

## VIVIEN AND GUI IN THE «CHANSON DE GUILLAUME» (G<sub>2</sub>)

Stories of Guillaume d'Orange and his family were clearly favoured by the poets and public of pre-courtly and courtly France: evidence of this popularity is to be found in the large number of extant manuscripts of the twenty four «chansons» which make up the *Garin de Monglane* «geste». The exploits of some six generations of the *Garin de Monglane* family (i.e. Guillaume and his relations) are described in these twenty four poems, which are, with the exception of the *Chanson de Guillaume*, preserved in cyclic manuscripts. It is probable, as Bédier remarks, that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the manuscripts were written, these «chansons» were read as if they formed a single, if extended, narrative<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the British Museum manuscript, for example, records eighteen of the «chansons» in that cycle, beginning with *Garin de Monglane*, which tells of Guillaume's great grandfather's adventures, and ending with *Foucon de Candie*, which describes the exploits of a nephew of Guillaume's nephew, Vivien.

The «chansons» of the cyclic manuscripts do not, however, form a single narrative. They were produced by different poets and at different times; the first poem in this group to have been composed was, without doubt, not *Garin de Monglane* (i.e. the first in the British Museum manuscript) — which was probably a much later work —, but presumably one which told of Guillaume himself: later additions to the cycle were then narratives dealing with that character's youth and old age, and stories of Guillaume's relations. In the past, it has been one of the primary tasks of «chanson de geste» scholarship to determine which events and characters were at the origin of the epic legend surrounding Guillaume d'Orange.

Originally, scholars believed that Guillaume's nephew Vivien was a fairly late addition to the cycle. However, at the beginning of this century, the discovery of the *Chanson de Guillaume* manuscript demonstrated that the opposite was, in fact, true. That poem is the oldest preserved work in this cycle<sup>2</sup>, and the dominant rôle which Vivien plays in the first part of the action

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<sup>1</sup> BÉDIER, J. — *Les Légendes Épiques. Recherches sur la Formation des Chansons de Geste. I. Le Cycle de Guillaume d'Orange*, Paris, 1914, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> The poem has been dated as early as 1080 (cf. SUCHIER, H., ed. — *La Chanson de Guillaume*, Halle / Saale, 1911, who considers only the first 1980 lines of the poem) and as late as 1200 (cf. McMILLAN, D., ed. — *La Chanson de Guillaume*, Paris, 1950); there can, however, be little doubt that this is the earliest recorded poem in this cycle (cf. BÉDIER, J. — *op. cit.*, pp. 85f., and more recently, WATHELET-WILLEM, J. — *Recherches sur la Chanson de Guillaume*, Paris, 1975, vol. I, pp. 651ff.).

of the *Chanson de Guillaume* clearly indicates his importance at the origins of this «geste».

It is now generally agreed among critics that the *Chanson de Guillaume* is a composite work — Frappier, for example, divides the poem into two parts:  $G_1$  (from line 1 — 1980) and  $G_2$  (from line 1981 — 3554)<sup>3</sup>. However certain scholars have held that the poem should be viewed as a whole: thus Bédier treats the work as if it has narrative unity<sup>4</sup>, and Adler, basing his argument on an appreciation of medieval aesthetics, defends the idea that this «chanson» is a structural entity<sup>5</sup>. These opinions are not, however, shared by the majority of critics: Suchier (whose edition of the poem is limited to the first 1980 lines of the manuscript)<sup>6</sup>, Becker<sup>7</sup>, Frappier, Riquer<sup>8</sup> and Wathelet-Willem<sup>9</sup> are among the many scholars who believe that the first part of the poem, which is dominated by the Vivien and Guillaume actions, ends with the narrator's comment «Ore out vengu sa bataille Willame» (1980)<sup>10</sup>, indicating that Guillaume has beaten the heathen invaders. All those scholars believe that the second part of the poem, which is dominated by the Guillaume and Rainoart actions, begins on the following line, with Guillaume, accompanied by his nephew Gui, riding across the battlefield after a defeat, and subsequently finding the moribund body of another nephew, Vivien: for those critics the many incongruities to be found when comparing the first and second parts of the work ( $G_1$  and  $G_2$  respectively), make it impossible to believe that the *Chanson de Guillaume* is not a composite work<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, one of the most flagrant contradictions of the poem as a whole has been seen in the martyr Vivien's death: in the *Chanson de Guillaume* Vivien would appear to die twice<sup>12</sup>, once at the end of the first battle on l'Archamp, where his apparently lifeless body is hidden by his heathen attackers (cf. 926f. — i.e. in  $G_1$ ) and again later, in his uncle Guillaume's arms, but this time after having confessed his sins and been given the last rites (cf. 2052 — i.e. in  $G_2$ ).

