

YDE ET OLIVE: EDITION AND TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT IN MS. TURIN L. II. 14

by

MOUNAWAR ABBOUCHI

(Under the Direction of Thomas Cerbu)

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a translation of the previously untranslated sequel to *Huon de Bordeaux* titled *Yde et Olive*, accompanied by a critical edition based on the Manuscript of the Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino, L. II. 14. The introduction explores the literary tradition to which the text belongs, tracing a history of the manuscript, exploring the different metamorphoses of the story within various literary traditions, and exposing the themes and issues in the text. Particular attention is paid to the modern concerns which this text expresses, such as issues of gender, sexuality, and femininity. There is notably a tradition of female knights in medieval French literature in the light of which *Yde et Olive* can be read.

INDEX WORDS: Medieval, Female Warriors, Cross-dressing, Transvestism, Gender Reversal, Translation, Old French, Chanson de Geste

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MOUNAWAR ABBOUCHI

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MOUNAWAR ABBOUCHI

Major Professor:	Thomas Cerbu
Committee:	Catherine Jones
	Jan Pendergrass

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
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To the one I love,  
So you can finally read this story.

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## INTRODUCTION

The beloved thirteenth century *chanson de geste*, or epic, *Huon de Bordeaux*, saw some success in its time and remains in four manuscripts, at least a couple of dozen versions in prose, and several retellings. Far less popular are its sequels contained in a manuscript at the National Library of Turin under the designation L. II. 14 (referred to as manuscript *T*). Editors have traditionally shied away from this manuscript, owing perhaps partly to the fact that it survived a fire which ravaged the library in 1904. The library lost some real treasures, including Jean de Berry's *Book of Hours* which Giovanni Gorrini described as "une des plus grandes oeuvres d'art de tous les temps."<sup>1</sup> Only about a third of its collection of 4,500 manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> The fire left the manuscript in poor condition, though mostly legible. Still, most modern editions appear to avoid using manuscript *T*.

The sequels have consistently been ignored or disregarded as "unnecessary", "scabrous", or "scandalous" by nineteenth and early twentieth-century critics.<sup>3</sup> The third sequel (some argue the fourth<sup>4</sup>) in the cycle, has received more attention from critics in recent years, though perhaps owing partly to the fact that it exists in its most complete poetic form in a unique manuscript. One could also argue that the contents of this portion of the cycle resonate with modern audiences in a different way, and are perhaps more suited to today's tastes. This section is call

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<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Gorrini, *L'incendie de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Turin* (Turin and Genoa: Renzo Streglio & Cia, 1904) 45.

<sup>2</sup> Gorrini 37.

<sup>3</sup> Léon Gautier, *Les épopées françaises. Étude sur les origines et l'histoire de la littérature nationale*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, vol. 3 (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1966) ; L. Petit de Juvenille, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900*, vol. 1 (Paris: Armand Colin & Cie, 1896).

<sup>4</sup> Caroline Cazanave, *D'Esclarmonde à Croissant: Huon de Bordeaux, l'épique médiéval et l'esprit de suite* (France: Presse universitaire de Franche-Comté, 2007) 36-37.

*Yde et Olive*, sometimes also referred to as *La Chanson d'Yde et Olive*, qualifying it as a complete work in its own right.

*Yde et Olive*, like most of the other sequels (excluding *Esclarmonde*), has never been translated into a modern language and is relatively unknown in circles of medieval scholarship. The absence of a published, modern edition has contributed to its critical neglect. There are many such obscure texts which have escaped the notice of potential translators, so the choice of this text in particular for the present translation may warrant some justification.

Though it has been little studied, *Yde et Olive* has gained considerably more attention than some of the other sequels in recent years, perhaps owing to the themes present in its narrative and to the issues it deals with. Many modern fantasy stories inspired and heavily influenced by medieval tales and chivalric romances have adapted distinctly medieval themes to cater to the tastes of modern audiences. Such is the case for instance in George Martin's series of fantasy books set in a world very like the European medieval world, titled *A Song of Ice and Fire*. These books feature female knights and cross-dressing characters, and actively address issues of sexism, patriarchy, and gender norms within their narratives. There is, however, a tendency to ignore the wealth of texts from the past which have paved the way for these modern stories. Since feminist criticism and gender and queer studies have shown interest in texts like *Yde et Olive* recently<sup>5</sup>, it is appropriate that the texts themselves should be made available to the average reader.

This thesis includes both an edition and translation of the Old French text. The sequels contained in Ms. L. II. 14 have been edited twice before; however, a new edition of *Yde et Olive* seemed to be in order, as neither previous edition is as accessible as one would like. The first was

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<sup>5</sup> Sahar Amer, *Crossing Borders: Love Between Women in Medieval French and Arabic Literatures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

completed at the end of the nineteenth century, and is now out-of-print, while the second earned its author her PhD from Vanderbilt University in 1977 but was never revised or published.

## PART I: THE TEXT

### 1. The Manuscript

The only version of the poetic *Yde et Olive* that is known to us exists in manuscript *T*. Ms. Turin L. II. 14 is the only extant manuscript which contains all of the complete sequels to *Huon de Bordeaux*, including *La Chanson de Godin*<sup>6</sup>, a ten thousand-line poem not preserved elsewhere. The present edition and translation are based on photographs of pages from the manuscript provided by the library in Turin. Two other manuscripts housed at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France contain the *Huon* story with some version of its sequels in verse, namely BnF fr. 22555 and fr. 1451, or *P* and *R* respectively. There is a summary version of the *Yde et Olive* story at the end of manuscript *R* in alexandrines (see Appendix A). The sequels have been known under different names and divisions, but a more or less complete list of the sections in the cycle, gathering all the fragments that critics have singled out, would look something like this:

- i. *Le Roman d'Aubéron*
- ii. *Huon de Bordeaux*
- iii. *Esclarmonde*
- iv. *Huon, roi de féerie/ Couronnement en féerie*
- v. *Clarisse et Florent*
- vi. *Yde et Olive I*
- vii. *Croissant*
- viii. *Yde et Olive II*

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<sup>6</sup> Françoise Meunier, *La chanson de Godin: chanson de geste inédite* (Louvain: Bibliothèque de l'Université, 1958).

- ix. *Huon et les Géants*
- x. *La Chanson de Godin*

There are two other episodes which only appear in manuscript *R*. These are *Huon et Calisse*, published in Hermann Schäfer's nineteenth-century edition,<sup>7</sup> and *Huon de retour à Babylone*.

In our manuscript, the sequels from *Esclarmonde* to *Godin* cover fols. 354<sup>v</sup>-460<sup>v</sup>, with *Godin* taking up more than half of those pages. It is perhaps no wonder that *La Chanson de Godin* was never included in modern editions of the sequels, but received its own separate edition.

The above list is based on Caroline Cazanave's division of the different sections in the cycle in her recently published work on the sequels. The *Esclarmonde* section contains a story which is sometimes referred to as *Huon, roi de féerie* because it was later developed in the alexandrine version as a separate section (manuscript *R*), but which is embedded in *Esclarmonde* in Ms. *T*, close in length to our *Yde et Olive*. Schäfer presents *féerie* as a distinct story in his edition, which Cazanave refers to as *Couronnement en féerie*.<sup>8</sup>

*Yde et Olive I, Croissant*, and *Yde et Olive II* have traditionally been combined under the title *Yde et Olive*, but recent scholars, beginning with Barbara Anne Brewka, who edited the sequels in an unpublished doctoral dissertation,<sup>9</sup> have looked at *Croissant* as an independent unit. In fact, the sequels are sometimes referred to as "chansons" in their own right. However, Cazanave rejects this convention, especially in the case of *Yde et Olive*, which she splits up into smaller discrete sections: "Ce que l'édition de M. Schweigel appelait la *Chanson d'Yde et Olive*, comme

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<sup>7</sup> Hermann Schäfer, *Über die Pariser Hss. 1451 und 22555 der Huon de Bordeaux-Sage; Beziehung der Hs. 1451 zur "Chanson de Croissant", die "Chanson de Huon et Callisse", die "Chanson de Huon, roi de féerie"* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1892).

<sup>8</sup> Cazanave 83.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Anne Brewka, "Esclarmonde, Clarisse et Florent, Yde et Olive I, Croissant, Yde et Olive II, Huon et les Géants, Sequels to Huon de Bordeaux, as Contained in Turin Ms. L.II.14: an Edition," PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1977.

s'il s'agissait d'un tout indivisible, est à décomposer en plusieurs portions."<sup>10</sup> We shall therefore be concerned in this work with section *f* (the sixth section) known as *Yde et Olive I*, which ends at the birth of Croissant, and will henceforth refer to it simply as *Yde et Olive*. It constitutes the first half, or first storyline, of what has traditionally been known as *La Chanson d'Yde et Olive*. Unlike most of the other sequels in the collection, this section of the chanson does not mention Huon de Bordeaux, nor is it as directly related to its prequels as the others are. That is part of the reason why I chose this text for the present study, as it provides a contained, complete, and independent narrative, which can be read and discussed on its own or in relation to the other texts that surround it. Our text falls on fols. 389<sup>v</sup>-395<sup>v</sup> of the manuscript.

Manuscript *T* survived a fire which ravaged the library in 1904, leaving most of it undamaged, except for a few illegible leaves. Ernst Wahlgren, in his description of the manuscript, attributes to its thickness the relatively mild damage it suffered: "Grâce sans doute à sa masse importante, le ms. se trouvait mieux défendu des flammes que beaucoup d'autres mss. français et se présente, après la restauration, dans un assez bon état."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Brewka says in her introduction that some of the texts were thrown out the window in an effort to save them from the flames.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, though some pages bear the marks of having survived fire, water, and smoke damage, some of the bigger and cleaner tears visible on the pages of the manuscript can only be explained by a heavy shock of some kind, or by the document having been subjected to brute force.

The section containing the *Yde et Olive* text has escaped the brunt of the damage, though some parts are partially effaced or faded. There are two horizontal tears that run halfway across

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<sup>10</sup> Cazanave 36.

<sup>11</sup> Ernst Wahlgren, *Renseignements sur quelques manuscrits français de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Turin* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1934) 17.

<sup>12</sup> Brewka 61.



each folio, left to right on the recto, one almost a third of the way down the page, and the other a quarter of the way up. Fortunately, Max Schweigel had already completed his edition of the sequels before the fire.<sup>13</sup> The edition presented here will rely on readings provided by the Schweigel edition for the parts which are illegible to us today.

Our manuscript appears to have been a luxury edition, richly illuminated with eight miniatures, colorful borders, flourishes and drawings in the margins. The initial letters beginning the laisses are illuminated in alternating red and blue, and the text is in the Gothic script. There is no way of knowing what rich patron commissioned the manuscript or in whose possession it may have been, but Brewka posits that it may have once belonged to the house of Savoy which was thought to own a copy of *Huon de Bordeaux*.<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that, though there is no indication as to the identity of the poet or *jongleur*, we owe the manuscript to at least two scribes, as testified by the change of hand visible at folio 397<sup>r</sup>. Catherine Jones explains that “it is generally assumed that *Huon de Bordeaux* is the work of a single learned poet, rather than the product of a long oral tradition.”<sup>15</sup> However, Brewka suspects the contribution of two authors.<sup>16</sup> There are certain linguistic traits exhibited by the text which we will discuss below that might hint at either the author’s or the scribe’s background. Much like the author mystery, there is no way of knowing for sure when the sequels were written. A scribal notation at the end of the manuscript provides a *terminus ad quem* of 1311.<sup>17</sup> It is likely that the manuscript was composed

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<sup>13</sup> Max Schweigel, *Esclarmonde, Clarisse et Florent, Yde et Olive. Drei Fortsetzungen der Chanson von Huon de Bordeaux nach der einzigen Turiner Handschrift zum Erstenmal veröffentlicht* (Marburg: Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1889).

<sup>14</sup> Brewka 69.

<sup>15</sup> Catherine M. Jones, *An Introduction to the Chansons de Geste* (Florida: University of Florida Press, 2014) 135.

<sup>16</sup> Brewka 70.

<sup>17</sup> Brewka 126.

before then, following the composition of *Huon de Bordeaux* in the twelfth century. Léon Gautier places the sequels in the later twelfth century.<sup>18</sup>

Our manuscript has been restored twice since the fire. The first time was between 1908 and 1909 during which time it was divided into four volumes; there are small punctures in the margin of each folio where the leaves had previously been bound. The sequels are now found in the third volume. The second restoration took place from 1974 to 1980, each volume taking one or two years to complete. The third volume was the most recently restored (1979-1980). The restoration of this volume began two years after Brewka completed her edition of the sequels, so there are some parts that were illegible to her but which have once again become accessible to us today.

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<sup>18</sup> Gautier 742.

## 2. Presentation of the Text

The following will present the text of *Yde et Olive* in both the original Old French and in an English translation. The poem consists of 1,062 lines making up 19 decasyllabic monorhyming strophes, or *laissez* as they are called in the language of the *chansons de geste*. The *laissez* vary greatly in length, the shortest having 23 lines, and the longest 125. Figure 1 shows the distribution of lines over the *laissez* which are numbered in Roman numerals I through XIX. The average is a midsize *laisse* of 57.9 lines. According to Catherine Jones' chapter on *Huon de Bordeaux*, the average length of a *laisse* is 116 lines and 118 lines in manuscripts M and P respectively.<sup>19</sup>

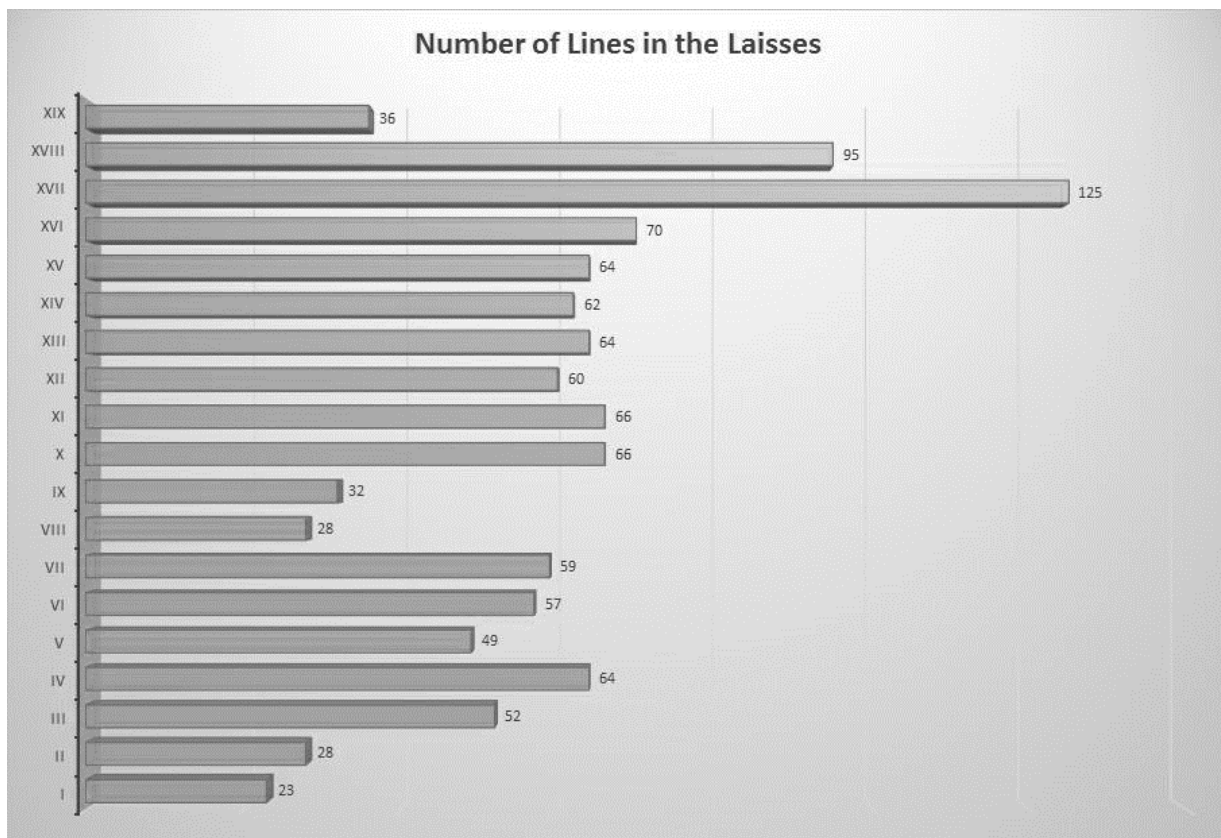


Figure 1

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<sup>19</sup> Jones 134.

The beginning of each *laisse* is indicated with an illuminated letter in the manuscript, but for our purposes, they will be designated with Roman numerals, and the lines will be numbered in Arabic numerals. Each page of the manuscript has two vertical columns of text which will be designated as **a** and **b** following the folio number. For instance, our texts begins on folio 389<sup>v</sup>a. The start of each new column in the manuscript will be signaled by a notation on the right side of the page. The notes at the end are keyed to the text. An asterisk next to a line of the text indicates that there is a corresponding note.

Since Schweigel and Brewka begin the *Esclarmonde* text in different places (Brewka begins her edition a *laisse* earlier than Schweigel, creating a 38-line discrepancy), and since the text is being presented here independently from the other sequels, this edition and following translation will begin at *laisse* I (corresponding to Brewka CC and Schweigel CCI) line 1 (B6222; S6184). The corresponding line numbers in Brewka and Schweigel will be indicated at the top of the page in the edition with a B and S respectively. Because it is sometimes impossible to tell if an element of the text is an authorial or scribal addition, we will use the form “author/scribe” to refer to the person who is responsible for the element in question. Although it is not inconceivable that this person was a woman, the likelihood of it being a man is higher; we will, therefore, refer to the author/scribe in the masculine for simplification.

### The Language of the Text

Brewka has already delineated some of the linguistic characteristics of the manuscript in great detail in a long section of her introduction,<sup>20</sup> but since we are only concerned with one of the sequels, we will limit ourselves to a few interesting features of the *Yde et Olive* part of the

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<sup>20</sup> Brewka 70-112.

manuscript. Specifically, we will look at Picard and Anglo-Norman traits of the text. Written mostly in a “standard” Old French dialect, the text, as William Kibler notes, displays certain dialectal idiosyncrasies:

It would be impossible [...] to find a text from this period that is purely Francien in the sense of reflecting uniquely Francien phonological, morphological, and lexical traits. All texts from the Old French period are to some degree ‘contaminated’ by traits from dialects other than the one in which they were principally composed, and one of the significant traits of Francien was its receptivity to other dialectal characteristics.<sup>21</sup>

Picard and Anglo-Norman are both northern dialects and share traits and phonetic changes. Whereas Anglo-Norman retains some Latin singularities, Picard “was perhaps the most idiosyncratic dialect of Old French, and it was recognized as ‘unusual’ even in the medieval period.”<sup>22</sup> The following are some examples of the dialectal intrusions we see in our text.

- a) The Picard 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun *jou* is used more often than *je*.
- b) The Picard *le* appears regularly instead of the feminine *la*. As we will see further on, this often creates gender ambiguity.
- c) The 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine possessive pronouns *sen* (Pic.) and *son* are interchangeable.
- d) Likewise, we often see the Picard 3<sup>rd</sup> person possessive *se* instead of *sa* for the feminine.
- e) The Picard 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person possessives *no* and *vo* often replace *nostre* and *vostre*.

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<sup>21</sup> William W. Kibler, *An Introduction to Old French* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1984) xxv.

<sup>22</sup> Kibler, *An Introduction* 252.

- f) The neuter pronouns “che” (l. 668) and “chou” (recurring in our text) appear in Picard.<sup>23</sup>
- g) The Picard infinitive *caïr* (to fall) appears instead of *cheoir*.
- h) The sound [ts] in Old French is palatalized in Picard and often noted with a *ch*.<sup>24</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular conjugation of the present tense, the final consonant is thus palatalized to a *c(h)* as in *calench* (l. 772) and “*sench*” (l. 961). The same phenomenon, which is typical of Picard, occurs in Anglo-Norman where *c* and *g* are interchangeable.<sup>25</sup> This alternation occurs in our text, and thus we see “*vieng*” (l. 620) and “*retieng*” (l. 643 and 645).
- i) The letter *c* in front of an *a* produces the sound /k/ in Picard where it is written as *ch* in Old French. However, in front of an *i* or an *e*, it becomes *ch*. So we have “*cante*” instead of “*chante*” (l. 150), but “*chil*” instead of “*cil*” (l. 555 and 912).
- j) The Old French *-eau* becomes *-iau* in Picard, so we see “*biax*” and “*biauté*” numerous times in the text, but also “*iaue*” (l. 90 and 674). This explains the spelling of “*carreau*” which we see as “*quariax*” in line 588.
- k) The ending *-iee* is reduced in Picard, so feminine past participles in *-iee* end in *-ié*, and words like *maisniee* become *maisnie*.

The following edition will attempt to intervene as little as possible, only making emendations when there is a glaring scribal error. Some spelling errors will be left the way they are presented in the manuscript, as they might illuminate some of the author/scribe’s conventions, slips, or the general decline, as it were, of the declension system. Likewise, in places where the “imploding *r*”, already beginning to weaken in the twelfth century,<sup>26</sup> disappears, Cazanave

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<sup>23</sup> Hasenohr 54.

<sup>24</sup> Kibler, *An Introduction* 252.

<sup>25</sup> Hasenohr 121.

<sup>26</sup> Christiane Marchello-Nizia, *Histoire de la langue française aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Dunod, 1992) 83.

recommends not emending this phonetic weakening and the muting of “r”, as it reflects “une évolution réelle.”<sup>27</sup> I have therefore chosen not to emend words like “faussas” (l. 453) or “escuies” (l. 509) where my predecessors have “faussa[r]s” and “escuie[r]”.

### Note on the Edition

Schweigel’s diplomatic edition has left many abbreviations unresolved in the text. I resolve abbreviations, noting some of the most common patterns displayed in the manuscript below. Abbreviations are used sporadically, sometimes several times per line, and other times sparsely for several verses. This may be explained by the fact that the scribe has kept line lengths more or less consistent throughout.

I have systematically expanded abbreviations as follows:

- a) The only word our scribe consistently abbreviates is *mlt*, which does not appear in the *Yde et Olive* section in its complete form. It appears elsewhere as “molt” twice and as “mout” at least six times, including in the Godin section. Although previous editors have resolved it as “mout” because it is the dominant unabbreviated form,<sup>28</sup> I have chosen to expand it as “molt” due to the presence of the “l”.
- b) The symbol **9** represents “con” or “com”. It has been resolved as “com” when followed by a “b”, “p”, or “m”, or when it stands on its own to mean “like” (modern French “comme”), and as “con” when followed by all other letters.

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<sup>27</sup> Cazanave 27n41.

<sup>28</sup> Brewka 139; Meunier 4-5.

- c) Horizontal bars over some words usually indicate an “n” or “m”, in which case expansion follows the same rules as in *b*, but sometimes they indicate that several letters have been omitted (see Table 1 below for examples).
- d) The use of two strokes usually signify that there are two letters omitted such as in *qũt* (“quant”).
- e) Three strokes usually stand for “our” or “ur”. They occur most often in the abbreviation *p“”* which has been resolved as “pour”.
- f) First and second person plural pronouns sometimes appear as *n<sup>9</sup>* and *v<sup>9</sup>*. They appear elsewhere as “nous” and “vous”, so they have been expanded as such.
- g) The symbol *Z* stands for “et” and appears at least five times more often than the complete conjunction.
- h) The letter *p* with a crossed tail is resolved as “par” in most instance, but sometimes as “per” as in “perdi”.
- i) The letter *p* also appears with either a bar or stroke above it and is mostly resolves as “pri” or “pre”.
- j) “qui”, “que”, and “qu’ ” are sometimes abbreviated as a *q* with a stroke mark above it as illustrated below.

As a point of interest, Table 1 illustrates the most common abbreviations made by our scribe.



Table 1 Abbreviations in the Manuscript

	con-, com-		et
	qui, que		sont
	pour		vous
	par-, per-		seigneur
	pre-, pri-		chevalier
	Example of omitted "n"		grant
	Example of omitted "m"		molt

The letters "u" and "v" are sometimes interchangeable, especially in the middle of a word where we would write "v" in modern French. Likewise, "i" and "j" are sometimes indistinguishable. I have followed modern spelling conventions in these cases and rendered "u" as "v" and "i" as "j" when necessary. The last pair poses a problem particularly for Roman numerals which I have chosen to transcribe as such rather than as full letter words. This edition will use "i" on "I" consistently for the number 1. The scribe delimits numbers with a dot on either side; I have chosen to mimic this convention, which will be especially useful for differentiating the number .i. from the adverb of place and personal pronoun "i" (or "y" in modern French.)

Apostrophes will be added following the conventions of modern French, and modern punctuation will be used, including quotation marks for dialogue. The acute accent will be used

to distinguish tonic “e” from atonic “e” in polysyllabic words, and especially at the end of a line to mark the assonance.

In instances where our text differs significantly from that of Brewka or Schweigel, our emendations will be mentioned in a note and marked with a B and an S respectively.

### Note on the Translation

The challenge of the following translation will be trying to stay true to the original French without adding meaning which is not there, while attempting to make the text readable to a modern-day readership. Too often, modern English translations of old texts overuse archaisms and outdated idioms. Overall, this exercise has shown that Old French lends itself very well and naturally to translation into English. There are similar patterns in the two languages which make for a smooth transition.

The following remarks about the present translation are intended to alert the alert the reader to the nuances present in the French, which might otherwise be lost in the translation, and will hopefully facilitate the comparison of the two texts:

- a) I have elected not to anglicize character names in the spirit of interfering as little as possible with the text. So Sorbarré, Désiiier, and the like will keep their French names (with the sole addition of accents). The translation will keep the Old French oblique case for masculine and the nominative case for feminine names, as these are generally the most recurring forms (see Table 2 for examples). Thus we have Yde (/i:d/) and Olive, but Ydé, Oton, Florent, etc.

- b) The author/scribe alternates between the preterit and the present, perhaps for the rhyme or meter. However, for the sake of consistency, the English translation will use the narrative past throughout.
- c) The way characters address each other is also volatile. Within the same conversation or piece of dialogue, a speaker might use the second person singular or the polite second person plural interchangeably to address an interlocutor. This aspect of the Old French text is not uncommon, and once again might occur solely for metrical reasons, but it is lost in modern English.
- d) The most perturbing issue posed by the translation is the problem of pronouns. Yde has found her/himself in the same plight as modern-day transgender people who struggle to make their pronouns understood. The use of the Picard pronoun “le”, which can be both masculine and feminine, only complicates matters further, as the author/scribe alternates between the feminine and masculine versions of Yde’s name, often making it difficult to know who the referent is.

“Molt volentiers, sires,” ce dist Ydés.

“J’en ferai tant, sire,” ce dist Ydés,

“Que tous li mons m’en savera bon gré.”

“Que ses tu faire?” ce dist li rois Otés.

“Sire,” fait ele, “chou c’on set commander.

“Gladly, sire,” said Ydé.

“I will conduct myself in such a way,” he said,

“That everybody will be pleased with me.”

“What can you do?” asked king Oton.

“Sire,” she said, “anything you can ask... (658-661)

This makes it difficult to know whether she is being referred to in the feminine or in the masculine. Moreover, the Old French poet occasionally goes several lines without using any pronoun or direct antecedent at all, leaving a verb standing ambiguously alone, where the modern English translator must provide a pronoun and clear referent.

This translation will attempt to minimize the use of pronouns when they are not present in the original text in order to avoid attributing a certain gender identity to the main character at any given time, and to keep the image that the author creates of Yde intact. When it is necessary to have a pronoun in a sentence where the Old French is ambiguous about gender, I will follow the closest occurrence of Yde’s name or other clues in that sentence.

