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INTENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT IN LA VIE DE SAINT THOMAS BECKET
BY GUERNES DE PONT-SAINTE-MAXENCE

A study of the aims of the poet in undertaking his work,
of the means and methods by which he proceeded, and an
evaluation of his success in achieving his aims

in THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME THREE
○

by JOHN ROBERT SIDDLÉ LITTLEFAIR

Submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the
University of Durham.

Department of French

1980

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TWO KINGS : HENRY II AND LOUIS VII

The intention was stated, at the beginning of the previous chapter, to follow closely the career of Thomas Becket throughout that period of his archbishopric - and this was overwhelmingly the major part of it - which he spent in adversity. In it was traced a perceptible and understandable tendency on the part of Guernes to incline our sympathies towards the archbishop, the sorrow of his plight, the justice of his stance, the piety of his behaviour as he defended what he saw to be the Church's inalienable rights. However, it would yet remain an unbalanced picture if we were not now to consider the poet's treatment of the other major figures in the story of Becket's life, and the first and most important of these must obviously be King Henry II. From a closer study of Henry's role in Becket's story, and more particularly the way in which the king is depicted by Guernes in his poem, we can gain a clearer picture of Guernes' treatment of his material and a better evaluation of how well this treatment corresponds to his avowed aims and intentions, which we investigated in Chapter III.

From a very early stage in Guernes' final version poem we may deduce that in his own mind there exists little doubt concerning the justice of Becket's stance. Indeed, we should



be very surprised that he should have undertaken such a work had grave doubts existed. But we must quickly appreciate that this approach at least implies a concomitant belief that King Henry was in the wrong, and Guernes does not hesitate long before presenting an aspect of this to his audience:

Faire soleit li reis as clers e force e tort.
 S'a forfait fussent pris, ja n'i eüst resort
 K'il nes feüst jugier as lais a lur scort.
 Cist Thomas les maintint; n'orent altre comfort.
 Pur els se combati tant k'en suffri la mort.

(Lines 36-40)

Thus early in his poem Guernes affirms that the king is in the wrong in the matter of the criminous clerks. This is an unequivocal statement, and one which the poet never seeks to review in the final draft of his poem. Such was not necessarily the case in the first draft, as we shall see. It is one of the tenets of his belief in the sanctity of the archbishop; as he states a little later in his poem, Guernes believes that Becket has suffered martyrdom par ceo que il maintint verité e raison.^(Line 120) Although he goes on to attack those directly responsible for the murder in the cathedral and to urge their immediate and contrite repentance, the fact that Becket has maintained the standards of truth and right suggests that the king has been opposed to these throughout the years of their conflict. Guernes argues this point strongly and forcibly early in his poem, thus establishing Becket in his audience's mind as the defender of God's Church, and Henry as the unreasonable aggressor:

Mult poëz bien veer mal conseil ot li reis.
 Il ne deit fere a clerc n'a iglise defeis
 Ne tolir rien del lur, mes mettre i pot acreis.
 De l'iglise prent il la corone e les leis.
 Mes Deus l'ament, ki est uns en persones treis!
 Bien est aparissant saint Thomas aveit dreit,
 Ki pur les clers surpris ainsi se combateit.
 Pur amur Deu le fist, si cum feire deveit.
 Deus li ad bien rendu, ki nullui ne deceit;
 Desdire nel pot nuls, car tut li munz le veit.

(Lines 56-65)

We shall return to the question of the advice which the king received shortly, but for the moment it is important that we recognise that almost from the outset Guernes has informed his audience unequivocally that Becket is in the right, and Henry is therefore in the wrong. Five lines a little later in the poem explain the poet's position clearly, if perhaps unintentionally, when he is telling us how he gathered the material from which to construct his poem:

Primes traitai d'oié, e suvent i menti.
 A Cantorbire alai, la verité oi;
 Des amis saint Thomas la verité cuilli,
 E de ces ki l'aveient des enfance servi.
 D'oster e de remettre le travail ensuffri.

(Lines 146-150)

We have already discussed in a previous chapter Guernes' revisions, both enforced and voluntary, of his work; what is

interesting here is what he considers to be valid and reliable sources for his information. He obviously regards it as quite sensible and satisfactory to seek information from those who had been Becket's friends, and those who had known and served him a long time. Even allowing for the differing outlook of the twelfth century from that of the twentieth, it must be remarked that such sources are unlikely to provide the poet with a wealth of material favourable to the king; indeed what they offered as fact would necessarily in some cases be little more than interpretation, and recollection divulged with the benefit of hindsight and a full knowledge of the outcome of the dealings between the king and the archbishop could scarcely fail to show the king in the unkindest of lights. Indeed, we shall see, with the benefit of the evidence of the fragment of the first draft of the poem, that in at least one significant instance, Guernes' opinion of the king changed radically for the worse. Moreover, we have observed in the preceding chapters that the Latin biographers whom Guernes consulted as written sources began from a standpoint not so widely different from his own as to improve materially the impression or picture of Henry II to be gained from a close study of them. It is true that none of them would have contemplated a work of the kind which he produced had he felt that a good case could be made out for the king's approach in the years of bitterness and struggle, or had his sympathies not lain so heavily with Becket.

It is interesting to pause for a moment in our consideration

of the hagiographers and notice, by way of comparison, how one of the chroniclers deals with the material. It is true that most of their accounts were only begun after Becket had been murdered in 1170, but even with the benefit of hindsight they are not writing with the same motivation as the Latin biographers.

Let us consider for a moment the account of Roger of Howden, or Hoveden. He probably did not begin to write his Chronica until the last ten years of the twelfth century; but before then his services had been used by Henry II, and the evidence which indicates that in the 1170s and 1180s Henry II used him both as ambassador and as negotiator on religious problems suggests that he was on the one hand not entirely hostile to the king, and on the other quite conversant with affairs of the Church. In that part of his Chronicle which deals with Becket's death, he does borrow quite heavily from the hagiographers but, as he was writing at a distance of some twenty years about one of the most famous and important events of the century, as Becket's life and death were undoubtedly seen by some, we may not find this too surprising.¹ Let us look, however, at a much earlier part of his chronicle, where he is discussing the initial stages of the quarrel between Henry and Becket:

"Eodem anno gravis discordia orta est inter regem Angliae et Thomam Cantuariensem archiepiscopum, de ecclesiasticis dignitatibus, quas idem rex Anglorum turbare et minuire conabatur; et archiepiscopus ille leges et dignitates ecclesiasticas modis omnibus illibatas conservare nitebatur,

Rex enim volebat presbyteros, diaconos, subdiaconos, et alios ecclesiae rectores, si comprehensi fuissent in latrocinio, vel mardo, vel feloniam, vel iniqua combustione, vel in his similibus, ducere ad saecularia examina, et punire sicut et laicum. Contra quod archiepiscopus dicebat, quod si clericus in sacris ordinibus constitutus, vel quilibet alius rector ecclesiae, calumniatus fuerit de aliqua re, per viros ecclesiasticos et in curia ecclesiastica debet iudicari; et si convictus fuerit, ordines suos amittere; et sic alienatus ab officio et beneficio ecclesiastico, si postea forisfecerit, secundum voluntatem regis et bailivorum suorum iudicetur.²

This must strike us as a fairly balanced appraisal of the differences which arose between the king and the archbishop, an attempt to state the position of each of them clearly and impassively. Roger does not attempt to explain the reasons or motives which prompted each to think and act as he did, and in this we can observe a clear difference between his approach and that of the hagiographers, a difference which we should now consider carefully as we look at the way in which Guernes deals with the part which Henry II played in the story of Becket's life.

Becket and Henry first come into contact when Theobald, Becket's predecessor as Archbishop of Canterbury recommends him to the king's service. We are promptly told that Becket le servise al rei (line 285) en nul liu n'entrobliet, that he serves the king with unswerving devotion:

Le rei de quanqu'il pot servi mult volentiers;
 En pensé e'en fet li fu del tut entiers.

(Lines 286-287)

However, within a matter of a few lines, we shall find Guernes qualifying his statement of Becket's unequivocal service to the king:

Mult ert humbles de quer, e de vis ert mult fiers.
 As povres huemles ert, as halz de fier reguart:
 Aigneals esteit dedenz, defors semlout lupart.
 Del rei servir a gré ne targa tempore u tart.
 Mes quel qu'il fust dehors, n'i ot point de mal art;
 A Deu guardot adès la dedenzeine part.
 Ja seit ceo que il fust orguillus e vains
 En cures seculers e en semblanz forains,
 Chastes ert de sun cors e en esprit sains;
 E ja seit ceo qu'il fust el servise al rei plains,
 De seint'iglise fu, tant cum pot, destre mains.

(Lines 290-300)

Now whilst this does not constitute a complete retraction of the poet's earlier statement, it does suggest a consciousness that to show Becket to be serving the king so wholeheartedly as to be to the detriment of the Church would imply a fault in the future archbishop. Nor does Guernes wish to impute any moral deviation on his part - indeed he goes on to recount the story of Avise of Stafford to make his point clear.

At the height of his secular powers as Chancellor of England, Becket was able to enjoy a rich and materially comfortable life;

it is a point which Guernes feels to need explanation, and he implies that if Becket erred at this time, it was not because he had ceased to serve God, but because Henry, however indirectly, was leading him away from God's path:

Cum plus crut e munta Thomas seculerment,
 Plus fu umles de quer, queus qu'il fust a la gent.
 Pur le rei mesfeseit en plusurs lius suvent,
 Mes vers Deu l'amendeit les nuiz priveement.
 Pur c'ad Deus tant ovré sur le bon fundament.

(Lines 331-335)

Guernes emphasises more than once Becket's steadfast service to the king, in the council chamber and on the battlefield, even if, as we have just seen in a passage which appears to be original, the future archbishop had to make his peace with God in the privacy of his own room once night came. The king, on the other hand, was so pleased with his chancellor that he decided, on the death of Archbishop Theobald, to try to make him Archbishop of Canterbury. It was only when Henry had made all the preliminary preparations and had cleared away the opposition of all the church leaders with the notable exception of the future Bishop of London, Gilbert Foliot, that the king seemed to hesitate and to seek a postponement of Becket's election. The reasons for such hesitation on the king's part seems obscure, and Guernes can only hazard guesses at what they might be:

Ne sai pur quei li reis s'en volt si tost retraire.
 Bien entendi, ceo crei, tut changot sun afaire;
 Ne mes sa volenté ne purreit de li faire,

Ne les dreiz seint'iglise ne lerreit pas detraire.
 Mes tut ceo que Deus volt ne pot nuls hom desfaire.
 U pur ceo que li reis vit bien e entendi
 K'il l'aveit lealment e par tut bien servi,
 Ne trovereit ja mes kil servist altresi,
 Or li pesot k'il ot sun servise guerpi.