In a relatively recent article on the subject of the composition of the *Chanson de Guillaume*, «La mort de Vivien et l'épisode de Gui»<sup>13</sup>, Burger, who concurs with the opinion expressed by the majority of critics that this work is a conglomerate of earlier poems, does not agree that the first part of

<sup>3</sup> FRAPPIER, J. — *Les Chansons de Geste du Cycle de Guillaume d'Orange (Vol. I. «La Chanson de Guillaume», «Aliscans», «La Chevalerie Vivien»*, Paris, 1955 (cf. pp. 144f.).

<sup>4</sup> BÉDIER, J. — *op. cit.*, (cf. pp. 346ff.).

<sup>5</sup> ADLER, A. — *Rainoart and the Composition of the Chanson de Guillaume*, in «*Modern Philology*», 49 (1951-52), pp. 160-171.

<sup>6</sup> SUCHIER, H. — *op. cit.* (cf. pp. XXXff.).

<sup>7</sup> BECKER, P. A. — *Das Werden der Wilhelm- und der Aimerigeste*, Leipzig, 1939 (cf. p. 189).

<sup>8</sup> DE RIQUER, M. — *Les Chansons de Geste Françaises*, Paris, 1956 (cf. p. 142).

<sup>9</sup> WATHELET-MWILLEM, J. — *op. cit.* (cf. pp. 393ff).

<sup>10</sup> Edition of text used: McMILLAN, D. (ed.) — *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> For a complete study of the many disparities which exist between  $G_1$  and  $G_2$  cf. WATHELET-WILLEM, J. — *op. cit.*, pp. 393-453.

<sup>12</sup> King Deramed also dies twice in the *Chanson de Guillaume*, as does the heathen Alderufe.

<sup>13</sup> BURGER, A. — *La mort de Vivien et l'épisode de Gui*, in «*Travaux de Linguistique et de Littérature*», 16 (1978), pp. 49-54.

the narrative ends on line 1980. To defend his point of view Burger refers to the *Chanson de Roland*, where, towards the end of that narrative, on line 3649, the narrator remarks «E Charles ad sa bataille vencue», although this is not yet the case. Therefore, Burger argues, the comment on line 1980 of the *Chanson de Guillaume*, referred to above, does not indicate that Guillaume has won, and thus in no way denotes that the first part of the poem ends here (pp. 49f.). Burger goes on to argue that Vivien's confession and death scene (i.e. the first scene of  $G_2$ ), is, in fact, a continuation of the first part of the poem: according to that critic, there is no concrete proof in the text that Vivien had died, after earlier having been seriously wounded in the head by a heathen warrior (line 920) (pp. 50f.). After having subsequently reminded the reader of the allusions to Christ's passion which earlier critics had seen in Vivien's death scene in  $G_1$  (i.e. lines 760-928), Burger then interprets the scene of Vivien's confession and death (i.e. lines 1988-2052) as analogous to Christ's Resurrection (p. 51).

That critic also argues that the scenes which feature the character of Gui, who appears in both  $G_1$  and  $G_2$ , and is, it will be remembered, Vivien's younger brother, are not part of the original Guillaume poem; according to Burger that primitive poem was initially composed of all the Vivien episodes which are in the *Chanson de Guillaume*, and the rest of  $G_1$  up to (but not including) those scenes in which Gui is featured. For Burger, the character of Gui does not fit into the context of the original Guillaume poem because the comic element which surrounds Vivien's brother, and the fact that he illustrates the τῶπας «puer senex», which, according to Burger, only appears in French epic poetry at the end of the twelfth century, would indicate that he belongs to an epoch later than that with which the primitive «chanson» is associated (pp. 52f.).

Clearly, many of the points raised by Burger are open to objection. When, for example, taking into account the comic element which surrounds Girard, a character who, without doubt, also exemplifies the τῶπας «puer senex», and obviously one of the original figures of the Vivien / Guillaume legend, it is impossible to accept Burger's argument that Gui, who so manifestly resembles Girard, belongs to a later epoch than the other characters of  $G_1$ : Gui is probably as much an integral part of the  $G_1$  poem, as is Girard.

