mirror for Princes*. In addition to the three main classifications, there is a small, but highly

¹⁴⁸ Matthew of Vendôme in *Ars versificatoria* I.74 (tr. A. E. Galyon, [The Iowa State University Press, Ames, 1980] p. 48)

important, number of rulers who might be considered to belong to more than one category, with characteristics and actions during their reign which pertain to their being worthy of both praise and blame. The treatment of these few rulers strengthens the case for the *Roman de Brut* being a *Mirror for Princes*, as their stories highlight and contrast the consequences of various behaviours more than the other categories.

Methods of Portrayal

There are many examples of great rulers in the *Roman de Brut* – more than of the terrible ones – yet they all seem to fall into a stereotype, and those commemorated by Wace all repeatedly show characteristics which one would expect in a *Mirror for Princes*. One of the most important of these characteristics is generosity, which Wace seems to favour above other qualities. The kings in Wace who are munificent have a tendency to garner much more praise than those who are not described as such: a possible message to potential royal patrons to be generous themselves. Bravery on the battlefield is also important; historians willingly record the winning of glorious battles, and this applies particularly to the exploits of King Arthur, who is the climax of the work. Also essential is nobility, which is innate through birth and behaviour, and acquired through conduct which embodies righteous authority and just moral precepts. Furthermore, Wace underlines wisdom, moderation,

Christian piety, and acting appropriately towards variously-ranked people, while a strong, handsome countenance and virile appearance are an undoubted advantage. The creation of laws that are beneficial to all subjects, particularly those that, according to Wace, supposedly remain even in his day, likewise represents an action of favourable monarchs. Ruling in peace is the ultimate achievement of efficient rulers, which often occurs after the winning of many bloody battles. In addition, a king should have great power, as powerful monarchs can defend a kingdom better, build roads and cities, and have greater wealth.

The rulers of ill repute are, naturally, quite the opposite. They tend to be usurpers, misers, or cowards, who are treacherous, immoderate, unjust, and arrogant. On occasions they can join forces or have positive dealings with heathens, outlining their absence of Christian righteousness and unwillingness to defend their own people. Inappropriate sexual conduct through encounters with pagans or homosexuality may also mark them as undesirable kings.

Wace mostly portrays the nature of the rulers through their actions and decisions. The unsuccessful kings are characterised more often by accounts of immoral actions and a lack of good deeds than by lists of their shortcomings, whereas the good kings are more likely to be defined by lists of their qualities.

The lists mostly consist of adjectives, or adverbs attached to rulers' actions. The most common words associated with the successful kings are *hardiz/hardement*, *paisable* (and longer descriptions of this), *pruësce*, *gentil*, *proz/pruz*, *forz*, *bons/buens/bien*, *corteïs/corteisement*, *sage/sagement*, and *bels*. The phrase "pruz e hardiz" is also relatively common when describing a favourable character. The predominant words associated with the undesirable kings are *orguillus*, *mals/malveis/malement*, *fel/felon* and *cruels*; these descriptions, however, do not take into account the harm the kings caused.

Given that the *Roman de Brut* details an immense number of rulers, I shall discuss at the most only five from each category. These rulers have different levels of importance in the tale. As the characteristics are often shown through actions, it will be necessary to provide relevant narrative detail and context. King Arthur and Guinevere, the subjects of the climax of Wace's work, will be examined separately as they are of great significance. Although their characteristics, especially those of King Arthur, are stereotypical and so shared with the other monarchs, Arthur and Guinevere are portrayed in hyperbole¹⁴⁹ and their deeds are far more resounding and detailed.

Kings of Renown

The first category is represented by the rulers of heroic mould, who are efficient in their rule and possess all of the positive qualities previously outlined. Aside from King Arthur, one of the greatest kings of Britain was Dumwallo Molmuz. His rule outlines the importance of moral behaviour, providing a prosperous kingdom, and being skilled in battle. He was the son of King Cloten of Cornwall, the rightful heir to Britain's throne, who had watched Britain be divided up into separate kingdoms by people who ignored his claim. Dumwallo defeated the kings of Logres, Scotland and Wales, and united Britain for the time. He had the key characteristics of an excellent king:

Clotem out puis un filz mult gent,
Ki fud de mult grand hardement;
Bels fud e proz e halt creüz,
Si out num Dumwallo Molmuz;
Hardiz fud e bels e corteis.
Cist trespassad tretuz les reis
Ki en Bretagne ourent esté
De hardement e de bealté. [2211-18]¹⁵⁰

That Dumwallo was militarily successful with great consequences from the moment he could bear arms, is another sign of his ideal kingship. He immediately set off and conquered Logres, killing King Pinner, and then moved on to the allied kings of Scotland and Wales. These kings were laying

¹⁴⁹ One of the *topoi* of didactic works, as outlined in the introduction.

¹⁵⁰ All quotations and line references are from Wace, tr. J. Weiss, *Wace's Roman de Brut – A History of the British*, (University of Exeter Press, 1999)

waste to Cornwall, but Dumwallo commandeered thirty thousand men and fought a long battle, conquering through wily battle tactics [2223-78]. The rest of Dumwallo's reign was ideal; he kept an unsurpassed peace, and made highly popular laws. Wace also mentions that he was the first British king to wear a gold crown, reinforcing the idea of his prosperity, and how he surpassed all previous kings:

Quant il out la terre conquise,
Par tut le regne ad tel pais mise,
Unc puis ne ainz n'i out tel pais,
Ne n'avrad il, ceo crei, jamais.
Corone d'or se fist cist faire;
Unches n'oi de rei retraire
Qui en Bretagne anceis regnast,
Ki d'or corone en chief portast.
Il fist un establissement
E si en fist confermement,
Que tut li temple e les citez
Eüssent si granz dignetez
Que ja huem, tant meffait n'eüst,
Se il dedenz entrer poüst,
Ja fust puis pur home adesez,
Ainz s'en alast quites clamez.
Quites ralast a sun ostel
E quite eüst tut sun chatel.
Puis establi que pais eüssent,
Ne par nul home adesez fussent
Cil ki as charues serreient
Ne cil ki as citez irreient,
Ne a temple ne a marchié;
E ki nul en avreit tuchié
En la merci fust de sa vie,
Come repris de felonie.
Ci mist les lagues e les leis

Que encor tienent li Engleis.
Quarante anz fud reis, puis fina;
Sa gent a Lundres l'enterra
Lez le temple sainte Concorde,
Si come l'estorie recorde,
Un temple que il fist funder
Pur concorde e pur pais garder. [2279-2312]

As seen in this passage, he was not only effective and important at the time, but he also generated positive effects that still existed in Wace's day, having supposedly created the languages and laws that were continuing to be used by the English. Dumwallo displays all the characteristics of a good king, but takes the qualities further. Despite a bloody beginning to his reign, he avenged his father's dishonour in not being respected enough by the nobles and not being made king of Britain. His reign therefore began with the purpose of bringing justice, then progressed to creating lasting traditions and establishing a good life for his subjects.

An example of how important munificence is can be found in comparing the brief accounts of the kings Merean and Bledudo [3673-89]. Merean was a stereotypical aristocratic king, full of noble characteristics: he was handsome, highly skilled at hawking and hunting, knowledgeable about dogs and birds, and loyal to his wife despite his many female admirers. He did not receive praise from Wace, but merely has descriptions of excellent nobility and of how he loved only his wife despite the fact that "de dames ert mult

desirrez/ E mult requis e mult amez” [3679-80]. His son Bledudo was very much like him; however, he gave much more generously than Merean, and in an entirely selfless way. He is therefore praised as being “mult... gentil seinur” [3689].

Gorgonian, the first of Morpidus’s sons to become king, offers another example of an ideal monarch. His reign is not related in such detail as that of Dumwallo’s, but he ruled calmly and justly, and remained moderate and righteous:

Gorgonian, ki fu premiers,
Fu reis leials e dreiturers,
Unches nulls reis plus dulcement
Ne governa terrene gent;
Ja a escient ne mentist
Ne a home tort ne feïst;
Unches en li n’out desmesure;
E a tuz vult faire dreiture.
Leials fu, e en leialté
Vint a la fin de sun eé.
A Lundres fu sa sepulture
Apareillee par grant cure. [3469-80]

Although no outstanding events during Gorgonian’s reign are recounted, the brief, quiet interlude appears to be a welcome change for his subjects from the sensational rulers before and after him. That great care was taken in preparing his tomb is an indication that his rule was appreciated. The

pious, just, well-meaning king is, in this instance, as good as the kings who are powerful and rich military leaders.