There is one instance where a correction had to be made, and that is in line 740. While addressing his barons, Oton does not yet know that Yde is a woman but refers to her with the feminine oblique *Ydain*. This is clearly an error on the author/scribe’s part. The same syllable count could have been achieved with the masculine oblique *Ydé* (we should note that the sentence does not call for the oblique case to begin with.) Consequently, “Ydain” becomes “Ydé” in the translation.

## PART II: ANALYSIS

### 1. Summary and Explanation of the Text

This section will provide a summary and episodic analysis of the narrative of *Yde et Olive*. The story begins where *Clarisse et Florent* leaves off. In fact, there is no clear transition between the two sections like there is between the *Esclarmonde* section and its successor. Though most of the sequels flow into each other with no clear transition, at the beginning of *Clarisse et Florent*, the narrator announces his intention to tell a new story, interrupts the flow of the narrative.

Hui mais commence gloriouze canchon

D'amors et d'ames, de pités et de plors. (Ms. fol. 374<sup>b</sup>)

Now begins another glorious song

Of love and arms, of pity and tears. (My translation)

These lines appear at the end of the *laisse* which ends the *Esclarmonde* section, but the transition is so clear that Schweigel splits the *laisse* and begins *La Chanson de Clarisse et Florent* with these two lines (3482-83 in his edition). No such announcement is made for *Yde et Olive*; rather the text just goes on to describe how Clarisse and Florent are reunited, and there begins our story. We should therefore provide a brief and condensed summary of the events preceding our tale.

### Before Yde et Olive: Clarisse et Florent

Clarisse, Huon and Esclarmonde's daughter, is sent to live with her uncle. She is courted by many suitors, especially one Brohart who lusts after her. Brohart convinces her to dress up in men's clothing and travel with him to Bayles where she might better examine her suitors and decide between them. He then kills the ship's crew and attempts to rape Clarisse, but she tries to defend herself, though she is badly injured as a result, and runs away from him. She is eventually brought to the kingdom of King Garin by Pierre of Aragon, concealing her identity out of fear. Florent becomes enamored of her, but Garin will not allow the union, thinking that Clarisse is too low-born, and decides to have her killed to put a stop to his son's obsession with her. While in prison, Clarisse manages to break out of her cell and find Florent, who is also being held prisoner. A watch guard helps the lovers escape, and they end up in Bulgaria where they are received by the chatelaine, Sorbarré. Clarisse's true identity is revealed, and they all sail home. Meanwhile, Garin is at war with his brother Désiier who plans to kill Garin and put Florent on the throne instead. Huon sends messengers from Monmur (his seat in *féerie*) who tell Garin that Clarisse is Huon's daughter. Garin finally allows the marriage, and peace is restored.

### Yde et Olive

*Florent's return to Aragon, Garin's death, Clarisse's death, Yde's birth*

A triumphant Florent returns home to Aragon to finally be united with his beloved Clarisse. They are married, and the kingdom rejoices. Soon after, king Garin grows ill and dies, leaving the kingdom to his son and his new bride.

Queen Clarisse becomes pregnant, but has misgivings about her pregnancy. Her fears are realized, and she dies giving birth to a daughter, Yde. Though he is happy that he has a daughter, Florent becomes consumed with grief and will not stop lamenting his wife, to the point that his barons think he will kill himself from excessive crying. They ask him, “Vous volés vous ocire par crïee?” (l. 96). The king’s councilors treat his behavior as a “vilonnie”, making it clear to him that he is ignoring his fatherly duties. He appears to snap out of his stupor and complies with his barons’ demands, hiring nurses to care for his daughter and insuring that she is brought up with every care. However, the narrator tells us that this recovery did not come without effort; he still mourns his late wife, and it is perhaps this prolonged and intense grief that drive him to madness.

*Florent announces that he wants to marry Yde*

The years pass, and Yde grows into a beautiful woman. Florent notices her resemblance to her mother and always keeps her close, kissing and embracing her. There is a great emphasis on the father’s attachment to his daughter which already shows the warning signs of misplaced or exaggerated affection. The narrator tells us how Florent would kiss Yde’s mouth and chest when she was seven years old, all the while sobbing and sighing for his wife. This may seem like an innocent and tender scene between a grieving husband and his orphaned daughter, but the subsequent insistence on the acts of kissing and embracing, and the frequency with which they are carried out, put the reader ill at ease. “Baisie et accollee” becomes like a refrain in this part of the poem, appearing four times, each time with a different intensifier: “Molt souvent l’a accollee et baisie” (l. 147); “Bien l’a .x. fois baisie et accollee” (l. 189); “Tant a Ydain baisie et accollee” (l. 202); “Li rois l’accolle et baisa volentiers” (l. 302).

Yde is now fifteen years old. The number fifteen is a recurring one in the text: the events take place during the pivotal fifteenth year of Yde's life, when she is considered a woman and of marriageable age; the king has been celibate for fifteen years; later on, the German army stops in Barsillon for fifteen days while they await reinforcements (l. 376); when she meets the Germans, Yde claims that she has been looking for work for fifteen days (l. 393); the army comes upon a valley fifteen leagues away (l. 419); the Spanish king swears that he will take the city before the fortnight is over (l. 712); and finally, Olive asks Yde to leave off consummating the marriage for fifteen days (l. 958). The medieval fascination with numbers is nothing new, and the number fifteen can easily acquire significance. 15 is  $3 \times 5$ , 3 being an obvious holy number, and 5 being the number of the stigmata, the extremities of a human body, the fingers on a human hand, the senses, etc. The list goes on. It could also simply be that fifteen is an easy number to remember and works well for an oral poem.

One day, after church no less, Florent announces to his council that he has decided to take a bride. Overjoyed, his barons tell him he has waited too long and are eager to hear who will be their new queen. He shocks the assembly by announcing that he will take his own daughter as his wife. Despite his barons' protestations, the king is adamant, and his council's words, which once had so much weight, only appear to anger him. One wonders why the barons do not exert any pressure on their king when they seem capable of doing so for lesser causes, especially when the king threatens to soil his bloodline and the entire kingdom. Or is Florent so far gone that he no longer hears or fears his barons? There is deterioration in the kingdom of Garin's progeny. While the late king was once concerned with appeasing his barons and proclaimed on his death bed that if he had to die, he would be at peace knowing that there was order in his kingdom, his son does not seem to care what his barons say and is not afraid of their discontent. We see later on in the



narrative the importance of the king's council at Oton's court. The Roman emperor appeals to his barons for protection against his enemies, and in return, he includes them in the decisions he makes, ensuring that they are always satisfied. We are presented in this text with two models of good kingship against Florent's example of a corrupt and misguided rule.

*Yde learns her fate and escapes from Aragon*

The young Yde is brought in and advised of her fate. As the narrator has been warning us from the start, she is horrified, being well brought up and a good Christian. She protests, but to no avail. Though her father's barons had begged and pleaded with him to change his mind, none of them had attempted to warn Yde or help her escape. Speaking among themselves, they say the young woman would never agree to such a sin, and that she would surely flee when she found out (l. 212), foreshadowing her eventual escape. However, none of them actually do anything to aid Yde. They merely beg and plead, but in the end bow to the king's wishes. In fact, in what appears to be an adaptation of the Yde et Olive story, the thirty-seventh play of the fourteenth-century *Les miracles de Notre Dame par personnages* titled *Le miracle de la fille d'un roy*, the king's councilors actually put the idea in his head in the first place. Perhaps the play is picking up on and developing the idea of corruption at court. Nevertheless, the attitude of Florent's barons seems to be that a young woman dishonored at home is better than a young woman roaming the world alone. And yet, the king keeps her in his room until the time comes for them to be married because he is afraid that she will be stolen from him. It could be that he suspects that one of his barons might try to help the girl escape, or that he has become so jealous and possessive that he must have her locked away for his peace of mind. What is more confusing is that everyone seems very upset when Yde finally manages to escape:

En la cité ot molt grant marison,  
 Tout pour Ydain a la clere fachon  
 C'on a perdue par itele aucoison.

There was great sorrow in the city  
 For Yde with the bright face  
 Who was lost under such circumstances. (354-356)

Rather than feeling relief that the young woman is free, they feel grief at having “lost” their princess. The feeling of possessiveness appears to be shared by the king and his people alike.

While locked in her father’s quarters in a very lady-in-the-tower-like fashion, and made to take a bath so her father can keep an eye on her, her uncle Désiiier arrives in Aragon. This *deus ex machina* gives her a chance to put on boy’s clothes while everyone is distracted, and somehow leave the palace on her father’s horse undetected. This episode is reminiscent of one in *Aucassin et Nicolette*. When she is imprisoned to separate her from her lover, and though frightened and lamenting her fate, Nicolette vows that she will not remain in her cell for long if she can help it, and, indeed, she manages to escape. As we have seen, this runs in the family, as Yde’s mother also manages a daring escape, shattering the traditional damsel in distress stereotype and acquiring her own agency.

It is a mystery how Yde manages to get out of the locked room, but as soon as she dons male clothing, she appears to become invisible. No one notices Yde the boy stealing a horse from the stable and leaving the palace. However, Florent immediately notices that Yde the girl is gone. He is informed that Yde took his horse, and he is rendered completely helpless. All he can do is

lament the loss of his daughter and the end of his hopes of marrying her. The theft of the horse is not insignificant. While Yde was expected to take her mother's place as her father's wife and the country's queen, she instead overrules her father's decision, becomes a man herself, and takes her fate into her own hands. The horse is symbolic of Florent's loss of power, and of Yde's eventual succession when her transformation is fully realized.

*Yde's first adventure*

Out in the world by herself, Yde quickly runs out of money and food and has to sell her horse. She eventually comes to the city of Barsillon (perhaps a cognate of modern-day Barcelona) where she spends her coin freely, not surprising for a princess used to a certain lifestyle. In the city, she meets an army of Germans who are on their way to Rome to fight for King Oton, the Roman emperor, in his war against the Spanish king. This no doubt refers to the Holy Roman Empire. Seeing her chance, Yde offers her services and travels with the German army for a month. If the army was indeed traveling to the actual city of Rome, they would have been very close to their destination when they came upon a Spanish army. Yde, who appears to be loyal to King Oton and wishes to defend his honor, takes up arms, undeterred by the fact that she had probably never held a sword before, being a princess and lady of the court. In fact, the narrator tells us that she knew little of weapons and fighting:

Ains mais sor home a nul jour ne hurta;

Petit sot d'armes.

She had never before this day struck a man,

And she knew little of armed combat. (439-440)

The armies clash, and the Germans lose. Yde survives and flees the scene, but not before killing every Spanish soldier she comes across with the strength of an untrained teenager. One might suppose for the sake of verisimilitude that she could have received some form of training on the road during the month in which she travelled with the Germans, but if anything is more astonishing and marvelous than Yde's biological transformation at the end of the poem, it is her psychological and physical transformation after she leaves Aragon, which allows her to get on a horse, take up arms, and kill several men better trained than she is on her first try.

Having escaped the fray, Yde finds herself on her own again, but much closer to her destination.

#### *Yde and the thieves*

Yde continues on her way with nothing to eat and no one for company, until she comes upon a band of thirty thieves. Desperate for something to eat, she asks if she can join them. The thieves immediately start planning how they can get her horse, but the young woman has nothing to lose and surrenders to them. After she has eaten her fill, the thieves start arguing among each other about what to do with the young squire who claims to be called Ydé of Pont Elye. Some propose he be killed, but one of the thieves, probably the leader, says it would be a shame to waste such a fine young man when they can force him to join their company. "Pour vous sera plus fors la compaignie" (l. 526). We must imagine that Yde looks strong and tough by now if the thieves think she would be a good addition to their number.

Outraged, Yde refuses to join the thieves, upon which she proposes a duel. If she wins, they must return her horse and sword, but if she loses, they will kill her and take everything down to the very shirt on her back. This time she tests her strength against another man's head-on and manages to overpower him with nothing but her bare hands, throwing him down onto a rock and knocking him out. Her feats of strength only get more and more astonishing.

After winning the duel, Yde gets on her horse and prepares to leave, but not before shouting some taunts at the thieves. Though she has won every battle, she remains doubtful of her abilities, though she appears undaunted. The narrator gives us a window into Yde's mind when he reports her thoughts:

“Bien doi avoir proueece et hardement

Quant je sui fille au rice roi Florent.”

“I must have strength and prowess

Since I am noble King Florent's daughter.” (579-580)

We see in this little vignette that Yde has to remind herself to stay strong and brave. She is after all a king's daughter, and must therefore show impeccable conduct, even outside her element. And even though her father the king has proven himself less than noble of late, she is still daughter to a great lord and hero.

Just as Yde is about to leave, one of the thieves grabs her rein and tries to pull her back. Without any hesitation, she raises up her sword and cuts his hand clean off. With that, she leaves unhindered and unfazed.

*Yde in Rome*

Yde finally arrives in Rome and goes straight to meet the king to warn him about the Spanish king's intentions to invade his land. She greets Oton and his barons so well that she immediately earns their respect and admiration. No doubt her schooling came in handy when addressing the court of the Emperor of Rome. When questioned about her background, she once again provides a false lineage, though perhaps not entirely fabricated. Among the names she provides for her parentage is that of Aymeri of Narbonne. We know from different sources that Aymeri marries Hermanjart, daughter of Désiiier of Pavie,<sup>29</sup> which makes him Yde's cousin. We see in this situation two family lines, from two different traditions, overlapping. Moreover, Yde mentions Hardré, who is brother to Ganelon, the famous traitor at Ronceveaux. Her own family has a famous traitor, Gérard, Huon's younger brother and Yde's great-uncle, who betrays his older brother in order to seize his kingdom. She may be drawing an analogy between the two. Nevertheless, with at least one verifiable relative, Yde could very well be related to Oton through Aymeri of Norbonne.

After she has impressed the court with her chivalry and good manners, and proved to Oton that she comes from a reputable family, the emperor decides to keep her in his household to serve his daughter, Olive. Meanwhile, Olive, who sits in on the audience, is completely taken with the young new squire. We see here a father-daughter moment very similar to the one we witness at Florent's court. Just as Yde sat at her father's side (l. 303), so does Olive sit "near Oton affectionately" (l. 630). However, this scene provides the antithesis to the scene in Florent's orchard. While Oton is affectionate toward his daughter and boasts of her beauty and

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<sup>29</sup> André Moisan, *Répertoire des noms propres de personnes et de lieux cités dans les chansons de geste françaises et les oeuvres étrangères dérivées*, vol. 1 (Geneva: Droz, 1986) 124.

good qualities, he maintains a comfortable amount of distance, unlike Florent. In other words, the narrator restores a “normal” father-daughter dynamic.

In this scene, we get to see Yde from Oton and Olive’s point of view.

Li rois de Romme a Ydain resgardé;  
Molt le vit grant et membru et formé.

The king of Rome examined Yde  
And saw that she was big, brawny and well built. (623-624)

It is interesting that the narrator says “molt le vit” rather than say that Yde *was* big and strong. Because of her disguise, a large part of her identity is determined by how others see her. In fact, in order for her to maintain that identity, it is imperative for her to maintain the illusion.

As is to be expected when there is a valiant knight and a beautiful princess in the same hall together, sparks begin to fly, at least on Olive’s side. The difference is that our knight is a woman. When Yde notices the princess’ attentions, she prays to the Virgin Mary not to be incriminated.

Olive l’a volentiers esgardee,  
Et Yde proie a la Virge honoree  
Qu’ele le gart que ne soit acusee,  
U se ce non, ele iert a mort livree.

Olive gladly watched her.  
 Yde prayed to the Holy Virgin  
 To protect her from being accused,  
 Otherwise, she would be brought to death. (689-692)

What Yde fears is the common trope which can be traced back to Biblical tradition with Potiphar's wife, who attempts to seduce Joseph but is rejected by him. The wife is indignant and accuses Joseph of trying to rape her. Potiphar, who had made Joseph head of his household in his absence, imprisons him. There is a successor to Joseph in Marie de France's lay *Lanval*. Guinevere, shunned by the eponymous hero, accuses him of homosexuality to humiliate him. An even more relevant example to our text is in Heldris de Cornuälle's romance, *Silence*, in which the cross-dressing heroine comes to the court of a king and wins the heart of Queen Eufeme. When she refuses the queen's advances, Eufeme accuses Silence of trying to rape her.

Another possibility, however, is that Yde herself is attracted to Olive, but does not want to be exposed. In the Ovidian tale, *Iphis and Ianthe*, Iphis is brought up as a boy and is promised to Ianthe in marriage. She falls in love with Ianthe but laments not being able to fulfill her desire because she is still a woman. Through Isis' intervention, she is eventually transformed into a man much like Yde. Though some critics have denied any direct influence, the tales of Iphis and Yde are similar in many ways. Just as Iphis complains for want of the required endowment, so does Yde fear her lack of male genitalia:

Ne set comment se porra demener;  
 N'a membre nul qu'a li puist abiter.



She did not know what to do,

For she had no member which would allow her to dwell with Olive. (882-883)

*Yde, the champion of Rome*

Yde lives in Rome and performs her duties so well that she makes a name for herself. She is praised for her piety and her kindness to the less fortunate. She does not forget her father Florent, but prays for him and constantly asks God for mercy. The threat of Spain remains, however, and a messenger rides in one day to warn Oton that the king of Spain is at his doorstep threatening to lay waste to Rome. The Spanish king, outraged that Olive was refused him, has decided to take Rome by force. The messenger reproachfully says he wishes Oton had agreed to relinquish the princess rather than see his entire city burn. Oton then asks Yde for her advice on what to do, to which she replies that he need only give her men and that she would drive the Spanish out of Rome herself. Oton summons all his vassals to war, and Yde leads them into battle, where they defeat the Spanish and return to Rome victorious. Though Yde wins the battle without great difficulty, her initial apprehension gives her yet another human dimension. She offers up a prayer before the battle commences:

“Vrais Dix, sekeur ceste lasse caitive

Qui pour honor est com uns hom cangie!

Pour le pecié m'en sui ci afuie,

Et ai mon pere et sa terre laissie.

Or me gardés, douce Virge Marie.”

“Oh, true God, help this poor wretch  
 Who became a man to preserve her honor!  
 Because of a sin, I fled  
 And left my father and his land.  
 Please protect me, sweet Virgin Mary.” (774-778)

Though she is by now regarded as the bravest man in Rome, the narrator does not rob her of her vulnerability.

The king’s barons tell him how Yde had so valiantly won the battle and taken so many prisoners. Olive is more in love with the returning hero than ever, and she tells him so. The corresponding lines in the text present some ambiguity.

La fille au roi l’a si fort enamé  
 Qu’ele li dist – ne li pot plus celer.

The king’s daughter was so enamored of him  
 That she told him, for she could no longer hide it. (825-826)

It is not clear who the referent of “li” is. The closest antecedent would have to be Yde, but we are not told how the latter reacts to hearing this news as we would expect, since this is her worst fear coming true. A less convincing but plausible reading is that Olive makes the confession to Oton rather than Yde. In this case, her confidence in her father may have encouraged him to arrange the marriage between the two. The king is overjoyed and praised for the great knight he has

fighting for him. What better reward for his champion than his daughter's hand and his entire kingdom after he dies? When Yde hears this, she is taken aback, and at first politely refuses Oton's offer. The king is angered that she would refuse his daughter and his land, so for fear of offending further, she accepts on the condition that the princess consent to the arrangement. She gives the other young woman a choice which she was never given herself. Of course, Olive is overjoyed because she had been pining for her knight this whole time, and accepts. With no further recourse, Yde abandons herself to God's mercy.

*Yde's marriage, accusation, and transformation*

The two young women are married, and there is great rejoicing in the kingdom. Come the wedding night, Yde waits until they are alone to tell Olive that she has a headache and excuses herself from performing her husbandly duty. Olive immediately answers that she has no thoughts of wanting to make love, and that she is perfectly content with kissing and embracing for now. She proposes that they postpone consummating the marriage for fifteen days until the wedding guests leave, after which time they will be free to take their pleasure without the pressure or expectations of the court. Caroline Cazanave (using the line numbers corresponding to Brewka's edition) offers the following commentary on this very ambiguous scene:

[...] la fraîche jeune épousée ne veut pas paraître aussi triviale et lubrique qu'une bourgeoise de fabliau. Olive réassure son chevalier inexistant de la courtoisie de l'amour mérité qu'elle lui porte (v.7173-75).<sup>30</sup> Puis, par un phénomène de dénégation appuyée – qui nous laisse à penser que la jeune prude n'est pas plus

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<sup>30</sup> Lines 952-954 in the present edition and translation.

ignorante des choses de la vie qu'Yde ne l'était au v.7104<sup>31</sup> – la compréhensive jeune fille repousse au loin l'idée qu'elle ait pu ne serait-ce qu'envisager un peu de gymnastique, l'expression « *jouer a la pate levee* » [...] <sup>32</sup>

Another possible reading is that Olive feels embarrassed and rejected, so she decides to feign disinterest in such trivial pursuits. Whether the princess' coyness is attributed to genuine demureness or a hurt pride, Yde is saved from having to tell her wife the truth for the moment.

This passage is full of double-entendres which can make it somewhat ambiguous at first glance, but certainly amusing throughout. The word “deportee” is used three times in nine lines. This might be for the rhyme, but the word itself has several possible meanings. In the context of this passage, it clearly means “spared”, “delayed”, or “excused”, as Olive is trying to convince Yde to postpone their wedding night until the people have left. However, “deporter” can also mean “to behave” or “to take one's pleasure”. The latter meaning seems to be at play here, and the author no doubt uses it knowingly, perhaps to tease the reader or listener. This reading is supported by the euphemism “jouer a la pate levee”, which Brewka and Cazanave have said is a unique occurrence. However, the expression appears as a variant in the *Aliscans* sequence of Burgerbibliothek Bern, Ms. 296.<sup>33</sup> The passage is unambiguously funny, though the situation itself is very serious. It appears as though the author wishes to break the tension, or to add to the whole scene a slightly salacious overtone typical of the fabliau.

There is another possible interpretation of the obscure expression. The modern French expression “au pied levé” means to do something unexpectedly, without preparation, or on the

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<sup>31</sup> Line 883 in the present edition and translation.

<sup>32</sup> Cazanave 153.

<sup>33</sup> Gustav Rolin, ed, *Aliscans mit Berücksichtigung von Wolframs von Eschenbach Willehalm kritisch herausgegeben von Gustav Rolin* (Leipzig: Reisland, 1987) 102.

spot. In theatre, it has a specific meaning: “On dit d’un comédien qu’il joue un rôle au pied levé lorsque, prévenu au dernier moment et sans avoir eu le temps de se préparer, il consent, pour ne point faire manquer un spectacle, à remplir le rôle d’un autre artiste qui se trouve dans l’impossibilité de faire son service.”<sup>34</sup> Moreover, according to Frédéric Godefroy’s *Dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue française*, “pied levé” is a kind of game.<sup>35</sup> The verb “jouer” means to play, but can also be a reference to “taking one’s pleasure”. Olive could be saying that they should not consummate their marriage immediately without being fully prepared, but that they should wait until everyone is gone and they can take their pleasure in peace. This explanation seems to fit the context and restore an uninterrupted chivalric discourse to the narrative.

The next morning, the newlyweds go to see the king where he asks his daughter how she likes being married and if the union is to her liking. Olive announces that it is exactly the way she wants it. Everyone is satisfied, and the feasting continues for another eight days, after which the guests return to their homelands. One might be able to tease a homoerotic reading out of this passage, by saying that Olive does not appear to have any interest in a physical relationship with the person she thinks is a man, but is content with a platonic one. Nevertheless, the period of reprieve is over, and Olive now expects her husband to keep his end of the deal. Seeing no way to conceal it anymore, Yde reveals her true sex and tells her the story of how she came to run away from her father’s kingdom. The princess is shocked at what she is hearing, but one suspects it has more to do with her partner’s story than the revelation that she is in fact female, as she is quick to comfort Yde and promise her that she will keep her secret faithfully. Even though the two cannot exist as husband and wife, the bond between them seems to grow stronger, and

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<sup>34</sup> Arthur Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s’y rattachent* (Paris: Librairie de Fermin-Didot et Cie, 1885), 457.

<sup>35</sup> Frédéric Eugène Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol 6 (Paris: F. Vieweg, Libraire-Éditeur, 1884) 148.

though their marriage is less than legitimate in their legal and social context, Olive still feels loyalty and an obligation toward Yde.

“[...] Mais or soiés toute rasseüree,  
 Puis que vous estes pour loiauté gardee.  
 Ensamble o vous prendrai ma destinee.”

“[...] But take comfort,  
 Since you are safe in loyalty.  
 I will face my destiny together with you.” (1000-1002)

Even when she thought her “husband” unable to perform his husbandly duty, she tells her father that she is perfectly content, and agrees to protect Yde though her desires remain unfulfilled, revealing perhaps a different kind of love between the two characters.

This sweet exchange is overheard by a boy who is horrified by what he has heard. His reaction is just as violent, if not more so, than the barons’ in Aragon when they first hear that Florent is planning to marry his own daughter. The boy swears to tell the king in the morning and that her very soul will be severed from her body if he can do anything about it. The king is, of course, equally outraged and even more grieved by the news, not just because his daughter is married to a woman and probably engaging in who-knows-what with her, but because he gave both Rome and his entire kingdom to a woman.

Just to be sure, however, he decides to test Yde before taking any further action, and devises a way to trap his suspect son-in-law. He has a bath prepared and orders her to join him.

One wonders why the powerful king does not simply confront the alleged transgressor and face her head-on. Is it possible that though he now suspects that she was a liar all along, he still has some respect for the fearsome warrior? It seems peculiar that the king with all his authority and the legions he commands would need to resort to such a roundabout way of getting to the bottom of things. On the other hand, Oton's device is also a subtle way of getting around the subject without subjecting the listener to any graphic details, keeping in mind that this poem would have been performed in front of a live audience.

The young woman tries to excuse herself, but the king is adamant. He calls for his council and tells them the whole story. Weeping as if he were the victim in all this (and perhaps he is since by all accounts, he was deceived) he asks for their advice. The punishment for cross-dressing is being burned alive, and Olive is no less guilty than Yde for having kept her secret and agreed to a union which the church cannot sanctify, hence she is to be thrown to the flames along with the transvestite. Though he is asked to pronounce a cruel sentence by his barons, this king exemplifies a good ruler in contrast with Florent, who did not heed his barons' wishes. Oton does not merely ask them for their advice as a courtesy; he plans to carry it out, until God himself interferes by sending an angel from heaven to announce that Yde is now a man. Far from leaving any loose ends, the angel also commands the emperor to let the boy go, for though he now has a son-in-law, the boy never lied. Before departing, the messenger announces Oton's impending death and the birth of an heir, Croissant. Balance is thus restored, and Yde can now marry a woman and inherit an empire.

## Yde/Ydé

The appearance of the name Yde in the text is not always consistent with the character's gender at any given time. Her gender and role are heavily dependent on who is contemplating her or conversing with or about her. The internal logic of the narrative dictates that when a person who does not know her true identity, she is referred to as male, while the narrator, in complicity with the reader, often refers to her as female. The feminine forms of the name are *Yde* (nom.) and *Ydain* (obl.), and the masculine are *Ydes* (nom.) and *Ydé* (obl.) The name sometimes appears with an "I" rather than a "Y". The following is a table of the different forms of Yde's name and the number of times they appear in the text. For more detail on where each form appears in the text, see Appendix B.

*Table 2 Occurrences of the Name "Yde" and Its Variations*

<b>Yde/Idé/Ydee</b> <i>Fem. Nom.</i>	<b>Ydain</b> <i>Fem. Obl.</i>	<b>Ydes/Ides/Ydés</b> <i>Masc. Nom.</i>	<b>Ydé/Idé</b> <i>Masc. Obl.</i>
38	16	9	12

As an example, in line 402: "‘J’ai non Ydés,’ cele respondu a", Yde introduces herself in the masculine to the Germans, but the narrator still refers to her as female ("cele").