(Lines 496-504)

There is probably a strong element of truth in the last four lines quoted here, but it is interesting that Henry, having instigated the procedures which led to Becket's becoming Archbishop of Canterbury, was unable to prevent or even delay the process because to do so would have been to go against God's will. God obviously saw Henry's initial idea as a better one and in a more favourable light than the king, on second thoughts, did himself:

Guernes now goes on, understandably, to relate the early days of Becket's archbishopric, explaining how devoutly and zealously he served God, the Church and his people, and for some considerable time we hear and learn nothing of King Henry. Having extolled Becket's virtuous service and delivered a sermon on the evils of the world and the true road to salvation, the first ominous chord is struck as Guernes concludes his remarks on Becket's outstanding qualities:

Asez avez oï^h quels il esteit jadis.
 Mordanz ert cume lous, quant l'ainel a surpris,
 Mesfaisanz ert e fers, e quereit los e pris;
 Or ert simples e dulz, despiseit vair e gris.
 E cum plus ama Deu, tant fu il del rei pis.

(Lines 731-735)

There is again an element of truth in this statement, but we should notice how skilfully the poet implies that, as all such earlier actions of the new archbishop as are deemed to be faults were done in the king's service, they were pleasing to Henry - culpably so. Moreover, adopting a rather more moral and righteous tone, the poet is able to increase the impression of a gulf between God's path and that trodden by the king and those who serve him, without actually stating it in such bald terms:

Car si tost cum il fu sacrez a cel'honor,
 De la parole Deu se fist preecheür,
 E del tut entendi al souverain seignur.
 Ne sai se pur ceo l'a reis pris en haür,
 Mes d'iloec en avant l'esluina de s'amur.

(Lines 736-740)

It is to become a common device with Guernes that when he wishes to imply a degree of criticism of the king, he tells us that he does not know why Henry should have acted in the way in which he did. Whereas with many of Becket's actions, certainly with those which may strike the audience as unusual, Guernes makes an effort to justify or rationalise them, he makes little effort to explain the king's actions and decisions in the same way, but gives us deliberately the impression that he is shaking his head sadly in the belief that the king must surely be misguided. We shall return to the question of guidance, or advice, shortly. For the moment let us continue our consideration of the initial differences which arose between the king and his new archbishop.

The first cause of contention between them, Guernes tells his audience, arose over Becket's resignation of the chancellorship:

Le premier maltalent vus sai jeo bien mustrer.
 Car al rei enveia maistre Ernulf ultre mer:
 Sun seel li rendeit, ceo li manda li ber.
 Dunc se prist durement li reis a emflamber:
 "Pur les olz Deu, fet il, nel voldra mes garder?
 "J'ai lettres e cungié, fet il, pleneirement,
 K'il pot estre arceveske, chancelier ensement.
 - Nu l'iert, fet mestre Ernulf; a estrus le vus rent;
 Car mult est il chargié de ceo qu'a lui apent.
 N'a suin de mun servise, fet li reis, bien le sent."

(Lines 741-750)

Guernes does not choose to dwell on this incident - seeking neither to explain Becket's action, for once, other than in the words of the message which he sends to the king, nor to comment upon the king's reaction. Instead he chooses to pass quickly on to the second issue, which he also treats with relative brevity. This concerned the "sheriffs' aid", which the king wished to have paid directly to the exchequer, whilst Becket found reason to object to this. Apart from reporting the oaths exchanged between the two men at Woodstock over the matter, Guernes passes over this incident in a mere twenty lines; nor does he pass any opinion, or even hint at one, on the subject. We can only speculate as to what the reasons for what such reticence may be. Perhaps the poet felt that the archbishop's case did not require any bolstering argument,

or perhaps a desire to continue with dramatic haste the unfolding division between Henry and Becket impelled him to treat the incident briefly. But we may at least suspect that the poet felt that Becket was not on strong ground, and it might be more prudent not to argue the case; if this is so, he certainly gives no encouragement to those among his audience - and he would scarcely expect them to be numerous - who might seek some degree of justification for the king's point of view and actions. As Guernes presents the material, Becket, answering the king oath for oath, has the last word in the argument.

The third instance of disagreement recorded by Guernes was the case of Philip de Brois, a canon who had been acquitted in the ecclesiastical courts of the charge of murdering a knight. Henry, incensed, wanted the canon brought before his own court. Eventually he has to be satisfied, according to Guernes, with a loyal oath from the monks that their judgment, that Philip should be banished from his prebend for a period of two years and that the king should receive the revenue from it for that period, had been justly arrived at. But despite the fact that this unusual form of assurance was duly given, Guernes closes this incident by giving us the king's reaction: dunc s'est li reis desveza.^(Line 925) He has not given us any arguments to support the ecclesiastical faction, nor has he attacked the opposing point of view; the king's extreme anger serves, perhaps, to discredit him sufficiently in this matter. It serves, certainly, to mark him out as a volatile, unpredictable, extreme and perhaps untrustworthy adversary in any dispute, and this would surely be in the poet's mind as he treats in quick

succession each of these three early disagreements between Henry and Becket.

By this time we have sensed the impatience of the king with his unsatisfactory dealings with the clergy, and we now learn how he set about finding what he hoped would prove a definitive solution to the problem. Having assembled the bishops, he required them to promise allegiance to and obedience of the customs of the realm, as established by his grandfather Henry I. The bishops agreed to do this, saving their order; but Henry II wanted no mention of this saving clause, and would accept none. Becket then demanded to know of the assembled bishops if they stood firm with him in their opposition to the king's plan; all were in agreement that they did. But various parties began to attempt to persuade Becket to change his mind, stating that the king neither wished nor intended harm to the Church; a group of the bishops, including the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Chichester and the Bishop of Lincoln were all persuaded by the king, following the advice of Arnulf, Bishop of Lisieux, to argue his case to Becket. (Line 855)
For the first time, we hear the phrase veintre l'arceveske. But Becket resists their approaches. It is eventually the influence of Philippe de l'Almodne which is effective, and so convincing were his assurances that the king had no malicious intent, that Becket finally went with him to Woodstock to inform the king that he would observe the customs of the realm.

The king, however, would now not be satisfied with Becket's assurances to this end unless they were made in public, since the archbishop's opposition had equally been open and public. Thus

Becket had to travel to Clarendon, regretting greatly that he had given way at all to the blandishments of Philippe de l'Almodne, and refusing now to repeat his oath in public. This produced an angry and extreme reaction from the king, which Guernes reports as follows:

Quant le rei nel pot veintre, n'i ot que corecier.

Mes les ordenez Deu manace a detrenchier;

Seint'iglise voldra, se il poet, trebuchier.

Ne se volt l'arceveske de rien humilier

Pur chose dunt li reis le sace manacier.

(Lines 931-935)

Thus we see on the one hand Becket's steadfastness and courage, on the other the seemingly inexplicable rage and violent intent of the king. Guernes does not attempt any discussion of the issue, but in the light of his account, we can judge that none would be necessary, for by his very presentation of the evidence he would have won the sympathies of his audience for the cause of the archbishop far more successfully than any reasoned argument of the issues involved could have achieved. The fact that Becket feels that submission to the king's will in this instance would be wrong seems to be proof enough of the case in the archbishop's favour. However, this is not a point which Guernes would care to carry too far, because he would be bearing in mind subsequent events; the process of persuasion was begun once again, this time to induce the reluctant archbishop to make a public avowal of his observation of the customs. At length, after various

delegations had attempted to persuade him to this end, the archbishop reconsiders the condition, and ultimately agrees to make the required public statement. Guernes treats the material in the following way:

Or veit li arceveske k'il l'unt tant agacié;
 Veit le rei et les suens forment prons en pèchié,
 Seint'iglise en trebuch, e lui e le clergié,
 E creit ke il avra ja del rei l'amistié.
 Cels veit mult renomez ki li unt conseillié.

(Lines 976-980)

Thus the poet would seem to suggest that it is not for his own benefit that Becket gives way. But if Guernes has skilfully explained the apparent inconsistency between Becket's agreement here and his earlier, indeed very recent obstinacy - a matter of some forty lines in Guernes' poem - he shows no such concern to explain to his audience the king's next demand. For Henry was not content with the ground given by Becket, but went on immediately to insist that the customs be written down and that the archbishop put his seal to them. He duly has them copied out, and brought to his presence:

Dunc fu lit li escrit, oiant tut le tropel.
 "Seignur, fet dunc li reis, n'ai soin de plet novel.
 Or voil que l'arceveske i pende sun seel."
 L'arceveske respunt: "Fei que dei Deu le bel,
 Ceo n'iert, tant cume l'anme me bat' en cest vessel
 Car cil ki li aveient icest conseil loé,

E li privé le rei, l'orent aseuré,
 Se le rei en avreit de parole honoré,
 E veant sun barnage li oust greanté,
 Ne sereit a nul tens escrit ne recordé;
 E li reis en fereit tute sa volenté,
 E tuz curuz sereient entr'els dous parduné.
 Or l'i curent del tut de covenant falsé.
 Or ne fera mes plus; trop a avant alé,
 E pesot li que tant en avait trespasé.

(Lines 1006-1020)

Guernes is following very closely here the account of Edward Grim;³ both writers make a point of mentioning the fact that Henry had no intention, if he received a verbal assurance of the archbishop's and the bishops' acquiescence, of having the customs written down and sealed by them; it seems strange that such a thought should ever have occurred to Becket, if the king's party had given no indication that such a manoeuvre was being contemplated, for the move seems to have been without precedent, and therefore Becket would have had little cause to fear it. On this occasion, Becket is adamant, leaves without signing, and, to demonstrate his repentance and chagrin at his own conduct, suspends himself from his office. The king refuses to negotiate unless he has an assurance that Becket will sign, which effectively rules out all possibility of negotiation; he is advised to ask the pope to approve the constitutions, but the pope refuses to do so. This hardly improves the king's temper, but he is advised to seek a legation

for Roger, Archbishop of York, which will have the effect of lessening greatly the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury:

Quant veit li reis Henris del tut est repuiez,
 Vers l'arceveske fu mult durement iriez,
 E a pris conseil cument il ert pleissiez.
 Dunc fu de mals engins sis conseilz esforciez;
 Mult volentiers se fust, se il poust, vengiez.
 Dunc li unt conseillié e privé e baron:
 S'il poeit de la pape aver greanteison
 Qu'a celui d'Everwiz doinst la legation,
 L'arceveske purra pleissir tut a bandon.
 Tut vendra a son pié, u il bien voile u non.

(Lines 1046-1055)

The pope granted only a very limited legation, in fact, and to Henry himself, according to Guernes, not to Roger. Henry did his best to exaggerate its power, scope and importance, but he finally sent it back to the pope in disgust.

The picture which Guernes gives us of the whole of this episode is, as we have seen, heavily weighted to show the archbishop in the most favourable light, revealing his thoughts, the motives which prompted his actions, the pressures to which he was subjected, the struggle with his own conscience. On the other hand, we are not forewarned of Henry's actions; each is revealed to the audience with no prior warning, and with none of the consideration which precedes or accompanies each stage of Becket's side of the story. This treatment can only serve to increase the impression which the poet's audience would gain of

the king as a capricious, volatile, extreme and inconsiderate figure who seems bent on persecuting and harassing the Archbishop of Canterbury into an abject submission to his will. This is achieved without any overt statement that the king is wrong or even unreasonable in his actions or demands, but the audience could scarcely fail, from Guernes' presentation of the material, to interpret events in that manner. Henry is made, in the instance of the written or unwritten customs, to appear guilty of an act of duplicity which, even without all the instances of his excessive demands, would do much to damage him in the esteem of those listening to or reading the poem. The episode is concluded by the king's returning of Roger's legation to the pope, and the venting of his anger and frustration on the Church and those who serve her:

Quant il n'en put faire el, griefment li anuia,
 E a pape Alissandre les letres renveia.
 E clers e saint'iglise durement guerrea,
 E par tut la u peut les clers forment greva,
 E mult mortal semblant l'arcevesque mastra.