Christian piety and righteousness are aspects of kingship often explored in Wace. These are the only characteristics of the king of Kent, Aldebert; even when he went into battle, it was for vengeance upon those who rejected Saint Augustine [13865-86]. King Aldebert is one of a handful of kings favourably looked upon for converting his household to Christianity when the opportunity arose. Saint Augustine travelled throughout his kingdom, painstakingly converting the rest of Aldebert's subjects [13693-13710]. Although the war for vengeance was brutal and merciless, Aldebert is still considered a good king for enabling his subjects to become Christian.

A unique case amongst the good kings is King Malgo who was excellent but with a major flaw. Wace begins by describing him as an ideal king such as could be used as an *exemplum* in a *Mirror for Princes*. Even his immoderation in generosity is not to be looked upon as a fault:

Malgo, sis niés, fud reis après,
Ki ama mult chevalerie
E mult l'usa tut sa vie.
Les idles environ conquest
E les humages des reis prist;
De bealté e de bones murs
Surmunta tuz ses anceisurs.

Forment fud bels, forment fud genz,
Forment ama tuz ses parenz,
Larges fud mult a desmesure,
Unques d'aveir tenir n'ot cure.
Malgo se tint a escharni,
A deshonoré, a huni,
Que il le jor n'ot tant dune
Dunt qui que seit li seüst gré. [13356-70]

However, Wace has a surprise in store for the audience:

Une sule teche aveit male
Dunt li Sodomite sunt pale;
Ne sout l'em en lui alter vice
Ne ne feseit altre malice. [13371-76]

It is extraordinary that a mortal sin should be present in a king whom Wace is portraying as good. The trait is glossed over, with Wace hastily adding that there were no other sins. Perhaps he was spared criticism by the fact that he was overly generous, for a king who is generous, especially to the right people, can seemingly do little wrong in this text. In the *HRB*, Malgo was also generous, but there is much more emphasis on his military prowess, and how he was “hateful to God” for his vice.¹⁵¹ His noble attributes in Wace’s version saved his reputation from the vices of his personal life. Geoffrey’s description of Malgo adheres more closely to the medieval perception of homosexuality. Non-procreative sex was discouraged, and *sodomia* was “regarded in canon law and theology as the most heinous of sins, comparable

¹⁵¹ *HRB*, p. 238

to homicide.”¹⁵² It is possible that Wace’s attempt at glossing over Malgo’s sexuality was an endeavour to appease his Norman audience. By the mid-eleventh century, the Anglo-French nobility had a reputation for “sexual non-conformism and bawdiness”, especially the descendants of William the Conqueror.¹⁵³ The second Norman ruler of England, William Rufus, was also accused of homosexuality, and the effeminisation of the young Norman aristocracy was complained about in works such as John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*.

The qualities of successful kings in Wace can be used as *exempla* for their noble audience. The reputation accompanying the rulers who possess many positive characteristics is an example of the didacticism found in the narrative. This reputation is shown through the honour given them through life or after death, as in the case of Dumwallo Molmuz, or by Wace explicitly mentioning the regard held for them. Interspersed through the accounts of these excellent rulers are tales which contrast them; the rulers of ill repute provide lessons on how not to act.

¹⁵² M. Goodich, *The Unmentionable Vice: Homosexuality in the Later Medieval Period*, (Dorset Press, 1979), ix

¹⁵³ Goodich, p. 4

Kings of Ill Repute

The most prominent king full of vices was Vortigern, who displays almost all the stereotypical attributes of the kings that are portrayed negatively. Wace expands on his reign in great detail, as there were both many noteworthy events during his rule, and many sins that he committed, particularly through his dealing with the pagans. The ultimate in evil rulers, he began by controlling the kingdom through Constant, whom he had persuaded to give up his vows and take the throne. Vortigern then usurped the throne through deceit. As a king he was arrogant and wicked, and all his subjects sought his downfall. One of his major crimes was drunkenly marrying the daughter of Hengist the Saxon: because she was a heathen, they did not have any Christian element in the marriage ceremony. Wace even sees fit to add a strong exclamation about this:

Tant l'ad Diabes timoné,
Ki maint home ad al mal turné,
D'amur e de rage l'esprist
De prendre la fille Henguist
Deus, quel honte! Deus, quel pecchié!
Tant l'ad Diabes desveied,
Ne l'ad pas pur ço refuse
Que paene ert, de paiens nee. [6989-96]

This example of the narrator's commentary reinforces the message of how shameful this behaviour is to the audience. Also supporting this message

is how Vortigern's marriage and the alliance with the heathen led to disaster for him, a clear message for kings of this calibre. His own sons deserted him because of this woman, and his Christian subjects forsook him. As he showed more love and trust to the Saxon heathens than to the Christians [7019-24], he thereby earned the latter's hate and gained a reputation in history as a wicked king. He suffered the fate of many of the villainous kings in Wace, with his reign coming to a tumultuous end and his death occurring at the agency of his relatives. Vortigern was betrayed by his own father-in-law, Hengist, and the very Saxons he had defended and held dear. Despite this stain on his memory, Vortigern remains an important king in that his reign encompassed several noteworthy battles with Picts and Saxons; moreover, he is an archetypal model of what a king should not be found in *Mirrors for Princes*.

King Cariz had both the misfortunes of being of a miserable disposition and having a catastrophic event during his reign. His case emphasises the necessity of possessing power and military abilities in a monarch:

Cariz fud puis reis de la terre,
Mes tute la perdi par guerre;
Dolenz fud e maleürus
E a tute gent häinus.
E sun tens vint la grant surverse
De paens e de gent adverse
Que Gurment amena par mer,

Bien an avez oï parler,
Ki firent la destruction
Dunt Bretagne perdi sun nun. [13375-84]

A detailed account of Gurmunt's invasion is the main feature described in Cariz's reign. Because he lacked the qualities of a good king, there were disastrous consequences for Britain, whose inhabitants lost their lords, customs and language against their will. As Cariz did not have enough power to resist Gurmunt, his people were not safe and fled to Wales, Brittany and Cornwall. Cariz himself fled to Cirencester where he was besieged. When they were defeated there, the Britons fled and Cariz escaped to Wales, never to be heard of again [13488-13614]. Britain was renamed *Englelande*, after the invaders. Cariz's case illustrates how important it was for a king to be powerful. In order to command his people, he needed more military *nous* and a personality that was not hateful; moreover, he needed to be a brave protector of his people, rather than a fleeing coward.

There were also disastrous consequences in store for Menbriz, one of the more evil kings that Wace describes. From the beginning of his reign he typifies the bad king, vying for the crown with his brother Malin, whom he treacherously murdered after calling a truce in order to confer with him [1457-68]. The length of his twenty-year reign was not due to any successful governance, but to him murdering all potential rivals:

Mambriz haï tut sun lignage
E tuz les homes de sun parage.
Ja si franc home n'i eüst
Ki bone terre aveir deüst
Que il n'osceüst par poisun
U par force u par traïsun. [1471-76]

It is interesting to note that Menbriz, like Malgo, practises homosexual acts. Wace here is not as neutral as he was with the generous Malgo. The details of the habits of Menbriz, the evil king, are given more prominence and follow directly after the other terrible descriptions of his actions –

Il guerpi sa proper moillier
Si se mist al vilain mestier
Dunt li Sodomite perirrent,
Quant il en lur cite fundirent
E vif chaïrent en abisme. [1477-81]

The detail of how the original Sodomites were cast living into Hell for their acts serves to highlight how terrible and impious Menbriz truly is – an interesting contrast with the hasty detail included in good king Malgo's description. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's version, Mempricius is also a tyrannical figure who abandons himself to sodomy, but there is no emphasis on Hell.¹⁵⁴ Wace is therefore adding his own details, which were more in accordance with medieval doctrine,¹⁵⁵ to sensationalise the vice even more. Menbriz, as a truly ineffective king, suffers a shameful and horrible death while hunting; having left his huntsman, and not knowing where to find game,

¹⁵⁴ *HRB*, p. 59

he ends up being torn to pieces by a savage pack of wolves [1488-92]. The fact that he has displayed gross incompetence in such a noble sport [1483-86] – one in which the successful kings are usually accomplished – also serves to show his lack of suitability as a ruler.