It is interesting that even in some battle scenes, the narrator still refers to her as "damoiselle Yde", like in the scene where she is struggling with one of the thieves (laisse XIII) in unarmed combat. The narrator recognizes that it is still a woman performing these feats of strength and prowess, but does not express any surprise. Does this show open-mindedness on the narrator's part about the capabilities of women?



As we have already seen in section 2, the author/scribe often creates ambiguity with the pronouns used to refer to Yde. Sometimes he will go back and forth between the feminine and the masculine, as in the following passage:

“J’ai non Ydés,” cele respondu a.

“Freres,” dist il, “tu menras mon ceval.

Je te retieng; nus maus ne t’en venra.”

Ides errant l’Alemant enclina.

A son ostel l’Alemans l’en mena.

Dix gart Ydain, li rois qui tout crea.

On l’a servie, mais ore servira.

“My name is Ydé,” she answered.

“Brother,” he said, “you will lead my horse.

I will retain you, and you will be under my protection.”

Ydé<sup>36</sup> promptly bowed to the German.

The German took him to his lodgings.

God, the king who created everything, keep Yde!

She was once served, and now he will serve. (402-408)

After Yde introduces herself for the first time as Ydé, the narrator switches to the masculine, as if, now that she has identified herself to the Germans, we are seeing her through their eyes as a

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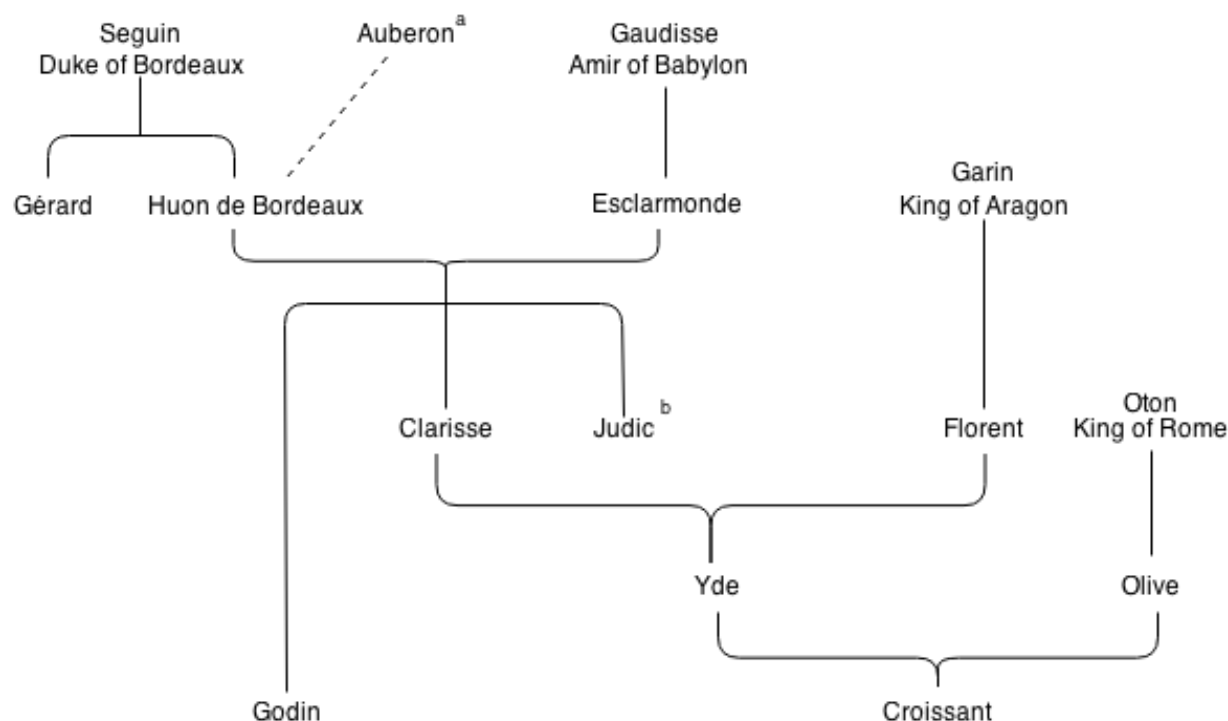
<sup>36</sup> This is the first time the narrator himself refers to Yde using the masculine form of her name.

young squire. But shortly after, he switches back to the feminine Yde in his prayer for God to protect her.

The final line of this passage is interesting for the translation, since the French does not give any clues as to the gender of the pronoun used. The only indication we have is that the narrator uses the feminine Yde in the previous line which should be the referent for the Old French pronoun “l’ ” (“le”/ “la”). The language leaves the line open for interpretation; however, the contrast seems apparent: Yde was served as a woman and a princess back in her father’s kingdom; now, as a man, Ydé must serve in order to survive. I have therefore used the feminine in the first half of the comparison, and the masculine in the second half.

On the other hand, there are passages where there is no ambiguity or going back and forth between genders. For example, during the wedding night, the narrator consistently refers to Yde in the feminine. This may be because the point of view is the same throughout (that of the narrator and/or Yde). Or perhaps the narrator meant to emphasize Yde’s conundrum of being married to a woman. One can imagine the effect this must have had on the mistrel’s audience. Were the listeners amused by the sticky situation, or did they fear for Yde and pity her?

## 2. Huon and the Sequels



<sup>a</sup> Auberon chooses Huon as his heir and leaves him the Kingdom of Féerie.

<sup>b</sup> Judic is named in manuscript *P* as Clarisse's older sister.

Figure 2 Huon's Family Tree

The story of *Huon de Bordeaux* must have been relatively popular when it was first composed as it survives in several manuscripts, but it garnered a lot of attention a bit later on when it was adapted into prose and was widely circulated across Europe. Huon made his way into English, more a romance at this point than an epic, with Lord Berners' sixteenth-century translation.<sup>37</sup> The character who became the most popular, however, was not Huon himself, but

<sup>37</sup>S. L. Lee, ed., *The Boke of Duke Huon de Bordeaux*. Done into English by Sir John Bouchier, Lord Berners, and printed by Wynkyn de Worde about 1534 A.D. 3 Parts. Edited from the unique copy of the first edition. Early English Text Society. Original Series 40, 41, 43 (London: N. Trübner, 1884; New York: Kraus Reprint, 1975, 1981).

Auberon, who made his debut in England and eventually finds his way into stories like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The initial success of *Huon* must have prompted a poet, perhaps *the* poet, to give it a number of sequels telling of Huon's family and progeny, making the beloved *chanson de geste* into a dynastic cycle, though perhaps not in the traditional sense, as we will see. The sequels must have also had some success in their time for someone to pay for such a lavish edition as our manuscript. However, they had considerably less success with the more conservative critics of the nineteenth century.

Foremost on the list of critics who had little patience with the sequels is Léon Gautier, author of *Les épopées françaises*, who saw little need for the story to have gone on as long as it did. After a summary and analysis of the different sequels, he remarks in an exasperated tone, "Vraiment, il était temps de s'arrêter."<sup>38</sup> L. Petit de Juvenille agrees with Gautier and remarks disdainfully:

C'est plus tard qu'on s'est plu à gratifier nos anciens poèmes de préfaces étranges et de compléments inattendus, et nous ne saurions citer un exemple plus frappant d'un procédé aussi singulier que cet *Huon de Bordeaux*, auquel on a, un jour, imposé comme prologue le ridicule *Roman d'Auberon* et qui est, dès le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, accompagné de quatre ou cinq Suites comme *Esclarmonde*, *Clariette*, *Ide et Olive* et *Godin*.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Gautier, *Les épopées* (vol. 1) 532.

<sup>39</sup> L. Petit de Juvenille 103.

These “four or five” sequels may have struck some critics as too scandalous for the sensibilities of the time, as Gautier remarks on the subject of *Yde et Olive*, and particularly Yde’s marriage to Olive and her subsequent transformation: “Le lecteur se demande peut-être comment l’auteur pourra sortir de cette péripétie scabreuse. Rien de plus aisé: Dieu change le sexe d’Ide, et *il* a un fils qui s’appelle Croissant. Voilà jusqu’où était descendue l’idée de Dieu dans le pauvre cerveau de ce versificateur du trentième ordre.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, the main *Huon* sequence remained a favorite for both its literary and commercial value.<sup>41</sup>

More recent scholarship has seen renewed interest in the sequels, however, with editions being attempted as early as the Schäfer edition. The following is a list of some of the notable editions of the texts surrounding *Huon de Bordeaux*:

- Brewka, Barbara Anne. “Esclarmonde, Clarisse et Florent, Yde et Olive I, Croissant, Yde et Olive II, Huon et le Géants, Sequels to Huon de Bordeaux, as Contained in Turin Ms. L.II.14: an Edition.” PhD Diss. Vanderbilt University, 1977.
- Graf, A. *I complementi della Chanson d’Huon de Bordeaux: testi francesi inediti tratti da un codice della Biblioteca nazionale di Torino*. Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1878. (*Le roman d’Auberon*)
- Meunier, Françoise. *La chanson de Godin: chanson de geste inédite*. Louvain: Bibliothèque de l’Université, 1958.
- Raby, Michel J. *La chanson de Croissant en prose du XV<sup>ème</sup> siècle*. New York: Peter Lang, 2001.

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<sup>40</sup> Gautier, *Les épopées* (vol. 3) 745.

<sup>41</sup> Cazanave, p. 22; Gaston Paris adapts the *Huon* story into a book for children: *Aventures merveilleuses de Huon de Bordeaux, pair de France et de la belle Esclarmonde ainsi que du petit roi de Féerie Auberon mises en nouveau langage par Gaston Paris de l’Académie Française* (Paris: Didot, 1898).

- Schäfer, Hermann. *Über die Pariser Hss. 1451 und 22555 der Huon de Bordeaux-Sage; Beziehung der Hs. 1451 zur "Chanson de Croissant", die "Chanson de Huon et Callisse", die "Chanson de Huon, roi de féerie"*. Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1892.
- Schweigel, Max. *Esclarmonde, Clarisse et Florent, Yde et Olive. Drei Fortsetzungen der Chanson von Huon de Bordeaux nach der einzigen Turiner Handschrift zum erstenmal veröffentlicht*. Marburg: Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1889.
- Städtler, Thomas, "Deux fragments d'une chanson de geste perdue: La *Chanson de Croissant*." *Romania* 125 (2007): 213-28. Print.
- Subrenat, J. *Le Roman d'Auberon, prologue de Huon de Bordeaux*. Geneva: Droz, 1973.

It is fortunate that the Schweigel edition was established before the fire of 1904 and provides a complete reading of the text in the manuscript when it was mostly intact. The present edition will rely on the Schweigel edition to fill in the gaps where reading of the manuscript is impossible today.

Like many other chansons de geste and poetic works of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Huon* was adapted into romance in a larger tradition of *mise en prose* in the fifteenth century. All of the different sections are present and developed in the prose version, which was first printed by Michel Lenoir in 1513. The subsequent print editions, now only found in incunables, were probably circulated and read more widely than their verse counterparts. In fact, Michel Raby points out in his edition that until Brewka's dissertation, the *Croissant* story was believed to exist only in prose, having been overlooked by editors of the poem.<sup>42</sup> He reproduces Brewka's edition of the decasyllabic version in the appendix to his book. Renewed interest in the scholarship may

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<sup>42</sup> Michel J. Raby, *La chanson de Croissant en prose du XV<sup>ème</sup> siècle* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001) x-xi.

also be explained by the two new fragments of the story of Croissant, which have been discovered recently.<sup>43</sup> We will discuss the version of *Yde et Olive* in the prose cycle further on.

### Huon de Bordeaux: A Feminine Cycle

As we have already seen, there are at least seven sequels in our manuscripts, not counting *Godin*, but they have traditionally been grouped under three large headings which included the other sub-narratives within them:

- *Esclarmonde*
  - *Couronnement en féerie*
- *Clarisse et Florent*
- *Yde et Olive*
  - ❖ *Croissant*
    - *Yde et Olive II*
    - *Huon et les Géants*

*Croissant* may be considered an exception since it reemerges in modern scholarship for reasons we have seen above. These three main story groups follow the female line of Huon's progeny. Unlike other family chronicles such as *Tristan de Nanteuil* in which female stories are interwoven with the larger male plots, the narrative in our cycle follows the stories of the characters from mother to daughter.

There is an interesting progression in the roles these three women play. Though all three are princesses and fit the mold of typical desirability and attractiveness, their participation in the

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<sup>43</sup> Cazanaue 175.

narrative evolves beyond the traditional female role and becomes more and more pronounced with every generation, going from the typical damsel in distress to the transgender rebel.

Beginning with the matriarch of the family, Esclarmonde is a Saracen princess, exotic and eroticized. One of the tasks set by Charlemagne for Huon's penance is that he must steal a kiss from Gaudisse's daughter. She represents the mysterious and unattainable, and eventually Huon makes her his wife. She is held captive and waits Penelope-like for Huon to come back from his voyages to save her from being forced into an undesirable marriage. Similarly to Odysseus, Huon gets sidetracked and temporarily forgets his beloved who is waiting for him. After a while he remembers and decides to go home. Though she is supposed to be the main character in the section editors have named after her, Esclarmonde remains mostly passive and plays no substantial role beyond being Huon's lady-love and his motivation to fight.

Esclarmonde's daughter, Clarisse, takes a step further than her mother, and further away from being a damsel in distress. While traveling on a boat with the traitor Brohart who wishes to marry her, the princess and the crew are betrayed, and there is a violent struggle. Brohart tries to force himself on her, but Clarisse does not stand idly by while others defend her (and fail). She defends herself (S3603). She is badly beaten by Brohart, but despite her battle wounds manages to escape. Later on in the story, when she is being held prisoner, no one rescues her, since her "knight" Florent is also being held captive, but she breaks down the wall of her cell and escapes. With the help of a watchman, Florent is also freed and the two escape together. Critics have likened *Clarisse et Florent* to *Aucassin et Nicolette*.<sup>44</sup> In both tales, the nobleman's father does not wish him to marry the woman he loves, believing her to be of inferior birth. Both young women are held captive to keep them from their lovers; both are aided by a benevolent

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<sup>44</sup> Omer Jodogne, "Aucassin et Nicolette, Clarisse et Florent." *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen-Âge et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier*, vol. 1(Geneva: Droz, 1970) 453-81.



watchman, and both turn out to be daughters of kings. Like Nicolette, Clarisse is considerably less passive than the traditional lady in a romance (we will discuss the question of genre below). Cazanave notes the fact that she is referred to as Clarisette in the narrative, perhaps an intentional hint at her counterpart.<sup>45</sup>

Thus we arrive at Yde who, on the path laid out by her mother, makes great strides for her gender, though she does not operate within its boundaries. In what seems to be the plight of the women in this family, Yde is threatened with an undesirable marriage. Huon's granddaughter does not sit around and wait to be rescued, but rather takes matters into her own hands and escapes wearing men's clothing. She achieves her own agency and has the same kinds of adventures usually reserved for male heroes, of which her female counterparts are most often deprived.

Yde is not the first cross-dresser in her family, however. Clarisse herself dresses as a man when she leaves the care of her guardian uncle, though we will see in Part II that her circumstances are very different. In fact, it is Yde's resemblance to her mother which encourages incestuous desires in her father. Furthermore, the two are so similar that the narrator uses some of the same descriptors for both. They are both blond, as white as snow in the case of Yde, and a flower in Clarisse's case; both are "plus vermelle que roze de rozier" (*Clarisse et Florent* S3742), and both have "les mains grailletes" (*CF* S3746; *YO* 296). Caroline Cazanave explains how the descriptions of the two women function differently in their respective narratives:

[...] Clarisse et Yde, bien que blondes soeurs jumelles, ne sont pas interchangeables à cause des emplois narratifs qui leur sont réservés. « Bouce

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<sup>45</sup> Cazanave 122.

bien faite plaisans est a baizier./ Ses mameletes font ses dras soushaucier »:<sup>46</sup>  
 cette remarque est valable pour Clarisse, car c'est la sensualité qui prévaut chez  
 cette actrice destinée à déchaîner bien vite les pulsions sexuelles des corsaires et  
 à rencontrer l'amour de Florent : ce pourquoi pour la fille d'Esclarmonde les  
 baisers sont tout de suite évoqués et la poitrine bien formée mise en valeur.<sup>47</sup>

It is very clear from Clarisse's description that she is sexualized in a way that Yde is not. In fact, the most remarkable part of Yde's description, which the author/scribe places at lines 282-300 of our text, is that she has no breasts to speak of. The narrator appears insistent that she "[n]'ot mamelete c'on aperchoive riens" (l. 300), nor does he use the same kind of language to eroticize her features as he (assuming it is the same author) does with Clarisse.

While Yde is beautiful, her beauty can be considered androgynous like that of Narcisse in the medieval retelling of the Ovidian tale.<sup>48</sup> Let us note the similarities between the descriptions of the two heroes:

Puis [nature] fist le nés, et puis la face,

Clere plus que cristaus ne glace.

Les dens fist blances comme nois,

Puis les aorne trois a trois.

.....

Le cuir del front, tenre et sutil,

<sup>46</sup> S3743-45; Clarisse is captured by pirates who argue over who gets to have his way with her first. It is during this scene that the narrator so pertinently provides a description of the heroine.

<sup>47</sup> Cazanave 128.

<sup>48</sup> Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Pyram et Thisbé, Narcisse, Philomena* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), l. 174-187.

Caviaus crespés, recerçelés,  
 Qui plus luisent c'ors esmerés.  
 Quant tot a fait a son creant,  
 Par le vïaire li espant  
 Et par la face qu'il ot tainte,  
 Une color qui pas n'est fainte,  
 Ki ne cange ne ne se muet;

.....

Tes est au soir com au matin,  
 Mesleement blanche et vermeille.<sup>49</sup>

Then Nature made the nose, then the face  
 Clearer than crystal or glass;  
 She made the teeth as white as  
 And then adorned them in threes.

.....

The skin of the brow was soft and delicate,  
 The hair in curly locks  
 Was brighter than precious gold.  
 When she had done everything to her liking,  
 She spread across his face  
 Which was tinted  
 A color which was not faint,

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<sup>49</sup> Baumgartner, *Nascisse* l. 77-80, 94-101, 104-105.

And which did not vary or change;

.....

It was thus from night to day

A mixture of white and vermillion. (My translation)

Like Narcisse, Yde meets the standards of traditional beauty: she too is fair of complexion (like crystal), but sufficiently red to be attractive, has golden hair that curls at the back, and delicate features. But, like Narcisse, she does not possess qualities that are inherently gendered, except perhaps her “hances bassetes” (l. 297). Narcisse’s androgyny emphasizes his youth and justifies his later homo- and auto-erotic feelings, while Yde’s frees her from feminine limitations, or rather, it makes it so that society imposes no limitations on her because no one can tell she is female. Her physical attributes had to be androgynous to a certain extent in order to allow for Olive to be attracted to her.

Following in the footsteps of her mother, she builds upon the successes of her foremothers to escape unfavorable situations, all the while improving her lot as a female. That is, until she is transformed at the end of the poem. Our heroine breaks the matrilineal cycle by becoming a man, first in appearance and then biologically (or so we are told), and slowly leaves the realm of the feminine in the process of acquiring agency. This begs the question of whether the two go hand in hand. She is also the first one in her family to have a son and not a daughter. Not insignificantly, after Yde becomes a man and procreates, Esclarmonde, mother of one, possibly two daughters (see Figure 2), who is made immortal by the fairies, has a son, Godin. It is as if Yde’s physical transformation into a man ends the family’s female line once and for all,

and just to make sure, the grandmother produces a male heir years after her great grandson is born.

### The Question of Genre

The qualification of *chanson de geste* may be too limiting for the cycle of Huon and his descendants. Though there are certainly elements of the epic in the stories it encompasses – the Carolingian context which Kibler sees as typical of the late French epic, wars between the Christians and the pagans, and the Christianization of pagan lands<sup>50</sup> (such as when Florent brings Christianity to Bulgaria and converts Sorbarré) – there are also many elements which do not typically appear in the *chansons de geste* proper, but are more within the realm of romance and courtly literature. This applies to all the episodes of our cycle, including *Yde et Olive*. Kibler has therefore seen the necessity to come up with a new category for these tales he has called the *chansons d'aventures*.

Looking specifically at the example of our text, Yde's journey is fraught with battles, it is true, and though there are no pagans, the Spanish threaten the holy city of Rome, which is just as bad (the presence of Saracens might be implied, since the Muslims had already entered Spain in the eighth century); but it is first and foremost a personal, psychological, and transformative journey of self-discovery where wonder and the marvelous pave the way for our heroine (and her ancestors). After she arrives in Rome and meets Olive, we enter the world of the romance. However, this reverse courtly situation breaks the usual mold twofold. In the first place, the princess is the one who finds herself enamored rather than being the object of desire, as in a large

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<sup>50</sup> William W. Kibler, "La 'chanson d'aventures'." *Essor et fortune de la chanson de geste dans l'Europe et l'Orient latin: Actes du IX<sup>e</sup> congrès international de la Société Rencesvals pour l'étude des épopées romanes*, vol. 2 (Modena: Mucchi Editore, 1982) 509-515.

majority of courtly tales (though one might say that “Princess Yde” is perhaps once again an object of misplaced desire). The princess Olive is proactive and pursues, though shyly at first, *her* beloved. The ability of Olive to express her desire and ask for it attests to her agency. Diane Watt suggests that Oton’s relationship to his daughter is similar to Florent’s relationship to his.<sup>51</sup>

[...] Oton’s feelings for his (apparently motherless) daughter may not be any more innocent than those of Florent. Just as we are told that Florent turned away Yde’s many powerful suitors because he wanted to keep her for his own company, so we learn that Oton had refused to give Olive in marriage to the king of Spain.<sup>52</sup>

However, Olive’s ability to confess her feelings about Yde to either her father or Yde him/herself (it is not clear which at line 826), Oton’s eagerness to marry her to Yde, and the court’s general rejoicing when Olive says that is what she desires most, all point to the contrary. In the second place, Olive subverts traditional gender-normative courtly love by falling in love with a woman, though unbeknownst to her.

Catherine Jones has commented that “Huon de Bordeaux exemplifies *the chanson d’aventures*, a hybrid form of epic production that emerged in the thirteenth century.”<sup>53</sup> The term “hybrid” is one that describes *Yde et Olive* very well, as not only do we see elements from romance and courtly literature, but there are also moments in the text which appear to belong more to the *fabliau* than to an epic *chanson*. We must mention here again the amusing expression “a la pate levee” at line 956. If our first interpretation, and the one which seems most adopted by

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<sup>51</sup> Diane Watt, “Behaving Like a Man? Incest, Lesbian Desire, and Gender Play in Yde et Olive and its Adaptations,” *Comparative Literature* 50.4 (1998): 265-85.

<sup>52</sup> Watt 269.

<sup>53</sup> Jones123.

scholars, is correct (p. 34), this rather crude metaphor, which sounds like it belongs more on the tongue of a bourgeois, but instead comes out of the mouth of a princess. Though the general tone of the poem is far from being sarcastic or humorous, having nothing of a parody in it, moments like this one might nevertheless make the reader smile.

It is *chansons de geste* like *La chanson de Roland* which have inspired nationalistic sentiment in times of war (for instance, during the German siege of France leading into the First World War<sup>54</sup>) and helped shape French national identity. In fact, *La Chanson de Roland* has been described as the French *Iliad*.<sup>55</sup> Following the Homeric model, one might consider tales like *Huon de Bordeaux* and its sequels as odysseys. Though they make up the larger body of national literature, their focus is less on the deeds of a people and its triumphs and traditions, but more on the individual journeys of its protagonists and the way they operate in their social, political and mythical contexts.

The question of realism and historicity is an interesting one in this text, which uses different historical events and characters but places them in an entirely foreign and fantastical context. Charlemagne and Otto, the Holy Roman Emperor, or someone named after him, both appear in the course of this cycle. Historically, the two kings were separated by a little over a century, but due to Huon's longevity, it might be possible within the logic of the narrative to argue that our King Oton actually refers to Otto I. King Arthur, who is a legendary product of much earlier centuries, comes back every year to do battle with Huon, but since he is now immortal, once again logic cannot discredit the author. In the narrative, we see Florent bringing Christianity to Bulgaria, an event, or rather a process, which actually takes place in the ninth

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<sup>54</sup> John F. Benton, "Nostre Franceis n'unt talent de fuïr": The *Song of Roland* and the Enculturation of a Warrior Class," *Olifant* 6.3-4 (1979): 237-258. 237.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Benton 237.

century. However, none of these events align with when the Kingdom of Aragon became a sovereign country. There is a clear fictional juxtaposition of historical people and places.

In addition to these pseudo-historical events, the author/scribe even shows us one of the Germans cursing in what can only be a German *francisé* during a battle at line 424: “Uns Alemans ‘Goutehere!’ jura.” Brewka had previously read this as the German’s name, but Cazanova points out that it is an exclamation used as a curse or swearword by the German.<sup>56</sup> The utterance could possibly mean “Gott Herr” or “Gott der Herr”, invoking the lord God. The purpose is perhaps to add authenticity to the dramatic scene.

However, nowhere is the text’s attempt at realism more apparent than in Yde’s itinerary. Our heroine first travels from Aragon to Barsillon. There are two possible interpretations of this first part of the journey. Moisan identifies Barsillon as a German city.<sup>57</sup> If this is the case, then the time frame suggested by the poem is plausible. If we take this to be modern-day Barcelona, however, the distance Yde would have traveled is around 300 kilometers. We are told that she travels only by night, hiding in the woods by day. The journey would then take around six days, but the poem tells us that she travels for a month on the way to Rome. This theory seems less plausible considering the fact that Yde could not speak the native language (l. 370-71) and the distance she travels; however, being on her own and without a guide, Yde could conceivably have wandered for a month without any clear direction. The next piece of information is more interesting and easier to make sense of. Yde’s journey with the Germans brings her close to Rome within a month of their departure from Barsillon. Our second theory also holds true, as the distance between Barcelona and Rome is around 1,500 km by land, and would take around a month to travel on foot. On the other hand, choosing a random spot on the map to represent a

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<sup>56</sup> Cazanova 27.

<sup>57</sup> Moisan vol. 2, 1051.



German Barsillon in the territory which would have made up Otto's kingdom, the Holy Roman Empire in the tenth century, it is easy to find a point which would be a month's journey away from both Aragon and Rome. Below are two maps of Yde's possible itineraries.



Figure 3 Yde's Itinerary

The poem also cites laws which were actually in place at the time. For instance, at line 267, the king's councilors tell him that he cannot marry his daughter because the law prohibits marriage within four degrees of consanguinity. Indeed, this is in compliance with the decrees of the 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Latran on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1215. Apparently, during this council, the restriction was *reduced* to the fourth because it was found to be too difficult to enforce otherwise:

“L'empêchement de mariage ne saura désormais excéder le quatrième degré de consanguinité et affinité: au-delà, en effet, on ne peut plus sans inconvénient grave en maintenir de manière générale l'interdiction.”<sup>58</sup> Moreover, we must note that the punishment that is suggested for Yde and Olive's transgression is burning, which, according to Jacqueline de Weever, would have

<sup>58</sup> Raymonde Foreville, *Latran I, II, III et Latran IV* (Paris: Éditions de l'Orante, 1965) 371.

been the penalty for homosexual relations. De Weever notes that “The penalties for ‘the sin of sodomy’ were laid down in the Code of Alfonso the Wise (1252-1284), but were not put into effect until the fourteenth century (Boswell 288-290)”.<sup>59</sup> It is, therefore, possible to say that the text strives for realism, or a Barthesian *effet de réel*,<sup>60</sup> and is anchored in some version of the real world, though it often mixes real places and events of different periods with the fantastic and miraculous.