(Lines 1101-1105)

Guernes now passes on to consider the issue of the criminous clerks. The question of traditio curiae was discussed at length in the first chapter, and again in the previous chapter. However, it is worth reiterating that in the initial stages of his discussion of this question, Guernes, who evidently feels strongly on the subject, goes to great lengths to explain the reasons and justifications for Becket's stance in defending the criminous clerks

from the possibility of double punishment, but gives no explanation at all of the king's point of view; rather he seeks only to emphasise the stark brutality to which Henry was prepared to subject those whom he wished to punish:

De tut iço ne volt li reis rien graanter.
 Nes en larra ensi en nule guise aler;
 Mais tut ainceis les volt faire desordener,
 A la justise puis les cumande a livrer,
 A pendre u a ardeir u vifs a desmenbrer.

(Lines 1131-1135)

It was these extreme measures proposed by the king, and against which Becket fought, seemingly single-handed, that Guernes had uppermost in his mind at the beginning of his poem when he told us, in the first mention of the king, that faire soleit ^(Line 36) li reis as clers e force e torta. When Henry discovers that Becket intends to make an inflexible stand to protect his clergy, we learn once more of his great anger and his threat to gain revenge:

Quant veit li reis Henris que veintre nel purra,
 Ne que les clers forfaiz desfaire ne lerra,
 Mult durement vers lui en ire s'enflamba;
 E tresbien li pramet que il l'abaissera,
 E la u il le prist, que il le remetra.
 Lungement ad duré entre els dous cist estris.
 L'arcevesque ne puet flechir li reis Henris;

(Lines 1176-1182)

Guernes goes on to attack the other bishops for abandoning Becket in his struggle against the king, and warns the latter not to trust their mal conseil(Line 1221), and follows this with a long justification of the interpretation adopted by Becket in the dispute over the criminous clerks, which we have already considered in the previous chapter. It was in an attempt to resolve the situation that the king summoned all the barons and the bishops to the Council of Northampton.

Guernes here reports events with relative rapidity, perhaps conscious that he has just interrupted the flow of events with his lengthy exposition of the issue of the criminous clerks. He shows the king to be quite intransigent in his determination that Becket shall answer the charges brought against him. It cannot be said that the poet inveighs against the king in this instance, but even so the king is scarcely shown to be helpful or conciliatory towards Becket. He treats with scant respect reports that Becket is ill, is reluctant to grant what seems a perfectly reasonable and justified appeal for a delay, will not allow the archbishop to go to see the pope. When Becket falls at his feet and appeals for mercy, the king merely replies "Par les oilz Deu...or m'avez vus huni."(Line 1475). We are told that he leaves Becket's presence and goes to another room de maltalent e d'ire e tainz e tressuez.(Line 1477). When he learns that the other bishops will not give him the judgment against Becket which he desires, we are told that he is en grant ire(Line 1496), that he is filled par mautalent(line 1498). When Becket is eventually granted a respite because of his illness, it is given de part le rei(line 1536) by the

Earl of Leicester and the Earl of Cornwall, and with no good grace, we may suspect, on the part of the king. Nowhere does Guernes dare to tell us that the king's behaviour is unreasonable, but it is difficult to read his poem and not to come to the conclusion that it was.

Although when he consults his bishops, Becket receives advice that he should not go into the court dressed in his archbishop's robe and carrying his cross before him, and that de pes en purra l'un vers le rei mielz parler,^(Line 1595) he refuses to heed this advice. The advice, we should note, is given by one who, according to Guernes, rien ne s'en desheite e le conseil le rei e aguisse e receite.^(Lines 1576-1577) Thus Becket sets off for the king's court, but with a deep sense of foreboding:

Mult reduta le rei e sun fier maltalent.
 Del tut le cunut bien senz nul receilement,
 Cumme cil qui l'aveit servi mult longement.
 E sout bien que li reis le haï durement,
 E que mult poi amis ot a cel parlement.

(Lines 1621-1625)

Having given us this inauspicious picture, the poet dwells on the nature of the king's hatred of the archbishop:

Mult m'esmerveil pur quei li reis si le haï,
 Se pur ço nun qu'il ot sun servise guerpi,
 E sun conseil del tut, e de lui departi,
 E qu'il s'osa drecier vers lui n'einsi n'einsi.

(Lines 1626-1629)

Guernes expresses himself in ignorance of why the king should feel such intense hatred towards his former friend, and does so moreover in a way which could only suggest to his audience that the king's behaviour was beyond rational explanation. He goes on to add that their former friendship only serves now to increase the intensity of Henry's hatred, and adds, as a stern warning:

Curuz de rei n'est pas gius de petit enfant.

Qu'il comence a hair, seit pur poi u pur grant,

Ja mais ne l'amera en trestut sun vivant.

(Lines 1636-1638)

As Becket is about to enter, Guernes tells us of Henry's anger, and how he has been misled by ire e malveis conseil (Line 1696). The king has also failed to take into account that Becket is no longer the man he knew as his friend. As Guernes tells us, trestut esteit changiez: sainz Espirz en lui fua.^(Line 1700) The barons dissuade the king from raising the issue of the criminous clerks, for fear of uniting all the bishops behind Becket, whereas, as matters stand, the bishops seem to be far from offering him wholehearted support. Again the poet tells us that he is not fully aware of the king's motives, but none of the alternatives which he suggests reflects much credit on Henry:

Je ne sai se li reis l'out fait apareillier

Qu'il volsist l'arcevesque faire ocire u lier;

Mais einsi li vint huem le jur sovent nuncier.

Puet cel estre li reis le voleit esmaier,

Que il le peüst mielz par manaces plaissier.

(Lines 1711-1715)

Henry then prevails upon the other bishops to intercede with Becket in an attempt to make him concede to the king's way of thinking, but Becket dismisses their approaches, stating that Deu het tricherie e tut' iniquité^(line 1735). Henry, thwarted in this advance, gives the bishops leave to appeal to the pope against their own archbishop, as he is told that in this way Becket may be deprived of the see. Again Guernes tells us that he does not know what is in the king's heart or mind at this time, but we may be fairly assured that little of it is favourable towards Becket. Indeed, when Henry learns that the Archbishop of Canterbury is now claiming that he was absolved from all debts at the time of his election, Guernes tells us that the king devint vermeilz plus que carbuns sur cendre (line 1852).

We have already looked at the famous incident in the court at Northampton when Becket defied the assembled nobles and bishops and refused to allow them to pass judgment on him, their spiritual father. It is interesting to note not only Henry's reaction when he learned of the potential danger to the archbishop, but his motives for wishing to avert it, and also the division of those present at the incident into two distinct camps, those who supported Henry and those who supported the archbishop, and the kind of people the poet ascribes to each group:

Li malvais qui quidierent le rei servir a gré,
 E garçuns e putains, unt saint Thomas hué
 E derochié de torges; car Randul l'out rové.
 Mais cil qui Deu cremirent e qui l'orent amé,
 En unt od grief suspir celeement pluré.

Dunc fu al rei nuncié cum hum le fist huer,
 E que l'um le voleit e laidir e tuer:
 Li reis sereit huniz s'um nel laissout ester.
 Dunc comandà li reis e fist par ban crier^u
 C'um laissast quitement lui e les suens aler.

(Lines 1941-1950)

It might be wrong to suggest that such was not in fact Henry's main motive in ordering that Becket should have a safe conduct from the hall, and certainly it is hardly the most creditable of reasons for allowing him to leave unscathed. But we should note the degree of opprobrium which the poet attaches to those who take the king's part as opposed to those who, however privately, support the archbishop. A little later, when the king has been told of a plea for clemency for Becket's followers, the king issued the order that they should be permitted to depart without harassment. The king receives no credit for this action from the poet.

Guernes does not directly report any further actions on the part of King Henry for some five hundred lines, at which juncture he has angrily discovered the archbishop's flight to the continent and has sent ambassadors to King Louis of France in a vain attempt to have Becket sent back to England, (Louis sees through their mult grant trecherie e decevabete^(line 2280)) and his earlier attempts to prevent Becket from leaving the country are reported. In the meantime, Guernes has taken the opportunity to enumerate the proposed Constitutions of Clarendon which Henry has sent to the pope in the hope of having them approved. But

Guernes does not allow the Constitutions to pass without comment or criticism of what the king was proposing, and perhaps the most important attack on the king in this section, and certainly the longest, concerns the king's lack of charity, an accusation which is heartfelt on the part of the poet, because he has suffered from it at first hand:

-Jo ving en plusurs lius que li reis out saisiz:
 N'esteit nuls des hostes ne povres recueilliz;
 Jo fui defors la porte del portier escundiz;
 Carité n'i fu pas, c'entendi a ses diz.
 Li reis prist tut fors tant dunt li lius ert furniz.
 Muine e cou e sergant, escuier e garçun,
 Chascuns aveit sun pain a dreite livreisun;
 Kar li serjant le rei erent en la maisun,
 Qui al partir la mistrent en tel destructiun,
 N'i trovisiez d'estor nis le menur chapun.
 La fait li reis vers Deu e vers le liu mesprise,
 E as baruns ki pere establirent l'iglise.
 Car il funt de lur fiu tut plenier le servise,
 E il prent lur aumosne, en sun tresor l'ad mise,
 Qui deüst estre as povres e en buen liu asise.-

(Lines 2491-2505)

It ill befits the king, Guernes tells us, to claim that such seizure of what does not belong to him should become part of the written custom of the realm. This is one of the most direct criticisms of the king which the poet allows himself;

no doubt he felt that as the pope rejected so many of the proposed constitutions, including this one, he was safe to do so, and personal involvement would impel the highly critical tone which he uses.

When Guernes at length returns to Henry and tells us how he received the news that Becket has fled from Northampton, he immediately gives us a very long catalogue of the outrages committed in the name of the king against his followers. The cruel excesses of the king are retold in the following terms:

Quant ot li reis Henris l'arcevesque s'en fuit,
 Durement s'en marri, e si conseilhier tuit.
 Tuz les porz funt guaitier e de jur e de nuit,
 Qu'il n'i puisse passer od plain chalant n'od vuit.
 Mais pur neent le fait, car Deus l'en ad conduit.
 Quant nel poent trover en trestut' Engleterre,
 Ne trover nel purrent, s'a Sanz ne l'augent querre,
 Sun maualent e s'ire li reis mustre e desserre.
 As parenz saint Thomas ad prise si grant guerre
 Que tuz les fist chacier hors de tute sa terre.
 Tuz les en fist chacier, e hummes e muilliers,
 Les clers enpersonez, burgeis e chevaliers,
 Od filles e od fiz, od enfanz laitieniers.
 Tut saisi en sa main, e terres e mustiers,
 E vif avoir e mort, blé, rentes e deniers.
 Tute l'arcevesquié aveit il nis saisie,
 En rentes e en fuis, en autre manantie;
 E a Randuf del Broc l'a livree en baillie,
 Qui tute a l'ues le rei ad la rente cuillie.