The possession of some essential kingly characteristics was often not enough to save a king and his reputation. King Wider had good military leadership, a trait normally found in good kings, (“Bien vit que tant cum il vivreit/ Bretainne priese ne sereit” [4931-32]). However, he lost his life and brought Britain to war through his pride:

Cil fu chevalier merveillus,
Mais mult fu fiers e orguillus;
De l’amur Romans n’out cure
Ne ne lur vout faire dreiture;
De Bretainne le dessaisi
E lur treü lur en toli.
Ne vout de rien a els ententre
Ne lur treü ne lur vout rendre.
Claudius mult s’en desdeina,
Emperere ert, sun chief jura
Que le treü restorera
E Wider deseritera. [4887-96]

His negative qualities led to his death; the battle against the Romans proved to be in vain, as peace was renewed after his passing.

¹⁵⁵ Goodich, ix

Thus Wace portrays characteristics that are to be avoided at all costs through displaying them alongside kings with wicked reputations and bad fortune. It is, however, the kings which span both categories who portray better moral lessons on the ruling of kingdoms.

Kings Who Span Both Categories

The few monarchs whose reigns display both praiseworthy and blameworthy rule generally begin badly and then repent. A perfect example of this is Argal, the second son of Morpidus. In the brief account of his reign, his nobles are willing to exile him:

Argal, ki emprés lui fu nez,
Fu emprés lui a rei levez;
Mais malement se descorda
E malement lui resembra.
Les nobles homes abaisça
E les non nobles aleva;
Ki avoir out, il li toil,
Quant dut veir dire, si menti.
Tresor assembla merveillus
Si fus avers e coveitus.
Unches n'ama home leial,
Tuz tens se delitou en mal.
Tant demean Argal tel vie
E tant dura sa felonie
Que li noble home s'assemblerent
E de la terre jeterent. [3481-96]

The concise tale of his reign reveals a monarch with almost all of the qualities of a bad and incompetent ruler. His appalling attributes are all the more prominent for him being preceded and succeeded by his two brothers who have exceptionally good character. Argal was given a second chance at ruling the kingdom; after years of travelling and begging for help, his brother King Elidur showed him great mercy and kindness, welcoming him like a prodigal son:

Li reis vit sun frere apovri,
Pitos fu mult sin out merci,
Par mainte fiez l'ad embracied,
Acolé estreit e baisied. [3515-18]

Argal was crowned again by Elidur, and this time, because of the great mercy his brother had shown him, he reformed and became the most moderate, peaceable and honourable of sovereigns. After a decade of energetic rule, he died and Elidur was restored to the throne. The tale of Argal opens up the possibility of reform in even the worst of kings.

King Lear, a good, powerful king for most of his long reign, can at first be seen as an effective king; he becomes ineffective on making a tragic mistake. He began as a prosperous monarch with great power, and his rule spanned sixty years:

Leïr en sa prosperité
Fist en sun nun une cite,

Kaerleïr out nun sor Sore,
Leïcestre l'apeloms ore,
Cité Leïr chascuns nons sone.
Jadis fu la cite mult bone,
Mais par une dissensiun
I out puis grant destructiun
Leïr tint l'enor vivement
Seissante anz continuelement. [1659-68]

The building of a prosperous city by a king is another sign of his being a good ruler – it shows off how much power and wealth he truly has. Lear's mistake was made when he “alques afebli / Come li huem ki enveilli” [1675-76]. Upon asking his three daughters how much they loved him, he misinterpreted their answers by believing the false flattery of the two eldest and assuming that the youngest, Cordeille, was mocking him [1687-1772]. He therefore decided, in arrogant anger, that Cordeille should inherit nothing from him, and divided the kingdom in half between Gonorille and Ragau, for whom he had found powerful husbands. These husbands could not wait to inherit the kingdom, and harassed Lear until he prematurely gave them their halves. Lear was then to be provided for honourably by one of them, yet both daughters in their turn treated him shamefully. He then repented of his injustice, and Cordeille and her husband King Aganippus helped restore him to the throne [1973-2042]. King Lear then became a successful king again. He ruled for a further three years, keeping the realm in all-important peace, and “a ses amis ad rendu / Ço que il aveient perdu” [2043-46]. Once Lear had restored his own

wisdom and judgement he was able to rule again as a great king, yet as an ineffective king he lost everything he had; he is therefore an *exemplum* of the importance of both wisdom and repentance.

Morpidus is an example of a king who had completely opposing traits at once. Though he had the generosity, noble looks, and battle ability of a good ruler, these qualities were cancelled by his immoderate temper and rash boldness. His story is a lesson in avoiding immoderation and arrogance.

Morpidus out nun, mult fu fiers
E hardiz e fort chevaliers.
Alosez fu de grant bunté,
Mais trop ert de grant cruelté;
A desmesure ert de grant ire;
Sempres voleit un home occire.
Des que veneit a corocier
Ne saveit nul home esparnier,
Sempres li dunout de s'espee;
Ja n'i eüst amur gardeee,
Demaneis sempres l'ocieit,
U fust a tort u fust a dreit,
E tant cum i senz ire esteit
Si faiseit quanque l'on vuleit;
En tut le regne, ki grant fu,
N'aveit home de sa vertu.
Le vis avait bel e cors gent,
E granz ons dunout e sovent.
Larges esteit a desmesure,
De tresor assembler n'out cure. [3369-88]

Morpidus' greatest shortcoming was *desmesure*, which is a characteristic of ineffective rulers in the *Roman de Brut*, and thus usually has

serious consequences. When it comes to his generosity, Wace appears to look favourably upon the *desmesure* which is displayed, but it does not help Morpidus' fate. His bloodthirsty anger and prowess on the battlefield helped save Britain from the duke of Moriane, and it was said that he killed more than his entire army put together. However, Morpidus' uncontrollable fury does not enhance his reputation; he dishonourably killed everyone on the field after victory, skinning a number of them alive and having them burnt on a pyre [3389-3416]. His great arrogance and bloodthirstiness, combined with his desire to protect his people, led to his downfall. A giant sea-monster had come over from Ireland, eating men, women and their livestock until they fled from the coast. Hearing of his people still living in fear, Morpidus decided to act, confident that he could defeat the beast himself. Wace makes negative comments about his folly to the audience during this adventure:

Trop grant hardement est folie,
Fols est qui trop en sei se fie.
Morpidus par sun hardement
Vint al monstre mult fierement,
Traist saietes e lança dars.
Si l'a nafré de plusurs pars.
Quant il nen out mais que ruer
Ne que lancer ne que jeter,
Od sul s'espee sure li corut;
Mais l'espee del grant cop frut
E la beste la gule ovri,
Devora le sil tranguuti,
Mort fu li reis par s'estultie. [3439-51]

Although the beast did die of its injuries, and Morpidus, like a heroic king, was successful in protecting his people, his death by a wild beast is more stereotypical of a wicked king. Morpidus does embody some of the traits of the good kings, yet his *desmesure* and overbearing self-confidence still override the rest. In addition, the immense joy felt by his subjects at the death of the sea-monster makes the very people he strove to protect quite forget him – perhaps highlighting how futile his deeds and reign were, despite their heroic appearance [3460-65].