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<sup>59</sup> Jacqueline de Weever, “The Lady, the Knight, and the Lover: Androgyny and Integration in *La Chanson d’Yde et Olive*,” *Romanic Review* 82.4 (1991): 382, Web, 28 Jan. 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Roland Barthes, “L’Effet de réel,” *Communications* 11 (1968) 84-89. Persée. Web. 22 Jun. 2015.

### 3. The Transformations of *Yde et Olive* and Other Stories Like It

Manuscript *T* contains the earliest known version of the *Yde et Olive* story. It also contains the most complete version in verse. Though Yde and Beatris are mentioned in the fifteenth-century manuscript *R*, it is not until the prose versions of *Huon de Bordeaux* that the story resurfaces in a real way. However, the prose version differs widely from the “original”. In this section we will examine the different adaptations of our tale, and other tales which resemble it in terms of themes and plot.

#### Adaptations of *Yde et Olive*

The first person to begin printing the prose version of the *Huon* stories was Michel Lenoir in 1513. At this time, the stories, which had already been adapted into prose in 1455,<sup>61</sup> began to be widely circulated. The early editions included wood carvings illustrating the text; however, several key elements of the story were changed or amplified. For instance, a governess is introduced, who is the sister of Pierre d’Aragon, ally to Clarisse and Florent. Yde goes to this old woman to ask her for her advice after she learns of her father’s intentions. In turn, the old woman goes to Sorbarré for help, and with the help of these two confidants, Yde escapes from her father’s kingdom. Unlike the poetic version, Yde does not act alone, nor does she seem as independent and self-made as she is in the original.

With greater latitude for detail and psychological development, the prose offers us more insight into the characters’ thoughts and emotions. For instance, Yde has ladies in waiting who are sorry for her: “ses pucelles, qui moult tristes, & desconfortees furent, quant la nouvelle en

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<sup>61</sup> Cazanave 159.

oyrent”,<sup>62</sup> or “her maids who were much aggrieved and disconcerted when they heard the news” (my translation). Moreover, Florent does not get angry when she tells him that what he is proposing is a sin; rather he grabs her hand when she tries to get up and tells her that she should not refuse him because he is dying of love for her: “ma fille ne faictes dange ne refus de ma volonté faire, car mourir me feriez pour la grande amour que i’ay mise à vous.”<sup>63</sup> This exchange bordering on manipulation is more complex than the one found in the poetic version.

The subsequent prose versions, which continue to be produced until the eighteenth century, offer a very different, and often more conservative reading of *Yde et Olive*. As Cazanave points out, these late versions do away with themes central to the plot, such as Yde’s transsexuality. Instead, she is burned at the stake, and Olive marries a man by the name Yde who replace the hapless heroine.<sup>64</sup>

The idea of the cross-dressing heroine who becomes a knight must have had some fascination for the medieval imagination, as the story of Yde, or one very similar to it, appears in dramatic form in *Le miracle de la fille d’un roy*.<sup>65</sup> Though it ends very differently from the *chanson de geste*, the play begins in much the same way as our poem. The young Ysabelle’s father wants to marry her, so she and her maid, both dressed in men’s clothing, run away, and have adventures similar to Yde’s. Ysabelle herself married to the emperor’s daughter. The king is informed that his son-in-law is actually a woman, and plans to trap her and reveal her true sex in front of everyone. Ysabelle prays for God’s help, and this is where the two stories diverge dramatically. God, a character in the play, sends Saint Michael to her in the form of a white stag.

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<sup>62</sup> *Les prouesses et faicts du trespreux noble et vaillant Huon de Bordeaux, pair de France et duc de Guyenne* (Lyon: Benoit Gigaud, 1587) 321.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid* 320.

<sup>64</sup> Cazanave 160.

<sup>65</sup> Gaston Paris and Ulysse Robert, eds, “Le miracle de la fille d’un roy,” *Les miracles de Nostre Dames par personnages*, vol. 7 (Paris: Firmin Didot et Cie, 1883).

The saint comforts the young woman and tells her that when she is made to take off her clothes, everyone will see that she is a man. Everyone is fooled by the illusion, but it is revealed later on that Ysabelle was a woman all along. The plot's resolution has her marry the emperor while the emperor's daughter marries Ysabelle's father.

Certain key differences are to be noted. First, like in the prose version, Ysabelle does not act on her own; the escape is orchestrated by Anne, Ysabelle's maid, who takes part in the deceit. Throughout the story, Ysabelle is instructed on what to do. But any agency our protagonist gains up until the marriage is stripped away along with her male clothing. Her gender and the status quo are restored, and immediately, just to seal the deal, she is married off to the emperor. Religion plays a far more active role in this play, not only because God plays an active role, but also because, instead of the tattle-tale boy, the two young women are overheard and exposed by a priest. Religion interferes and restores divine order, gender-appropriate clothing, and heterosexual unions. The twenty-ninth play, which predates *Fille d'un roy* by a few years, titled *Le miracle de la fille du roi de Hongrie*, has been thought to be the basis for the later play. Literary critic Alexandre Micha even accuses the former of having plagiarized the latter.<sup>66</sup>

The fourteenth-century *Tristan de Nanteuil* is a *chanson de geste* cycle much like *Huon de Bordeaux* inasmuch as it follows the members of a large family and chronicles their stories. The *chanson* contains a sub-plot which will resonate with readers of *Yde et Olive*. In this *chanson*, Tristan is separated from his wife Blanchandine who is dressed as a man. Believing Tristan to be dead, she marries a woman and is transformed into a man. This tale is one of the few that retain the theme of transformation. Some critics have argued that there is a direct influence of *Yde et Olive* on *Tristan de Nanteuil*, and that the author of the latter was at least familiar with the

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<sup>66</sup> Alexandre Micha, "La femme injustement accusée dans Les miracles de Notre-Dame par personnages," *De la chanson de geste au roman: Etudes de littérature médiévale offertes par ses amis, élèves, et collègues* (Geneva: Droz, 1976) 90.

former.<sup>67</sup> The cross-dressing female knight is not an uncommon motif in the French Middle Ages, but the physical transformation from one sex to another is comparatively rare. A case can therefore be made for interferences between texts within the few short centuries we have examined.

### Analogues to *Yde et Olive*

*Fille d'un roy* appears to be the product of the convergence of two traditions: the tradition to which *Yde et Olive* belongs, and the tradition to which two other heroines belong. They are Grisandole and Silence. The former appears in the twelfth-thirteenth century in *Le Livre du Graal*.<sup>68</sup> The latter is the protagonist of the thirteenth-century romance titled *Le roman de Silence*. While some of the circumstances that lead to their shared fate differ, the two stories are strikingly similar. In both, the heroine is dressed as a knight, enters the service of a king, and captures Merlin, only to be unmasked by him. The king executes his unfaithful wife and marries the heroine who is restored to her original gender. *Fille d'un roy* combines elements from these two strands of stories about cross-dressing female knights.

Though the theme of cross-dressing is central to our text, it is not the only big issue that threatens to disrupt the social and political structure in the narrative. Incest is the real trigger for the action, and one of the best known examples of incest is *La Manekine*. This tale begins very much like *Yde et Olive* with the “lecherous father” motif, designated at T411.1 in the Motif-

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<sup>67</sup> Cazanave 171.

<sup>68</sup> “Histoire de Grisandole,” *Le Livre du Graal*, vol. 1, ed. Daniel Poirion (Paris: Gallimard, 2001) 1227-53.

index.<sup>69</sup> This bloody precursor to Charles Perrault's *Peau d'Ane* tells of a young woman, Joie, whose mother dies, and whose father falls in love with her. To thwart her father's efforts to marry her, she cuts off her own hand, thereby making herself less attractive to him. A Freudian reading might suggest that Joie's hand is a phallic symbol, and that her disfigurement is a metaphor for castration. Robert Clark explains that "the persecuted, mutilated daughter becomes the phallic woman of male-castration fantasies. Indeed, with the severing of her hand, she also represents the phallus since her hand's fate and her own are parallel."<sup>70</sup> This act of violence interrupts her father's lust and enforces her will over his. In a similar way, Yde's theft of the horse symbolizes her rendering Florent helpless and incapable of fulfilling his desires. The hand and the horse, both symbols of masculinity and the masculine libido, are removed by the young women who are thenceforth free of male control over their sexuality, at least for the moment, in the case of Yde. *La fille du roi de Hongrie* is thought to be an adaptation of *La Manekine*.

A possible source for *Yde et Olive*, which some critics have attempted to disprove, but which others have accepted as the most probably source, is the tale of *Iphis and Ianthe* from the ninth book of the *Metamorphoses*. The Ovidian story has clear parallels with ours though the premises are very different. In fact they prove too dissimilar for Cazanave: "une trop grande difference de tonalité sépare ces deux narrations."<sup>71</sup> The story opens onto a very different scene. Instead of a king mourning his wife, we see a very poor couple who are hoping for a male heir. The husband, Ligdus, announces to his wife Telethusa that if their offspring turns out female, he will kill it, for they cannot afford to raise a female child. The wife has a vision in which Isis

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<sup>69</sup> Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature : A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Medieval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*, revised and enlarged (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958) Web. 8 June 2015.

<sup>70</sup> Robert L. A. Clark, "A Heroine's Sexual Itinerary: Incest, Transvestism, and Same-Sex Marriage in *Yde et Olive*" *Gender Transgressions: Crossing the Normative Barrier in Old French Literature*. Ed. Karen J. Taylor (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998) 92-93.

<sup>71</sup> Cazanave 134.

announces to her that she will give birth to a daughter, but that she need not fear; she instructs Telethusa to hide the child's real sex and bring her up as a boy. The child, Iphis, is born. She grows up as a young man, and is eventually betrothed to Ianthe. The cross-dressing heroine falls in love with her intended but laments not being a real man. Meanwhile, Telethusa fears for her daughter's life and prays to Isis for help. The goddess interferes at the last minute before all is lost to transform Iphis into a man.

Though the Ovidian tale and the thirteenth-century poem diverge greatly, they share enough of the kernel to be read in parallel with each other. The situations in which the two cross-dressers find themselves are identical: they are both threatened with death because they are transvestites and/or because they are married or are about to be married to women. The transformation is the only way out for either of them. In Iphis' case, it seems to be what she desires so that she can be with Ianthe, as she firmly believes that two creatures of the female sex cannot cohabitate. She laments the fact that she is born female and considers herself cursed by the gods. She wishes that either she or Ianthe could be transformed into a man.<sup>72</sup> Yde, on the other hand, never expresses a real desire to become a man; she merely recognizes the peril she would be in should anyone discover her secret. The motif of sexual transformation is rare enough that it might suggest intertextuality, but the question of textual influence remains unresolved.

### Cross-Dressing Heroines in Different Traditions

There are examples of female cross-dressing across multiple traditions in medieval French literature that will help us read our text within a larger context and perhaps better understand it. We have already seen them in the epic, the romance, and on stage. In this section

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<sup>72</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, vol. 2. Trans. Georges Lafaye, 3rd edition (Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1960) 117-118.



we examine the circumstances and resulting consequences of dressing up as a man in the texts we have already discussed, as well as three more genres: the fabliau, the short story (*nouvelle*), and the animal tale.

A male appearance gives our heroines a freedom of movement which they do not normally have and plays an active role in their success as heroes in their respective stories. Thus, Yde would have never gotten very far on her journeys as a woman, but as a man she was able to travel all the way to Rome and make her fortune there. Likewise, Silence stood little chance of changing the laws which prohibited her from inheriting her father's lands as a female heir without her male disguise. We find similar situations in the Nouvelle 26 of the Duke of Bourgogne's *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. In this tale, the female heroine Katherine travels in the guise of a man to rejoin her lover Gérard, only to find out that he has already replaced her with a new lover. Gérard fails to recognize Katherine, so the latter uses her disguise to plan her revenge.

Lack of recognition is key to the comic effect of *Berenger au long Cul*. In this fabliau, a woman wants to expose her cowardly husband who pretends to be a valorous knight. She disguises herself as a knight named Berenger and confronts him. Taking her for a man, the husband agrees to kiss her rear end rather than face her in single battle. Even when her sex is exposed, the husband does not recognize that it is female, but takes it to be an unusually long anus, hence Berenger's byname. The wife succeeds in proving her husband a coward and now has power over him. There is a similar situation in *Le Roman de Renart* involving Isengrin, Patou the bear, the peasant, and his wife in an episode of Branch XXI,<sup>73</sup> sometimes also referred to as "La Monstrance des culs". Isengrin, Patou and the peasant come upon a ham in the forest, and to decide who gets to take it home, they have a contest to see who has the longest anus. The peasant's wife proposes to take his place in the contest. She dresses up in his clothing and goes

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<sup>73</sup> *Le roman de Renart*, trans. Jean Dufournet and Andrée Méline (Paris: Flammarion, 1985) 458.

to meet the other two. When it is her turn to perform the “monstrance”, Isengrin and Patou admit that the peasant has the longest anus they’ve ever seen, and the peasant and his wife win the ham. Once again, there is missed recognition, and the illusion is prolonged.

Though the last two examples we have mentioned are seemingly meant to make the reader laugh, there are bigger issues at play in the text, and cross-dressing for women is often a matter of life or death. For Katherine and Yde, their motivation is to protect themselves on their travels. Rather than have an escort, Katherine convinces her parents to allow her to travel in men’s clothing with no one but an old uncle. Even with minimal protection, she can move freely as a man and minimize the number of potential dangers on the road. Sometimes, it is a matter of pride. It saves Katherine from being humiliated and rejected by Gérard, and it saves “Berenger” from an unhappy marriage. After the husband confronts Berenger, he comes home to find his wife waiting to tell him that she has met the knight with the long anus, and that he has told her everything. She threatens her husband with this information, and the humiliated husband is made powerless to stop her from entertaining her lover right in front of him.

According to Valerie Hotchkiss, “women often put on male clothing to circumvent impediment to social prestige or personal fulfillment,”<sup>74</sup> and further, that “the empowering force of male disguise reveals the limitations in medieval inscriptions of female identity since success – which is often attributed to the ‘manly spirit’ of the heroine – is contingent upon the suppression of femaleness.”<sup>75</sup> Indeed, as soon as they put on male clothing, the limitations placed on them because of their sex seem to disappear, unlike Philomena who, though capable and

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<sup>74</sup> Valerie R. Hotchkiss, *Clothes Make the Man: Female Cross Dressing in Medieval Europe* (New York: Garland, 1996) 83.

<sup>75</sup> Hotchkiss 4.

intelligent, remains limited by her sex, and is raped by her brother-in-law, who then cuts out her tongue, forcibly silencing her and putting her in her place, as we shall see below.<sup>76</sup>

Whatever the heroine's motivations and reasons might be, once the illusion is in place, it must be maintained. Unlike men who cross-dress for comic effect, letting their real sex show underneath the disguise,<sup>77</sup> the female-male disguise must be total. However, we must ask whether it is really the clothes that "make the man" as the title of Hotchkiss' book quips. Yde's physique already gives her an advantage, as the narrator tells us she is flat-chested, but her language and actions must be just right in order to complete the disguise. She demonstrates great strength and skill in combat, and her diction gets more and more "unladylike" and assertive as the story progresses. Though she is never submissive, even talking back to her father and making him angry at lines 313-14, her speech patterns become more aggressive and "manly" when she is dressed in men's clothing:

“Fil a putain ! Mauvais larron pullent!

Vo traïsons ne vous vorra noient.

Vers moi avés pensé vilainement;

Cis a luitiét, je croi qu'il s'en repent.

Je ne vous dout se n'estiés plus de .c.!”

“You sons of whores! Evil, foul-smelling thieves!

Your treachery will gain you nothing.

You plotted wickedly against me,

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<sup>76</sup> Baumgartner, *Philomena* l. 174-187.

<sup>77</sup> Meagan Evans, “You’re Putting Me On: The Old French Fabliaux as Carnival Cross-Dressing,” *New Medieval Literatures* 12 (2010): 76-78.

But I think this man who fought me is regretting it.

I would not be daunted by you if there were over a hundred of you.” 573-77

Cursing and intimidation become as natural to her as fighting. Neither are taught to her or expected from her as a princess, and yet she can perform as the perfect man and knight merely by wearing the clothes.

Indeed, language plays a large part in the deception. The use of pronouns and the descriptors provided by the author reinforce the illusion. As long as people perceive a man, see him, and hear him, for all intents and purposes, she *is* a man. People do not need proof of Yde’s identity until the illusion is broken by the boy’s words, and it is once again with language that her identity is restored. The angel’s words are enough to convince everyone that Yde now possesses the proper male appendages. We are never shown proof of her transformation, only informed of it. The change is not even outwardly apparent. At least with Iphis, we are told that his body shows more strength, his hair becomes shorter, his complexion less fair, etc. The transformation is plain and visible. In Yde’s case, we have nothing but the angel’s word for it. Talking about Silence, Yde and Blanchandine, Gabriela Tanase offers the following insight on language play:

[...] le motif relance la problématique de la perception par rapport à l’identité truquée : comme les signes extérieurs créent une attente, on finit souvent par ne plus distinguer la réalité. Cette ambiguïté entre le signe et le référent est exprimée par un jeu de langage, où le signe tantôt montre ce que le texte ne cache en fait jamais, tantôt voile ce que l’héroïne cherche à dissimuler.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Gabriela Tanase, *Jeux de masques, jeux de ruses dans la littérature française médiévale (XXIIe-XVe siècles)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010) 122-23.

The way Yde's identity is constructed, indeed, gender identity in general in the texts we have discussed, relies almost exclusively on other people's perceptions. Even when "Berenger's" husband is shown the truth and beholds his wife's genitals (which he has presumably seen before) with his own eyes, his conscious mind does not recognize it. In the same way, a real physical transformation was not necessary for Yde, as no one requires actual proof.

### The Three Transgressions of Yde

Our text is largely organized around the theme of transgression and can be divided into three parts corresponding to three main transgressions which drive the plot: incest, cross-dressing, and same-sex marriage. They are all of a sexual and social nature, and they are all considered to be sins by the church. We might turn our attention to some of the vocabulary used in the text, starting with the word "cors", or "body", which appears 23 times in the poem. When preceded by a possessive pronoun, it usually means "the person himself or herself"; however, the frequency with which the word appears regardless of context is perhaps not accidental, but it is certainly noticeable. The focal point of the poem being the body, and particularly Yde's body, it is not surprising that the physical has found its way into the language and the discourse of the narrative.

Though Yde is not to blame for the first transgression and plays no active part in it, she is the trigger for it. The incestuous desire that Florent has for his daughter is potentially disruptive of the social structure in the world of the text. This relationship is unacceptable for obvious religious reasons, but though the king's people are horrified in the Ms. *T* version of the *Yde et Olive* story, they react very differently in *Le miracle de la fille d'un roy*. In the dramatic piece, it is in fact the king's courtiers who give him the idea to marry his daughter. This could be

symptomatic and critical of a much deeper problem arising from the corruption of the social and political institutions in the world of the play. In our version, however, Florent's incestuous desires are acceptable to no one, and everyone warns the king that his soul will be damned if he goes through with his plan. Watt points out another interesting aspect of Florent's transgressive scheme:

Florent's decision to marry his own daughter against her will also offends against another aspect of the church teaching: from mid-twelfth century on, the canonists insisted that the consent of each of the partners, and not simply that of the families, was crucial if the contract was to be binding.<sup>79</sup>

Florent's intentions appear, then, to be illegitimate on every level, since Yde does not approve of the engagement.

The second transgression is a result of the first, perhaps not as severe, but still unnatural and punishable by law. Still, Thomas Aquinas, a contemporary or near-contemporary of the *Huon* author, adds a stipulation in the *Summa Theologica*, Question 169, stating that "[n]evertheless this may be done sometimes without sin on account of some necessity, either in order to hide oneself from enemies, or through lack of other clothes, or for some similar motive."<sup>80</sup> It would appear, therefore, that Yde is in the clear. However, this "transgression" goes far deeper than her physical appearance. The male clothes bring with them a new identity as we have already seen, and her actions while in men's clothing may be seen themselves as a transgression. Ydé is a warrior and readily takes down his enemies, as a good knight should.

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<sup>79</sup> Watt 268.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, vol. 4, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1921) 311.

However, Yde the lady has no “business” killing men and inheriting kingdoms. The crossing of gender boundaries and disruption of the social order are perhaps where the transgression truly lies.

Interestingly, the narrator does not express any surprise at Yde’s seemingly impossible feats of strength, nor does he seem overly concerned with the fact that these deeds of valor are being carried out by a person who is biologically female. As in the late medieval poem *Le ditié de Jehanne d’Arc* in which Christine de Pisan champions her contemporary historical female knight, the boundaries of gender are stretched beyond their usual limits, and both narrators portray their heroines as valiant, strong, and courageous in their own right, without referring to them as the male personas they adopt, but as the female warriors they are underneath their hauberks. This is not always the case in French literature of the period. Women are sometimes praised for their male-like qualities, but reminded of their limitations because they are still, at the end of the day, female. Such is the case for Philomena, the Ovidian heroine from the French retelling of the same name, who is described as having both typically female and male skills. She can equal both Apollonius and Tristan in entertainment and music, knows how to train falcons, and *could have* spent her time hunting if she wished. Clearly, though she does not take part in the more masculine activities, she is capable of it. Such a woman is simply a “failed man” and is soon put in her place.

In *Le Roman de Silence*, there is a debate between the personifications of Nature and Nurture in which the former argues against Silence’s cross-dressing, blaming her parents for going against her (Nature) and raising their daughter as a boy, while Nurture argues that education and upbringing have clearly taken precedence since Silence shows as much prowess and valor as her male counterparts. The narrator, however, appears to side more with Nature, and

will often interject to add his voice to hers. “Mais li malvais, quant il cho oent/ Que on les prise, dont s’orguellent/ Et grant folie en auls accuellent” (2410-12).<sup>81</sup> The *Yde et Olive* narrator does not, however, put forward any kind of moral judgment; on the contrary, he seems to be on Yde’s side throughout, invoking God’s protection and fearing for her life when the boy outs her.

Finally, having escaped one kind of “unnatural” marriage, Yde finds herself in another one according to the conventions of the time. As if coming back full circle, she is again charged with mortal sin. One does not know which is worse, incest or homosexual relations. Diane Watt argues that “despite its socially disruptive potential, female homoerotic desire is treated more sympathetically than the father-daughter incest with which it is paralleled and to which it is connected conceptually.”<sup>82</sup> Judith Bennett argues that female homosexual relationships were relatively untroubling, adding that “most theologians [...] either overlooked or trivialized same-sex relations between women” because no offspring could ever result from such a union. Moreover, lesbian relationships would have been less grievous than male homosexual relationships because “in the ‘spermatic economy’ of medieval understandings of sex, little harm was done in same-sex relations between women—since no sperm were spilled.”<sup>83</sup>

However, it should be pointed out that while Florent is warned of the harm that his sin would have on his immortal soul, Yde and Olive are threatened with being burned alive for theirs. We wonder, then, whether it is truly the nature of the gravity of the sin itself or the gender of the sinners which prompts the punishment. Florent, being a king and man, has little to fear for the decisions he makes. On the other hand, Yde and Olive, though high-born ladies, lose their own

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<sup>81</sup> Heldris de Cornuälle, *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999) 112-113. English translation: “But the wicked, when they hear/ that they are being praised,/ become so full of vanity and folly...”

<sup>82</sup> Watt 266.

<sup>83</sup> Judith M. Bennett, “‘Lesbian-Like’ and the Social History of Lesbianisms,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9.1-2 (2000): 5-6.



agency as soon as Yde is female again. Rather than being brought back up because her identity as a princess is restored, she is brought down by her gender. And she takes Olive with her, for once she became her “husband”, she took the place of the patriarch who could exercise direct control over Olive. When Yde was a man, she not only acquired her own agency, but she acquired it for Olive too, giving her a choice and a voice in front of her father and the court.

### Conclusion

These are some of the issues the reader might keep in mind while reading the story of *Yde et Olive*. Some of the hot topics we are hearing and reading about today are women’s rights, LGBT rights, transgender culture, gender and sexuality, and alternate history. In that sense, *Yde et Olive* can be considered a very modern story, not only because of the themes present in the text, but also because their presentation is devoid of any moral or value judgment. A little-known and obscure text like ours can challenge the way medieval literature has traditionally been viewed as a whole, because of the more widely read and studied titles in the canon, which often portray more conventional gender dynamics and sexual tropes. This text will perhaps offer a new perspective, and through whatever lens one decides to read it, the story will have some element of appeal, or in the very least, interest for the modern reader.

## PART III: EDITION

I

En Arragonne en vint Florens joians.

Li prex Garins ot molt le cuer riant

De chou c'ot pais et qu'il ravoit Florent.

4 Cascuns en fu bax et liés et joians;

Molt en mercient le Pere tout poissant

Du grant avoir qu'il ont de remanant.

Au palais vont belement cevauchant.

8 Encontre va Clarisse tout riant,

Et de pucelles i avoit plus de .c.

Qui ont les cuers baus et liés et joians.

Florens l'embrace qui ot le cors poissant,

12 Et le baisa doucement en riant.

Ensamble vont au mostier simplement.

Florens i offre .i. paille molt tres gent

Et .i. marc d'or, puis offrent autre gent.

16 Après en vont orer molt bonement.

Quant canté ot li bon prestres Climens

Si vont mengier, n'i font delaiement.

Molt ont de mes du tout a lor talent.

20 Après mengier se jüent li auquant, [B6241; S6203]  
 A escremir aprendent li enfant,  
 Et li plusour vont as tables juant.  
 Cil jongleor les vont molt deduisant.\*

## II

24 En Arragonne estoit la gent molt lié  
 De chou qu'il sont tout partout apaisié.  
 Li rois Garins est molt afoibliés,  
 Son bel visage appali et froissiét.

28 Em poi de terme l'ot molt amenuisiét.  
 Ne li tient mais de deduit commencer  
 De cacerie ne de vol d'esprevier.  
 Entour lui sont li baron arrengiét;

32 Mander li font les maistres pour aidier.  
 Cascuns d'aus dist confors n'i a mestier,  
 Et l'aigre mors le commence a coitier  
 Qui ne le veut jamais entrelaissier. 389<sup>v</sup>b

36 Ses lais a fait, ne s'i volt atargier;  
 Quanqu'il avoit a tout pour Diu laissiét.  
 Dix ait de s'ame et merci et pitié.  
 Ses .ii. mains joint, si regarde le ciel.\*

40 Diu reclama, le Pere droiturier,

“Secourés moi! Trop sui a grant meschief.

[B6262; S6224]

Partir me voel du mont a vo congiét,

Mais d'une coze ai jou le cuer molt lié:

44 Que mi baron sont partout apaisiét.”

Son cier enfant a clerement huciét,

“A Diu Florent. Mon roiaume ai laissiét.

Proiiés a Diu qu'il ait de moi pitiét.”

48 Si se couca que n'a .i. mot raisniét.

Mors est li rois, venus est li clergiés;

Enfouï l'ont en cel jour au moustier.

### III

Mors est li rois en icele journee.

52 Florens fu rois a la ciere membree;

En tel mois a corone d'or portee.\*

Clarisse fu roïne coronee.

A grant deduit ont lor vie garde;

56 Li rois Florens engroissa s'espousee.

Li gentis dame a faite sa portee;

Li tans aproce que sera delivree.

Molt par estoit fresce et encoulouree.

60 De sa groiseur est molt espoëntee;

Sainte Marie a sovent reclamee,

“Car sekeur, dame, ceste lasse esgaree  
Tant qu’ele soit de son fruit delivree.”

[B6283; S6245]

64 Li rois a molt la roïne escoutee.

Vint au moustier, s’i a grant gent menee.

Pour celi prie qu’il avoit tant amee,

Mais chou ne vaut, poi ara de duree;

68 Lor grans amours iert par tans dessevree,

Qu’ele en morut, ce fu griés destinee.

Une fille ot, au moustier fu portee.