Del tut n'en pout avoir li sainz une demie.
 De rien n'i pout avoir li sainz hum recovrier;
 Ne nuls de tuz ses clers n'i osa repairier,
 Ne nuls des suens n'i out a beivre n'a mangier,
 Ainz les ad fait li reis fors del païs chacier.
 Tut ad pris a sun ués tresqu'a un sul denier.
 Ensi en sunt chacié li parent saint Thomas.
 Vunt en autre païs dolent, chaitif e las,
 E portent lur enfanz, lur robes e lur dras.
 Veir se dit li vilains que "de si haut si bas":
 Ainceis erent manant, or n'en i ad nul cras.

(Lines 2566-2595)

This passage is worth studying in considerable detail, for it reveals several interesting features. The king's anger and its repercussions are retold in deliberately great detail, to emphasize the extent of the desolation and cruelty wreaked on innocent parties merely to satisfy the king's rage and frustration. No attempt is made at mitigation; the actions of Henry are portrayed as gratuitous violence born of a pure desire for revenge. There is no other motivation. It is true that Guernes feels strongly the lot of the poor, and his sympathies are always with them. His sense of wrong is fully justifiable in the light of what he has told us, but we should note that he has developed the theme rather more fully than his principal written source, Edward Grim.⁴ The contrast between Henry and Becket is even more starkly drawn when the

poet goes on immediately to recount how the archbishop in his self-imposed exile pitifully received his people and drew consolation from examples of persecution and oppression to be found in the Bible, from Abraham, from Joseph, and from the New Testament from the infant Jesus in mortal peril from Herod.⁵

This is followed by an account of more oppression and restriction on the part of Henry, threatening those who appealed to Rome with prison, appropriating St. Peter's Pence, and, if we can believe Guernes and his written source here, Edward Grim,⁶ threatening prison and death to anyone caught bringing letters from Rome:

Se nuls aportast brief, e fust aparceüz,

Qui de Rume venist, tost fust pris e penduz.

(Lines 2669-2670)

These charges, together with the assertion made earlier that the king was depriving the supporters of Becket of their lands and possessions, are repeated more than once by the poet in subsequent lines.

Guernes' anger and indignation at the king's oppressive measures at one juncture find their expression in what appears to be a piece of very heavy irony; this concerns the question of St. Peter's Pence, which, Guernes tells us, Henry has diverted from the pope into his own coffers. Guernes continues:

Selunc mun jugement li reis aver le deit:

Apostolies, legaz, arcevesques esteit.

Se pape u arcevesque sa terre entrediseit,

Senz cruiz e senz estole li reis les asoilleit.

N'i poeit saint'iglise vers li mustrer nul dreit.-

(Lines 2741-2745)

We almost begin to imagine that Guernes' allegiance has most

dramatically switched to the king, until we realise that his voice must be heavy with irony. He is telling his audience that, if Henry can fulfil the roles of pope, legate and archbishop with such ease and efficiency, as he seems to think he is doing, then surely the Church can have no possible claim to St. Peter's Pence in the face of such a strong case as that which the king can offer. There is no extant written source for this passage, and its tone and its content both suggest that the French poet has constructed this piece of irony himself. It is a rare example of the use of irony by Guernes. Clearly, Guernes' true meaning is quite different from the one which his actual words convey, and no doubt the tone of the poet's voice would leave little room for confusion in the minds of his audience. We too should perceive the intended criticism of King Henry which is contained in these lines.

There now follows the section in which Guernes gives a faithful rendering into French of correspondence between the archbishop on the continent, and England. Guernes translates Becket's Exspectans expectavi and Desiderio desideravi, the letter of the English bishops to Becket, Quae vestro pater, and Becket's reply to this, Mirandum et vehementer stupendum. We have already considered the contents of these letters, noting how Becket accuses his clergy of a weak and pusillanimous approach to the dispute with the king, and how the letters to the king are full of historical and biblical illustrations of

Becket's interpretation of the relationship between the head of the church and the head of the state, and how he refutes the clergy's accusations that his approach and intransigent stand are endangering the safety and future of the church.

These letters occupy considerable space in the poem, which reflects the importance which the poet attaches to them.

He wishes his audience to be aware of the nature of the dispute; there can be little doubt that his sympathies lie entirely with Becket; if the amount of space which the poet gives over to an accurate translation of Becket's letters did not convince us of this, his own comments, attacking the English bishops and reinforcing Becket's arguments, must surely do so. He notes with some satisfaction that part of the bishops' letter which admits that:

Ne dium que le reis n'ait mesfait e mespris,
Mais il est par tut prez de l'amender tuzdis.

(Lines 3286-3287)

No doubt Guernes was only too pleased to reproduce all Becket's arguments to demolish the case presented by the bishops. (Guernes tells us that it is sent by Foliot in the name of all the English bishops.) He agrees with Becket in his stance, mistrusts the king's avowed desire for peace, and, when he is reporting Becket's two visions, is particularly virulent in portraying the king, stating once le rei quil haï senz raisun (Line 3639) and once li reis, qui mult le het. The King has not forgotten the archbishop in exile, but regards him as sun mortel enemi. He

tells us of the further drastic measures which the king proposes against the Cistercian order in England if their counterparts at the abbey of Pontigny, where Becket spent the first two years of his exile, do not expel him forthwith:

(Jo crei bien que li reis lur out fait denuncier
 Qu'il les fereit tuz fors de sa terre chacier,
 S'il ne faiseient d'els l'arcevesque esluignier.)

(Lines 3708-3710)

We shall return shortly to the reaction of the King of France in this matter.

It is only when Henry has learned that Becket was enjoying the protection of King Louis, Guernes tells us, that the series of conferences aimed at a reconciliation between Becket and Henry was begun; again we shall return shortly to the part played by Louis in this process, but for the moment we should consider the role of King Henry in the conferences, and how he approached the problem of a reconciliation with his former friend. Before the first meeting at Saint-Légier-en-Yvelines, Guernes tells us:

E as baruns de France duna tant reis Henris
 Que par granment doner les fist tuz ses amis,
 E tut quida aveir le conseil del país.

(Lines 3811-3813)

Although Guernes passes no further comment on this, and although the two kings seemingly agreed not to harbour each other's enemies in their territories, nothing positive came of this encounter; Henry's initial approaches read and sound tantamount

to an attempt to bribe the opinion of the French to adopt his view of the affair.

The next meeting, again instigated by the good offices of King Louis, was due to be held at Pontoise, but once Henry learned that the pope was to be present, he did not continue, but turned back. Guernes passes no further comment. There is no written source for this meeting, and the only allusions to any conference at or near Pontoise make it impossible for the pope to have been present; thus such cannot be a reason for Henry's failure to attend, but the incident as retold by Guernes reflects no credit at all on Henry.⁷

According to Guernes, at the next meeting at Nogent-le-Rotrou, again instigated by Louis, Henry has no desire for a reconciliation; (Line 3976)
Mais li reis d'Engleterre n'out suing de l'acorder. This causes even the hopeful Louis to despair of ever bringing Henry to a satisfactory accommodation:

Fait il: "De vostre acorde n'avrai ja mes fiance;
 Mais ainceis en oi jo tut adès esperance.
 Car al rei d'Engleterre truis jo si grant bobance
 Qu'il ne m'en volt oïr, n'en conseil n'en oiance.

(Lines 4007-4010)

There followed a conference at Montmirail, at which two cardinals from Rome, Guernes tells us, who were devoted to the king's cause, would willingly have deceived the archbishop. Moreover, the king had given them some hopeful reassurances:

Li reis lur dist que tant se volt humilier
 Qu'il free l'arcevesque quanqu'il voldrunt jugier,

E quanque saint'iglise en voldra otrier,
 Se c'est que l'arcevesques s'i volsist apuier.
 "Si fera, funt li il; ço ne puet il laissier."

(Lines 4021-4025)

But the effect of the king's apparently generous offer is immediately vitiated when Guernes recounts the vision which Becket had warning him of the king's intended duplicity and treachery. Thus, the following day, Becket firmly demands full restitution before negotiations can be opened. He then leaves, and no satisfactory conclusion is reached. If the king finds reason to prevaricate, Guernes gives us the impression, as we have seen, that he is gravely at fault. If Becket, holding to the substance of a dream, firmly opposes the king, then we are to applaud his steadfast wisdom and determination. The distinction could hardly be more clearly drawn for us, and it reveals equally where the poet's sympathies lie. At the following conference, again, according to the poet, held at Montmirail, the king asks that the archbishop should observe the customs of the realm as they existed in the time of his ancestors. When Becket refuses once again, the king replies "il n'a cure de pais - veez cum jo li faz amur e grant relais" (Lines 4112-4113). Not surprisingly, all present urge Becket to give way, especially when the king offers to abide by the judgment arrived at by three French bishops chosen by Becket. The latter will agree that this should be so sauf sun ordre^(Line 4127). The king's answer to this is almost predictable:

Li reis jure cel mot en estuvra oster:

Par cel mot le voldreit, ço dist, ensoffimer.

De tutes parz li dient qu'il laist cel mot ester.

(Lines 4128-4130)

Becket will not do so. The king sees trecherie-e engin (Line 4137)

in Becket's phrase. But the position is not as intractable as it appears:

Dunc respundirent tuit li sage e li meillur

Que li reis dit asez: pais volt e offre amur.

Quant l'arcevesque vit tuit se tindrent al rei,

Li priurs del Munt Deu e Bernarz del Coldrei

E nis li reis de France, u il ot greignur fei,

De ses beals oilz plura e se tint tut en sei:

"Seignurs, fait il a els, sa volenté otrei".

(Lines 4144-4150)

But when the two come to kiss of peace, Becket says
(Line 4157)

Sire a l'onur de Deu e la vostre vus bes Geoffrey Ridel

warns the king that this is soffisme and once again the
(Line 4158)

reconciliation, this time on the very point of conclusion,

breaks down. Becket receives the opprobrium of all present,

who hold him solely responsible for the failure to achieve

a settlement. But the archbishop is unrepentant, adamantly

informing them that the church was in danger and that they

were blind who could not see this. The king, Guernes informs

us, had second thoughts, and finally concedes, but too late,

that Becket was just and in the right:

A la Ferté Bernart jut li reis cele nuit.

Devant ses privez a Gefrei Ridel aduit.

"Cestui voil jo, fait il, que vus honurez tuit.

Mielz s'est ui esmerez de l'or set feiz recuit.
 Guari m'a par sun sens; li fel ne m'a suduit."
 Quant il se fu culchiez e il s'out purpensé
 De ço que l'arcevesque li aveit graanté,
 E que pur un sul mot l'out ensi refusé,
 Dit qu'il est enginniez e que mal a erré
 Car l'arcevesques out faite sa volenté.
 E jure les oilz Deu e volt bien afichier
 Que ja mais a cel puint ne purra repairier.
 Tuz ses servanz ad fait erramment esveillier,
 E ad fait pur l'evesque de Peitiers enveier,
 Tost vienge a li parler. Il ne s'i volt targier.
 A mienuit ala al rei Henri parler.
 "Vus estuvra, fait il, a l'arcevesque aler.
 Enginniez sui, quant pais ne li voil graanter,
 Car il m'out otrié quanque soi demander.
 Par les oilz Deu, ja mais n'i purrai recovrer!
 "Or alez après lui, pensez de l'espleitier.
 Dites lui qu'or prendrai ço que il m'offri ier".