Belin and Brenne: lessons in conflict and co-operation

The brothers Belin and Brenne both have stereotypical noble characteristics, but also have dishonourable sides to their natures. The mistakes and their successes involve didacticism through example; their mother's plea to them, which will be discussed further,¹⁵⁶ involves direct didacticism to both them and the audience. They show a combination of the two stereotypes, particularly Brenne. His first mistake was unwisely heeding the counsel of “paltoniers, / E menteürs e losengiers” [2329-30], who convinced him that Belin had received the better share of the kingdom, and that he was dishonoured by his brother. They advised him to secretly ally himself with the king of Norway by marrying his daughter. Wace here

comments that Brenne was not acting out of wickedness, but “bien quida faire, si failli” [2408]. Because he took this advice, he aroused the suspicions of Belin, who then took all his lands while he was in Norway. This led to outright war between the brothers, with Brenne fleeing after a battle that killed fifteen thousand men [2532-70]. While exiled in France, attempting to gain aid to reconquer his lands, Brenne is described as:

Chevalers ert hardiz e pruz,
Si se faiseit amer a tuz.
Ne failleit mue as livreisuns
Ne as soldees ne as duns;
Mult ert preisez pur sa proësce
E mult amez pur sa largesce,
Kar largement se conteneit,
Mult donout e mult despendeit. [2642-48]

However, after reconciling with his brother and conquering Rome, Brenne, as the new Roman ruler, does not display good kingship and becomes the opposite:

Puis i fist mainte cruelté
Come li home de grant fierté. [3157-58]

He has the capability to be a good, noble king as seen by his behaviour in France, but these qualities are negated by the unwise beginning and cruel end to his reign.

¹⁵⁶ Toruene is discussed on pages 151-2

Despite seizing his brother's territory, Belin was an ideal king during Brenne's exile:

Belin tint l'enor vivement
E mult se content sagement
Paisibles fud e paisa ma,
Pais establi e pais guarda. [2599-2602]

Belin also displayed excellent kingship by travelling all of Britain, having many bridges and long, raised roads created across the land. After creating them, he ordered that the roads should be completely peaceful and free; those who committed any violence on them would forfeit his land [2603-2634]. The end of his reign after his return from his conquests was also productive; he spent his time strengthening broken walls, repairing old cities, and building towns [3159-64]. However, during the conquests of France and Italy, he committed some atrocities alongside his brother. The slaughter of the Roman hostages in front of their families was the most dishonourable of these. The Romans had indeed broken their "friendship", but killing the hostages in that manner is not often found in heroic warfare. It was also unwise, as it infuriated the Romans even more, giving them more strength to fight. [3053-66] Belin was a much more successful king than Brenne, yet he still had the tendency to react dishonourably when provoked. The account of the brothers can be seen as a *Mirror for Princes* due to their success while working in

harmony. They also display characteristics of good kings by placing importance on maintaining infrastructure and sustaining peace in a kingdom.

Lists of Kings

There are several places where kings are mentioned only briefly, in the form of a list. These mainly deal with a succession of kings, one after the other chronologically. Wace's lists of kings recall Eustache Deschamps' didactic ballade *Nembroth*, in which it is not necessary to name everything the famous figures are noted for; fame aside, the impact is created by the sheer number of them. The largest list of royalty in the *Roman de Brut* is, however, a list of Ebrauc's children. Some of these children will become powerful kings, but only after this list has been outlined, for Ebrauc is still the king at this stage:

Les nons as filz oiez quell sunt:
Brutus Vert-Escu, Margadud,
Sisillius, Regin, Bladud,
Moriud, Lagon e Bodloan,
Kimcar, Spaden Gaül, Dardan,
Eldad, Cangu, Kerim, Luor,
Rud, Assarac, Buël, Hector.
Les nuns as filz oï avez,
Des meschines oïr devez:
La premiere fu Gloïgin,
Otulas, Ourar, Innogin,
Guardid, Radan, Guenlian,
Angarad, Guenlode, Medlan,
Mailurë, Ecub, Tangustel,
Stadud, Kambreda, Methael,
Gad, Echeïm, Nest e Gorgon,
Gladus, Ebren, Blangan, Egron,

Edra, Aballac e Angues,
Anor, Stadiald, Galaes. [1542-60]

This list serves to highlight King Ebrauc's power and virility, yet his sons also became powerful forces; Assarac led his brothers in conquering all the land, and Brutus Vert-Escu became king. The daughters all married well in Lombardy, to descendants of Trojans. However, directly following this list is an account of some of the characteristics of the daughters. Burgess has suggested that:

the range of comments on these women give us an idea of the attributes Wace would look for in a perfect woman: beauty, nobility, charm (if that is what is meant by the term *gaie*), industriousness and manual dexterity, eloquentness, courtliness, generosity and wisdom. Perhaps also his perfect woman would be tall. ('granz', v. 1570; cf. v. 6984).¹⁵⁷

Therefore, the qualities which Wace briefly mentions in conjunction with or within the lists of characters could be re-emphasising his message on the acceptable traits of the nobility.

The quickest succession of kings that Wace details is in the form of two lists very close together, divided somewhat by extended detail on King Cherim. Twenty-one kings are dealt with, having very little or no detail attached to them:

¹⁵⁷ G. S. Burgess, *Women in the Works of Wace* (unpublished version. Article can also be found in Burgess & Weiss, *Maistre Wace: A Celebration*, St Helier, Société Jersaise, 2006) p. 6

Puis fud d'Engleterre emprés lui [Iwallo]
 Runo reis, le filz Peredur,
 Puis Geronces, filz Elidur,
 Puis fu reis sis filz Catullus,
 Emprés Catullum Coïllus,
 E puis Porreus e puis Cherim;
 Cherim fu bevere de vin;
 En buens beivres turna s'enteinte
 E tut i usa sa juvente
 En beverie e en ivresce,
 Unches ne fist altre prüesce;
 E Deus tel eür li dona
 Que unches hom nel guereia.
 Treis filz que il out de sa feme
 L'un emprés l'autre ourent la regne,
 Cil ourent nom Fulgenius,
 Eldragus e Andragius.
 L'un avant l'autre ourent tut trei
 Engleterre, chescun par sei,
 Mais assez poi de tens durerent
 E en mult poi de tens finerent.
 Uns filz Andragis, Urian,
 Regna emprés sun pere un an;
 Emprés Urian, Eliud
 Ad le regneen grant pais tenud;
 Emprés Eliud, Cledauceus,
 Puis Doten, puis Gurgustius,
 Puis Merean, ki mult fu bels... [3646-73]

There is also a shorter list which appears earlier in the work, again with
 hardly any embellishment attached to the kings:

Quant Rivail, li reis, fu feniz,
 Le regne out emprés lui sis fist
 Qui aveit nun Gurgusti,
 Puis refu reis Sisillius,
 E puis Lago, niés Gurgusti,
 E puis Kimare, fiz Sisilli.
 Gorbodiagnes fu emprés. [2133-39]

Another small list involves a little more elaboration on the features or characters of the kings mentioned. It is possible to tell from some of these whether the ruler was good or bad, from what small amount of reputation has lasted with them – these morsels of information comply with the stereotypical features of the other kings:

Redion emprés Eldol fu,
Puis ad Rederch le regne eü,
Puis fu reis Famu Penissel,
Puis Pir que le chief ot mult bel,
De chief e de chevaleüre
L'enora mult forment Nature.
Emprés Pir regna Caporus
E puis sis filz Eliguellus;
Cist se content mult sagement
E mult amesurement.
Sis fiz qui puis regna, Heli,
Quarante anz entiers reis vesqui;
Cil Heli treis fiz engendra,
Le premerain Lud apela,
Puis fu nez Cassibellanus
E emprés celui Nennius. [3723-38]

These lists are merely a direct translation from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historium Regum Britanniae*.¹⁵⁸ They are an element to the narrative that cannot be construed as performing the function of a *Mirror for Princes*, despite their recalling Eustache's nostalgia of past heroes, which is a common feature of this genre. Unless the few characteristics mentioned are there to reinforce Wace's ideals of the ruling class, they have little moral

¹⁵⁸ For example, *HRB*, p. 60, pp. 85-86

element, and merely summarise less important aspects of Britain's history. Wace has barely changed these from Geoffrey's original work, except for adjustments required to meet the rhyme and metre.