Yde ot a non quant en fons fut levee.

72 Au roi Florent ont sa fille moustree;\*

Quant il le voit grant joie en a menee.

De la roïne a tantost demandee.

On voit bien l’uevre ne puet estre celee,

76 Pour chou li ont la verité contee.

Quant li rois l’a oïe et escoutee,

Il ciet pasmés, tel dolour a menee.

Au relever a ses paumes hurtees.

80 Courant s’en vient pour veoir s’espousee.

390<sup>r</sup>a

Molt de sa gent sont après lui alee.

Vient u palais, si l’a morte trouvee,

Celi u monde qu’il avoit mix amee.

84 Pour Clarisse a sa vois en haut levee,

“Suer, douce amie, mar fustes onques nee.\*

[B6306; S6268]

Pour vous ai jou tante riens oubliee,

Et a repos estoit ma chars entree.

88 Or m'est pour vous ma grans dolors doublee.

Bien m'est avis que vous m'estes emblee.”

L'iaue des iex li est aval coulee;

Pleure et souspire, molt a ciere matee,

92 Et sa poitrine en est toute arrouzee,

Dont se repret a faire l'enversee.

Sorbarrés l'a levé sans arrestee,

Et dist, “Bon rois, pour la vertu nommee,

96 Vous volés vous ocire par créee?”

“Dix,” dist Florens, “ma dolors est doublee.

Mors desloiaus, trop par fustes ozee

Quant vous m'avés tolue m'espouzee.”

100 Sa gens estoit entour lui esgaree;

La roïne ont doucement regrettee

Dusc'au demain que l'aube aparut clere.

IV

Grans fu li dix c'on mena pour Clarisse.

104 Pleurent et crient et mainnent grant martire;

Dusc'au moustier ne s'arrestèrent mie.

Avoec aus ont grande cevalerie.

[B6327; S6289]

Toute gent vont plourant pour la roïne.

108 Après la messe, lués qu'ele fu fenie,

En .i. sarcu ont encloze Clarisse,

Ens u cancel ont la bele enfouïe.

Tout entour sont assamblé la clergie.

112 Li rois retourne en sa grant sale antie

Dont rest li dels doublés de la roïne.\*

“Que devenirai,” fait il, “pour vous, amie?”

Sorbarrés fait lués apporter sa fille.

116 Quant li le voit, a haute vois s'escrie,

“Amie douce, or es tu orphenine!”

Si home ont dit, “Vous faites vilonnie.

Pour duel mener ne le rarés vous mie.

120 Laissiés le duel si ferés courtoisie.

De li avés une molt bele fille;

Si bele n'a dusc'a la mer de Grisse.

Pour tel restor soit la noize laissie.”

124 Li rois respont, “Seignour, et jou l'otrie.

Jou m'en tenrai puis ques cascuns m'em prie.”

390<sup>b</sup>

Li rois s'en tient mais c'est a grant hascie.

Pour son enfant fait querre .ii. norices

128 Qui nuit et jour durement l'ont servie.

Dusc'a .vii. ans li ont mené tel vie.

[B6350; S6312]

Ains puis le roi Florent ne virent rire,

Et nuit et jour pour sa femme souspire;

132 Ydain baisoit la bouce et la poitrine.

A ses .vii. ans fu a la lettre mise.

Ele aprent tant, bien sot son sautier lire,

Et en rommans et en latin escrire.

136 Bien ait li cuers qui si bien le doctrine.

A .xiii. ans fu si bele meschine,

Pour sa biauté toute gent s'esjoissent.

Au pere l'ont rouvee duc et prince,

140 Et conte et roi volentiers le presissent.

N'en n'i vient nul que on ne l'escondisse.

Requize l'ont de dela Rommenie.

Li rois respont marier n'en voel mie;

144 Ains l'avera pour lui a compaignie.

Ne voel de li encor eslongier mie.

C'est ses deduis, n'autre amor il ne prise.

Molt souvent l'a accollee et baisie

148 Pour s'espouzee a cui ele fu fille.

.I. jour de mai que l'aloete crie,

Cante la melle et s'esjoist li pie,

.I. diemence quant la messe ot oie,



152 Ist du moustier Florens et sa maisnie [B6373; S6335]

.C. cevaliers ot en sa compaignie.

En .i. vergier de grant ancisserie,

La sont assis sor l'erbe qui verdie.

156 Li rois parole oiant sa baronnie,

“Seignor,” fait il, “se Dix me benie,

Molt ai esté en ceste enfermerie.\*

Il a passé .xiiii. ans, voire .xv.

160 Que j'ai perdue Clarisse la roïne,

La bele dame cui Jhesus beneie.

De bone amor l'amoie sans faintize;

Onques puis jour n'och femme a compaignie.\*

164 Ore est bien drois que a vous tous le die:

Pour femme avoir iert ma joie essaucie.

Une en arai, n'iert hom [qui] m'en desdie.”\*

V

La gent au roi ont grant [joie] menee

168 De chou qu'il a a femme s[e pen]see.\*

“Sire,” font il, “pour la vert[u nome]e,

Dont sera elle et de quele contree?

390<sup>v</sup>a

Si m'aït Dix, molt iert bone eüree

172 Quant d'Arragone iert roïne clamee.”

Et dist Florens, “Par l’ame de mon pere, [B6394; S6356]  
 Maint haut homme ont ma fille demandee.  
 Jou ne sai homme u mix fust mariee.

176 Dedens .i. mois l’averai espouzee;  
 Jou le prendrai pour l’amour de sa mere.”  
 Dist Sorbarrés, “Qu’est ce que tu dis, leres?  
 Doit dont ta fille estre a toi mariee?

180 A ceste loi que Dix nous a donnee,  
 Dedens infer sera t’ame dampnee.”  
 Et dist Florens, “Mar i ara pensee!  
 S’il est nus hom qui le m’ait deslöee,

184 Lués li arai l’ame du cors sevre.”  
 Sa fille mande, et on l’a amenee.  
 Dix comme est fresce et bien encoloree!  
 Tout riant vient devant le roi, son pere,

188 Et li rois l’a entre ses bras combree.  
 Bien l’a .x. fois baisie et accollee,  
 Et celle s’est vers lui avolentee,  
 Mais ne set pas son cuer ne sa pensee.

192 Quant le sara si en iert molt iree.  
 Son cier pere est si fort u cuer entree;  
 Tout le tresperce dessi en la coree.  
 Du sens istra se ne l’a espouzee.

- 196 Dix! Pour coi a li rois tele pensee [B6417; S6379]  
 Dont tante dame iert encor esplouree,  
 Et tante terre et destruite et gaste,  
 Tante jovente en iert deshyretee,
- 200 Tante pucelle orphenine clamee?  
 Li rois ara pour li sa ciere iree.  
 Tant a Ydain baisie et accollee,  
 Passa li jours, s'aproisma le vespree.
- 204 La gent au roi est forment tourmentee  
 Tout pour Ydain que il a enamee.  
 Par nul d'aus tous n'en iert l'uevre contee.  
 Dist l'uns a l'autre, "Ceste coze est provee:
- 208 S'il le tenoit en sa cambre a celee,  
 Ja ne seroit de Florent deportee  
 Qu'il nel eüst tantost despucelee.  
 S'elle savoit de son cuer la pensee,
- 212 Anchois [fui]roit outre la mer Betee\*  
 Que l'atend[ist]. Chou est coze prouvee  
 Car [la puc]elle est tant bien escollee;  
 Du tout s'estoit a Diu servir donnee." 390<sup>v</sup>b

## VI

- 216 Li rois Florens de riens ne s'arresta.

Ains fait mander sa gent, plus ne targa.

[B6438; S6400]

Briés et escriis a pris, ses seela.\*

Les haus barons u Florens se fia

220 Mande partout, et la gaite i ala.

La gaite a dit marier se vaurra.

Cascuns l'entent, grant joie en demena.

Savoir vorront qu'il lor demandera

224 Et l'occoison pour coi semons les a.

En Arragonne tant de gent entré a

Que li marciés et la ville em puepla.

Cascuns barons se vesti et para,

228 Puis vont a court – nus ne s'i arresta.

Li rois Florens grant joie au cuer en a.

Cascuns haus hom molt bel le salua.

Les haus barons cascun accolé a,

232 Et lor a dit conseillier se vorra

De femme avoir, car volenté en a.

Pluisour li dient que trop atendu a,

“Ber, pren moullier dont honors te venra.

236 Si m'aït Dix, ta cours mix en vorra.

Ce fu damages quant vo femme fina,

Car sa pareille ne troverés vous ja.”

Li rois l'entent, tantost le cief crolla.

- 240 Il fait laver, a mengier lor donna; [B6461; S6423]  
 A grant plenté de viandes i a.  
 Puis sont levé quant li mangiers fina.  
 En son vergier son conseil assambla,
- 244 Et Sorbarrés pres de lui s'acosta.  
 Li gaité Guis, qui bonté li fist ja,\*  
 “Florens, bon rois,” dist il, “entendés cha.  
 De marier avés parlé piece a.
- 248 Or esgardés u li cuers vous traïra,  
 Et respondés ensi com vous plaira.  
 Decha la mer si haute femme n'a,  
 S'avoir le voels, que on ne t'amaint cha.”
- 252 Li rois a dist que sa fille prendra;  
 N'autre, ce dist, que li n'espousera.  
 Quant l'ont oï, li uns l'autre bouta,  
 Lievent lors mains, cascuns d'aus se signa.
- 256 “Sire,” font il, “Damedix vous en gart!  
 Onques n'avint, ne jamais n'avenra;  
 Or n'est il hom que, s'il vous escoutast,  
 Ne vous tenist de tel coze a musart.
- 260 Sousviegne vous de Diu qui nous forma, 391<sup>r</sup>a  
 Qui le baptesme et le foi nous donna.  
 Gardons la loi que il nous commanda.

Cis iert honnis qui le trespasera.

[B6484; S6446]

264 Le mariage, quant il le commanda,

Tous crestiens Jhesucris commanda

C'a son parage ne se mariast pas.

Tu ne le pues avoir dusques en quart,

268 U autrement bougrenie sera.”

Florens l'oi, grant mautalent en a.

Dist a sa gent, “De chou ne parlés pas!

Si m'aït Dix, autre que moi n'avra;

272 La damoiselle avoec moi remanra.”

## VII

Li rois Florens les a fais esmaier.

Sa fille mande et fait aparillier.

Alé i sont si noble conseilier,

276 Et Sorbarrés le commence a coitier.

Son cors acesme la pucelle au vis fier

De dras a or qui molt estoient cier.

A l'adestrer i ot maint chevalier;

280 Des cambres ist, s'entre u palais plenier.

Encontre li est li barnés dreciés.

De sa biauté est cascuns formiiés.

Bien le vous doi conter et anoncier:

- 284 Plus estoit blanche que n'est nege en fevrier; [B6505; S6467]  
 Desor le blanc ot coulour qui bien siet,  
 Vermelle estoit comme roze en rozier;  
 Les iex plus vairs que n'a faucons muiers;
- 288 Les caviax blons qui cercelent arrier,  
 N'i vaut fix d'or de biauté .i. denier.  
 Ains nus cristaus tant fust aparilliés,  
 Ne fu plus blans – bien l'oze tesmongnier –
- 292 Com est li frons Ydain a l'aprocier.  
 Le nes traitich, les sourcix enarciés,  
 Bouce vermelle et les dens bien forgiés,  
 Le col plus blanc que n'est ivoires ciers,
- 296 Les mains grailletes, les dois bien adreciés,  
 Hances bassetes, et s'ot vautis les piés,  
 Tant est ses cors de tout biens adreciés.  
 Jovenete est de .xv. ans tous entiers;
- 300 N'ot mamelete c'on aperchoive riens.\*  
 Envers son pere est ses cors adreciés.  
 Li rois l'acole et baisa volentiers.  
 Encoste lui sor .i. paile s'assiet,
- 304 Et ne savoit de coi il veut plaidier.  
 “Ma bele fille,” dist Florens, “or oiés. 391<sup>b</sup>  
 Orphenine estes, s'ai de vous grant pitié.

Puis que perdi vo mere, ne fui liés,

[B6528; S6490]

308 Mais par vo cors iere resleeciés.

Mix ressamblés vostre mere au vis fier

Que riens qui fust onques desous le ciel.

Pour son samblant, ai jou vo cors plus cier.

312 Si vous prendrai a per et a moullier.”

Cele l’entent, si embroncha son cief.\*

“Peres,” fait elle, “as tu le sens cangiét?

Plus chou ne dites, car trop est grans peciés!”

316 Adont se veut la pucelle drecier.

“Fille,” fait il, “de chou ne parlés nient.

Ja me feriés tantost vif erragier!”

Tout si baron s’en sont agenoulliét,

320 Et dient, “Rois aiés de vous pitié.

Tu vex ta fille et ton cors vergongnier!”

Florens a dit, “Leceour, pautonnier!

N’est hom vivans qui m’en puist traire arrier.

324 Que par celui qui en crois fu dreciés,

Jou le prendrai cui qu’en doie anoier!”

## VIII

La fille au roi est forment esmarie.\*

Toute nuit pleure, si s’apelle caitive.



- 328 “Que devenrai? Pour coi fui ainc nasquie? [B6549; S6511]  
 Se li miens peres a o moi compaignie,\*  
 L’ame de moi en iert pour voir traïe!  
 Jou m’en fuirai, chi n’arresterai mie.”
- 332 Es vous le roi o sa grant compaignie  
 Qui en sa cambre a fait mener sa fille;  
 Il a pour que ne li soit ravie.  
 Le bai[n]g fait faire u sa fille iert baignie,
- 336 Si qu’ele estoit si fort espoërie.  
 Atant es vous Désiiier de Pavie.  
 En la ville entre a grant cevalerie.  
 Encontre va Florens et sa maisnie,
- 340 Et la pucelle est fors du baing salie.  
 Dras d’omme vest, de riens ne s’i detrie;  
 En guize d’omme s’est bien aparillie.  
 Vient a l’estable, au destrier est lancie,
- 344 Puis est montee que ne s’atarga mie.  
 Par nului n’est veüe ne coisie.  
 Fors d’Arragonne en va, Dix li aïe.  
 Florens revint en sa cambre, l’a quize;
- 348 Bien s’aperchiut que s’en estoit fuïe.  
 Molt fu dolans, je ne vous en [ment] mie.\*  
 Pour la pucelle amene grant martyre,

Et la commune entour lui brait et crie.

[B6572; S6534]

352 Dient au roi, “Vo destrier n’avés mie.

Dessus s’en va fuiant Yde vo fille.”

## IX

En la cité ot molt grant marison,

Tout pour Ydain a la clere fachon

356 C’on a perdue par itele aucoison.\*

Et Yde en va a coite d’espouron.

Vestus avoit dras d’omme pour paour.

Quant du jour voit aparoir la luour,

360 En bos s’enbusce la bele toute jour;

Par nuit cevauce, que n’i fait nul demour.

Dedens le mois vendi son arragon.\*

N’avoit dont vivre, n’avoit or ne mangon,

364 Or va a pié seule sans compaignon.

Bien est vestue a guize de garchon:

Accaté ot cauces et caperon,

Braies de lin si beles ne vit on;

368 Espee ot chainte, et si porte .i. baston.

Vers Alemaigne acoille son roion.

Tant a esré que vint a Barsillon,

Mais point ne set entendre lor raison.

372 En la cité a pris herbergison. [B6593; S6555]

De ses deniers despent a grant foison.

La sejourna dusques en Rovinson,\*

Tant c'une os vint a la ville a bandon.

376 Dusc'a quinzaine iluec sejourneront;

L'arriere ban iluec atenderont.\*

Tout droit a Romme iront au roi Oton

Qui a .i. roi a pris aatison,

380 Qui tient Castele et Espagne environ.

Cil Alemant encontre lui iront.

Yde la bele en entent la raison,

Mais s'ele puet, il s'en repentiront.

X

384 Yde la bele de riens ne s'atarga;

Du roi Oton durement s'apensa,

Et s'ele puet, par lui conseil ara.

As Alemans belement s'acointa.

388 Ens lors ostex molt souvent se moustra.

Uns Alemans belement l'apella,

“A cui iés tu? Di moi, nel celés ja.”

Dist a Ydain, “Biax frere, or enten cha.”

392 “Sire,” dist ele, “a celui cui plaira.

Service kier plus de .xv. jours a.

[B6614; S6576]

En A[rrag]onne ai servi grant piecha;\*

Or est cis mors qui ici m'amena.

391<sup>v</sup>b

396 Bien sai servir, ne sai qui moi prendra,

Mener sommier u garder .i. ceval,

Et s'il avient qu'en bataille on alast,

Pfour de moi je croi i avera.”

400 Dist l'Alemans, “Molt grans biens t'en venra.

Comment as non? A moi n'en choile ja.”

“J'ai non Ydés,” cele respondu a.

“Freres,” dist il, “tu menras mon ceval.

404 Je te retieng; nus maus ne t'en venra.”

Ides errant l'Alemant enclina.

A son ostel l'Alemans l'en mena.

Dix gart Ydain, li rois qui tout crea!

408 On l'a servie, mais ore servira.

Or le gart Dix qui tout le mont crea!

S'on l'aperchoit, grans dolours en istra.

.III. jours après, si grans ost assambla;

412 Vers Rommenie molt bien s'acemina.

Damoiselle Yde est montee a ceval,

Qui a loi d'omme molt bien s'aparilla.

Tant servi bien que cascuns s'en loa.

- 416 Dusc'a .i. mois li os exploite et va, [B6637; S6599]  
 Tant que la guerre et la noize aprocha.  
 Une forest ont coisie en .i. val\*  
 .XV. grans liues devant aus duré a.
- 420 De robeours plus de .vij.<sup>m</sup> i a;  
 Bien sont armé cascuns sor bon ceval.  
 Les Alemans voient de l'autre part.  
 Pour gaaignier, cascuns d'aus s'apresta.
- 424 Uns Alemans "Goutehere!" jura,\*  
 S'on li court sus, il se desfendera.  
 Et Espaignot vienent le fons d'un val;  
 As Alemans crient, "Estes coi la?"
- 428 Tout estes mort, piés n'en escapera,  
 Se ne mes jus tout chou que d'avoir as."  
 Ide respont pas nel otriera.  
 Devant son maistre a brocié le ceval.
- 432 N'ot point d'escu, mais sa lance empoigna.\*  
 .I. Espaignot ferit qu'ele encontra  
 Que son escu li rompi et quassa,  
 Et de son dos le hauberc li faussa.
- 436 Parmi le cors la lance li bouta,  
 Si l'abati, ains puis n'en releva.  
 Yde la bele sa lance resaca;

Ains mais sor home a nul jour ne hurta;

[B6660; S6622]

440 Petit sot d'armes. Arriere retourna.

392<sup>r</sup>a

Uns Alemans arriere resgarda,\*

Se li a dit, "Bien ait qui t'engenra!"

## XI

Quant la bele Yde ot l'estour commenciét,

444 Cil Alemant sont après desrengiét.

A l'assambler ot tant escut perciét,

Et tant hauberc rompu et desmaillié,

Tant Alemant a terre trebuscié.

448 Yde tenoit le branc amont dreciét.

Cui ele ataint, tost l'a descevauciét;

Malement sont l'un a l'autre acointiét.

Li Espaignot furent tout erragiét;

452 Li Alemant s'i sont bien ensaiét,

Feru de dars et de faussas lanciét.\*

Et nonpourquant furent si atiriét.

Des Alemans n'en est escapés piés,

456 Ne soient tout ocit et detrenciét.

Yde s'en fuit courant par le rocier.

Montee fu sor .i. courant destrier;

N'ot fors le branc, perdu ot son espiel.

- 460 S'ele ot paour, nus n'en doit mervillier, [B6681; S6642]  
 Car la ne set ne voie ne sentier,  
 N'en avoit riens qu'elle peüst mengier.  
 La nuit heberge par dalés .i. ramier
- 464 Dusc'au demain qu'il prist a esclairier.  
 Toute jour a devant li cevauciét,  
 Dusc'a la nuit qu'il prist a anuitier.  
 Li fains a molt son gent cors maistriét.
- 468 Sor destre garde par dalés .i. rocier.  
 Molt prés de li a coisi .i. fouier;  
 Trente larron seoient au mangier.  
 La damoiselle i tourna son destrier.
- 472 Quant li larron le voient aprocier,  
 Li uns a l'autre le prist a conseilier,  
 "Esgart," font il, "vesci .i. escuier.  
 Ja nous laira, cui qu'en poist, son destrier."
- 476 Et la bele Yde commencha a hucier,  
 "Dix soit," dist elle, "avoec vous au mangier.  
 Il m'est avis bien estes [a]aisiét.\*  
 Se il vous plaist o vous me recuelliés,
- 480 Jou paierai mon escot volentiers."  
 Et li larron qui sont outrequidiét  
 Ont respondu, "Bien sommes consilliét.

A il o vous serjant ne cevalier

[B6704; S6666]

484 Qui vous conduist parmi cel bos plenier?"

Dist la pucielle, "Par foit, mes grans peciés,

392<sup>1</sup>b

Il n'a o moi plus de gens, ce saciés."

Uns des larrons s'est a son frainc lanciés,

488 Puis li a dit, "Icis est gaaigniés;

Ferés i tout anchois que vous mengiés.

Que ne vous soit escapés cis loudiers!

Aucuns de nous en seroit engingniés."

492 Dist la pucelle, "Et pour coi vous coitiés?

En moi mourdrir arés poi gaaignié.

Je me rendrai a vous molt volentiers;

Tenés m'espee et si vous apaisiés.

496 J'ai tel famine, prés ne sui erragiés.

Pour l'amour Diu vous demanch a mengier!"\*

Li maistres dist, "Vien avant escuiers.

Si m'aït Dix, tu n'i seras touchiés.

500 Ains vous donrai quanques mestiers vous iert."

Yde respont, ".C. mercis en aiiés."

Au mengier va seoir par desirier.

XII

La damoiselle est au mengier assise.



- 504 Or le gart Dix, li fix Sainte Marie. [B6725; S6687]  
 Ele a mengiét de chou qu'ele desirre,  
 Et li larron, cui le cors Diu maudie,  
 Après mengier ont lors nape cuellie.\*
- 508 Li uns a l'autre a tenciét et estrive  
 Pour l'escuies qui n'a perdu la vie.\*  
 Or l'ociront, que n'atenderont mie.  
 L'uns d'aus a dit, "Ce ne ferons nous mie.
- 512 Li escuiers est plains de courtoisie.  
 Quant avoec nous a pris herbergerie,  
 Emblen venra o nous par compaignie,  
 U se ce non, il perdera la vie."
- 516 A Ydain vont, se li prenent a dire,  
 "Com avés non? Dites le nous biax sire."  
 Cele respont qui paour ot d'ocire,  
 "J'ai a non Ydes, et sui du Pont Elye.
- 520 Aler cuidai tout droit en Rommenie,  
 Mais cil d'Espagne ont mort ma compaignie.  
 Adreciés moi si ferés courtoisie,  
 Et me rendés mon destrier de Persie."
- 524 Li maistres dist, "Ensi n'ira il mie.  
 Lerres serés tous les jours de vo vie;  
 Pour vous sera plus fors la compaignie,

U se ce non, la teste arés trencie.”

[B6748; S6710]

528 Ide respont, “Ce n’est pas courtoisie.

De larrechin ne me mellerai mie!

Ains n’ot larron en toute ma lignie,

392<sup>v</sup>a

Ne de tel ouevre ne me sarai deduire.

532 Mais rendés moi m’espee qui flambie

Et mon destrier; n’a tel dusqu’en Roussie.

Quant monterai, l’uns de vous me desfie.

Se ne me puis desfendre, se m’ocie.

536 Trop me vendriés cier vo herbergerie

Se mon destrier aviés en vo baillie.”

Li maistres dist, “Tu as ciere hardie.

A moi t’estuet luitier par arramie.

540 Se tu m’abas en ceste praërie,

Cuites seras de ceste compaignie.

Et se tu ciés, ne t’en mentirai mie:

N’i aras branc ne destrier de Nubie;

544 Cele robe iert fors de ton dos sacie.”

Dist la pucelle, “Dehait qui nel otrie.”

Dont est tantost du surcot despoullie.

Tout li larron l’esgardent, si en rient.

548 Sor drestous est Yde bien ensaignie.\*

Dist au larron, “Quant l’uevre avés partie,

Faites en la traire vo compaignie.

[B6771; S6733]

S'amenés cha mon destrier de Nubie,

552 Et a l'archon soit m'espee fourbie.

Que j'ai piecha a prodomme oï dire

Que cis est faus qui en larron se fie.”\*

Chil l'ont oï, cascuns d'aus li otrie.

556 Ensi ont fait com la bele devize.

Et ciele vient au larron descuellie;

Parmi les flans ses bras li lace et plie.

En haut le lieve plaine paume et demie,

560 Puis l'a estraint encontre sa poitrine.

Samblant li fait c'a senestre l'encline,

D'autre part l'a tourné, si le sousvine.

### XIII

Damoiselle Yde tint par grant hardement

564 Entre ses bras le fort larron pullent.

A terre l'a jeté si durement,

Sor .i. perron si dolerusement,

Ens en sa bouce n'a il remés nul dent

568 Qui ne li duelle molt dolerusement,

Et que la teste en .ii. moitiés li fent.

Yde n'ot plus del arrester talent;

Vint au destrier, s'i monte isnelement.

[B6792; S6754]

572 L'espee traist, si crie hautement,

“Fil a putain ! Mauvais larron pullent!

Vo traïsons ne vous vorra noient.

Vers moi avés pensé vilainement;

392<sup>v</sup>b

576 Cis a luitiét, je croi qu'il s'en repent.\*

Je ne vous dout se n'estiés plus de .c.!”

Dont dist em bas que nus hom nel entent,

“Bien doi avoir prouece et hardement

580 Quant je sui fille au rice roi Florent.”

Coi qu'ele va pensant si faitement,\*

Uns des larrons par la resne le prent.

Yde le voit, le branc tot nu descent.

584 Le pong li cope a cel commencement,

Et cils s'en fuit, d'angoisses brait forment.

Yde s'en va, qu'el[e] plus n'i atent.\*

Et li cevas l'emporte si forment,

588 Plus tost aloit que quariax ne descent.\*

Or le gart Dix a cui li mons apent!

De grant peril escapent molt de gent.

Tant a alé la bele o le cors gent,

592 Le bos passa, n'i arresta noient.

Vers Romme traist dont ele ot grant talent.

[B6815; S6777]

Dedens la ville est entree erramment;  
 Dusc'au palais ne s'arresta noient.

596 Devant le piét du grant palais descent,  
 Puis est montee u maistre mandement.  
 Le roi salue assés courtoisement,  
 "Cis Damledix qui maint el firmament

600 Il saut le roi que ci voi em present,  
 Et ses barons et quanqu'a lui apent."  
 Rommain sont coi et toute l'autre gent.  
 Envers Ydain cascuns d'aus tous entent.

604 Bon gré li sevent trestout communement  
 De chou qu'ele a parlé si sagement.  
 Li rices rois li redist son talent,  
 "Et Dix saut toi," dist il molt liement.

608 "Dont estes vous amis et de quel gent,  
 De quel país, et qui sont vo parent  
 Que ci venés si esseulés de gent?"  
 "Sire," dist Yde, "vous l'orrés erramment.

612 Escuiers sui, n'ai de terre .i. arpent.  
 En Alemengne ai servi longement.  
 Poi ai conquis, dont tous li cuers me ment.  
 Une assamblee vi l'autre jour de gent

616 Qui vostre mort ont juré voirement.

Au roi d'Espagne en vont celement.

[B6838; S6800]

Bien le moitié ont perdu de lor gent

Que j'ai aidiét a livrer a tourment.

620 Or vieng a vous brochant molt durement.

393<sup>r</sup>a

Recevés moi s'il vous vient a [t]alent.”\*

Li rois l'oï, si resgarda sa gent.