(Lines 4186-4207)

But once again it is too late; when Becket learns what
 the king now intends, he hurriedly departs before the Bishop
 of Poitiers can reach him. Becket now considers that what
 he had offered to do contre raisun fu^(Line 4215). This is an extremely
 interesting passage, because for once Guernes reverses his
 normal practice of investigating Becket's words and actions in
 the greatest detail, whilst leaving Henry's actions to take us

by surprise, often unpleasant surprise. This time we have been shown the workings of his mind, whilst Becket's final departure remains virtually unexplained and the poet passes immediately on to consideration of the next incident. The reason for his reversal is not far to seek. The king has eventually recognised that the archbishop was right, and admitting his mistake, has made a belated and vain attempt to rectify it; it is Becket who prevents this, and the poet does not choose to dwell on this fact.

After so many abortive and frustrating attempts to bring about a solution, King Louis of France at last set in motion a chain of events which, after several meetings at which the final form of words and arrangements were worked out, brought about an agreement between the King of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury which both men felt their concept of honour would allow them to accept. Initially Henry, when approached by Louis, is willing to refer to the clergy, then agrees to make some form of restitution; he promises peace and love to Becket and his much wronged followers, as well as restitution in full of their land and possessions. Becket agrees; Louis encounters a difficulty over the kiss of peace, because the king has sworn an oath not to grant Becket this:

"Jo ai juré, fait il, que ja nel baiseraï
 Baisér cent feiz pur mei e mun fiz le feraï,
 E a lui e as suens pais e amur tendraï
 E lur possessiuns e rentes lur rendraï,
 Ne ja menur amur ne lur en porteraï."

(Lines 4256-4260)

For the moment, at least, Henry's good faith is not questioned, and progress is possible because Becket states that he is prepared to waive his demand for the kiss of peace, being more concerned with pais e amur^(line 4263). Thus the conference at Fréteval was assembled with some good hope of success. The pope had written to both parties, urging conciliation, and both men agreed to try to implement his suggestions, that peace might be achieved.

Guernes tells us that fear was one of the major influences on Henry at this time, but he does not elaborate on his statement that:

Dit qu'or frea tut ço qu'il unt conseillié.
(Il cremi l'apostolie, qui l'aveit manecié.)

(Lines 4323-4324)

The king leads Becket out into the middle of the plain in order that the two of them may speak in private, and there confesses that he has been badly misled in the dispute, that he regrets this, and that he has missed Becket:

Quant li reis l'out tut sul enmi le champ mené,
Fait il: Sire arcevesque, mult m'avez demuré,
Car altre conseil m'unt a grant damage esté:
Puis que parti del vostre, ainc puis n'ai amendé,
Ainz en ai mult del mien despendu e guasté."

(Lines 4361-4365)

Guernes suggests no other motives for this admission on the part of the king than the pressures brought to bear upon him by the King of France and the pope. Becket advises him to

renounce bad advice, and the king states his intention to rely solely on Becket's in future, to help him govern the country and, furthermore, he wishes him to take charge of his son Henry. Henry still blames Becket for the misfortunes which befell his people during his absence, for it was he who fled the country senz co que nuls eüst vers vus de rien mespris; ^(Line 4403) but again he promises to make restitution in full. Becket then tackles him over the question of the coronation of his son, Henry, as King of England. (We have already seen how Guernes erred over the chronology of events surrounding this coronation). Again, the king admits his guilt: Veirement i mespris ... bien le vei; ^(Lines 4409-4410) mais bien ert adrecé, se j'amender le deia. Furthermore, the king pledges to interfere no further with the affairs of Becket or of his bishops.

But all, Guernes tells his audience, is not quite as it seems; with the benefit of hindsight, Guernes can tell us:

D'ambesdous parz diseient qu'entre els dous aveit pais;
Car li reis li faiseit mult bel semblant adeis.

(Lines 4419-4420)

The very strong implication here is that the king had no intention ever of keeping the promises with which the peace between the two men was being bound up. It would have been extremely difficult, and have required an act of immense objectivity, for the poet to have come to a greatly differing conclusion, in view of subsequent events. Guernes amplifies this theme a little later:

Kar li reis li mustROUT defors mult bel semblant;
Pur co diseient tuit, li petit e li grant,
Que ja mais nel harreit li reis a sun vivant.

(Lines 4446-4448)

This material, which appears to be original, throws grave doubts on the honesty and probity of the king.

Becket is still disturbed by the king's refusal to give the kiss of peace, despite his stated indifference. As a result of this, he goes to meet the king, and during the course of their discussions, he tells him:

"Reis, fait li sainz Thomas, mal estes enseigniez.
 Vus n'estes mie tels cum estre soliez
 Al tens que vus servi, ainz estes tuz changiez,
 Quant en vostre cité ai mes guages laissiez.
 Nel fesist Loewis pur enguagier ses fiez."

(Lines 4476-4480)

The king defends himself against this charge, but his excuse, upon which he is not made to elaborate, sounds somewhat lame, and Guernes introduces it by once again hinting that the king may be being less than scrupulously honest in his dealings with Becket:

Dunc ad li reis surris; ne sai s'i out faintié.
 Fait il: "Sire arcevesque, or vus vei mult irié;
 Mais or suffrez a tant, car bien ert adrescié.
 Autres besuignes m'orent le quer si enlascié,
 Ne poi entendre a vus pur terre ne pur fié."

(Lines 4481-4485)

Guernes' lack of omniscience, in other circumstances aggravating to poet and audience alike, is here put to good purpose, for he may safely hint at things which he is in no position to verify, and can scarcely be accused of attacking the king openly.

Rather he seems to praise him with faint condemnation.

But Henry goes so far as to have the various dispositions to which he has agreed set down on paper, at Becket's wise request, and Guernes eagerly quotes them to his audience, as if to bind Henry.

But Henry and his officers, as Guernes is quick to point out, were manifestly in no hurry to put these dispositions into effect, and the poet goes so far as to question who, in the last analysis, must bear the responsibility and the blame for the continuing injustices in respect of Becket's lands and possessions, Randulf del Broc, who perpetrated them, or the king, who allowed them to continue. He warns all men to be mindful of God's judgment.

When the time comes at last for the Archbishop of Canterbury to return to his see, the king is due to meet him in Rouen. But he fails to do so:

Quant Saint Thomas s'en dut en Engleterre aler,
 Li reis Henris le dut a Ruem encontrer,
 Si cum il out pramis, faire deniers livrer.
 Unes iteles lettres li ad faites porter;
 Bien les vus savrai lire, ses volez escuter;
 "Henris, li reis des Engleis, des Normanz dues e sire,
 Saluz a l'arcevesque Thomas de Cantorbire.
 Loewis reis de France, si cum j'ai oi dire,
 Ad somuns tute s'ost par trestut sun empire;
 Volt aler en Auverne pur ma gent desconfire.
 "Mes hummes volt destruire e ma terre essillier.

E mi ami de France le m'unt fait bien nuncier;
 Auvernaz m'unt mandé que jo lur voise aidier.
 Encontre vus dui estre a vostre repairier,
 A Buem: saciez bien que mei l'estuet laissier."

(Lines 4596-4610)

The king goes on to write that in his stead he has sent his trusted servant John of Oxford, who is to ensure - as was to prove necessary, in the event - Becket's safety; in addition his own son, Henry, King of England, will ensure that due restitutions in England are made. This is a faithful, indeed almost literal translation of Henry's letter, and Guernes makes no capital out of the king's failure to keep his word.⁸ This may be because of the enormity of the event which must now be in the consciousness of the audience once Becket was on the point of returning to England; equally, the poet may not wish to emphasise the incident because Henry's adversary and the cause of his failure to keep his word was li buens reis Loewis, who had been possibly Becket's most trustworthy and steadfast ally during the last six years, a point which Guernes has not been slow to appreciate in the previous thousand lines or so of his poem. But perhaps the fairest interpretation would be to credit the poet with a desire to report accurately the events leading up to the archbishop's return to his see. By translating Henry's letter, we can see that he has achieved this.

We have said that the protection of John of Oxford was to prove necessary, and so it was, for on arrival in England Becket was confronted by an angry crowd of those who stood to lose greatly if Henry's promised restitutions were put into effect,

and only the intervention of John of Oxford prevented violence being done to the archbishop. John sensed that if Becket were harmed, li reis en sereit mult blasmez, ^(Line 4729) li reis en sereit retez de traïsun (Line 4736).

Becket's attempts to see and exact satisfaction from young Henry, once he had returned to his see, proved singularly unsuccessful, but Guernes lays very little of the blame for this at the young king's father's door, and the next time we are told directly of Henry himself, it is to learn of his rage when he is told in a letter that Becket has excommunicated the three bishops; his fulminations were to have mortal effect:

E quant li reis le vit, mult out le quer irié;

Ses mains feri ensemble e se plainst senz faintié.

En sa chambre en entra d'ire desculurez;

Dit qu'il ad malveis hommes nurri e alevez,

En malveise gent est sis pains mis e guastez,

A ses dolurs ne part nul de tuz ses privez!

Mult aveit tuz le suens par ses diz esfreez.

Funt il: "Que s'a li reis si fort a dementer?"

Se il veïst ses fiz u sa femme enterrer

E trestute sa terre ardeir e enbraser,

Ne deüst il tel duel ne faire ne mener.

S'il eüst rien oï, bien le deüst mustrer.

"E tut ço que l'um ot, ne deit um maintenir.

Tuz ses comandemanz sumes prez de furnir

E chastals e citez brisier e asaillir

E perilz de nos cors e des anemes souffrir.

A tort se plaint de nus, quant nel volt descovrir.
 - Uns huem, fait lur li reis, qui a mun pain mangié,
 Qui a me curt vint povres, e mult l'ai eshalcié,
 Pur mei ferir as denz ad sun talun drecié!
 Trestut mun lignage ad e mun regne avillié:
 Li duels m'en vait al quer, nuls ne m'en a vengié!"
 Lués en comença tute la curt a furmier;
 Eaus meïsmes enpristrent forment a avillier
 E le saint arcevesque forment a manecier.
 Par fei s'en comencierent pluisur a alier
 Que la hunte le rei hasterunt del vengier.

(Lines 5014-5040)

We could hardly claim, given Henry's own subsequent confession, that this account is in any way unfair to the king, nor does the poet seek to put more words into the king's mouth than any of his sources. This, indeed, seems to be an accurate, if vivid and momentous account, of what Guernes came to believe took place at Bures on that fateful day in December 1170. That it is much less favourable to King Henry than the first draft, or than Grim's account, is manifest from a comparison of the two corresponding sections. If the second is not unfair to Henry, the first is much more explicit in exculpating him.