Female Rulers and Consorts

In the *Roman de Brut* the female characters are also strong and powerful or have great influence on the historical events. They are also given more detail than their accounts found in the *HRB*.¹⁵⁹ Many of these women show attributes that are often virtues of great rulers in *Mirrors for Princes*. For all the great and powerful women, whether they are ruling queens or peacemakers, Wace provides more information on those with positive attributes than those with negative ones.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ G. S. Burgess, *Women in the Works of Wace*, p. 6

¹⁶⁰ Even when Wace briefly mentions a woman, he can sometimes imply she has a much greater influence than what he specifies. This can be seen in the first queen he includes: the wife of Latin and mother of Lavinia. Although this is a summary of the events in the Aeneid, and she is not even named, Latin promising Lavinia and the kingdom to Aeneas "estre le gré la reine" [44] suggests the will of the queen was significant. She wished to uphold the original plan of Turnus marrying Lavinia, and although Latin goes against his wife here, the fact that her wishes are worthy of mention suggests she normally had some influence over the ruling of the kingdom.

Exemplary female characters

Guendolien, Toruenne, Marcie, Genuis, and Eleine all have near-ideal characteristics, and their actions generally have beneficial effects for their country and those close to them. All could be considered excellent models as rulers or consorts, as described at the beginning of this thesis. Although they are exceptional – especially those women who reign alone – they all have qualities that any woman, noble or otherwise, should admire and emulate if they are ever in such a position. Toruenne, the mother of Belin and Brenne, and Genuis are renowned for being noblewomen whose pleas successfully created peace between warring factions [Toruenne’s plea, 2711-2830 & Genuis 5133-5153].

Wace’s account of Queen Eleine, the daughter of Choël and the wife of Constant, is an example of a *Mirror for Princes*. It is stated that Eleine was brought up to be a queen because she was the only heir to her father’s kingdom, and was educated so she could govern. She possessed the stereotypical qualities of a good ruler – she “fu bien lettree/ E de belté assez loee” [5609-10] and “de sa valor ne de sun sens/ Ne saveit l’om feme en sun tens, / Ne de sun pris nule meschine” [5655-57]. Eleine’s Christian piety is shown through Wace’s adding to the *Roman de Brut* the tale of how she

discovered the True Cross while in Jerusalem, a detail not found in the *HRB* [5720-24]. Wace says that she is very highly educated, beautiful, and a wise, excellent wife; as she is purposefully raised as an ideal queen, her characteristics show what Wace expects of an exemplary queen [5605-14, 5653-58].

An unusual story is that of Guendoliene, whose crusade for justice and vengeance on her damaged honour is a tale more likely to be about a heroic male character; her skills in battle, sense of honour, and just rule are the qualities of effective kings. Her tale offers didacticism through example for the several women who acted as regents for their young sons. She takes revenge against a crime committed against her by her husband Locrin and his lover Hestrild. Guendoliene was removed from her position, and in anger gathered a great army from her home, Cornwall. She fought against Locrin “come feme fiere e seüre” [1423]; he was killed in battle, and the rightful queen took control of the country, drowning Hestrild and her daughter. Despite the violent beginnings of her reign, Guendoliene was “mult fere/ E merveilluse justisiere”, [1441-2] ruling alone for fifteen years until her son came of age. She then returned home to Cornwall to take possession of her father’s lands [1381-1450]. Therefore, her actions as a good regent justify her brutality towards her husband, his lover and offspring. She bravely avenged the wrong committed

against her, ruled as a just queen, and then let her son take the throne as soon as he could, rather than holding on to her power. She is almost a female parallel of Dumwallo Molmuz, as both of them began their reigns with violent vengeance against dishonour, and then ruled honourably.

Another effective queen and regent is Queen Marcie, who surpassed her husband King Guincelin in renown. While Guincelin receives the briefest of mentions, his wife is described as the stereotypical ideal ruler. As Burgess notes, she is one of a few women in the *Roman de Brut* who has many adjectives and phrases describing her,¹⁶¹ rather than merely actions. Her major characteristic is her intelligence; well-educated and wise, she used her education for the study of the Scriptures. According to this legend, she also created a law, the *lex Merciana*, which King Alfred eventually translated into English. While she acted as regent for her son Sisillus, she ruled “en pais e en grant quieté” [3359], handing over the crown to her son when he knew how to govern the land. Thus she was an ideal, proactive queen regent for Britain, with the country benefiting from her intelligence, wisdom, and peaceful rule.

¹⁶¹ Burgess, *Women in the Works of Wace*, p. 7

Royal women as Peacemakers

Active peacemaking is a quality found in several of the effective royal women, and Wace can show direct didacticism towards rulers through this. It can be found in the tale of Belin and Brenne's mother Toruenne, who was also the wife of Dumwallo Molmuz. She prevented complete war between her sons with a heart-rending plea. Toruenne displayed great bravery in coming between two armies that were about to do battle, searching for Brenne and ripping off her clothing to display the body that nourished and created him. Her long plea begins as one for pity, then for respect and love for his family; the second part of it contains a strong admonishment, pointing out all the wrongs Brenne has done and advice on how to act now. Her admonishment is interesting in that it involves direct didacticism, as she is reproachfully telling an erring prince how he should have behaved and how he should now be behaving – a trait found in *Mirrors for Princes*. This includes lines such as:

‘Tu deüsses en pais venire
E tes bels aveirs porofrir.
E tu nus viens les noz tolir,
Kin us deüsses maintenir.
Fai cests folie remainder!’ [2759-63]

Toruenne's lengthy speech [2729-2816] works, showing her wisdom, her intelligence, and the respect her sons had for her. The two brothers

embraced upon her order [2823-28] and from then on worked together as a powerful force: the didactic advice is successful.

Another peacemaking queen was Genuïis, the wife of Arviragus and daughter of Claudius, Emperor of Rome. She was “gente de cors, bele de vis” [5064] and was “mult bien enparentee” [5137]. Although already a good queen with these qualities, her bravery and wisdom were her outstanding characteristics. Like Toruene, she intervened as a battle was about to start, this time between the Romans and the Britons. Both sides now being her people, she was desperate to end the conflict between them:

Pur l’enor de sun parenté
Ad tant d’ambedous parz loé

Que li baron s’entr’acorderent
E pais pristrent e pais donerent [5139-43]

Her negotiating skills led to an excellent relationship between the Romans and Britons, Arviragus helping the foreigners and their cause out of affection for his wife [5147-52]. This shows how a clever queen could have a lasting positive effect on an empire.

Women of Ill Repute

Apart from Queen Guinevere, there are very few major portrayals of a royal lady unsuccessful in her role. In the *Roman de Brut*, the women who are

portrayed negatively are usually shown as such through their being catalysts for disaster amongst other characters, rather than through their being actively wicked. The most significant case of this is that of the Princess of Norway, daughter of King Elfinges. Her story shows the negative side of what can happen if a woman does not adhere to the rules and expectations of her society. She disliked being married off to Brenne, the joint king of Britain, as she was in love with Gudlac, King of Denmark, to whom she had previously been betrothed. She sent for Gudlac to come take her away; subsequently Gudlac and Brenne's fleets met in a bloody battle. The Danish king made off with his mistress, but a relentless pursuit by Brenne cost many lives on both sides. Gudlac ended up being able to keep the Princess of Norway provided that he gave hostages and that Denmark became a tributary of Britain. The consequences of the princess's not conforming to the usual practice of arranged royal marriages in her society were that thousands of lives were lost, and the kings of Britain, Denmark and Norway were shamed [2409-2598].

Despite the lack of significant women with bad reputations, Wace makes an interesting comment during his account of King Lear: "*Mult i ad poi femes senz vice / E senz racine d'avarice*" [1883-4]. He could be highlighting Cordelle's exceptional goodness, or it could be Wace's general belief of the character of women. If the latter is the case, the heroic queens he described

have had their deeds severely undermined by this comment. However, the overall impression of the women that he gives detail to is positive. As Burgess notes, “his ideal woman would seemingly be noble, beautiful, well educated, intelligent and generous. She would behave in court society in such a way as to be esteemed and honoured by those around her... only becoming politically involved if circumstances demanded it. He clearly admired women who, when necessary, displayed courage and resourcefulness.”¹⁶² This ideal vision of a queen culminates in the character of Guinevere, who begins her reign with all the characteristics of an ideal queen.