#### XIV

Li rois de Romme a Ydain resgardé;

624 Molt le vit grant et membru et formé.\*

De sa raison l'a forment enamé.

Es vous le fille Oton le couronné.

N'avoit si bele en trestout le regné;

628 Olive ot non, plainne estoit de bonté.

Tout li baron sont contre li levé.

Dalés Oton s'assist par amisté,

S'a l'escuier belement esgardé.

632 Otes escrie, u molt ot de fierté;

Dist a Ydain, “Amis, or m'entendés.

Comment as non et de quel parenté?”

“Sire,” dist ele, “on m'apelle Ydé

636 De Terrascoingne, car la ai jou anté.

Jou sui cousins au rice parenté:

Conte Ainmeris et Namles li barbés.\*

[B6859; S6821]

Pres appartient a l'Escot Guillemer,

640 Mais banis sui pour les parens Hardré.

Puis ai je molt de grans maus endurés.”

Otes a dit, “T'ies de mon parenté!

Je te retieng; en toi cuit grant fierté.

644 Olive, fille, avés vous escouté?

Pour vous retieng cel escuier löé.

Servira vous a vostre volenté.”

“Sire,” dist ele, “.v.<sup>c</sup> mercis et grés.

648 Mais n'en och nul tant me venist a gré.”

Rommain l'otrient par bone volenté.

Molt volentiers ont resgardé Ydé.

Li rois l'apelle et l'a arraisonné,

652 “Amis,” dist il, “or me servés a gré.

J'ai une fille qui molt a de biauté.

Cele tenra ma terre et mon regné.

Or gardés bien comment vous maintenés;

656 Se bien le sers, il t'est bien rencontré.”

“Molt volentiers, sires,” ce dist Ydés.

“J'en ferai tant, sire,” ce dist Ydés,

“Que tous li mons m'en savera bon gré.”

660 “Que ses tu faire?” ce dist li rois Otés.

“Sire,” fait ele, “chou c’ on set commander.

[B6882; S6844]

“Premiers sai bien Jhesuscrist aouer,

Et a prodomme molt grant honor porter;

664 Le povre gent de mon avoir donner,

Et l’orguillous par paroles mater,

393<sup>b</sup>

Et le prodomme envers moi acoster;

Au grant besong, .i. confanon porter,

668 Et se che vient a bataille assambler,\*

Pfour de moi i porriés vous mener;

Bien sai .i. cop emploier et donner.

S’ on m’a mesfait bien m’en sai deporter,

672 Et mon courouch dedens mon cuer celer;

Et si sai bien mon ceval establer,

Et estrillier et a l’iaue mener.

Bien sai a table le mengier aporter.”

676 “Si m’aït Dix,” ce dist li rois Otés,

“S’en toi a tant et valour et bonté

Que je t’oi chi et dire et deviser,

Bien te doit on servir et honorer,

680 En haute court chier tenir et amer.

Forment sui liés quant chaiens iés entrés.

Jamais ne quier que de moi departés.”

Yde l’entent, si l’en a encliné.



XV

[B6905; S6867]

684 Desor est Yde a Oton demouree.\*

Le gentil roi de Romme la loëe

De bien servir est tous jours apensee.

Tant a ouvré et soir et matinee,

688 Que ses services toutes les gens agreee.

Olive l'a volentiers esgardee,

Et Yde proie a la Virge honoree

Qu'ele le gart que ne soit acusee,

692 U se ce non, ele iert a mort livree.

La povre gent a grant honor portee,

En l'ounour Diu mainte aumosne donnee.

Quant loisir a, s'est au moustier alee.

696 Sovent prioit pour roi Floire, son pere,

Pour cui ele est si tainte et mascuree,

Et d'Arragonne est en fuiant tournee.

“Si m'a li rois de sa char engenee.”\*

700 Un mois entier s'est ensi demenee

Par dedens Romme, la fort cité loëe.

Forment estoit grande et fors et formee;

Ens u palais est li bele arrestee.

704 Es vous .i. mes brochant de randonnee.

Devant le roi a sa raison moustree,

“Entendés moi,” dist il, “drois empereres.

[B6927; S6889]

Li rois d’Espaigne a vo terre embr[as]ee.\*

708 En vo país est si avant entree

Que desous Romme est ensamble arrestee.\*

A maint Rommain on[t] la teste copee.

393<sup>v</sup>a

Li rois d’Espaigne en a sa loi [j]uree,\*

712 Anchois qu’il soit la quinzainne [pa]ssee

Avra par force ceste grant tor quarree,

Et vostre fille a force violee,\*

Et vous meïsmes la teste arés copee

716 Pour vostre fille qui li fu refusee.

Il venist mix qu’il l’eüst espousee

Que tant de gent en fust morte et finee.

Rois, va encontre, si desfent ta contree,

720 U se ce non, ta ville iert deshertee.”

Quant l’entendi Otes li empereres,

Ydain manda sans plus de demoree,

Et puis li dist em parole secrete,

724 “E gentis Ydes, et c’as tu em pensee?

Conseilliés moi de ceste meserree.

L’ost ne m’estoit par nul homme mandee

Qui a ma terre exillié et gastee.”

728 “Si m’aït Dix, sire,” ce dist Ydee,

“Jou les irai veoir la teste armee.

[B6950; S6912]

Bailliés moi gens pour faire a aus merlee.”

Otes respont, “Ceste raisons m’agree.”

732 Errament a ses buisines sonnees.

.X. mil Rommain l’oent errant s’armerent,

Vienent au roi, tantost se presenterent.

“Sire,” font il, “que vous plaist et agree?”

736 Tout sommes prest a quanques vous agree.”

“Seignor baron,” dist Otes l’empereres,

“A vous me plaing de cele gent dervee

Qui devant Romme assalent ma contree.

740 Vesci Ydain qui a la teste armee.

Alés o lui, Ybert, la grant valee,

Si gardés bien que n’i ait meserree.

Aidiés li tout au trenchant del espee,\*

744 U se ce non, par l’ame de mon pere,

Au revenir li donrai tel soldee,\*

Dessus l’espaule iert sa teste copee.”

XVI

Ydes s’en va a bele compaignie;

748 De Romme issi la fort cité antie.

Dessi c’au Toivre n’i ot resne sacie,

Et Espaignot mainnent grant tabourie,

[B6971; S6933]

Car la cité cuident avoir assise.

752 Une journee est li os assegie,

Mais autrement iert li ouevre partie.

Yd[es] venoit a bataille rengie.\*

Diu reclama, le fil Sainte Marie.

393<sup>v</sup>b

756 En .i. vert elme ot sa ciere emb[r]oncie,\*

Et ot se targe emprés son pis sacie.

Vers Embronchart est la bele adrecie –

En Mont Caillet tenoit grant compaignie.

760 Niés fu le roi qui molt ot seignorie.

Sa baniere a envers Yde adrecie,

Et la bele est envers lui aprocie.

Fiert Embronchart sor sa targe florie,

764 Ens u plus fort l'a rompue et percie,

Et le hauberc li derront et descire;

Parmi le cors li met sa lance [entire],\*

Du bon destrier l'abat mort et souvine.

768 Caïr le voit, et puis li prent a dire,

“Outré, cuivers! Li cors Diu te maudie!

Mar i venis tel coze as commencie

Dont plus de mil en perderont la vie.

772 Je vous calenc les plains de Rommenie!”

Puis dist em bas la pucelle eschavie,

[B6994; S6956]

“Vrais Dix, sekeur ceste lasse caitive

Qui pour honor est com uns hom cangie.

776 Pour le pecié m'en sui ci afuïe,

Et ai mon pere et sa terre laissie.

Or me gardés, douce Virge Marie.”

A ices mos a l'espee sacie;

780 Pierron de Bus a la teste trencie,

Et plus de .vii. en livre a tel martire.

Tous un a .i. les va pendant et tire;

N'i viut les bons fors des mauvais eslire.

784 Espaignot sont livré a discipline.

En fuies tournent parmi une sapine,

S'ont encontré Gualerant d'Aubespine,

Ensamble o lui de chevaliers .iii. mile.

788 La rest l'estours et noize commencie.

Ilueques ot tante jouste furnie,

Et d'Espaignos tante teste trenchie,

En fuies tournent lors gens est desconfite.

792 Alars du Grong hautement lor escrie,

“Par Saint Fagon, mal est l'uevre partie!

Peciés nous fist faire tele envaïe.

Cha fait cis blons a cele targe entire,

796 A cele crois qui si luist et flambie. [B7017; S6979]

Se tel baron cuidasse en Rommenie,

Entrés n'i fusse en trestoute ma vie.

Par son cors seul la bataille a furnie,

800 Et no baron en vertuour se misent. 394<sup>r</sup>a

Le grant avoir ont cil de Rommenie,

Ces pavillons et ces tres recuellirent.”

Yde fu molt resgardee et coisie,

804 Car des crestiax l'avoit veüe Olive.

Trestous li cors de joie li fourmie,

Et dist em bas c'on nel e[n]tendi mie,\*

“Mes amis iert; ains demain li voel dire.

808 Ains mais ne fui d'omme si entreprise;

S'est bien raisons et drois que je le die.”

A ices mos, revient la baronnie.

Au roi Oton tout le voir li jehirent,

812 Comment il a la bataille partie,

Tout detrenchoit a l'espee fourbie.

N'a tel baron dusqu'en la mer de Grisse.

## XVII

Quant li rois Otes oï la verité,

816 Que si prodomme a u vassal Ydé –

Des Espaignos l'a si bien delivré –

[B7038; S7000]

Grant joie en a li fors rois couronnés.

A Ydé a molt grant honor porté.

820 Dedens .i. an l'a si bien esprouvé,

Que son païs a il tout aqité.

Les uns a mors et les autres navrés,

Et s'en a tant em prison amenés,

824 Qu'il aquita la terre et la regné.

La fille au roi l'a si fort enamé

Qu'ele li dist – ne li pot plus celer.

.I. jour avoit rois Otes assamblé

828 Les pers de Romme, et les postaus mandés.

“Baron,” dist il, “or oiés mon penser.

J'ai une fille qui molt fait a loër.

Ains que je muire le vorrai marier.

832 Si le donrai mon chevalier Ydé;

Romme ait avoec et ma grant roiauté,

Car jou ne sai nul tel baron qu'Idé.”

Romain s'i sont volentiers acordé,

836 Dont l'accolla par molt grant amisté.

Dist li rois Otes “Or m'entendés, Ydé.

Vous m'avés tout mon païs aqité.

Le guerredon vous en voel ci donner:

840 J'ai une fille qui tant a de biauté; [B7061; S7023]

Vous l'averés a moullier et a per,

Et mon roiaume quant jou ere finés.”

“Mercit, bons rois. Pour Diu de maïsté,

844 Jou n'ai u mont vailliant .i. ail pelé.\*

Damages iert se bien n'as esgardé

394<sup>t</sup>b

La u tu aies ton enfant marié.

Povres hom sui; ne me voel marier.

848 Ains doi soldees et querre et demander.”

“Comment?” dist Otes. “Et c'avés empensé?\*

Avés vous dont mon enfant refusé,

Et le païs que vous ai présenté?”

852 “Naie, en non Diu, sire,” ce dist Ydés.

“Ains le prendrai volentiers et de gré,\*

Se il li plaist et il li vient en gré.

Faites errant la pucelle mander.”

856 Et cele i vint, n'i a pas demouré,

Adont l'apelle Otes li couronnés,

“Ma bele fille,” dist li rois, “entendés.

Il vous convient orendroit créanter

860 Que vous ferés toute ma volenté.

Et vous tenrés après moi mon regné.

Se je sui mors, point n'avés d'avoué.



- Tout mi baron ont pour bien esgardé [B7084; S7046]
- 864 Que vous prendrés mon chevalier Ydé;  
Si sera rois de ceste roiauté.”
- Dist la pucele, “Ore ai ma volenté .  
N’ai pas mon tans en cest siecle gasté
- 868 Quant j’arai chou que tant ai desiré.”  
As piés son pere a a genous alé.  
Au redrecier a hautement crié,  
“Peres,” dist ele, “or pensés du haster;
- 872 Tous jours me samble que il s’en doie aller.”  
Quant li baron ont la bele escouté,  
Grant joie en ont tout ensamble mené.  
Puis dist li rois, “Venés avant, Ydé,
- 876 Se fianciés ma fille en loiauté.  
Je le vous doins avoec ma roiauté.  
De vo service m’est hui bien ramenbré,  
De ce c’avés mon país aquité;
- 880 Or vous sera molt bien guerredonné.”  
Yde l’entent, li sans li est müés.  
Ne set comment se porra demener;  
N’a membre nul qu’a li puist abiter.
- 884 Nostre Seignour a sovent reclamé,  
“Glorious Dix qui mains en Trinité,

De ceste lasse cor vous prengne pités

[B7107; S7069]

Cui il convient par force marïer!

888 Hé! Florens, peres, com eüs mal penser

C'a nul baron ne me vausis donner;

Ains me cuidas a moullier espouser.

394<sup>v</sup>a

Mix me laissasse en .i. fu embrase[r].

892 Jou m'en fuï, pour la honte eskiver,

De ton país, par ton pecié mortel.

En maint peril a puis mes cors esté.

Or me cuidai dedens Romme garder,

896 Mais jou voi bien mes cors ert encusés.

La fille au roi a mon cors enamé;

Or ne sai jou comment puisse escaper.

Se jou lor di femme sui [en ve]rté,\*

900 Tantost m'aront ochis et decopé,

U a mon pere diront la verité.

Il me rara molt tost se ci me set,

U il m'estuet fuir outre la mer.

904 Comment qu'il voist, malvais plait ai tourné,

Et nonpourquant jou ai dit fausseté.

Puis que j'ai Romme et l'onour conquesté,

J'espouserai la fille au couronné;

908 Si face Dix de moi sa volenté.”

Dont dist au roi, “Jou ferai a vo gré.”

[B7130; S7092]

Droit au moustier Saint Pierre en sont alé.

Yde pluevi, grant joie ont demené.

912 Chil damoiseil behordent tout armé,

Pucelles ont treskiét et karolé.

.I. mois entier a le feste duré.

Li tans aproce c'on les doit espouzer.

916 De chevaliers i ot molt grant plenté;

D'Idé veoir sont en grant volenté.

Droit au moustier en sont .i. jour alé;

Rommain adestrent Olive o le vis cler.

920 Ydes est devant, grans sospirs a jetés.

Dusc'au moustier n'i ot point arrêté.

Le jour li font la pucelle espouzer.

Olive a prise a moullier et a per;\*

924 Or a sa fille li rois femme donné,

Car il cuidoit que ce fust hom d'Ydé.

Maint siglaton ont le jour endossé,

Maint drap de soie et maint mantel forré.

928 Au grant palais ont le mangier donné.

Li jongleour ont grant joie mené,

Harpes, vieles i oïst on sonner,\*

Dames, pucelles treskier et caroler,

932 Et ces dansiax noblement demener. [B7153; S7115]

Aprés mangier, quant il orent soupé,

En est cascuns ralés a son ostel.

### XVIII

Grans fu la joie ens la sale pavee.\* 394<sup>v</sup>b

936 Tante candaille i avoit alumee,

Toute la ville sambloit estre embrasee.

Acesmé sont a l'us de lor contree.

Quant ont mengié, la grant table ont oste[e],

940 Olive mainnent en la cambre pavee.

Coucie l'ont, et puis l'ont enclinee.

Es vous Ydain qui vient toute esplouree.\*

La cambre a bien veroullié et fermee,

944 Puis vint au lit u estoit s'espousee.

Si l'apella coiemment a celee,

“Ma douce amie et loiaus mariée,

La bone nuis vous soit anuit donnee,

948 Car jou l'arai molt griés si com jou bee;

Jou ai .i. mal dont j'ai ciere tourblee.”

A ices mos fu Olive accollee.

Cele respont qui bien fu avisee,

952 “Biax dous amis, ci sommes a celee;

- S'estes la riens que plus ai desirree. [B7174; S7136]
- Pour la bonté que j'ai en vous trouvee,  
 Ne cuidiés pas que jou aie pensee
- 956 Que jouer voelle a la pate levee.\*  
 Onques de chou ne fui entalentee.  
 Mais vous m'aiés .xv. jours deportee  
 Tant que la gens soit de chi destornee,
- 960 Que jou n'en soie escarnie et gabee.  
 A no deduit arons bien recouvree.  
 Tant sench bonté en vo cors arrestee  
 Que, s'il vous plaist, je serai deportee
- 964 Fors du baisier. Bien voel estre accollee,  
 Mais de l'amour c'on dist qui est privee  
 Vous requier jou que soie deportee."\*  
 Yde respont, "France dame honoree,
- 968 Jou vous otroi tout chou qu'il vous [agree]."\* 395<sup>r</sup>a  
 Dont ont l'un l'autre baisié et [accollee];  
 En cele [nuit n'i ot cri] ne mellee.  
 La nuis passa, si revint la journee.
- 972 Au [matinet] est la bele levee,  
 Et ricement vestue et acesmee,  
 Et la roïne est après li alee.  
 Otes l'a molt au matin esgardee

976 S'elle s'estoit cangie ne müee.\* [B7197; S7159]

“Fille,” fait il, “comment iés marïee?”

“Sire,” dist ele, “ensi com moi agreee.”

Adont ot il u palais grant risee.

980 Olive fu ricement estrinee.

.VIII. jours tous plains a la feste duree.

Departi sont et vont en lors contree

Quant la quinzainne fu plainnement passee,

984 Et Yde jut avoecques s'espousee.

Ne l'a nient plus que soloit aparlee;

Devers les rains pointe ne adesee.\*

Olive s'est durement mespensee;

988 Sa compaignie a sacie et boutee,

Et Yde set molt bien u elle bee.

Vers li tourna, plus ne li fist celee.

De cief en cief li a l'uevre contee:

992 Que femme estoit – merci li a crïee! –

Et que fuïe estoit pour le sien pere,

Hors de son liu par estranges contree.

Olive l'ot, s'en fu espoëntee;

996 Ydain a molt doucement confortee,

Et si li jure par la Virge honoree,

Ja nel dira au roi Oton, son pere,

“Le mien seignour qui a vous m’a donnee.

[B7220; S7182]

1000 Mais or soiés toute rasseüree,

Puis que vous estes pour loiauté gardee.

Ensamble o vous prendrai ma destinee.”

Uns garchons a oï lor devisee.

1004 Il jure Diu demain iert acusee,

Et qu’Yde ara l’ame du cors sevrete.

La nuis passa, si vint la matinee.

Les dames sont au matinet levees.

1008 Et li garchons – mal de l’ame son pere! –

[En] vint au roi en la sale pavee.\*

[Se] li a bien la parole contee:

Que femme est Yde cui sa fille a donnee,

1012 Et [Rommenie] et toute sa contree.

Li rois l’entent, s’a la coulour müee.

395<sup>t</sup>b

Dist a[u] garchon, “Saint[e] Vierge honoree,\*

C’as dit ribaus, mauvais traïtres, leres?

1016 Se ce n’es[t] voirs, la teste aras colpee!”

“Sire,” dist il, “c’est verités proutee.

Gardés que soit de par vous esproutee.”

Li rois ploura, la ciere a enclinee,

1020 Dont s’apensa comment iert esproutee.

.I. baing fait faire en la sale pavee.

Dedens entra, puis a Yde mandee,

[B7243; S7205]

Et elle i vint. Li rois l'a commandee,

1024 “Despoulliés vous sans point de demoree.

Venés o moi baignier, ensi m'agree.”

Cele respont qui fu espoëntee,

### XIX

“Biax sires, rois,” dist Yde au cors mollé,

1028 “Et s'il vous plaist, de chou me deportés.”

Li rois respont, “Tous les dras osterés.

S'il est ensi que on m'a devisét,

Je vous ferai ambe .ii. embraser!”

1032 Yde trambla, Olive a souspiré;

A genouillions a Diu merci crié.

Li rois a tout son barnage mandé.

Devant aus tous ceste cose a conté.

1036 Tout em plourant a cascun escrié,

“Seignour,” dist il, “quel conseil me donrés?”

“Fai les ardoir!” cascuns li a crié.

Ensi com Yde a de paour tramblé,

1040 Devers le ciel descent une clartés.

Ce fu uns angles; Dix le fist avaler.

Au roi Oton a dit, “Tout cois estés.



Jhesus te mande, li rois de maïsté,

[B7264; S7226]

1044 Que tu te baignes, et si lai chou ester,

Car jou te di en bonne verité,

Bon chevalier a u vassal Ydé.

Dix li envoie et donne par bonté

1048 Tout chou c'uns hom a de s'umanité.

Lai le garchon," dist li angles, "aller;

Il vous avoit dit voir, mais c'est passé.

Hui main iert feme, or est uns hom carnés.

1052 Dix a partout poissance et pöesté.

Otes, bons rois, dedens .viii. jours, venrés

En l'autre siecle, de cestui partirés.

Et vostre fille avoec Ydain lairés.

1056 .I. fil aront, Croissans iert apellés.

En sen venir, fera molt de bontés

A molt de gent dont il iert poi amés,

395<sup>v</sup>a

Et si ara molt de grans povertés."

1060 A ices mos, s'en est l'angles tournés

Qui bien les a en Romme confortés.

Et en cel jour fu Croissans engenrés.

Edition Notes

**23** This is what is referred to as the emphatic mode. “Chil” does not function as a demonstrative, but as a definite article. Kibler writes: “Cil is often found in traditional descriptions of objects or beings regularly evoked in such situations” (65). The translation will therefore use “the” when appropriate.

**39 S:** *esgarde* 6222.

**53 B:** *cel* 6274.

**72 S:** *la fille* 6255.

**85** Potential alternate punctuation: “Suer douce, amie, ...”

**113** The “separable” prefix “re-” according to Hasenohr (257) preceding the verb “estre” signals a repetition of an action. In this case, it indicates that the king resumes his grief at the palace. Later on in line 788 during the final battle scene, the same verb signals that the battle is renewed, or more precisely, it signifies the relocation of the battle from the valley to the forest.

**158** “Enfermerie” could mean an “illness” as well as “imprisonment”. Alternatively, the latter may also connote “cloistering” or a state of (in this case, voluntary) chastity.

**163** Schweigel inverts these two lines in his edition (l. 6345 and 6346).

**166** There is a tear in the manuscript page which runs four lines down the page, so we rely exclusively on S6349-52 for the missing words.

**168 B:** *sa* 6389. See p. 17.

**212** The same tear which disrupts the reading on the recto has made some words illegible on this page. Reading based on S6395-97.

**218** Enclisis of “si les”.

**245** Sometimes masculine, although usually feminine (Godefroy vol. IV, 205).

**300** The assonance in *-ié* is irregular at both this line and line 317.

**313** S: *embronche* 6496.

**326** S: *esmaïe* 6509.

**329** S: *mens* 6512.

**349** Word effaced. We rely on S6532.

**356** Ms.: *9 a*; S: [*On*] [*l*]a 6539.

**362** An “arragon” is a horse or destrier (Moisan vol. I, 173).

**374** Another spelling of “rovaison”.

**377** The related “arban” or “herban” means the tax or service which is owed to a lord by his vassals, but also, and more appropriately in this context, the summons to arms (Hindley, Langley, and Levy 361).

**394** Word is effaced in the same spot as previous page on the lower right hand corner on the recto and the lower left on the verso. Reading based on S6577.

**418** S: *on* 6601.

**424** See p. 59.

**432** Ms.: *ēpoigna*; S: *espoigna* 6615.

**441** There is a tear in the manuscript that runs clean across this entire line but does not prohibit reading.

**453** B6674 and S6636: *faussa[r]s*. See pp. 18-19.

**478** An “a” is added to correct the hyposyllabic line.

**497** B: *mangier* 6718; S: *mēgier* 6680.

**507** “Lors” could here be the adverb “alors” meaning “then”, though it is most likely the possessive pronoun misspelled with an “s”.

**509** B6730 and S6692: *escuier*. See pp. 18-19.

**548** A charming misspelling of “trestous”.

**554** Proverb, appears as “Il est foul qui en ribaut se fie” in Joseph Morawski, *Proverbes français antérieurs au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Édouard Champion, 1925) 31.

**576** The tear runs across this line, but the text remains legible.

**581** Brewka (l. 6802) and Schweigel (l. 6764) both have “sifaitement” as one word.

**586** This line is hyposyllabic and therefore justifies the addition of the final “e” to the feminine pronoun “el”.

**588** B: *quarriax* 6809; S: *quariax* 6771.

**621** Ms.: *lalent*, scribal error.

**624** We have an interesting focal shift in these two lines. In the previous line, the narrator refers to Yde using the feminine *Ydain*; however, in the following line, she is described from the king’s perspective as “grant et membru et formé”, using a series of adjectives in the masculine form.

**638** B: *Aimmeris* 6859; the name is given in full as *Ainmeri* in *Huon et les Géants* B8448.

**668** Ms.: *voient*: this seems to make little sense in the context.

**684** B: *des or* 6905.

**699** B: *l’a* 6920. This emendation would be unnecessary if we consider that the narrator switches to direct reported speech in this line, so I have kept “m’a” and added quotation marks.

**707** There is some distortion of the letters “as” in “embrasee” as well as in “arrestee” two lines later, but it is safe to say that this is the correct reading. It seems ironic that this part was probably damaged during the fire.

**709** This is the construction “si...que”. Schweigel emends the lines to “En vo païs est *en avant* entrée/ *Qui* desous Romme...” (l. 6891-2). Brewka’s version “si [...] qui” (l. 6929-30) seems erroneous.

**711** There is a tear and some fraying of the parchment in this spot on these two lines.

**714** The following five lines have various tears, holes and smudges. We rely on S6893-97 to fill the gaps. When Brekwa had access to the manuscript, she reported tape covering the lines corresponding to 6930-34 in her edition (541).

**743** “Tout” functions as an adverb of degree.

**745** Ms.: *revenueir*.

**754** The ending of “Ydes” is effaced and not obvious since either the feminine or masculine nominative form of the name could work here. Reading provided by S6937.

**756** Ms.: *emboncie*.

**766** Word completely effaced. Reading provided by S6949.

**806** Ms.: *etendi*.

**844** Used to say that something is worthless (Godefroy Compl. vol. I, 58); similar to the common expression “oeuf pelé” (Hindley, Langley, and Levy 474). There could be a play on the word “pelee” which might be a reference to male genitalia (Godefroy vol. VI, 67).

**849** S: *em pensé* 7032.

**853** The referent of the pronoun “le” is ambiguous; however, the following line seems to imply that it should be “enfant”.

**899** The text is partly effaced and difficult to make out, but this is the most plausible current reading; S: *par verté* 7082.

**923** The “O” in Olive is completely effaced.

**930** Inversion of subject and verb: “on i oïst sonner”.

**935** There is a miniature at the beginning of the second column of folio 394<sup>v</sup> containing two panels, the first depicting a marriage ceremony, and the second a couple in bed with an onlooker standing at the foot of the bed. A caption at the top of the page written in red ink reads “Ensi que Ydes fille Flourent d’Arragon espousa Olive la fille Otheuiien l’empereur de Roume”, “Thus Ydes, daughter of Florent of Aragon, married Olive, daughter of Othon the emperor of Rome” (see Appendix A).

**942** The nominative *Yde* should follow “es vous”, but the oblique *Ydain* was necessary for the meter.

**956** Brewka does not have an explanation for “jouer a la pate levee”, but she thinks it clearly refers to sexual intercourse (542). Cazanave comments on it thus: “la compréhensive jeune fille repousse au loin l’idée qu’elle ait pu ne serait-ce qu’envisager un peu de gymnastique, l’expression « jouer à la pate levee » [...] apportant, dans sa première attestation repérable, la dose d’euphémisme pittoresque exigée pour pouvoir être prononcée dans la bouche d’une fille de roi bien élevée et, qui plus est, pucelle” (153). There may be at least one other occurrence of the phrase (see pp. 40-41).