When the three bishops themselves arrived at the court in Bures, however, Henry, as Guernes tells us, ad ... mult changié sun semblant^(line 5046). He is a model of restraint and moderation, and his reaction when told that Becket has excommunicated all those who were present at Henry's son's coronation, which must necessarily

include Henry himself, is very restrained compared with his initial reaction to the letter, which we have just considered. It seems that he refuses to be goaded into anger by the bishops' impassioned account of Becket's excesses, of his insult to the king's honour. When general anger and indignation against Becket are aroused once again in the courtroom, no mention is made of the king or his reaction; he has no part in the plots which are hatched against Becket. Certainly Guernes does not lay Henry open to the charge that Henry either ordered or condoned Becket's murder, but merely gives the impression that his rage could have easily provoked the idea in the minds of his courtiers. It is difficult to believe that if dunc fu li mautalenz tutes parz enbrasez, saint Thomas maneciez e forment vergundeza, Henry was entirely ignorant, but it is possible to think he might dismiss this as angry and heated exaggeration. The first version, on the other hand, clearly implies that he was ignorant. In any case, Guernes' audience would not be conscious of these possibilities, but might well observe that Henry did not actively order Becket's murder, which is much more to the forefront of the poet's thinking at this time. If anyone was active in arranging for Becket to be despatched, it was, according to Guernes, Roger de Pont l'Évêque, who convokes the eventual assassins, incites them and pays them. This evidence occurs in no other account.

Guernes' summary of events tacitly accepts that the king did not expressly order Becket's death, but suggests that he may have been indirectly responsible for it, and should certainly not surround himself with, listen to or associate with those

who advocated Becket's murder, or might incite the king to order or condone it:

Cil firent saint Thomas ocire e detrenchier
 Qui deüssent al bien le rei mielz conseillier
 E de la male veie turner e raveier.
 E cels en deit hum plus blasmer e chalengier,
 E li reis les devreit de sei mult esluignier.
 Nes deit pas apresmier, se il bien se repent.
 Car lur conseil li fu a mult grant dannement,
 E mult en est blasmez de ço qu'a els s'entent.
 E il l'unt conseillié tuzdis a sun talent:
 Conseil a volenté ne vait pas lealment.

(Lines 5136-5145)

We may detect that there are still certain ambivalent ideas expressed in this passage - how closely did the king listen to those who advised him? - and on what precise matter? - but the king is not to be held directly responsible for the order which brought about the murder in the cathedral at Canterbury. We may also suspect a degree of political expediency, or a desire for personal safety, in Guernes' conclusion, but we must be fair to him in stating that from the evidence which he has presented to us, he has not exonerated the king entirely from his share of blame - and the extent of the king's responsibility on the basis of Guernes' evidence would be open to dispute in any case.

What is not open to dispute is the fact that Guernes does not exonerate King Henry in this second version as fully as he did

in the first draft of his poem; for we should consider now the fragment of Guernes' first draft of the poem, to which we referred in earlier chapters, which have survived and have recently, as we have seen, been brought to light. In this first draft, Guernes specifically tells his audience that if the king had known in advance of the plan of the four knights to go to England to murder the archbishop, he would have prevented them from doing so; indeed, when he discovered that they had gone, he vainly sent after them with a message that they were to return:

Cel unt mustré al rei; si unt fait ke infant:
 Si li üssent dit, n'alassent en avant.
 Mes li fel Satanas les a entichiez tant
 K'a la mer sunt venu. Vent orent bien portant;
 Al Port as Chiens s'en vindrent sens desturber siglant.
 Quant ot dire li reis que il s'en sunt alé,
 Après els enveia qu'il seient retorné:
 Cremi qu'il n'üssent grant folie empensé,
 Car il ne vulsist pas pur tut l'or del regné
 Qu'il cüssent, einsei cum il firent, erré.

(Lines 1-10)

In the full, surviving version of the poem, Guernes does not go so far as to say that had Henry known, he would have averted Becket's death. Nor does he state in the second version that Henry was genuinely sorry for Becket's sake - as we have seen, expressions of sorrow or fear concerning Becket's safety are usually couched in terms which express what was no doubt a very real fear,

and one that proved to be well-founded: that any harm which befell the archbishop would instantly and automatically redound to King Henry's very great discredit. It is interesting to speculate whether in the light of the lines which follow in the fragment of the first version, Guernes could have put the words li duels m'en vait al quer, nuls ne m'en a vengie (Line 5035) into Henry's mouth a few lines earlier in his original draft:

E quant il oit dire qu'il l'aveient ocis,
 Mult fu de marrement e de duel entrepris,
 Huntus e curecez e tristes e pensi.
 En sa chambre en entra, n'en eisi des wit dis;
 Le beivre e le mangier a mult ariere mis.
 Einsi s'adulusa; nuls n'i poeit parler
 Quant de la mort oit al seint hune cunter.
 Car empensé aveit de lui emprisoner.

(Lines 11-18)

In the first version, therefore, Guernes included an unequivocal statement that Henry knew nothing of the plot to murder Becket, and includes also - as he does not in the second version - a brief but convincing picture of the depth of Henry's grief at Becket's death. The effect of these omissions is to lessen the sympathy of the audience, to reduce the likelihood that Guernes' audience will view protestations of Henry's innocence favourably. In the original version it is possible to interpret li fel Satanas les a entichiez tant^(Line 3) as either a poetic reference to evil, or possibly as a damning soubriquet for Roger, Archbishop of York; at all events, it clearly removes the blame from Henry's

door and lays it elsewhere. In the second version of the poem, however, the king appears as much more calculating, dissembling his true feelings and expressing no desire to obviate the clear possibility that someone might take his words too seriously.

By comparing the two versions, we can see that Guernes came to see the king as more culpable as a result of his journeying to Canterbury to learn the truth about Becket at first hand.

He rejects the evidence of Edward Grim, which he used in his first version, which at least suggests the innocence and grief of the king, and in its stead presents to his audience a much more confused picture, open as we have seen to a variety of interpretations, but less favourable to the king than the first draft had been. It is not unjust to speculate that, if Guernes so radically amended his views on such an important and central issue in the light of his discoveries at Canterbury, we may well have found in the first draft a picture of King Henry which was much more favourable. We shall perhaps bear in mind here Guernes' statement that in the second version he had removed much of what he had previously written pur oster

(line 6170)
la mençoenge. This line becomes much more meaningful in the light of the fragment of the first poem, especially if we take (line 6169)
ainz to refer to the first version only. In the second draft,

Guernes does state that the king has been grossly mistaken to surround himself with friends and advisers who l'unt conseillié tuzdis a sun talent: Conseil a volenté ne vait pas lealment (lines 5144-5145).

This implies that Henry's wishes were, in fact, very different from those which the poet was content to impute to him in the initial draft of his poem. If we recall his opening remarks

about the nature of the first draft, especially his references to the fact that he had not had the opportunity to perfect and amend it, we may reflect that this is one instance which bears out the claim that he had not e l'amer et le dulz adulci e tempré (Line 153). His claim that la u j'oi trop mis, ne l'oi uncore osté ^(Line 154) may indeed refer to the poet's treatment of the king as a whole. Whilst, on the basis of this one extract, it is dangerous to infer too much, it does seem to bear out the poet's claim in this one instance. Nor should we be too surprised to discover that, as a result of his contact with those at Canterbury who had known and revered Becket, the poet's view of the king, and his interpretations of the king's actions became more suspicious and critical. This, as we have already seen, would be a natural consequence, we might suspect, of Guernes' claim that a Cantorbire alai, la verité oi; ^(Lines 147-148) des amis saint Thomas la verité cu jillia, although the poet himself would scarcely concur with this, or necessarily be aware that this process was almost inevitable.

Guernes tells us several times in both versions that the four knights told the archbishop that they had come del partle rei, that they were acting for him, that the king was gravely displeased, if they were not actually saying that they were carrying out the king's express orders (in the first version they did claim this in fact). Returning exclusively to the second version, after the murder, their rallying cry was Reaus! ^(Line 5643) But none of this is surprising, nor increases the king's incrimination. Indeed, more than once, Becket refutes their assertions, stating unequivocally mis sires li reis est tant leals e ber qu'il ne volsist pas teus ^{v^{me}} paroles mander, ne il nes voldra pas garantir ne tenses (Lines 5302-5304).

A little later he reaffirms his faith in the king - nel tieng
 (line 5327)
pur traitura - and his belief that the king intends to honour
 what he has promised. Such faith, of course, redounds to
 the archbishop's credit in his final hour, but it is important
 to note that nothing that happens in the cathedral implicates or
 impugns the king beyond what was said and what happened in the
 courtroom at Bures. Indeed the next time Guernes tells us
 directly of King Henry is some considerable time after the murder
 has taken place, and the news has reached the continent. Guernes
 is discussing punishment, and God's vengeance, and his lines on
 Henry's part and guilt are a model of tact and blame acceptably
 mixed :

Mais la vengeance Deu n'est pas ainsi hastee,
 Qui somunt que la culpe seit encor amende.
 Deus ne volt ne desire que l'aneme seit dampnee.
 Ne la semaine n'est encore pas entree
 U la felonie ert e vengie e trovee.
 Mais de primes en est Normendie fulee,
 Car la mort al saint humme i fu ainz purparlee,
 E cil en est guardains de qui la cause est nee.
 E par l'uis dunt quida clore cele bae
 Est la veie desclose e l'ire Deu mustree.
 Mais Deu ad, bien le sai, cel' ire desturnee
 Qu'il aveit al realme e al pueple aprestee.
 Car li reis Henris ad del tut culpe clamee,
 La mesprisun par tut endroit sei amende
 E tute sa franchise saint' iglise dune.

(Lines 5716-5730)

Thus the king is absolved. Clearly he is not exonerated as completely as he was in Guernes' original version, where, as we have seen, Guernes had preempted the possibility of the king's being found guilty by his audience by stating unequivocally that the king had known nothing of the plan to assassinate the archbishop, and when he had discovered it, had attempted in vain to have the four knights stopped. Mention of this major modification in the poet's attitude to the king has been made both earlier in this chapter, and also in Chapter Two. Although King Henry's repentance does something to restore our opinion of him, had the first version survived in its entirety, such restoration might, on the evidence of part of the fragment of the first draft, prove much less necessary. In the final version, Guernes' only further words of implied criticism occur over the see of Canterbury, where the king had allowed Randulf del Broc and his followers a scandalous degree of latitude, which they used to further their own ends, to fill their own chests. But it is Randulf and his kind whom the poet goes on to attack, not the king himself.

There only remains Guernes' account of Henry's pilgrimage to Canterbury, almost four years after Becket's murder and indeed after Becket's canonisation. The extract, running to some two hundred and fifty lines, is much too long to quote in its entirety, but it recounts the king's great humility, his alms to the poor, his endowment of a hospital, his barefoot entrance into the city not cumme reis mais cum mendifs,^(Line 5955) his prayers at the martyr's tomb, his tears, his request that all

should pray to the saint for the king's forgiveness, his scourging by the bishops, his all-night vigil at the tomb, his utter and complete repentance, of which we are assured many times. That God and the saint were satisfied and accepted this repentance was attested by the immediate upturn in the king's political fortunes, which had been low at this time. In a twelfth-century environment where people were used to seek, indeed encouraged and almost demanded miraculous transformations, this dramatic change would have been invested with great significance. Perhaps if we study the words spoken by the Bishop of London, we shall sense the tone - indeed much changed - and intent of the passage as it reflects the king's penitence:

"Seignur, fait li evesques, or entendez a mei.
 Veez ci en present nostre seignur le rei:
 Venuz est al martyr en amur e en fei;
 Sa confessiun pure me fait dire par sei,
 Si cum jo l'ai oïe, e pluisur, en secrei.
 "Devant Deu le conuist e devant le martyr
 Qu'il ne fist pas ocire saint Thomas ne murdrir,
 N'il nel comanda pas a tuer n'a ferir;
 Mais il dist tel parole, bien le vus volt gehir,
 Qui fu cause e matere de l'ocire e murdrir.
 "E pur ço que lui fu - ço cunuist, -ocis,
 Est venuz al martyr, culpables e clamis,
 E s'en rent e conuist e forfait e chaitis.
 Al seint crie merci de ço k'il ad mespris,
 E de l'adrescement s'est tut en voz los mis.