Guinevere

Queen Guinevere and the part she played in dishonouring her husband Arthur give a portrayal of a bad and ineffective queen; yet, through the qualities described at the outset, she can be seen to span both good and bad categories. Her tale shows the consequences of immoral behaviour amongst royal women. At the time she married Arthur, she appeared to be the perfect wife:

Guenevre prist, sin fist reïne,
Une cunte e noble meschine;
Bele esteit e curteise e gent,
E as nobles Romains parente;
Cador la nurri richement

¹⁶² Burgess, *Women in the Works of Wace*, p. 16

En Cornoaille lungement,
Cume sa cuisine prochaine;
E sa mere resteit romaine.
Mult fu de grant afaitement
E de noble cuntienement,
Mult fu large e buene parliere,
Artur l'ama mult e tint chiere. [9645-56]

As a courteous, noble and well-spoken queen, she shares many traits of good royal consorts in *Mirrors for Princes*. However, Arthur and Guinevere could not have children and there would be no direct heir to the kingdom [9657-8]. The inclusion of this unsatisfactory aspect of their marriage, a detail which is added to the narrative by Wace, mars the account of Guinevere as the ideal royal consort.

When Wace first mentions that Modred, Arthur's nephew, is in love with Guinevere, it is a secret and dishonourable love which is suspected by none [11179-84]. However, the sin does not appear to be all on Modred's side – an indication that the queen was a willing participant comes in Wace's despairing comment that both Modred and the queen were entrusted with the kingdom:

A Mordret e a la reine,
Deus! tant mal fist cele saisine,
Comanda tut fors la corune. [11187-89]

Modred, in this statement, is not the only treacherous one. Also, as Judith Weiss details, “Wace hammers home the shame of this with an

especially strong word, *putage*,¹⁶³ and its various meanings of fornication, debauchery and whorish behaviour suggest something new about Guinevere”.¹⁶⁴

When Arthur returns after defeating the Romans, he finds Modred has committed the greatest treachery, usurping the kingdom and committing adultery with his uncle’s wife. After Modred’s flight, Wace returns to the subject of Guinevere. Now she is explicitly a willing and thoroughly guilty participant in the betrayal and shaming of Arthur, and no longer displays the qualities of a good queen. She does not escape Modred and return to Arthur, but rather runs from her legal husband, carrying her shame with her:

A Everwic iert a sujor,
En pensé fud e en tristur;
[Membra lui de la vilainie
Que pur Modred s’esteit hunie,]
La bon rei aveit vergundé
E sun nevou Modred amé;
Cuntre lei l’aveit espusee
Si en esteit mult avilee,
Mielz volsist morte estre que vive.
Mult fu triste, mult fud pensive... [13205-14]

She flees to an abbey in Caerleon and, hidden away, takes the veil and disappears. This action shows that she does show some remorse and will find redemption for her actions, but the consequences of Guinevere’s behaviour are

¹⁶³ “Feme sun uncle par putage / Amat Mordret si fist huntage” – 1185-6

disastrous. She causes great shame to the royal family and her actions are an enormous betrayal to the Messianic figure of King Arthur. His prowess and victories on the battlefield are completely undermined by his being cuckolded, and the subsequent war against Modred, Guinevere's lover, is what ultimately leads to his downfall.¹⁶⁵

Arthur as the ideal king?

King Arthur is the ultimate military leader and monarch in the *Roman de Brut*. Possibly modelled on tales about the French hero Charlemagne,¹⁶⁶ his exploits on the battlefield are the most detailed aspect of his reign, especially those to do with conquering other nations. In the *Roman de Brut*, Wace's ideal British ruler is the brave and noble Arthur, and the account of his life is the climax of the work. Even at the tender age of fifteen, when he acceded to the throne, he displayed the qualities of being the finest of kings:

Juvenals esteit de quinze anz,
De sun eage fors e granz.
Les thecches Artur vus dirrai,
Neient ne vus en mentirai;

¹⁶⁴ Weiss, xix

¹⁶⁵ Pratt, p. 256

¹⁶⁶ See G. H. Gerould, *King Arthur and Politics* (*Speculum*, Vol. 2. No. 1, (Jan, 1927) pp. 33-51)

Chevaliers fu mult vertuus,
Mult fu preisanz mult gloriuz;
Cuntre orguillus fu orguillus
E cuntre humles dulz e pitus,
Forz e hardiz e conqueranz,
Large dunere e despendanz;
E se busuinnus le request
S'aidier li pout, ne l'escundist.
Mult ama preis, mult ama gloire,
Mult volt ses fais metre en memoire,
Servir se fist curteisement
Si se cuntintmult noblement.
Tant cum il resqui e regna
Tuz alters princes surmenta
De curteisie e de noblesce
E de vertu e de largesce. [9013-32]

Arthur's character therefore covers all the main criteria for a good king in Wace's opinion, which were to varying degrees displayed in the excellent kings discussed earlier: generosity, nobility both in behaviour and by birth, being brave, strong and powerful, and acting appropriately with people according to their situation. Indeed, Wace claims that Arthur surpasses all other princes in these virtues, which, given the lavish praise of others such as Dumwallo Molmuz, is an extremely high accolade. The main problem with Arthur that Wace directly presents is his inability to produce an heir.

Throughout the long account of King Arthur's reign, Wace repeatedly portrays incidents that show him to be the superlative ruler. His descriptions

are often panegyric, especially during the introduction of Arthur's character and his coronation.

King Arthur's extravagant coronation is important in how it displays many aspects of excellent kingship on a grand scale. It begins with Arthur summoning his court to Caerleon. Wace's list of the powerful men attending highlights Arthur's extreme and widespread power. He summoned his kings, counts, dukes, viscounts, barons, vassals, bishops and abbots [110243-46], who came from everywhere Arthur had visited and conquered, such as Spain and Iceland. Everyone attended,

Tant pur Artur, tant pur ses duns,
Tant pur cunestre ses baruns,
Tant pur veeir ses mananties,
Tant pur oïr ses curteisies,
Tant pur amur, tant pur banie,
Tant pur enur, tant pur Baillie. [10331-36]

This example of anaphora, which is combined with *conduplicatio* whenever *tant* reappears after the caesura in the same line, emphasises how Arthur is at the height of his success. He has love, wealth, and nobility; he commands so much power that he can give it; he has powerful people beneath him; and he is generous.

His subsequent coronation is also a display of power and wealth. Arthur has four gold swords borne by four “kings” in front of him in the procession [10369-74], while Guinevere has four white doves borne by the “kings’” wives, and is surrounded by women in the most costly clothing [10385-10416]. After the coronation itself, a glorious Mass is held, showing the pious side to Arthur. The three-day feast that follows is another display of wealth and power. There were two thousand serving men for Arthur’s feast alone, all clad in ermine, and the drinking vessels were all finely made [10445-82]. The luxuries of Guinevere’s feast were indescribable [10483-92].

Wace then describes how Britain was at its finest:

De buens homes e de richesce
E de plenté e de noblesce
E de curteisie e d’enor
Portout Engleterre la flur
Sur tuz les regnes d’envirun
E sur tuz cels que nus savum.
Plus erent curteis e vallaint.
Neïs li povre païsant
Que chevalier en alters regnes,
E altres erent les femes. [10493-10502]

Everything appears ideal for the Britons, at the pinnacle of their world. This is, however, not necessarily because of Arthur, but it does help glorify his reign, and it is naturally associated with him. This idea of a sort of Golden Age of Britain can also bring understanding to the element of nostalgia surrounding Arthur, and the legend of his return. It has also been argued that this *topos* of a

Golden Age is a reflection of the chivalric ideals in authors' own societies: through showing the ideals of the "past," Wace could be fostering the interest in chivalry in his own times.¹⁶⁷

On the fourth day of the ceremony, Arthur displays his immense generosity. Wace describes this at great length, again making use of anaphora and occasionally *conduplicatio* with the word *duna* in order to strengthen the message of Arthur's *largesce* all the more:

Li reis ses bachelors feufa,
Enurs delivers devisa;
Lur servises a cels rendi
Ki pur terres l'ourent servi;
Burcs duna e chasteleries
E evesquiez e abeïes.
A cels ki d'altre terre esteient,
Ki pur amur al rei veneient,
Duna cupes, duna destriers,
Duna de ses aveirs plus chiers.
Duna deduiz, duna joiels,
Duna levriers, duna oisels,
Duna pelicuns, duna dras,
Dun cupes, duna hana,
Duna palies, duna anels,
Duna bialz, duna mantels,
Duna lances, duna espees,
Duna saietes barbeles.
Duna cuivres, duna escuz,
Ars e espies bien esmoluz,
Duna lieparz e duna urs,
Seles, lorains e chaceüirs.
Duna hauberks, duna destriers,

¹⁶⁷ Leyerle, p. 143

Duna helmes, duna niers,
Duna argent e duna or,
Duna le lieliz de sun tresor.
N'i out hume qui rien valsist
Qui d'altre terre a lui venist
Cui li reis ne dunast tel dun
Qui enur fust a tel barun. [10591-10620]

By giving multiple examples of what is given, the message of generosity is restated. This extraordinary generosity not only serves to portray him as the best of kings, but the sheer value and number of gifts show how he has become the wealthiest and most powerful of British kings through his conquests and subsequent acquisition of riches.