The reasoning behind Burger's claim that the scene of Vivien's death and confession (1988-2052) is analogous to the Resurrection of Jesus is also not easily defensible: Burger claims we have no proof that Vivien dies at the end of the first battle on l'Archamp (the critic therefore concludes that after his body has been hidden by the Saracens, Vivien lives on, unconscious, for an indeterminate time, until he is found by his uncle Guillaume). Yet, to sustain his argument that the first scene of  $G_2$  has, in fact, been modelled after the Resurrection, we must assume that Vivien had, at some stage, died: obviously, Jesus' Resurrection only occurs after His death. Indeed, had some such miracle taken place, then doubtless the narrator would have commented upon it, as he did after the divine intervention which brought about the Christian victory at the end of the third battle on l'Archamp (cf. «Ço fu grant miracle que nostre sire fist» — 1858).

Although it is possible that the narrator's reference «Ore out vencu sa bataille Willame» (1980) might, as Burger contends, not signify that the first

part of the narrative ends here, other, more convincing arguments speak against this interpretation. In his lament before Vivien's confession, Guillaume speaks of his nephew's investiture at Termes (2003); however, those references made by Vivien in  $G_1$  to his oath (cf. 288ff.; 808ff.), nowhere mention Guillaume's palace at Termes, nor indeed, that his oath had been made in his uncle's presence: the localisation of Vivien's oath-taking ceremony at Guillaume's palace is not a feature of  $G_1$ , but is a later development of the Vivien tradition (i.e. it is described in *Chevalerie Vivien* and is mentioned in *Aliscans*). Equally, the description of Vivien in  $G_2$  is clearly not the same as the portrayal we are given of Vivien in  $G_1$ : although Vivien in  $G_1$  is not very old, he is certainly not as young as Vivien in  $G_2$ . In the first part of the narrative Vivien is described as having a beard (cf. the narrator's comment: «Dunc tort ses mains, tire sun chef e sa barbe» 474), which would certainly indicate that he is well past the age of puberty. Yet, in his lament in  $G_2$  Guillaume says of his nephew: «Vivien, sire, mar fu ta juvente bele, / Tis gentil cors e ta tendre meiselle!» (2001f.). Here there would appear to be no question of Vivien having a beard: his «tendre meiselle» is characteristic of tender youth, i.e. Vivien in  $G_2$  has not yet reached the age of puberty. The later poems of the cycle which deal with Vivien lay great emphasis on his youth: this does not occur to such an extent in  $G_1$ , which is the oldest surviving «chanson» to deal with Guillaume and his nephew. It is apparent, therefore, that Vivien in  $G_1$  and Vivien in  $G_2$  are not the same characters, and it is thus impossible to argue that Vivien's confession scene is a continuation of  $G_1$ .

It is thus clear, that the traditional division of the *Chanson de Guillaume* into two narratives (i.e. Frappier's  $G_1$  and  $G_2$ ) would still appear valid. However, despite the obvious objections to Burger's interpretation of the *Chanson de Guillaume*, that critic does uncover a problem which earlier scholars would not appear to have considered of great relevance<sup>14</sup>: i.e. Gui's absence at Vivien's death scene. It is, indeed, most strange that Vivien's brother Gui, who is, after all, only a short distance from his uncle, when the latter, on finding Vivien's body, hears his confession and gives him the last rites, should apparently show no compassion, and take no interest, in his brother's death. When discussing the absence of Gui at the beginning of  $G_2$ , Burger notes: «L'interpolateur a bien senti qu'il [Gui] était de trop dans la scène de la rencontre de Vivien et de son oncle et s'en est débarrassé vaille que vaille» (p. 52). It is, indeed, possible that the poet who was responsible for the *Chanson de Guillaume* felt that Gui did not fit into the scene of Vivien and Guillaume's meeting: but since Gui was, in all probability, never a feature of the original scene which depicted Vivien's confession to his uncle, the poet did not have to eliminate him from it, as Burger suggests. Those scenes in  $G_2$  which feature Gui and Vivien have, in all likelihood, been introduced into the *Chanson de Guillaume* from independent sources.