(Lines 5966-5980)

The king's repentance is unequivocal, complete. Moreover, if we suspect that Guernes is more charitable towards the king in concluding his poem than he has been for much the greater part of it, there are several factors which should be borne in mind. Firstly, Henry has done penance, and there was abundant evidence, at least to those who wished to see it, not only that it was sincere, but efficacious; his political star rose dramatically after his pilgrimage to Canterbury. 'after' could easily be transmuted, in the mediaeval mind, to 'as a result of'. He was scourged by churchmen who, if appearances meant anything, believed and confessed him to be sincerely contrite. His political fortunes brook no argument.

Secondly, Guernes himself was a man of the church, and there is ample evidence in his poem not only of concern for the material lot of the poor, for example, but also for the spiritual welfare of the wicked, and he has on many occasions urged repentance and contrition. That he should find pleasure when these qualities are evinced is therefore not wholly surprising, even if it does lead to an apparent inconsistency when compared with his earlier line of approach to the king - and we in the twentieth century would be more conscious of this than either the poet himself or his audience. We might suspect that a posture of satisfaction at the outcome may be convenient or expedient to the writer in these circumstances, but it would surely be more charitable to Guernes to believe his pleasure at the king's repentance to be genuine.

But we should not forget entirely the approach of Guernes the historian. We have already noted several times his desire for completeness, and it is entirely natural that he should include such a momentous event as the king's pilgrimage to Canterbury at the end of his poem. Nor can there be great doubt that he reported matters as they would have appeared to any observer that day. There is, it is true, the argument that in tone, this section of the poem is much more favourable towards the king than any other, but we should remember that in the second version, following the king's angry outburst at Bures, he has largely been exonerated from further blame. When the king is the cause of Becket's distress, as he is made to appear in the greater part of the poem, then he is treated with greater severity than when, as at the end of the poem, he is repentant for the harm he has caused. Just as we noticed inconsistencies in Guernes' treatment of the main figure, Becket, so we may anticipate them in other characters, although it must be said that in Henry's case, the differences are not greatly marked, as his role as Becket's adversary and oppressor are clearly defined for much of the poem.

We should also bear in mind the evidence of the fragment of the first draft, which we have considered in this chapter, and which sheds considerable light on Guernes' treatment of the king; we have seen how Guernes appears to have modified his judgment of the king, in this instance at least, becoming markedly less favourable to Henry. Whether this is indicative of a general shifting of Guernes' treatment of the king throughout the poem is

perhaps too difficult to assess on such slight evidence, but it does not alter the possibility that such inconsistencies as appear in the poet's treatment of the king may have their origins in the poet's problem of reconciling two versions which may have been, and indeed as he claims to have been (and such evidence as we have supports this claim) widely divergent. If indeed the first version was stolen from him, the lines, or some of the material at least, must still have remained relatively fresh in his mind. Skilful as he was, Guernes would still have been presented with a formidable problem if his task was as great as he implies. It would certainly account for certain of the discrepancies of treatment, if we wished to postulate such a theory. As Guernes' treatment of Henry may vary as a result of this process, we may also wonder whether his treatment of Becket varied for similar reasons, although the fragments which survive from the first version give us no solid evidence for this. But Henry's apparently genuine act of repentance, coming as it did some considerable time after the completion of the first draft, would have the effect of mollifying the poet's judgment of the king, of restoring him to something approaching his former position in the poet's estimation. Towards the end of the poem, when Becket's triumph is assured, there was also perhaps less need for Guernes to portray Henry as the implacable oppressor which he has been for much of the poem. In that sense, by this stage of the poem, the battle is over.

Not that Guernes casts him immutably in this guise. We have noted instances where the poet has attempted to be fair

to, or uncritical of the king, when bias or criticism might have come naturally. Because Becket is normally shown to be right, it follows that Henry must often be shown to be wrong; this is often achieved by a lack of explanation of motivation on the poet's part, as we have seen, and this too is sometimes achieved to the detriment of a consistent approach to the character and behaviour of the king. It must be said that Guernes and his audience would be more concerned with seeing Henry cast repeatedly in the role of persecutor and oppressor, than with seeing a clearly defined pattern of behaviour emerge from which to assess his character; we saw examples of the other side of the coin frequently enough in Becket's case. So we cannot achieve an entirely consistent impression of either Becket or Henry, nor should we seek to, and we must remember that in Henry's case at least, if it is true that we are all inconsistent beings, there is much supplementary evidence to suggest that Henry was less consistent than most. Guernes has spent a great part of his treatment of Henry, although not all of it, showing Henry to be consistent in his deep opposition to Thomas Becket. To that end he has had, necessarily, to be selective, but his approach to Henry at the end of the poem should not constitute an invalidation of the whole of his portrayal of the king earlier in the poem, nor should we imagine that it was intended to do so, even if we take his pleasure at Henry's belated repentance to be genuine.

Finally, Henry's repentance can serve another purpose for Guernes in his poem. If Henry's opposition allowed Guernes to emphasize Becket's pre-eminence in life, so his repentance serves to seal for Becket the final victory which - though this is a modern

concept which would only occur indirectly to Guernes' audience, in that they were venerating a saint - in the last analysis escaped him during his lifetime. His death, or rather the cause and nature of his death, and his subsequent canonisation give him a victory in a sense which he could never achieve in life. Although it was not the victory which he sought - at least not until, as we have seen, it became obvious that none other was possible - it was inevitably to be interpreted as a victory, and there should be no reason why Guernes should not report it as such; the part Henry plays in this could not be minimised, nor could it very easily be reported grudgingly, given that Henry's pilgrimage was an additional, possibly final piece of evidence, of that victory. This, of course, reflects a considerable shifting of ground from Guernes' first interpretation of events as reflected in the fragment of the first draft.

Guernes does not lose sight of Henry's part in Becket's struggle and death, simply because Henry repents of it at the end of his poem. He reminds us of it when he first begins his account of the pilgrimage to Canterbury. But he cannot detract from Henry's act of contrition without adversely affecting the nature of Becket's triumph at the end of the poem. The poet succeeds in drawing all these threads together clearly and succinctly as he begins his consideration of the last major event which he recounts in his poem:

Nis li reis d'Engleterre, ki fu ses enemis,
 Pur ki sis anz e plus fu eissuz del pa^{is},
 E pur ki maltalent si humme l'unt ocis,

Od grant humilité l'ad al quart an requis,
 E li cria merci de quanqu'il out mespris.
 Al quart an qu'ot suffert li martyrs passiu,
 Al setme meis de l'an - juiet l'apele l'un -
 E al duzime jur, un vendresdi par nun,
 Vint li reis al martir a satisfactiun.
 Mais pur grant busuig vint a sucurs al barun.

(Lines 5911-5920)

We should remember that Henry's pilgrimage to Canterbury took place long after Guernes' first version of the poem had been completed, or stolen from the poet, whichever may have occurred first - the poet claims that the theft prevented his completion of his work on the first draft. We shall recall that such marginal evidence as the surviving fragments of that first draft offers suggests that Guernes held a more favourable opinion of King Henry before his visit to Canterbury. Perhaps Henry's public act of regret and grief at Becket's death did something to restore a more favourable opinion to Guernes, to cause him to return to an outlook at this stage of the poem similar to that which he may well have held fairly consistently at the time when he was composing his first draft.

We have talked of a consistent picture, and seen how in the case of King Henry it was not possible for Guernes to present one to his audience because it would not have served his purpose to do so, even if it had been feasible. But when we pass to consideration of King Louis VII of France, we find that circumstances are somewhat different. King Louis, it must from

the outset be said, plays a very minor role compared with his English counterpart in the story of Thomas Becket. He only comes into the story when Becket begins his exile, and although he is active throughout the following six years, indeed, Guernes portrays him as the main instigator of most of the conferences which eventually led to the achievement of a reconciliation; once that objective has been achieved, he disappears from Guernes' account entirely, save for one passing mention. We can readily deduce that in the case of King Louis, Guernes is not greatly interested in portraying a subtle or well-drawn character to us; in a sense which is never true either of Becket or of King Henry, Louis' character, as Guernes draws it in his poem, does remain constant, consistent; and this is possible because the poet, well aware of the demands of his audience, is only in the last analysis interested in one aspect of King Louis: the fact that when Becket was in exile, Louis was seen to be an almost unfailing source of help, strength and inspiration to the archbishop, one moreover who constantly sought to bring about a reconciliation between Becket and Henry. We may read that Louis was a kind and gentle man, and this may indeed be true, but it almost seems incidental to the development of Guernes' account; we may even suspect that he is li buens reis de France, an epithet which Guernes frequently applies to him, because he offers Becket aid, shelter protection and hope, rather than the other way round. In this respect it is easy for Guernes to present us with a more consistent figure where it was not in the case of King Henry, because we are interested only in one aspect of King Louis' life. That

is not to say that Henry never suffers by comparison: he does, and often, and it was Guernes' intention that he should. Louis' goodness is regularly used as a strong contrast to Henry's evil temper, cruelty, oppression and persecution. The aim here is not so much to exalt the figure of King Louis for its own sake as to reveal King Henry in an unfavourable light by comparison, and this - and we have already glimpsed instances of this earlier in this chapter - he achieved to telling effect on more than one occasion.

It is a little ironic therefore, in the light of what has just been said, that when Guernes has occasion to mention King Louis, for the first and the last times it is on both occasions in a context which the poet wishes to pass over rapidly and without elaboration. In the first instance, we learn that when Becket was chancellor of England and sought los e pris, guerra le rei de France, Loewis, De bien servir le rei s'esteit mult entremis (lines 404-405). Guernes does not dwell on this, the only mention of King Louis in the first two thousand lines of the poem.

Similarly, when Becket eventually leaves France to return to Canterbury, Henry was due to meet him, but, as we have seen, is unable to do so because Louis has raised a large army against him, and so Henry is prevented from keeping his word. Again, Guernes passes on without comment, and this is the last we hear of King Louis of France, some fifteen hundred lines before the poem ends.

But these are the only inconsistencies in the picture which we are given of King Louis, and they are so far apart, so isolated,

and passed over with such speed that for a mediaeval audience they would be unlikely to detract from the firmly established picture which we are given of the King of France between these two incidents.

That picture is one of a firm and steadfast friend to Thomas Becket, a picture which does not vary appreciably in the two thousand or so lines in which Louis is actively concerned with the Becket dispute.

When Guernes reports Louis' first meeting with King Henry, an agreement of peace is reached between them. When, shortly afterwards, after Becket's flight to the continent, Henry sends ambassadors to King Louis in an attempt to prise the archbishop from his territory, he affects to recall the man to mind, and how well he had served his master. When he is reminded that some at least of that service involved making war upon Louis himself, the French king is not in the least dismayed or swayed from his purpose:

-Sire quens, fait li reis, bien sai par verité,
 Quant servi sun seignur par si grant leauté,
 S'eüst esté mis huem, qu'il me servist a gré.
 E quant il li conquist casteals e herité,
 Tant le deüst il plus tenir en grant chierté.