**966** The punctuation of these five lines is suggested by Caroline Cazanave (154) as an alternative to Brewka’s punctuation which significantly changes the meaning of the passage:

*Tant sench bonté en vo cors arrestee*

*Que, s’il vous plaist, je serai deportee.*

*Fors du baisier bien voel estre accolée,*

*Mais de l’amour c’on dist qui est privee*

*Vous requier jou que soie deportee. B7183-87*

**968** The following six lines are partly effaced, so we rely on S7151-56 for the parts that are difficult to make out.

**976** B: *se elle* 7197; S: *selle* 7159.

**986** The verb “adeser”, meaning “to touch or approach”, has clear sexual connotations (Godefroy vol. I, 100).

**1009** There is smudging in the Ms. which has effaced some parts of the following four lines.

**1014** Ms.: *saint vierge*.

## PART IV: TRANSLATION

I

Florent came joyfully to Aragon,

And brave Garin was light of heart,

For there was peace, and he had his son back.

4 Each was in good spirits, light of heart and full of vigor,

And they thanked the Almighty Father

For all the great wealth they still had.

They rode pleasantly to the palace.

8 Clarisse came to meet them smiling,

And she had with her over one hundred maidens

Whose hearts were happy, light, and joyful.

Florent, who was strong of body, held her in his arms,

12 And, laughing, kissed her sweetly.

Together they went humbly to the church\*

Where Florent made an offering of a beautiful silk

And one golden marc, after which others made offerings,

16 And then they prayed devoutly.

When the good priest Clement had sung the service,

They went to feast without delay.

They had dishes aplenty filled with all that they desired,



20 And after the feast, they reveled for some time:

Young men learned to fence,

And many played backgammon

While the minstrels delighted them.

## II

24 The people of Aragon were very glad

Because there was peace everywhere,

But King Garin had grown old,

His handsome face pale and wrinkled.

28 He had become very weak in a short time

And was no longer interested in delighting himself

In hunting or hawking.

The barons gathered around him

32 And called for physicians to come to his aid,

But none of them could bring any comfort.

Bitter death began to court him

And refused to release him.

36 He made his will without delay

Leaving everything to the church.\*

May God have mercy and pity on his soul!

He joined his hands and looked up to heaven,

40 Imploring God, the just Father:

“Save me! How wretched I am!

With your leave, I wish to depart from this world,

But of one thing my heart is very glad,

44 That everywhere my barons are at peace.”

To his dear son he cried clearly:

“Farewell, Florent. I have left my kingdom [to you].

Pray God to have mercy on me.”

48 And so he lay down, and spoke not another word.

The king died, and the clergy assembled

To bury him in the church on that day.

### III

The king died on that day,

52 And Florent with the rugged countenance became the king.\*

He donned the crown that same month,

And Clarisse was crowned queen.

They took great pleasure in their life together,

56 Such that King Florent made his wife pregnant;

The noble lady carried her burden to term,

And the time for her to be delivered of it drew near.

She was fresh and full of color,

60 But she was afraid of her pregnancy

And often invoked Saint Mary thus:

“My lady, help this wretched one,  
And let her be delivered of her fruit!”

64 The king listened to the queen for a long time,  
And went to church, taking many of his people with him,  
To pray for the one he had so loved,  
But to no avail, for she had little time left on this earth.

68 Their great love would soon be severed,  
For she died; it was a terrible fate.  
She had a daughter who was taken to the church  
And baptized Yde.

72 When Florent was shown his daughter,  
He had great joy,  
But he immediately asked after the queen.  
His people knew the affair could no longer be concealed,

76 So they told him the truth.  
When the king heard and listened,  
He fainted from the great pain this caused him.  
When he got up, he struck his palms

80 And came running to see his wife,  
Followed by many of his people.  
He came to the palace and found her there, dead,  
The one whom he had loved best in the whole world.

84 He raised his voice high for Clarisse:

“Sister, sweet friend, you were born in an evil hour!\*

For you I have set aside so many things,

And my flesh was at rest,

88 But now my pain is doubled because of you.

I do believe that you are stolen from me.”

Tears fell from his eyes,

And he cried and sobbed, his face streaked with pain,

92 His chest awash with tears,

Whereupon he collapsed again.

Sorbarré raised him up without pause

And said, “Good king, for virtue’s sake,

96 Would you cry yourself to death?”

“God,” said Florent, “my sorrow is doubled.

Treacherous death, you were too brazen

When you took my wife from me!”

100 His people surrounded him, beside themselves,

Gently mourning the queen

Until the morning when the bright dawn appeared.

#### IV

Great was the mourning that they held for Clarisse.

104 They cried and wailed and made a great noise;

They made their way to the way to the church without stopping

And had with them a large cavalry.

Everyone went weeping for the queen.

108 After the mass was over,

Clarisse was placed in a tomb.

The beautiful one was interred in a chancel,

As the clergy all gathered round.

112 The king returned to his ancient great hall,

Where his grief for the queen was redoubled.

“What will become of me,” he said, “without you, my love?”

Sorbarré had his daughter brought to him.

116 When he saw her, he cried aloud:

“Sweet child, you are now an orphan.”

His men said to him, “What you’re doing is unseemly!

You will not have her back by mourning

120 And would do well to leave your grief.

You have by her a beautiful daughter;

There is none so beautiful as far as the sea of Greece.

To make amends, set aside your grief.”

124 To which the king replied: “Lords, I will concede

And refrain from it since you are all asking me to.”

The king kept his word, but to his great torment.

He had two nurses brought for his child,

128 Who attended to her faithfully night and day,

And raised her thus until she was seven years old.

Until then, they did not see the king smile.

He sighed for his wife night and day,

132 And he would kiss Yde's mouth and chest.

At seven years, she was taught her letters:

She learned a great deal and knew how to read her psalter well,

And to write in French and Latin.

136 Blessed be whoever taught her so properly.\*

At fourteen, she was a beautiful young woman,

Whose beauty brought joy to all.

Dukes and princes asked her father for her hand,

140 And counts and kings would have gladly taken her,

But none came who were not refused.

She was sought after from beyond Rome,

But the king answered that he did not wish to marry her to anyone,

144 And that he would keep her in his company,

For he did not wish to be parted from her in any way;

It was his desire that he would have no other love.

He would often embrace her and kiss her

148 For the sake of the wife to whom she was born.

One day in May while the lark was trilling,

The blackbird singing, and the magpies rejoicing,

After he had heard the Sunday mass,

152 Florent exited the church with his retinue –

He had a hundred knights in his company.

In an ancient orchard

They sat on the green grass.

156 The king spoke, and his barons listened:

“My lords,” he said, “God bless me,

I have been in this infirmity for a long time.

It has been fourteen or fifteen years

160 Since I lost Clarisse, the queen,

The beautiful lady – Jesus bless her.

I loved her well and faithfully;

Since then I have never enjoyed the company of a woman,

164 But it is fitting that I tell you all this:

Having a wife would increase my happiness.

I will have one, and no man can dissuade me from it.”

V

The king’s people were very glad

168 That he had his mind set on a wife:

“Sire,” they said, “for goodness’ sake,

From where will she be, from which country?

By God, what a happy hour it will be

172 When a queen of Arragon will be proclaimed.”

Florent said, "By my father's soul,  
 Many high-born men have asked for my daughter,  
 And I do not know a better man for her to marry.

176 I will marry her before the month is out.

I will take her for the love of her mother."

Sorbarré said, "What are you saying, villain?

Will your daughter, then, be married to you?

180 According to the law that God gave us,

Your soul will be damned to hell."

And Florent said, "Do not even think of it!

If any man tries to dissuade me from this,

184 I will have his soul severed from his body."

He asked for his daughter, and she was brought to him –

God, how fresh and rosy she was! –

Who came happily before the king, her father.

188 The king grabbed her in his arms,

And ten times did he kiss and embrace her,

And she yielded to him readily,

For she did not know his heart or his will.

192 When she would later learn about it, it would infuriate her.

She had so consumed her father's thoughts

And pierced his heart

That he would lose his mind if he did not marry her.



196 God! Why does the king have such a thought,

Which will yet cause so many ladies to weep,

So many lands to be destroyed and spoiled,

So many youths to be disinherited,

200 So many maidens to be proclaimed orphans?\*

And the king will yet grow angry because of her.\*

He had so kissed and embraced Yde,

That the day passed, and it was near vespers.

204 The king's people were sorely aggrieved

For Yde, with whom he had fallen in love.

The matter was never disclosed by any of them,

But one would say to the other: "This thing is certain:

208 If he had her shut up in his room,

She would not be spare by Florent for long,

Who would soon take her maidenhood.

If she knew his heart,

212 She would rather flee across the frozen sea

Than let it happen. This thing is certain,

For the young woman is well schooled

And has devoted herself entirely to God's service."

## VI

216 King Florent would not stop for anything,

But called his people together without delay.

He had letters and missives written, which he sealed himself,

Asking for the high barons whom he trusted

220 From everywhere, and the watch guard went to him.

He told the sentinel that he wanted to get married.

This brought great joy to everyone who heard him,

And they wanted to know what he would ask of them,

224 And for what reason he had summoned them.

So many people came to Aragon

That they thronged the markets and the town.

Each baron dressed and arrayed himself,

228 And went straightaway to court.

King Florent rejoiced at this,

As each high-born man greeted him courteously.

He embraced each noble baron

232 And told them that he wanted to be advised

On taking a wife, because such was his desire.

Many told him that he had waited too long.

“Brave sir, marry a woman who will bring you honor.

236 By God, your court will be better off for it,

Though it was a shame when your wife died,

For never will you find her equal.”

Hearing this, the king nodded his head.

240 He had them wash and invited them to eat:

There was an abundance of food,  
And when the feast was finished, they got up,  
And his council assembled in his orchard.

244 Sorbarré sat next to him,

And Guis, the sentinel, who had done him a kindness in the past.\*  
“Florent, good king,” he said, “listen to me.  
You spoke of marrying some time ago.\*

248 Look where your heart will lead you,\*

And answer as it pleases you.  
There is no woman so high-born from here to the sea  
Whom we would not bring to you if you wished to have her.”

252 The king said that he would take his daughter,

And that he would marry no other but her.  
When they heard him, they nudged each other,  
Raised their hands up, and crossed themselves.

256 “Sire,” they said, “God keep you from this!

It has never been done, nor will it ever come to pass.  
No man who hears you  
Would not take you for a deviant.

260 Remember God who made us

And gave us baptism and faith.  
Let us keep to the law with which he charged us.

Certainly whoever transgresses it would be dishonored.

- 264 When he commanded marriage,  
 Jesus Christ instructed all Christians  
 That they should never marry their kin.  
 You can only marry beyond the fourth degree,\*
- 268 Otherwise it would be heresy.”  
 When Florent heard this, he was greatly angered.  
 He said to his people, “Do not speak of this.  
 She will have no one else but me. So help me God,  
 272 The maiden will stay with me.”

## VII

- King Florent had greatly troubled them.  
 He asked for his daughter and had her dressed.  
 His noble councilmen went along,  
 276 And Sorbarré began to implore him.  
 The maiden with the proud face adorned herself  
 In precious golden clothes.  
 Many knights accompanied her
- 280 As she left her quarters and entered the large palace.  
 The gathered barons stood to greet her,  
 Who were each moved by her beauty.  
 Indeed I must tell you and recount it,

284 That she was whiter than snow in February,  
Topped with a very becoming color,  
Red as a rose on the bush.  
Her eyes were greener than any falcon's,  
288 And she had blond hair that fell in curls on her back.\*  
A golden thread was not worth one denier of its beauty.  
Never was a crystal ever more dazzling  
Or whiter, I daresay,  
292 Than Yde's brow when one approached her.  
Her nose was well shaped, her eyebrows arched;  
Her mouth was red and her teeth well formed,  
Her throat whiter than precious ivory,  
296 Her hands dainty, her fingers shapely,  
And he had low hips and arched feet.  
Thus was her body well formed in every way.  
She was only fifteen years old,  
300 And had no breasts which could be seen.  
Yde turned toward her father,  
And the king gladly embraced and kissed her.  
She sat next to him on a silken coverlet,  
304 Not knowing what he wished to talk to her about.  
"My beautiful daughter," said Florent, "now listen to me.  
You are an orphan, and I pity you greatly.

Since I lost your mother, I have not been happy,  
308 But because of you I have found joy again.  
You resemble your mother with the proud face  
More than anything else under heaven.  
Because of this likeness, you are all the more dear to me;  
312 Therefore, I will take you as my companion and wife.”  
When she heard him, her face sank.  
“Father,” she said, “have you lost your senses?\*”  
Don’t say that again, for it is a terrible sin!”  
316 Then the maiden wanted to get up.  
“Daughter,” he said, “not another word,  
Or you will make me very angry.”  
All his barons knelt down  
320 And said, “King, have pity on your soul.  
You would disgrace your daughter along with yourself.”  
Florent said, “Knives and scoundrels!  
There’s no man alive who can hold me back!  
324 By Him who was raised on the cross,  
I will have her, no matter who it should vex!”

## VIII

The king’s daughter was much distressed.  
She cried all night and thought herself very unfortunate.

328 “What will become of me? Why was I ever born?

If my father has relations with me,

My soul will truly be damned.

Therefore, I will flee, and I will not look back.”

332 And behold, the king with his great company

Had his daughter taken to his chambers

Because he was afraid that she would be taken away from him.

He had a bath prepared where his daughter was bathed,

336 So that she was thoroughly terrified.

But lo and behold, Desiier of Pavie

Entered the city with a great cavalry

And went to meet Florent and his household,

340 Whereupon the young woman hurried out of the bath;

She put on men’s clothing and did not delay for anything.

Disguised as a man,

She went to the stables and ran toward a warhorse.

344 She mounted it without delaying one moment,

Nor was she seen or spotted by anyone.

So she left Aragon, God help her!

When Florent came back to his chambers looking for her,

348 He saw that she had fled.

He was greatly grieved by this – I will not lie to you.

He raised a great clamor over the young woman,

And the people around him cried and wailed.

352 They told the king: “You no longer have a warhorse;

Yde, your daughter, has fled on it.”

## IX

There was great sorrow in the city

For Yde with the bright face,

356 Who was lost under such circumstances.

Meanwhile, the young woman had fled, vigorously spurring on her horse,

And dressed in men’s clothing out of fear.

When she began to see daylight,

360 The fair one hid in the forest all day.

She rode by night and did not linger anywhere.

Within a month, she had sold her horse,

For she had nothing to live on or to eat.

364 Thus she went on foot without any companion.

She was disguised as a boy

And had bought hose and hood;

Finer linen breeches had never been seen.

368 She wore her sword at her side, and also carried a rod.

Hurrying on the path to Germany,

She roamed so far that she came to Barsillon,\*

Where she could not understand their language.



372 She took lodging in the city  
And spent her deniers freely.  
She stayed there until the Rogation,\*  
When an army entered the city boldly.

376 They intended to stay there for a fortnight  
And wait for reinforcements,  
After which they would go straight to Rome, to King Oton,  
Who had accepted the challenge of a king

380 Who held Castile, Spain, and their surroundings.  
Therefore, the Germans were warring against him.  
Fair Yde heard of this matter  
And decided she would make the Spanish regret it if she could.

X

384 The beautiful Yde did not delay.  
She thought a lot about King Oton,  
And intended to seek his council if she could.  
She acquainted herself courteously with the Germans,

388 And was often seen at their inn.  
One German amicably called her over.  
“Whom do you serve? Tell me, and do not hide it any longer,”  
He said to Yde. “Make it known to us now, good brother.”

392 “Sir,” said Yde, “I serve whoever will have me.

I have been looking for employment for fifteen days now.

I served in Aragon a long time ago,

But the one who brought me here is now dead.

396 I will serve faithfully whoever takes me into his service,

Whether it is to carry loads or look after a horse.

And if we should go to battle,

I believe there will be worse than I.”

400 The German said, “Much good will come to you.

What is your name? Do not hide it from me any longer.”

“My name is Ydé,” she answered.

“Brother,” he said, “you will lead my horse.

404 I will retain you, and you will be under my protection.”

Ydé promptly bowed to the German,\*

Who took him to his lodgings.

God, the king who created everything, keep Yde!

408 *She* was once served, and now *he* will serve.\*

God, the king who created the whole world, preserve her!\*

If she is found out, she will suffer greatly because of it.

Three days later, a great army assembled,

412 Which headed to the region of Rome.

The lady Yde was mounted,

She who had disguised herself so well as a man

And had served so skillfully that everyone praised her.

416 For a month, the army treaded and went forward,  
Until the sound of war began to be heard.  
They spotted a forest in a valley  
Yet fifteen long leagues ahead of them

420 Where there were more than seven thousand raiders,  
Well-armed, and each mounted on a strong horse.  
The Germans saw them from the other side,  
And they all readied themselves to fight for spoils.

424 One of the Germans swore by God  
That if anyone rushed at him, he would defend himself.  
And the Spaniards came from the bottom of the valley  
Shouting at the Germans, "Why are you here?"

428 You are all dead! No one will escape alive  
If you do not lay down everything you have."  
Yde answered that she would not yield  
And spurred her horse ahead of her master.

432 She had no shield, but she took up her lance.  
One Spaniard came forward, and she clashed with him,  
Shattering his shield,  
And splitting his hauberk at the back.

436 She drove the lance through his body  
And killed him; he would never again get up.  
Fair Yde pulled out her lance.

She had never before this day struck a man,  
440 And she knew little of armed combat. She fell back,  
And one of the Germans looked around at her  
And said, "Bless the one who begot you!"

## XI

After the beautiful Yde had begun the battle,  
444 The Germans fell to disorder.  
There was such a number of shields pierced in the fray,  
Split and broken breastplates,  
And fallen Germans on the ground.  
448 Yde brandished her sword high,  
Unhorsing anyone who clashed with her;  
They were cruelly met indeed.  
The Spaniards were raging,  
452 And the Germans were put to the test,  
Pierced with arrows and treacherous lances,  
And yet they were so well equipped.  
Not one of the Germans escaped,  
456 But they were all cut down and slain.  
Yde ran to escape the slaughter  
And jumped on a speeding horse  
With nothing but her sword, having lost her lance.

460 She was afraid, and no one should be surprised,

Since she did not know the roads,

Nor did she have anything to eat.

At night, she slept near a wood

464 Until the morning when it started to get light.

She rode ahead all day

Until the evening when it started to get dark.

Her fair body was overcome by hunger.

468 She looked to her right near a rock

And saw a fire nearby.

Thirty thieves were sitting down to eat.

The young woman rode up to them,

472 And when the thieves saw her coming,

They began to consult among each other.

“Look,” they said, “here comes a squire.

No matter what, he will leave us his warhorse.”

476 And the beautiful Yde began to speak.

“May God be with you at your table,” she said.

It seems to me that you are well off.

Please receive me and allow me to join you,

480 And I will gladly pay you for my share.”

The insolent thieves,

Answered, “We are well advised.

Do you have a sergeant or knight

484 Who leads you through these thick woods?"

The young woman said, "In truth, and to my great misfortune,

Know that there are no more people with me."

One of the thieves threw himself at her bridle

488 And answered, "Then the matter is settled;

You will do what we ask before you eat.

Don't let this scoundrel get away,\*

Otherwise one of us might be fooled by him."

492 The young woman said, "What is your hurry?

You would gain very little by my death.

I will surrender willingly to you;

Here is my sword, and may it appease you.

496 I have such a hunger that I am near insanity.

I ask you for the love of God to give me some food."

The leader said, "Come forward, squire.

As God is my witness, you will not be touched.

500 I will give you whatever you need."

Yde answered, "I am a hundred times thankful."

And she gladly sat down to eat.

## XII

The young woman sat down to eat,

504 God, son of Saint Marie, protect her.

She ate her fill,

Then the thieves, may God curse them,

Put away their tablecloth after the meal.

508 They quarreled and fought with each other

Because of the squire who was not yet dead.

They wished to kill him and would not wait any longer,

But one of them said, "We will not do this.

512 This squire is very courteous.

When he took refuge among us,

He committed to traveling and keeping company with us.

If he refuses, he will lose his life."

516 They went over to Yde and began to tell her,

"Tell us, good sir, what is your name?"

Afraid of being killed, she answered,

"I am called Ydé, and I am from Pontarlier.

520 I had intended to go straight on to Rome,

But the Spanish killed my companions.

You would do a courteous thing by making amends to me

And giving me back my Persian horse."

524 The leader said, "That will not happen,

But rather you will be a thief for the rest of your life.

Our band will be stronger with you.

If you refuse, your head will be cut off.”

528 Yde answered, “This is not courteous behavior.

I will not deal in thievery.

There has never been a thief in my family,

And I would not know how to delight in such work.

532 Give me back my shining sword

And my warhorse, which has no equal anywhere as far as Russia.

Once I am mounted, let one of you challenge me to a fight;

If I cannot defend myself, let him kill me.

536 It would be too high a price for your hospitality

If you take my horse for yourselves.”

The leader said, “You are strong of countenance.

The agreement is that you will fight me.

540 If you slay me on this field,

You will be free of this company,

But if you fall – I will not lie to you –\*

You will have neither blade nor Nubian horse;

544 Your very clothes will be torn off your back.”

The maiden said, “Curses on whoever does not agree to this!”

She was immediately relieved of her coat

As the thieves looked on in amusement.

548 Yde, who was well educated,

Said to the thieves, “Since you have agreed to this,



Have your company fall back.

Bring me my Nubian horse,

552 And have my sword polished at the wheel.

As I once heard a good man say,

Whoever trusts a thief is himself dishonest.”

Each of those who heard her agreed to it

556 And did as the fair one had devised.

She went over to the thief and, catching him off-guard,

Pinned his arms to his sides and bent them,

Then raised him a full palm’s length and a half off the ground,

560 Clutching him against her chest.

She made as if to throw him to the left,

And then turned him the other way and brought him down.

### XIII

Tightly between her arms, the lady Yde held

564 The strong, foul-smelling thief,

And threw him to the ground hard

And painfully on a bolder,

So that he had not a tooth in his mouth

568 Which did not ache painfully

And split his head in two.

Yde had no wish to dally any longer.

She got to the horse and mounted quickly,  
 572 Brandishing her sword, and shouting loudly,  
 “You sons of whores! Evil, foul-smelling thieves!  
 Your treachery will gain you nothing.  
 You plotted wickedly against me,  
 576 But I think this man who fought me is regretting it.  
 I would not be daunted by you if there were over a hundred of you.”  
 Then she said softly, so that no one could hear,  
 “I must have strength and prowess  
 580 Since I am noble King Florent’s daughter.”  
 While she was thus pensive,  
 One of the thieves grabbed her rein.  
 Yde saw him and brought her naked blade down on him,  
 584 Immediately cutting off his hand.  
 The thief ran away bellowing in agony.  
 Yde left without waiting any longer,  
 Her horse carrying her away so swiftly  
 588 That she was going faster than an arrow falls.  
 May God, to whom the world belongs, protect her!  
 (So many people escape great perils.)\*  
 Thus went the one with the fair body,  
 592 Passing through the woods without stopping.  
 She made for Rome, for she greatly desired to go there

And entered the city promptly,  
Not stopping until she reached the palace.

596 She dismounted at the foot of the palace

And went up to ask after its master.

She greeted the king courteously,

“May God who holds heaven

600 Save the king whom I see here present,

And his barons, and everything under his dominion.”

The Romans were quiet, as was everyone else.

They all listened intently to Yde

604 With great admiration,

For what she had so wisely spoken.

The noble King returned her greeting.

“God save you,” he said cheerfully.

608 “Where are you from, friend, and of what people,

From which country, and who are your parents,

You who come here so wanting for company?”

“Sire,” said Yde, “you will have your answer right away.

612 I am a squire who owns not a single acre.

I served in Germany for a long time.

I have hardly conquered anything, for which my whole heart fails me.

But the other day, I saw an assembly of people

616 Who swore your death in truth.

They are secretly on their way to the king of Spain,  
Having lost half of their number,  
Which I helped to bring to death.

620 That is why I have come to you most urgently.

If it so pleases you, receive me.”

When the king heard her, he looked at his council.

#### XIV

The king of Rome examined Yde;

624 He saw that he was big, brawny and well built.

For this reason, he immediately grew to like him.

At that moment, crowned king Oton’s daughter entered the hall;

There was none so beautiful in all the kingdom.

628 Her name was Olive, and she was full of kindness.

All the barons rose to greet her.

She sat near Oton affectionately

And looked sweetly at the squire.

632 Oton, who was full of pride, cried out,

Saying to Yde, “Friend, listen to me;

What is your name and lineage?”

“Sire,” she said, “they call me Ydé

636 Of Tarragona, for I have a dwelling there.

I am cousin to some powerful people:

Count Ainmeri and Naimés the Bearded.

I am closely related to Guillemer the Scot,

640 But I was banished by Hardré's family

And have since endured great trials."

Oton said, "You are my kinsman.

I will keep you in my service since I sense that you are full of pride.

644 Olive, daughter, did you hear?

I will retain this praise-worthy squire for you.

He will serve you as you wish."

"Sire," she said, "five hundred times thank you,

648 I have never heard anything that pleased me so much."

The Romans consented to this out of good will

And gladly received Ydé.

The king called him and spoke to him thus:

652 "Friend," he said, "you will serve me as I see fit.

I have a daughter who is very beautiful,

And who will inherit my land and my kingdom.

Be mindful of how you behave.

656 If you serve her well, you will be rewarded."

"Gladly, sire," said Ydé.

"I will conduct myself in such a way," he said,

"That everybody will be pleased with me."

660 "What can you do?" asked king Oton.

“Sire,” she said, “anything you can ask.

Firstly, I know well how to worship Jesus Christ

And pay honor to a noble man;

664 How to give to the poor of my possessions,

To put the arrogant in their place

And keep noble men close;

If need be, I can carry a standard,

668 And if we should go to battle,

You could lead worse than me,

For I know how to deal a good blow,

And if wrong is done me, I know how to handle myself

672 And hide my grievance in my heart;

I know how to bring my horse to stable,

Brush it, and lead it to water;

And I know how to serve food at table.”

676 “As God is my witness,” said Oton,

“If you have such valor and goodness in you

As I have heard you say and tell,

You must be well treated and honored,

680 Loved and held in high esteem at court.

I am very happy that you entered this house,

And I never wish you to leave my side.”

Yde heard him and bowed.

## XV

684 From that time, Yde remained in Oton's house,  
And the good king of Rome praised her.  
She was always mindful of serving well  
And worked so tirelessly day and night,  
688 That it pleased everyone.  
Olive gladly watched her.  
Yde prayed to the Holy Virgin  
To protect her from being accused,  
692 Otherwise, she would be brought to death.  
She brought much dignity to the poor  
And gave many alms in the name of God.  
When she had free time, she went to church  
696 And often prayed for her father, King Florent,  
Because of whom she was thus so tainted and soiled,  
And had to flee Aragon,  
That king who had fathered her of his own flesh.  
700 For a whole month she carried on thus,  
In Rome, the renowned and strong city.  
She was tall, strong, and well built;  
Yde, the fair one, dwelled at the palace.  
704 And there came a messenger at a great gallop  
To present his case in front of the king.

“Hear me,” he said, “just emperor.

The king of Spain is burning your land.

708 He has advanced so far into your kingdom,

That his army is assembling right outside Rome.

They have cut the heads of many Romans.

The king of Spain has sworn an oath

712 That within a fortnight

He will have taken this strong fortress\*

And raped your daughter by force,

And that you yourself will be beheaded

716 For having refused to give her to him.

It would have turned out better if he had married her,

Than for so many people to meet their end thus.\*

King, go meet him in battle and defend your country,

720 Otherwise, your city will be laid waste.”

When Emperor Oton heard him,

He asked for Yde without delay

And then said to her in confidence:

724 “My good Ydé, what do you think about this?