Thus the long coronation and its celebrations, which Wace describes in such detail, play a highly important part in showing why Arthur may be deserving of future Messianic status. The sheer scale of his success at this point, while still quite a young king, shows how much more power he could achieve in the future – something which he does with the war against Rome.

Arthur's Military Superiority

As a military leader, King Arthur was unsurpassed.¹⁶⁸ Much of Wace's praise of Arthur throughout his account is to do with his military prowess as a leader, warrior and tactician. He willingly took the wise advice of his men, a

highly praiseworthy attribute in a king: “Artur ad ses baruns creüz” [9135]. Many of Arthur’s victories were due to of the advice and military prowess of his barons, and the fact that he took advice from trustworthy men also shows him as a successful king. Most of his reign was spent in earning glory and power through conquests of various sizes, although he could hold lands in great peace when he wished. He defeated the Saxons, conquered the Scots, Ireland and Iceland, plundered Norway, defeated Gaul in a long series of battles, and finally, in a supreme, long, glorious effort, he conquered Rome.

He was a great fighter himself, actually leading his men into battle and setting an example rather than directing troops from further back. His leadership qualities can be seen many times, but especially so in his speech to halt his men retreating from the Romans. He shouted encouragement at them cheering them on to remember their greatness and not quit the field, and saying that he would protect them. He himself leads them onto the battlefield, and fought as hard as he could.

King Arthur’s prowess on the battlefield is displayed many times, and is apparent right from his first war with the Saxons, where he fought with “grant aspresce, de grant vigur, de grant prüesce” [9349-50]. He himself killed

¹⁶⁸ “Unches, ço dient en Bretagne, / N’out mais si vaillant chevetaine” 9595-6

four hundred, which was more than the rest of his men killed altogether [9355-6]. His great strength is also shown through him fighting giants. Only one of these battles is narrated, in which he defeats the giant Dinabuc who killed Eleine [11481-11552], although Wace told of other encounters with fearsome giants in this tale, thus enhancing his prowess for the audience. The one mentioned in detail is Rithon, who had been the most frightening of the giants Arthur defeated; Rithon had killed many kings and was the strongest that Arthur had encountered until Dinabuc [11561-92].

However, behind all Arthur's glorious conquests and brave feats lies a distinctly less positive tone to his reign. Arthur appears to be rather overzealous in his pursuit for power, and the glory and riches that come with it. Although his first battle was one of honour and vengeance upon the terrible Saxons, the rest of his campaigns were conquests for conquest's sake, without provocation, and with lands mostly being devastated rather than simply won. The defeat of Rome, the ultimate challenge with the greatest rewards if successful, at least began with an inflaming letter from the Romans, but most of his conquests had truly negative aspects, apart from the obvious great loss of lives. This is mainly seen through dishonourable conduct, which dilutes Arthur's all-important nobility.

Wace has a tendency to emphasise the positive side of Arthur's actions, although there are clearly dishonourable acts occurring. Early on in his reign, when Arthur was waging war on the Scots for helping the Saxons, the horrors of Arthur's attack are portrayed in the form of a plea for mercy from the women, children and holy men of the land. The long plea shows what Arthur and his men have inflicted on their fellow Christians. They had no wish for the heathen Saxons to come, and suffered greatly from their wickedness. However, despite all the cruelty endured under the Saxons, they told Arthur: "Mal nus unt fait, tu nus faiz pis" [9509]. The land was destroyed, innocent families were destroyed, and the people were starving because of Arthur's war on them. They pleaded for Arthur to have mercy on his fellow Christians; now that he has conquered them, he could hold them as slaves if he wished, but not keep killing them [9465-9521]. To his credit, Arthur granted their wishes and received their homage [9522-6], yet the fact that this plea was necessary shows that all was not right or just with his war. He had been carried away with his duty to avenge wrongs. This can especially be seen in the people's comment that he was worse to them than the Saxons, and their final point that "Chrestienté iert abaisside / Se ceste terre est eisselede, / E ja en est peri le plus" [9519-21]. The speech highlights that at this point Arthur did not have the Christian piety or sense of true justice that a king should have, despite it being a war of vengeance and honour.

The conquest of Ireland was also a dishonourable one, and represents the first war that he waged for no specific reason. The most experienced of Arthur's men went with him, and this highly skilled army's first action was to pillage food from peasants and cause petty fights. King Gillomar of Ireland advanced to help his suffering people, but unfortunately the Irish had little skill in weaponry and had no means of defence. Arthur's men shot volleys of arrows at defenceless men so they were forced to flee for their lives. Gillomar became a vassal of Arthur, paying him an annual tribute and giving him hostages [9659-9702]. Thus Arthur's conquest of Ireland appears dishonourable; he may have gained wealth and power, but he did not gain glory for defeating those who were not warriors.

Other examples of Arthur gaining lands without military glory are the conquests of Denmark and the islands of Orkney, Gotland and Wendeland. This also highlights how Arthur and his army had been behaving in the other lands they conquered, because none of the kings wished for Arthur to kill their people or destroy their lands as he had been doing elsewhere. The kings of the islands brought Arthur so many of their possessions, and gave and promised him so much that Arthur agreed not to pillage their lands, but let the kings

become his men, with hostages to ensure loyalty [9721-7]. However, for the king of Denmark, the pleading seemed a lot more difficult:

Tant dist, tant purchaça
E tant pramist e tant duna
E tant request e tant preia,
Al rei Artur se concorda. [9881-84]

The repeated use of *tant* here indicates that Arthur was reluctant to relinquish the opportunity to plunder Denmark without a lot of compensation. King Arthur was conquering for financial gain and military glory, both of which are technically acceptable for a king, but the devastation of the innocent lands he went through does not represent just behaviour.

Although Arthur's conquests, especially that of conquering Rome, were enormous achievements for a king, he made one mistake that undermined his entire rule. A mistake leading to the change of a king's status is a common theme concerning those kings who span both main categories that were discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Arthur's lapse in wisdom cost him his kingdom, his honour and his life. This mistake, of course, was placing his trust in his nephew Modred to look after Britain during his conquests on the continent.

Despite the three-fold flight of Modred, King Arthur's reign ended in disaster. The final battle at Camble, in Cornwall, may have been successful in that Modred and most of his men died [13271-72]. Arthur and the greatest of his people from all over his vast kingdom were also killed:

La plaine fud des morz cuverte
E del sanc des muranz sanglente.
Dunc peri la bele juvente
Que Arthur aveit grant nurrie
E de plusurs terres cuillie,
E cil de al Table Roïnde
Dunt tel los ert par tut le mude;
Ocis fus Modred en l'esture
E de sa gent tut li plusur,
E de la gent Arthur la flur
E li plus port e li meillur. [13264-74]

Thus Arthur's rule came to a tragic end, with all the important people to him dead and all the conquests meaning nothing. His fall was the greatest among the rulers in Wace, from being the most powerful king of Britain, to being unable to hold on to his own land or his wife.