<sup>14</sup> WATHELET-WILLEM — *op. cit.*, notes: «Au début de  $G_2$ , le responsable du texte de Londres est manifestement encombré de ce personnage qui suit Guillaume, mais qui n'a plus de rôle à jouer dans la suite» (p. 535). She does not, however, develop this point further.

NOTAS DE INVESTIGAÇÃO

To prove my point, I shall now briefly examine the episode in question: *laisse* CXXXI (i.e. the beginning of  $G_2$ ) starts with the narrator telling his audience that Guillaume and his nephew, Gui, are riding across the battlefield:

Li quons Willame chevalche par le champ,  
Tut est irez e plein de maltalant,  
Rumpit les laz de sun healme luisant,  
Envers la terre li vait mult enbronzant,  
Sa bone enseigne teinte en vermeil sanc.  
Mult grant damage trove de sa gent;  
Guiot le vait de loinz adestrant. (1981-1987)

There can be little doubt that this scene is quite different in character to the preceding episode (in which Gui beheads the heathen King Deramed, and Guillaume wins the battle): the atmosphere is one of defeat rather than of victory — indeed, this is one of the reasons which has lead critics to see this scene as the beginning of  $G_2$ . Gui is at a distance from his uncle: it is possible that the poet is trying to prepare the public for that character's absence from the following scene, for the next line marks a switch in the story-line from Gui to Vivien. The narrator tells his audience:

Vivien trove sur un estanc (1988).

Guillaume, and not Gui, finds Vivien: from this moment until after Vivien's death, Gui disappears from sight. What follows is, without doubt, one of the most moving episodes in the whole Guillaume cycle (i.e. Vivien's confession and death). However, it is not my intention here to examine this confession scene: of import for the present discussion is the fact Gui has no place in it<sup>15</sup>.

After Guillaume has given his nephew the Sacrament, the narrator describes Vivien's death, and Guillaume's subsequent reaction:

L'alme s'en vait, le cors i est remés.  
Veit le Willame, comence a plurer.  
Desur le col del balçan l'ad levé,  
Qui l'en voleit a Orenge porter. (2052-2055)

It is, then, Guillaume's intention to take his nephew's corpse back to Orange. However, because he is attacked by fifteen heathen kings, he is unable to do so: Guillaume is forced to lay Vivien's body on the ground so that he can defend himself. The narrator then continues:

E ces quinze l'unt del ferir ben hasté,  
Que par vife force unt fait desevrer  
L'uncle del nevou qu'il poeit tant amer. (2069-2071)

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<sup>15</sup> It is natural that at Vivien's death Guillaume and not Gui should be present since, in Old French epic poetry the family relationship of greatest intimacy was that which existed between uncle and nephew (cf. FARNSWORTH, W. O. — *Uncle and Nephew in the Old French Chansons de Geste. A Study in the Survival of Matriarchy*, New York, 1966).

This reference to Guillaume's nephew (which is assumed to be Vivien) would make perfect sense, were it not for the following lines:

Puis unt Sarazins Guiot environé,  
E sun cheval suz li li unt mort getet,  
E li enfes est a tere acraventé. (2072-2074)

Suddenly, there is a very awkward change in the action (back from Vivien to Gui): Gui is taken prisoner. Yet now it appears that the «neveu qu'il poeit tant amer», from whom Guillaume is separated, could equally well be Gui: the poet has been so inept in this switch from the Vivien to the Gui action that it is difficult to understand to whom he is referring. For the rest of that laisse Vivien's younger brother, Gui, motivates the action. At the end of that strophe the narrator, in reference to Gui, notes:

Par devant le cunte l'unt mené as niefs,  
E li quons Willame s'est mult adolusez.  
Turne as Sarazins cum hom qui est irrez;  
Quinze en ad morz e seisante nafrez,  
Si que nuls ne pout ester sur ses piez. (2086-2090)

The anger which Guillaume shows the enemy here is certainly a reaction to what the Saracens have just done to Gui (i.e. they have taken him prisoner): these killings were not apparently motivated by the memory of Vivien's martyrdom. It is therefore evident that as soon as Gui comes back on the scene, Guillaume appears to forget Vivien: indeed, directly after Gui is attacked by Saracen warriors, the fifteen kings which had separated Guillaume from Vivien are also forgotten.