Advise me on this unfortunate matter.

I have never had to send my army against a man

Who has destroyed and laid waste to my land.”

728 “As God is my witness, sire,” said Yde,



“I shall go meet him armed to the teeth.

Grant me people so that we may do battle with the Spanish.”

Oton said, “Your words please me.”

732 He immediately had his trumpets sounded.

Ten thousand Romans heard them, took up arms without delay,

And came promptly to present themselves before the king.

“Sire,” they said, “what is your pleasure?

736 We are all ready to do your bidding.”

“My lord barons,” said emperor Oton,

“I appeal to you for justice against these deranged people

Who assail my country outside Rome.

740 Here is Ydé who is armed and ready.

Go with him, Ybert, to the great valley,

But be wary of going astray.

Aid him by the edge of your swords,

744 Or upon my father’s soul,

Whoever does not will be rewarded upon his return

With his head being cut off his shoulders.”

## XVI

Ydé went with a fine company,

748 And left the great and ancient city of Rome.

He did not pull the reins until they reached the Tiber River.

The Spaniards had raised a great clamor,  
For they thought they had taken the city.

752 A whole day they besieged it,  
But the matter would be decided otherwise,  
For Ydé joined the ranks of battle,  
Invoking God, the son of Mary.

756 He had covered his face with a green helm  
And lifted his shield to his chest.  
The fair one went straight for Embronchart,  
Who had a formidable company in Mount Caillet.

760 He was nephew to the king who lorded over so much land.  
He turned his banner toward Yde,  
And the fair one approached him.

She struck Embronchart on his flower-adorned shield,

764 And, with all her strength, she pierced and shattered it,  
Cracking and tearing his hauberk.  
Then she drove her entire lance through his body,  
Knocking him off his charger, and laying him dead.

768 She saw him fall and began to say,  
“You are vanquished, scoundrel! May God damn you!  
You came in an evil hour, and started something  
For which more than a thousand will lose their lives.

772 I will challenge you for the plains of Rome.”

Then the slender maiden said quietly,  
 “Oh, true God, help this poor wretch,  
 Who became a man to preserve her honor!

776 Because of a sin, I fled

And left my father and his land.  
 Please protect me, sweet Virgin Mary.”

At these words, she drew her sword,

780 And cut off Pierron de Bus’ head,

And delivered seven others to same fate.  
 She took them out one by one and without stopping,  
 Not wanting to distinguish between the good and the evil.

784 The Spaniards were taught a lesson.

They turned to flee into a pinewood  
 Where they met Gualerant d’Aubépine,  
 Who had with him three thousand knights.

788 There the battle was begun again, and the fighting renewed.

He fought so well,  
 And severed so many of the Spaniards’ heads,  
 That they turned around and fled, their company defeated.

792 Alars du Grong shouted loudly at them,

“By Saint Fagon, this has gone badly for us!  
 We did wrong by attacking.  
 This is the doing of that fair one with the hard shield

796 And the brilliant shining cross.\*

If I had known that there was such a knight in Rome,

I would never have come here in all my life.

He won the battle by himself,

800 And our knights fought valiantly.

The Romans are very fortunate,

With all their assembled pavilions and tents.”

Yde was much beheld and admired,

804 For Olive had seen her from the battlements.

Her whole body tingled with joy,

And she said softly, so that no one heard her,

“He will be my love. I want to tell him tomorrow.

808 I have never been so taken with a man,

So it is fitting that I should tell him so.”

As she uttered those words, the company returned.

They told king Oton the whole matter as it had happened:

812 How Ydé had won the battle

And cut down all his enemies with his polished sword.

There was no knight like him as far as the sea of Greece.

## XVII

When king Oton heard the whole story,

816 That he had such a good man in his vassal, Ydé,

Who had so aptly rid him of the Spaniards,

The strong crowned king greatly rejoiced.

And honored Ydé immensely.

820 He had proven himself so well within a single year

That he had freed the whole country.

He had slain some and wounded others,

And taken so many prisoners

824 That he had insured the safety of the land and the kingdom.

The king's daughter was so enamored of him

That she told him, for she could no longer hide it.\*

One day, king Oton assembled

828 The peers of Rome and called upon the powerful.

“My lords,” he said, “hear my thoughts.

I have a daughter who is very worthy of praise.

I want to marry her off before I die,

832 So I will give her to my knight, Ydé,

And with her Rome and my vast kingdom,

For I know no other man like him.”

The Romans all agreed to this gladly

836 And embraced him in great friendship.

King Oton said, “Listen to me, Ydé.

You have freed my whole kingdom,

And I wish to give you a reward.

840 I have a daughter who is exceedingly beautiful.

You will have her as your wife and companion,  
As well as my kingdom, once I have met my end.”

“Thank you, good king, by God in his majesty.

844 I have nothing that is worth more than a peeled clove of garlic.

It would be a shame if you did not consider carefully  
To whom you would marry your daughter.

I am a poor man and do not wish to marry,

848 For I am always seeking service to earn my wages.”

“What?” said Oton. “What are you thinking?

Do you then refuse my daughter

And the country that I have offered you?”

852 “No, by God, sire,” said Ydé,

“I will take her gladly and willingly,

If that is her wish, and it so pleases her.

Have the maiden brought here right now.”

856 And the young woman came without delay.

Now crowned Oton called her,

“My fair daughter,” the king said, “listen.

It would behoove you now to promise

860 That you will do as I wish,

For you will hold my throne after me.

If I die, you would have no protector.

All my barons have seen it fit

864 That you should take my knight Ydé,

And that he should become ruler of this kingdom.”

The maiden said, “That is my wish.

I have not wasted my time on this earth

868 Since I will have what I have so desired.”

She fell to her knees at her father’s feet,

And, straightening back up, she proclaimed loudly,

“Father,” she said, “please consider making haste,

872 For every day, it feels like he will leave.”

When the barons heard the fair one,

Together they all greatly rejoiced.

Then the king said, “Step forward, Ydé,

876 And promise yourself faithfully to my daughter;

I give her to you, along with my kingdom.

Today I have paid you back well for your services,

And for freeing my country,

880 And you will be very well rewarded for it.”

When Yde heard him, her blood ran cold.\*

She did not know what to do,

For she had no member which would allow her to dwell with Olive.

884 She often invoked Our Lord,

“Glorious God who resides in the Trinity,

Have pity on this wretched body

Who is being married by force.

888 Oh! Florent, father, how badly you judged

By not giving me to a man,

But instead thinking to take me as your own wife.

You would have done better to let me burn in a fire!

892 I fled your land

To escape the shame of your mortal sin,

And I have since then faced many perils.

I thought myself safe in Rome,

896 But now I find myself incriminated again,

For the king's daughter has fallen in love with me,

And I do not know how to get out of it.

If I tell them that I am really a woman,

900 They will immediately kill me and tear me to pieces,

Or tell my father the truth.

He will soon have me back if he finds out I am here,

And I will have to flee across the sea.

904 No matter how I look at it, I have made a bad mess of things,

For in any case, I have lied.

Since I have gained both Rome and honor,

I will marry the crowned king's daughter,

908 And may God do with me as he wishes.”



So she said to the king, "I will do as you please."

They went straight to the Church of Saint Peter,

Where Yde plighted her troth, and much joy was had;

912 The young men jousting in full armor,

And maidens sang and danced the carole.

The feast lasted a whole month,

And the time to have them wed was drawing near.

916 There were knights in great numbers

Who were eager to see Yde.

One day they went straight to the church

Where the Romans escorted Olive with the fair face,

920 While Yde was at the front, letting out great sighs.

She did not stop until they reached the church,

And that day they had her marry the maiden.

She took Olive for her wife and companion.

924 The king had given her his daughter as a wife

Because he thought Yde was a man.

They wore many a-silk brocade that day,

Many silk garments and fur coats,

928 And they feasted at the palace

As the minstrels delighted them.

Harps and vielles were heard playing,

Ladies and girls dancing and singing,

932 And youths conducted themselves most genteelly.

After the feast, when they had dined,

Each went back to their lodging.

### XVIII

Great was the rejoicing in the paved hall.

936 There were so many candles burning

That the whole city seemed ablaze.

The guests were appareled according to the customs of their countries.

When they had eaten, the great table was removed,

940 And they led Olive to the paved chamber,

Laying her down in bed and reclining her.

Yde came into the chamber, all wet with tears.

Securing and locking the room,

944 She came to the bed where her wife lay

And spoke to her softly and secretly thus:

“My sweet friend and faithful bride,

I bid you good night,

948 For I expect to have a very unpleasant night;

I have an ache which shakes my whole head.”

With these words, she embraced Olive,

Who, being well-advised, answered,

952 “Fair sweet friend, we are here in private,

And you are what I have desired most of all  
 Because of the goodness I have seen in you.

Do not think that I have thought

956 About wanting to make love.\*

I have never had the desire for such things,  
 But give me a reprieve of fifteen days  
 Until the guests have left,

960 So that I won't be mocked and ridiculed.

In that way, we will have remedy for our desire.

I feel that such goodness resides in you

That, if it please you, I would be excused from anything

964 Besides kissing. I would like to be embraced,

But with regard to that love which is called intimate,

I ask you to release me from it.”

Yde answered, “Noble and honored lady,

968 I will grant you all that pleases you.”

And with that they kissed one another and embraced.

No cry or quarrel was heard that night,\*

Which passed thus until the day rose again.

972 In the morning, the fair one got up,

Dressed and adorned herself richly,

And the queen went after her.\*

Oton examined his daughter closely that morning

976 To see if she was at all altered or changed.

“Daughter,” he said, “how do you find yourself married?”\*

“Sire,” she said, “exactly to my liking.”

At that, there was a great burst of laughter in the palace,

980 And Olive was embraced vigorously.

The feast lasted eight whole days,

Then people went back to their countries

After the fortnight had fully passed,

984 And Yde lay with her wife.

She did nothing more than talk to her as she was wont to

But did not pierce her organs with a lance.

Olive doubted herself harshly,

988 And she poked and nudged her companion.

Yde knew well what she was hoping for,

So she turned toward her and no longer hid it from her.

She told her the whole story from beginning to end:

992 That she was woman – and she begged for mercy –

That she had run away because of her father,

Away from her home into strange lands.

Olive was alarmed when she heard her

996 And comforted Yde very gently,

Swearing to her by the holy Virgin

That she would not tell her father, king Oton,

“My lord, who gave me to you.

1000 But take comfort,

Since you are safe in loyalty.

I will face my destiny together with you.”

A boy overheard their conversation.

1004 He swore to God that tomorrow Yde would stand accused,

And that she would have her soul severed from her body.

The night passed, and the dawn came.

The ladies rose in the morning,

1008 And the boy – cursed be his father’s soul! –

Came to the king in the paved hall.

He told him what he had heard,

That Yde, to whom he had given his daughter,

1012 Rome, and his whole country, was a woman.

When the king heard him, he changed color.

He said to the boy, “Holy sainted Virgin,

What did you say, you scoundrel, wretched traitor, ruffian?

1016 If this is not true, you will have your head cut off!”

“Sire,” he said, “it is the honest truth.

Take care to put it to the test yourself.”

The king wept, lowering his face,

1020 And thought about how it could be proven,

So he had a bath prepared in the paved hall.

He entered it and asked for Yde.

When she came in, the king commanded her,

1024 “Disrobe, and do not delay.

It would please me for you to come bathe with me.”

She answered, frightened,

## XIX

“Noble sir, king,” said Yde of the shapely body,

1028 “Please excuse me from this.”

The king answered, “You will remove all your clothes.

If what I was told is true,

I will have both of you burned at the stake.”

1032 Yde trembled, and Olive gasped.

On her knees, she begged for mercy from God.

The king summoned all his barons,

And related the whole matter in front of them.

1036 Weeping, he cried out to them,

“Lords,” he said, “what counsel will you offer me?”

“Have them burned!” they all shouted.

Then while Yde was shaking with fear,

1040 A light came down from the sky.

It was an angel, whom God had sent down.

The angel said to Oton, “Peace.

Jesus, King in majesty, asks

1044 You to bathe and let it be,

For I am telling you in truth

That you have a good knight in the young man, Ydé.

God sent him and given him out of kindness

1048 All that makes a man.

And let the boy go,” said the angel,

“He spoke truthfully to you, but all that is past.

This morning she was a woman, but now he is a man in the flesh.

1052 For God has power and might over everything.

Oton, good king, in eight days’ time, you will come

Into the other world and depart this one,

And you will leave your daughter with Yde.\*

1056 They will have a son who will be called Croissant.

In his coming, he will do much good

For people by whom he will be little loved,

And he will suffer from great poverty.”

1060 With these words, the angel left,

Who had so comforted those who were in Rome,

And on that day, Croissant was conceived.

Translation Notes

**13** The original “simplément” or “simply” has religious connotations. In other words, they went to the church “devoutly” or “with humility”.

**37** Literally, to God.

**52** The Old French “ciere membre” is an epic formula which appears in other *chansons de geste*, such as *Ami et Amile* (l. 1492). This appears to be a common trait of the ideal and beautiful knight, as is the case for Ami, according to Beatrix Koncz.

**85** “Suer” or “sister” is used as a term of endearment and does not denote a fraternal relationship.

**136** Literally, “may whoever taught her so well have a good heart”.

**200** This appears to be a prophetic intervention on the narrator’s part.

**201** Literally, “he will have an angry face.”

**245** Guis is the guard who appears in the previous sequel, *Clarisse et Florent*. Florent is imprisoned by his father, Garin, and Clarisse is speaking to him through a wall. The guard, who we now know as Guis, warns them of Garin’s spies, and helps the two lovers escape.

**247** The Old French “piece a que” means “it has been a long time that...”

**248** The original “esgarder” can also mean “be careful”. This might be a hint from the minstrel foreshadowing Florent’s questionable decisions and his barons’ objections later on.

**267** For an explanation of the laws concerning marriage and consanguinity, see pp. 60-61.

**288** Literally, “her hair curled at the back”.

**314** Literally, “has your reason changed?”

**370** Either modern-day Barcelona or a German city (see pp. 54-55).



**374** The Rogation Days occur on April 25<sup>th</sup> and the three days before the Ascension in May.

"Rogation Days". *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015. Web.

23 May. 2015 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/506750/Rogation-Days>>.

**405** This is the first time the narrator himself refers to Yde using the masculine form of her name.

**408** See explanation on page 60.

**409** For the sake of parallelism with the previous two lines, I have kept the feminine where the pronoun "le" in Old French could be either feminine or masculine. The following line seems deliberately ambiguous in the Old French.

**490** The thief appears to go from addressing Yde in the previous two lines to addressing the rest of his party. Though the change is subtle and potentially confusing in the written poem, we must imagine the minstrel acting out the exchange and giving physical cues to clarify what is going on in this scene.

**542** The narrator's voice comes through in the thief's speech pattern; this sounds a lot like one of the narrator's interjections.

**590** I place this sentence between parentheses because it appears to be a proverbial generalization made by the minstrel almost as an aside, as if to comfort the audience.

**713** The Old French "tor" literally means "tower".

**718** It is unclear whether the messenger is still reporting the king of Spain's oath, or if he himself is making a reproachful comment to Oton.

**796** In other words, "sword".

**826** It is both strange and interesting that the narrator does not tell us Yde's reaction at Olive's confession.

**881** Literally, “her blood moved”.

**956** An alternate translation would be: “About wanting to take our pleasure right away” (see explanation pp. 34 and 52-53).

**970** The French uses clearly martial vocabulary to describe the would-be love scene between the two heroines; it is not uncommon to describe the bedroom like a battlefield.

**974** “The queen” probably refers to Olive though she is not yet crowned.

**977** In other words, “coupled” or “united”, referring specifically to the sexual union between Olive and Yde.

**1055** It is curious that the angel uses the feminine (“Ydain” in the Old French) here after the supposed transformation, and continues to use the feminine version of the name into the *Croissant* section. The syllable count would have been the same if the angel had used the masculine oblique “Ydé”.

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APPENDICES  
A. Image from the Manuscript

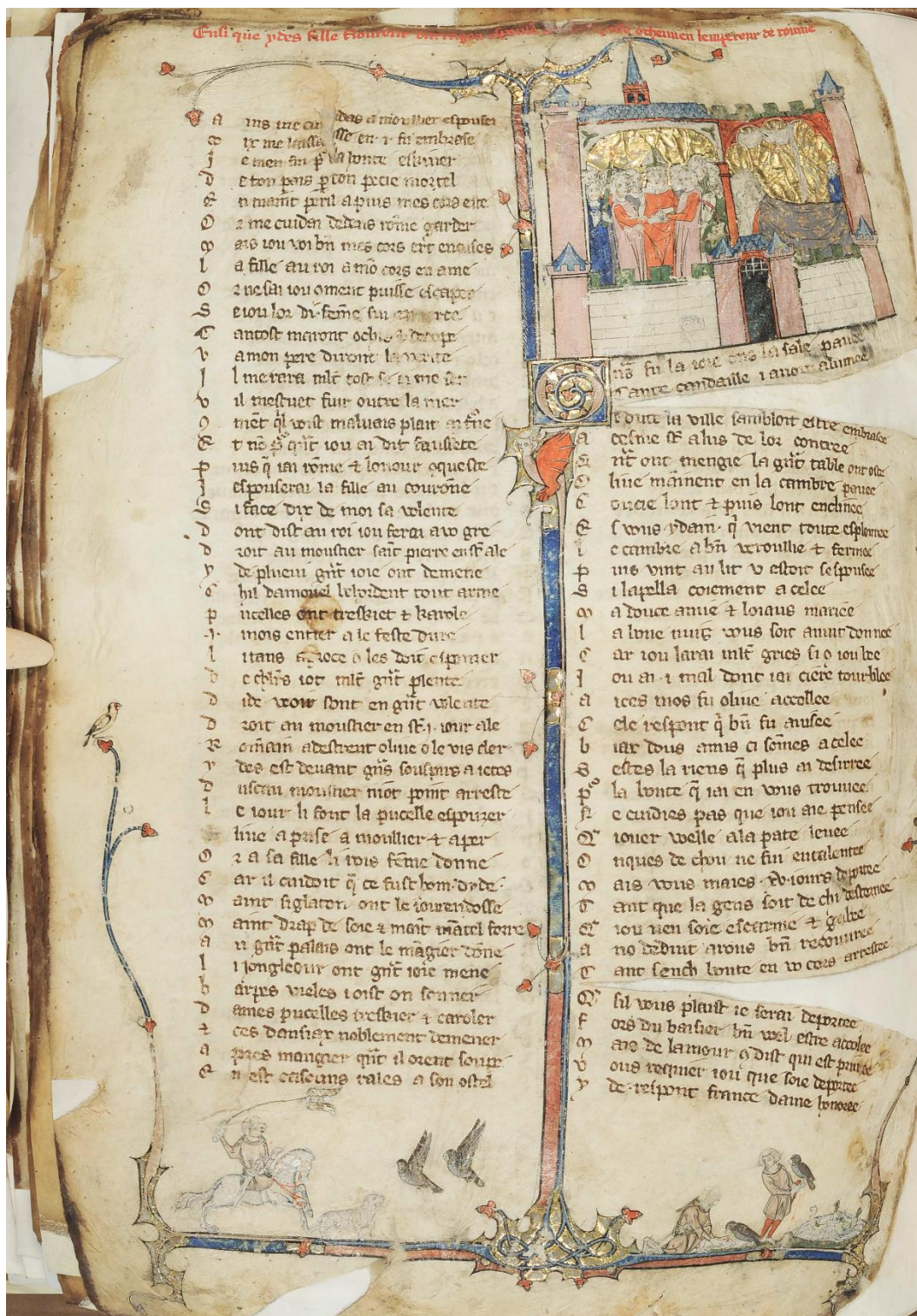


Figure 4: Ms. Turin L. II. 14, Fol. 394v. Printed here with kind permission from the Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino.

B. Exerpt from Manuscript R

The following appears in BnF 1451, f. 225r vv. 14-29. The stories of Yde and Croissant are summed up at the very end in a few short alexandrines. Hermann Schäfer's edition of some of the sequels in the two BnF manuscripts reproduces the summary in full<sup>1</sup>.

Summary

Et par jcelle paix don't je fais parlement  
 Fust fait vng mariage, se l'istore ne ment  
 De Clarisse la belle et du noble Flourent;  
 Mais n'est pas en ce liure, car jl prent finement,  
 Ains est ens ou rōmant, par le corps saint Climent,  
 De Croissant cilx de Rōme qui moult ost hardement,  
 Qui fust filx a la fille Clarisseo le corps gent  
 Qui par le voloir dieu, le pere omnipotent,  
 Fust cangiée sa char, le liure le m'aprent,  
 Et se devint uns homs o gré du sapient,  
 Ydé auoit a nom, le mien corps point ne ment;  
 Si espousa la fille l'empereur vrayment  
 De Rōme la majour qui moult ost hardement,  
 Qui ost nom Beatris, le corps auoit moult gent.  
 Et de ces deux segneurs dont je fais parlement  
 Jssit le ber Croissant, qui tant fust excellent

---

<sup>1</sup> Hermann Schäfer, *Über die Pariser Hss. 1451 und 22555 der Huon de Bordeaux-Sage; Beziehung der Hs. 1451 zur "Chanson de Croissant", die "Chanson de Huon et Callisse", die "Chanson de Huon, roi de féerie"* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1892) p. 33.

Translation

And from the peace I speak of  
 A marriage was brought about, if history tells us the truth,  
 Between the beautiful Clarisse and the noble Florent;  
 But it is not in this book, for this book ends here.  
 It shall be in a romance afterwards, by the body of St. Clement<sup>ii</sup>,  
 About the one named Croissant of Rome who was very valiant,  
 The son of Clarisse's daughter who was strong of body,  
 And who by the will of God, the omnipotent father,  
 Was changed in flesh, as the book informs me,  
 And became a man, by the will of the All-Knowing.  
 His/Her name was Ydé<sup>iii</sup>, I do not lie  
 S/he did marry the daughter of the emperor  
 Of Rome, the mighty, who was very valiant.  
 Her name was Beatris<sup>iv</sup>, and she was lovely in body.  
 To these two nobles of whom I have told you  
 Croissant was born, the man who was so admirable...

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<sup>ii</sup> A formulaic oath.

<sup>iii</sup> The editor uses the masculine form Ydé instead of the unaccented feminine form of the character's name. This makes the line adhere to the meter of the poem. It is not clear, however, if the subject of the verbs "avoit" (line 24) and "espousa" (line 25) is masculine or feminine, and this poses a problem for the translation. Yde was still a woman when she married the emperor's daughter, or at least that is what the version of the story in the Turin manuscript tells us. This passage illustrates the gender ambiguity embedded in the language of the text(s).

<sup>iv</sup> Olive is called Beatris in this version.

### C. Index of Proper Names

The following index relies largely on the information found in André Moisan's *Répertoire des noms propres de personnes et de lieux cités dans les chansons de geste françaises et les oeuvres étrangères dérivées* and Louis-Fernand Flutre's *Table des noms propres avec toutes leurs variantes figurant dans les romans du Moyen Age écrits en français ou en provençal et actuellement publiés ou analysés*.

Ainmeris 638 (Aimeris, Aymeri): Husband of Hermanjart, daughter of Désiiier de Pavie, cousin of Yde (Moisan vol. 1, 124).

Alars du Grong 792: A Spanish knight.

Alemaigne 369; Alemans (nom.) 387, 389, 400, 406, 422, 424, 427, 441, 455; Alemant (obl.) 381, 405, 444, 447, 452.

Arragonne 1, 24, 225, 346, 698; Arragone 172.

Betee (mer) 212: The frozen sea, possibly the Arctic Ocean (Moisan vol. 2, 1062).

Caillet (Mont) 759: Territory held by Embronchart, near Rome (Moisan vol. 2, 1089).

Castele 380: Castile.

Clarisse 8, 54, 84, 103, 109, 160: Mother of Yde, dies in childbirth, wife of Florent, daughter of Huon de Bordeaux and Esclarmonde.

Climens 17 : Priest of Aragon.

Croissans 1056, 1062 : Yde and Olive's son.

Désiiier de Pavie 337: King of Lombards, Florent's brother, Yde's uncle (Moisan 343).

Embronchart 758, 763: Nephew to the Spanish king, killed by Yde, Lord of Mont Caillet.

Espaigne 380, 521, 617, 707, 711; Espaignos (nom.) 790, 817; Espaignot (obl.) 426, 433, 451,

750, 784.

Florent (obl.) 3, 46, 72, 130, 209, 580; (nom.) Florens 1, 11, 14, 52, 56, 97, 152, 173, 182, 216, 219, 229, 246, 269, 273, 305, 322, 339, 347, 888: King of Aragon, son of Garin, father to Yde.

Garins 2, 26: Late king of Aragon, father to Florent.

Grisse (mer) 122, 814: Greece.

Gualerant d'Aubespine 786: A baron who comes to the Romans' aid against the Spanish.

Guillemer (l'Escot) 639: Baron of Charlemagne (Moisan vol. 1, 542), alleged relative of Yde.

Guis 245: Watch guard who comes to Florent's aid in *Clarisse et Florent*.

Hardré 640: One of the traitors at Roncevaux, brother to Ganelon, alleged relative of Yde (Moisan vol. 1, 558).

Jhesus 161, 1043; Jhesucris 265; Jhesuscrist 662.

Ide/Ides *see* Yde.

Namles 638 (Naimes): Duke of Bavière, adviser to Charlemagne, alleged relative of Yde (Moisan vol. 1, 727).

Nubie (destrier de) 543, 551.

Olive 628, 644, 689, 804, 919, 923, 940, 950, 980, 987, 995, 1032: Daughter of Oton, wife of Yde/Ydé.

Oton (obl.) 378, 385, 626, 630, 684, 811, 998, 1042, Otes (nom.) 632, 642, 721, 731, 737, 815, 827, 837, 849, 857, 975, 1053; Otés 660, 676: Emperor of Rome, father of Olive.

Pavie *see* Désiiier.

Pierron de Bus 780: Baron killed by Yde in battle.

Pont Elye 519: Yde claims to be from Pont Elye when she introduces herself to the thieves,

identified as Pontelier by Moisan (vol. 2, 1327).

Romme 378, 593, 623, 685, 701, 709, 739, 748, 828, 833, 895, 906, 1061; Rommenie 142,412,

520, 772, 797, 801, 1012; Rommain 602, 649, 710, 733, 919; Romain 835.

Roussie 533.

Saint Fagon 793: Facundus, a Spanish martyr (Moisan vol. 1, 396).

Saint Pierre 910: The church where Yde and Olive are married, perhaps St. Peter's Basilica?

Sainte Marie 60, 504, 755; Virge Marie 778; la Virge honoree 690, 997.

Sorbarrés 94, 115, 178, 244, 276: Chatelain of Montoscur in Bouguerie (Bulgaria), converted to

Christianity, friend to Clarisse and Florent, becomes one of Florent's advisers.

Terrascoingne 636: Yde introduces herself at "Ydé de Terrascoingne" to Oton.

Ybert 741: A baron at Oton's court (Moisan vol.2, 965).

Yde (fem. nom.) 71, 353, 357, 382, 384, 413, 438, 443, 448, 457, 476, 501, 519, 548, 563, 570,

583, 586, 611, 683, 684, 690, 761, 803, 881, 911, 967, 984, 989, 1005, 1011, 1022, 1027,

1032, 1039; Ide 430, 528; Ydee 728; Ydain (fem. obl.) 132, 202, 205, 292, 355, 391, 407,

516, 603, 623, 633, 722, 740, 942, 996, 1055; Ydes (masc. nom.) 519, 724, 747, 920;

Ides 405; Ydés 402, 657, 658, 852; Ydé (masc. obl.) 635, 650, 816, 819, 832, 837, 864,

875, 925, 1046; Idé 834, 917.