Arthur's reign concludes with his being mortally wounded in the final battle against Modred. His death, however, is not believed to be permanent according to British folklore, and, to some extent, Wace himself. Arthur was borne to Avalon for the treatment of his wounds, and the Britons, according to Wace, believe he is still there and will return one day. As for Wace's opinion, for once he agrees with the prophet Merlin:

Maistre Wace, ki fist cest livre,
Ne volt plus dire de sa fin
Qu'en dist le prophetes Merlin;
Merlin dist d'Arthur, si ot dreit,
Que sa mort dutuse serreit.
Li prophetes dist verité;
Tut tens en ad l'um puis duté,
E datera, ço crei, tut did,
Se il est morz u il est viz.
Porter se fist en Avalun,
Pur veir, puis l'Incarnatiun
Cinc cenz e quarante dous anz. [13282-94]

Arthur's status as a Messianic figure in folklore demonstrates that to many people he was indeed the greatest of all British kings, to be fully admired and to be used as a measure alongside the kings to come. Yet although the scale of his power was immense, it ultimately failed. King Arthur, the powerful, heroic Messianic monarch, is not entirely deserving of his legendary status in Wace's work. Although he is without a doubt the most powerful of all the kings in the *Roman de Brut*, aspects of his behaviour during his conquests, his cuckolding, and all his achievements ultimately coming to nothing so quickly, indicate that despite all his wonderful attributes, he should not be seen as the best of the praiseworthy and successful kings. Instead, he is one of the rulers that span the categories of successful and unsuccessful kings. His many noble, kingly attributes described by Wace save him from being merely an incredibly powerful warlord, which most of his actions portray. His unwise decision with Modred reversed his mostly successful and praiseworthy

kingship into one that did not have a lasting effect through his achievements lingering or through a thriving legacy from his descendants. Rather, the legacy of his original power depended on an element of nostalgia for the short period in which Britain was at its finest, and a mystical tale of his returning to come and rule Britain truly successfully.

It is possible to read the *Roman de Brut* without assuming it to be a *Mirror for Princes*. To take it at face value, it is an Old French version of the Latin history of Britain. The addition of Wace's own details, ideals, and commentary could be seen as the creation of a piece of literature which was more his own, and which could guide the audience's opinions of his characters, rather than the creation of an overall moral message to his audience. Alongside this, the constraints of the rhyming couplets would have led him to many of the larger edits of the work.

However, there are many didactic aspects of Wace's *Roman de Brut* which resemble elements of a *Mirror for Princes* work. Firstly, the stereotypical categories of the rulers, and the *topoi* which Wace employs, indicate that there may be a message of showing the audience what a proper ruler should be, and how he should and should not act. All the typical characteristics are repeated through the work, for the audience to recognise

who the truly heroic and wicked monarchs are. The kings that span both categories would be important for this: when they act with the excellent traits of kings, their reign is successful, and good things happen to them, whereas a lapse in exemplary behaviour causes disaster in their reigns. The many virtuous women featured in the work could also be held up as examples to other noblewomen, and the lack of immoral women in the work could indicate that the women were included to inspire others with their ideal principles and skills. In addition, as the *Roman de Brut* was allegedly presented as a royal gift, it was the perfect opportunity for a *Mirror for Princes* writer, especially given the historical context, to present a work of this genre.

CONCLUSION

The presence of didacticism in an Old French text did not necessarily mean it was intentionally crafted as a *Mirror for Princes*. However, the literary confirmation of medieval expectations of rulers through stereotypical characters and their actions opens up the possibility of works being used as examples for kings and noblemen. The obvious didactic nature of Eustache Deschamps' *ballades*, where he directly addresses a prince, cannot be found throughout all the texts in this study. Nevertheless, the morals and expectations of what constitutes praiseworthy and blameworthy rulers, found in other contemporary *Mirrors for Princes* such as *Policraticus*, are found across the entire range of the texts in this study. As well as influencing and reinforcing the general audience's perception of acceptable leadership, various characters in these texts could be used for didactic instruction for kings, princes and nobility.

In the Old French epics studied, didacticism is often shown via the need for a strong heroic king who ensures the welfare of a region. The parody of this genre, such as *Le Voyage de Charlemagne*, shows how a lack of heroic qualities in a monarch can bring shame upon himself and his vassals. *Le Voyage de Charlemagne*, despite its being intended as a satire of both the

chansons de geste and of Louis VII's pilgrimage, could be used as an example for monarchs and their noblemen of how not to behave. The characters' ridiculous behaviour offers obvious didacticism on how the aristocracy should not act: therefore, the hyperbolic reflection of political events, recognisable to the audience, could to some extent fulfil the function of a *Mirror for Princes*. There is no evidence, however, that this or the other epics discussed were actually used as such.

The didactic possibilities of the epic genre can be seen emerging in *La Chanson de Roland*. While much of the tale is arguably focussed on the morality of the Crusades, the passages involving instruction to the characters on being good vassals mark this epic out as being more of a mirror for vassals than their princes. However, the developments of Charlemagne as a great warrior king and of Bramimonde as a female assistant to didacticism are important through their contribution to the didactic elements found in other *chansons de gestes*.

The two epics from the William Cycle differ in the extent to and way in which they can be read as *Mirrors for Princes*. *Le Couronnement de Louis* contains an explicit instructional episode addressed to a prospective king, with some examples of ignoble royal behaviour from the characters following in the

narrative. *La Chançon de Willame* does not contain instructions, but some of its characters can be seen as displaying true leadership and nobility, or seen as portraying unacceptable behaviour. Both epics involve the hero Count William fighting against a Saracen invasion, both contain King Louis acting as an ineffective monarch, and they both have knights and counts as the heroes rather than the monarchs. *La Chançon de Willame* also introduces Guiborc as a potential mirror for noblewomen through her actions, and indeed appears as the most likely character that could be emulated due to the successful household and noble roles she employs.

Of the works discussed, Chrétien de Troyes' romance *Erec et Enide* is the one most likely to have been written with the intent of being a *Mirror for Princes*. It continues the notion of equal didactic examples for both men and women, as suggested by the two names in the title. The entire plot centres on the improvement of the main couple, with various didactic examples provided for them and the audience throughout their journey. The message of the tale is reinforced by the *Joie de la Cor* episode, in which they take care of a couple who depict the future that Erec and Enide might have had if they had not gone on their *aventure*. That their improvement is rewarded with a hyperbolic coronation, where they are able to sit on the same level as the great monarchs Arthur and Guinevere, also portrays the benefits of their journey. Chrétien thus

provides the audience with not only an entertaining and finely-crafted tale, but one with a clear message about the roles of princes and their consorts, and the importance of them attaining a healthy marriage.

Wace's *Roman de Brut*, although its primary purpose is as a history of Britain for a Norman audience, can be considered a *Mirror for Princes*. The didacticism that Wace employs is able to sway the audience's opinions of his characters. Much of it plays to the stereotypes of effective and ineffective kings, and therefore satisfies the audience's expectations; it is possible that Wace's moral commentary, and emphasis on the consequences of certain behaviour, were used as lessons by the *Roman de Brut*'s noble audience. The most likely intentional didactic aspect of Wace's work was his emphasis on generosity: as he was searching for a royal patron, it is natural that generosity would be given prominence amongst the excellent king's traits as a message for potential employers.

These works, irrespective of the authors' original intentions in composing them, have the potential to be used as *Mirrors for Princes* as they all contain elements of didacticism. From the patriotic lessons on vassalage in the *Chanson de Roland* being potential examples for noblemen, to the stereotypes of Wace's kings and their fortunes mostly pertaining to medieval

expectations, lessons on laudable and ignoble behaviour can be read into the works. However, most of these texts also place an importance on women throughout the narrative. *Erec et Enide* is the best example of this, as much of the narrative is dictated by Enide's thoughts, how they show her progress in the journey, and how they highlight Erec's change in attitude and action. Didactic roles for women are also given in the *Roman de Brut*, *Le Voyage de Charlemagne*, *La Chanson de Roland*, and *La Chançon de Willame*. Therefore, through the instructions and examples contained in the text of these works, all apart from *Le Couronnement de Louis* have the potential to be read as *Mirrors for Princes and their Consorts*.

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