We can therefore see that a scene which depicts Gui is followed, without a change of location, by one which describes his brother Vivien, and this in turn is succeeded by one which features Gui again: there is, however, no interaction here between the two narrative strands, indeed, they appear quite separate from each other. It is, of course, possible that Vivien does not play a rôle in Gui's scenes, and that Gui is not featured in the episode which depicts Vivien's death, simply because neither of these characters has a *function* in each other's scene: i.e. Gui has no place at Vivien's confession and Vivien is not part of the Gui action. However, these sudden switches in the story-line are significant because they can give us important clues as to the composition of this «chanson». The awkward changes in the narrative referred to above are probably due to the work of an inept «remanieur», and, most likely, reveal the points of connection between episodes which have been incorporated into the *Chanson de Guillaume* from independent sources.

As was noted above, the *Chanson de Guillaume*, as a whole, has long been considered a composite work; yet what the abrupt changes in the story-line referred to above show us, is that even so small a section of text as the first 119 lines of  $G_2$ , is probably composed of a combination of scenes from disparate works. Thus, it is likely that those scenes in  $G_2$  which feature Gui (i.e. 1981-1986 and 2072-2090) have been introduced into this poem from a different origin (or

are perhaps the work of the poet who was responsible for the *Chanson de Guillaume*: the fact that after his capture by the heathens, Gui is no longer of importance to the plot would seem to uphold this point of view<sup>16</sup>. Similarly, the whole scene which deals with Vivien's death and confession in  $G_2$  (i.e. 1988-2071) also seems quite independent of the rest of the poem. Although Vivien's death is referred to later in the work (cf. 2255; 2342; 2467; 2483; 2518), no further mention is made of the confession, or death<sup>17</sup>: therefore it is probable that the Vivien scene in  $G_2$  has also been introduced here from some independent source. The scenes which deal with Gui and Vivien are, therefore, quite probably, interpolations in the  $G_2$  narrative.

As was noted at the beginning of this article, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the cyclic manuscripts were written, the «chansons» in the Guillaume cycle were read as if they formed a single if extensive narrative: the only poem in this cycle not to be included in these manuscripts is the *Chanson de Guillaume*. Most critics agree that the *Chanson de Guillaume*, as a whole, is composed of two distinct parts ( $G_1$  and  $G_2$ ). Indeed, it was suggested by Suchier that the first part of the work was comprised of two originally independent poems: one describing the exploits of Vivien, and the other those of Guillaume<sup>18</sup>, and Weeks postulated that the last 906 lines of the «Chanson» were based on an independent Rainoart poem<sup>19</sup>. All these theories lead us to believe that the *Chanson de Guillaume* is a very composite work, and one cannot help but feel that it forms, in itself, a type of micro cyclic manuscript, made up of material from disparate sources, composed by different poets and at different times. The interpolation of the scenes which describe Gui and Vivien in  $G_2$  is, therefore, in all probability, a characteristic of the process of cyclic construction which is at the basis of this work.

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<sup>16</sup> If we simply lift the scene of Vivien's death and confession (i.e. 1988-2071) out of the narrative (i.e. the episode which separates those scenes dealing with Gui), then we are presented with the Gui action of  $G_2$  in one cohesive narrative unit. Thus, after having told his audience how Gui is riding at a distance from Guillaume («Guiot le vait de loinz adestrant» — 1987), the narrator, possibly in a separate strophe, would then go on to describe how Gui was captured by the Saracens («Puis unt Sarazins Guiot environé» — 2072).

<sup>17</sup> In the other poems in which Vivien's death is featured (i.e.  $G_1$  and *Aliscans*), after his martyrdom the memory of his sacrifice motivates other Christian warriors to avenge him: in  $G_2$ , however, this does not occur. It would, therefore, appear that references to Vivien after his death have, in  $G_2$ , been included by the «remanieur» in an attempt at giving the poem as a whole greater unity. They do not, however, have the same function as do those references to Vivien after his death in  $G_1$  or *Aliscans*; in both those works they are skillfully worked into the narrative, motivating the furtherance of the action. In *Aliscans*, after the final victory on the battlefield, Guillaume even returns to the site of Vivien's confession to bury his nephew.

<sup>18</sup> SUCHIER, H. — *Vivien*, in «Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie», 29 (1905), pp. 641-682.

<sup>19</sup> WEEKS, R. — *The newly discovered Chançon de Williaume (III)*, in «Modern Philology», 3 (1905), pp. 211-234.