(Lines 2216-2220)

The king's purpose is, in fact, that l'arcevesque aït e maintienge e aït chier; pur rien qui seit el mund qu'il ne s'en
(Lines 2229-2230)
leist pleissier, as was revealed in a message which Louis had sent to the pope, and there are other references at this point to Louis'

desire to help and protect the archbishop. Guernes tells us, as Becket sadly considers his fate and the rift between himself and the King of England:

En l'essil nepurquant li ad bien esteü:
 Car li reis Loewis l'a del tut maintenu,
 Lui e les suens trové quanque mestier lur fu;
 E li barun franceis le runt tant succuru,
 Bienpout aidier as suens qui la furent venu.

(Lines 2636-2640)

During the lengthy recitation of Becket's tribulations and the letters which passed back and forth on the nature of the dispute, we hear no mention of King Louis of France, nor is there any good reason for doing so; but as soon as mention is made of Henry's desire to force the archbishop to leave the abbey of Pontigny, we are told once again of Louis' support and protection:

Mais quant li reis Henris vit bien e entendi
 Qu'il purreit remaneir tuzdis a Punteigni,
 Ne a lui ne as suens nule rien ne failli,
 E li reis Loewis e Franceis l'urt cheri,
 Al plus tost qu'il purra, l'ostera de cel ni.

(Lines 3676-3680)

We are reminded how Louis had frequently requested Becket to go and dwell under his direct protection, and when Louis hears that Henry is actually succeeding in forcing Becket to leave, his reaction is one of pleasure that at last Becket will accept his offers:

Quant ot li reis de France qu'ensi l'en chacerunt,
 Or le purra aveir, joint ses mains contremunt;

Deu en a mercié, qui guverne le mund.
 "Jo crei, fait li, encore que angeles meskerrunt."
 Pur les monies le dist, ki ensi ovré unt.
 Mais li reis Loewis sur sun cheval munta,
 Prist ses hummes od li, a Funteigni ala.
 Od le saint arcevesque dedenz capitle entra.
 L'abé e tuz les monies durement mercia
 Del honur que li ber entur els trové a.
 Car mult unt fait, ço dit, a France grant honur
 De ço k'unt receté entr'els cel bon seigneur.
 Ne volt des ore mais qu'il aient la heür
 Del rei Henri, quis volt deserter pur s'amur;
 Or volt qu'il ait od lui des ore le sujur.
 E dit qu'il le voldra a Sanz od sei mener;
 Quanque mestier li ert li fera tut trover,
 E a lui e as suens, quanqu'il devront user.

(Lines 3766-3783)

The contrast between the two kings is strong, as it is intended to be; Louis giving thanks to heaven for his opportunity to be of useful assistance to the archbishop, whilst Henry persecutes the same man and apparently thinks of little else. We hear frequent references to li buens reis de France or li honurez reis de France.

It is li honurez reis de France, Guernes tells us, who is the prime mover when reconciliation between Henry and Thomas Becket becomes a possibility.

Mais li honurez reis de France, Loewis,
 Endementieres s'est durement entremis

Que il fesisist le rei e saint Thomas amis.

L'apostolies i ad sovent ses briefs tramis

As concilies qu'il unt de l'acorde entre els pris.

(Lines 3981-3985)

This is only the first of many initiatives taken by Louis in an attempt to bring about a reconciliation, and if no motive is given, then we are left to assume that it is either his pure goodness of heart, or his desire to see Becket extricated from difficulties and the problem finally resolved which prompts him to such actions. The lack of motivation seems to redound to his credit, as was very clearly not the case with the King of England.

The contrast between the two men is perhaps drawn most strongly when they meet at Nogent-le-Rotrou, for we see clearly their divergent attitudes to Thomas Becket:

En Nujem le Rotrou out un parlement pris

Entre le rei Henri e le rei Loewis;

Pur sa besuigne faire l'out pris li reis Henris.

L'arcevesque i mena li reis de Saint Denis,

Qu'il feïst, s'il peüst, lui e le rei amis.

Mais li reis d'Engleterre n'out suing de l'acorder;

Preia le rei de France qu'il l'en laissast ester

De Thomas l'arcevesque, qu'il n'en volsist parler,

E il li frea tut quanqu'il volt demander.

"E jel larrai tresbien, fait Loewis li ber.

"Jo ne sui pas de lui ne des suens anuiez,

E de lui retenir sui je tut aaisiez;

Car de sun grant sens est mis regnes enhauciez,
 Li vostres suffreitus e forment enpeiriez:
 Greignur mestier que jo certes en avriéz."
 Quant vint a l'arcevesque li gentilz reis de France,
 Fait il: "De vostre acorde n'avrai ja mes fiance;
 Mais ainceis en oi jo tut adès esperance.
 Car al rei d'Engleterre truis jo si grant bobance
 Qu'il ne m'en volt oïr, n'en conseil n'en oiance.
 "Alcune feiz vus ai e preié e requis
 Que vus remansissiez el regne saint Denis;
 Or vus abandoins jo mun regne e mun país,
 Estampes e Orliens e Chartres e Paris:
 Del mien e de mes rentes ert vostre estuveir pris."

(Lines 3991-4015)

These lines are worth considering in detail, because not only do they juxtapose Louis' generosity with Henry's hard-hearted persecution, they are used by the poet to suggest that each man's character is revealed, and is consequently to be judged by the manner in which he views and treats Thomas Becket. Louis is li gentilz reis de France, in other words, for no other reason than that he is, for Guernes' purpose and in the minds of his audience, entirely and constantly on Becket's side in the dispute. The poet, in presenting us with this virtually consistent picture of the King of France, had made all his other qualities inordinately subservient to his willingness to support and to help Thomas Becket. Guernes is not interested in portraying the character of Louis accurately; rather he wishes

to emphasise the extent to which Louis supports the exiled archbishop. Louis is not a major character in Guernes' poem, except insofar as he provides a crucial stay for Becket, which in turn allows the poet to compare Henry of England with him in a most unfavourable light.

At the second meeting at Montmirail reported by Guernes, we learn of Thomas Becket that it is in the King of France
(Line 4148)
u il ot greignur feia, and consequently the archbishop is both alarmed and despondent when he finds that for once Louis believes Henry to be in the right. This is an important factor when Becket comes to yield ground in this matter.

At the conference of Montmartre it is once again li bons reis, li buens reis de France who applies the pressure to Henry to bring him to a reconciliation, or at least a position where one is possible:

A oreisun ala une feiz reis Henris
A Saint Denis de France. Mes li reis Loëwis
Ala a lui parler entresqu'a Saint Denis:
Freia lui, pur les sainz que il aveit requis,
Que l'um le peüst faire e l'arcevesque amis.

(Lines 4216-4220)

It is the same picture which the poet paints at Fréteval, where an agreement is finally achieved:

Tant a reis Loëwis rei Henri enchalcié,
Arcevesque e evesque od cel altre clergié,
Dit qu'or free tut ço qu'il li unt conseillié.

(Lines 4321-4323)

Once the agreement has finally been achieved, Guernes goes on, as we have seen, to discuss how it is worked out, and to show how Henry prevaricated; then we hear the story of Becket's return, his activities in England, Henry's reaction, the knights' departure, Becket's murder, and Henry's eventual repentance; in all this we hear only one mention of King Louis of France. Once his part has been played, he is of no further interest to us. He disappears from the scene, apart from the fleeting reference to him by Henry, as suddenly as he appears. It is only in the central two thousand lines of the poem that we are concerned with him; his role is shown to be that of a faithful and diligent protector of the troubled archbishop, the prime instigator and tireless worker in the search for a reconciliation. There is no suggestion in the poem that Guernes supports Louis simply because he is the King of France, the king of the poet's own homeland. But Guernes misses little opportunity to use his actions to show his English counterpart in a highly unfavourable light. Were this not a conscious part of the poet's treatment of his material, one suspects that his audience might not have been impressed so frequently and so insistently with li buens, li honurez, li gentilz reis de France.

Relatively little has been said in this chapter of the two principal written sources used by Guernes, Edward Grim and William of Canterbury. We shall conclude by a brief

consideration of the treatment of the two kings by each of the Latin biographers.

We have seen that Guernes relied for much of his information on Grim's account in the production of both the original and the 'revised' versions. We have seen that he follows in Grim in including an account of Henry's belated, penitent journey to the martyr's tomb. Guernes in the second version consciously rejects Grim's evidence of the king's ignorance of the plot to murder Becket, which we can see from the surviving fragments of the first draft he had originally followed quite faithfully, in favour of a more critical attitude towards Henry. Yet a brief study of Grim's method will show us that Guernes' approach to the king differed considerably from that of the Latin writer. At the first signs of a rift between Henry and Becket, Grim, who has had very little to say about the king up to this point, launches into a long apostrophe:

"Advertens quoque rex solito sibi indevotiorem apparere archiepiscopum, et contemptum se suspicatus ab eo, quem supra omnes homines adamaverat, crescente paulatim amaritudine et subintrante odio, a cordis illum secretario et consiliis suis efficit alienum. Affuit sine mora fratrum accusator, incentor odii, concordiae persecutor, haud ignarus regiae commotionis, quippe qui perambulat terram et circuit eam quaerens quem devoret et in suam redigat possessionem. Itaque auget odia, praeparat semina discordiarum, jurgiorum ministrat fomitem, et comparatis viribus sanctum aggreditur archiepiscopum, ut

vel cum dedecore ejiciat a proposito, si adversitate victus legi consentiat injustitiae, vel si in sententia perstiterit, infami illum murmure maculet, et quod penitus evacuare non valet meritum, saltem illud minuat impatientia. Rursum vero regis animum tum per se occulta intrinsecus inspiratione, tum extrinsecus per nequitiae suae ministros, contra patrem spiritualem et pastorem animae suae accendit ira, armavit malitia, et lethali tandem odio induravit."

(Grim, ch. 22, p.372.)⁹

Having told us with such emphasis of the strength of the king's feelings and the lengths to which he was prepared to go in order to overcome him, Grim has to his own satisfaction established the culpability and implacable hostility of the king. He does not return to the theme to expand upon it with the same fervour, but accepts that the king will oppose Becket as a basic truth in his account. We read numerous times such phrases as in parentes fugitivi furor regius debacchatus est, and the king is shown to be vicious and vindictive:

"Hinc sane, cum nec ratione nec quasi apostolica auctoritate gravare posset archiepiscopum in propria persona, in subjectis persequitur, et vultu tristiori quod animo gerebat odium letale praetendens, minis fecit quod opere non valebat; ordinatos et ecclesiam Dei quacunque potuit occasione, ut archiepiscopum irritaret, opprimere non cessavit."

(Grim, ch.33, p.385)

Thus Grim recounts the king's attitude with more sadness than anger, for Henry's opposition assumes an implacable, immutable, inevitable aspect. This is not to say that it is not effective, but it lacks the freshness and the dramatic intensity of Guernes' account, where we find the poet inveighing with greater indignation and sense of injustice.

By the same token, Grim does not attempt to convey the figure of King Louis VII of France in the same way as Guernes. Grim is more dispassionate:

"Rex vero Francorum instantius egit ut pacem inter regem et archiepiscopum reformaret, et frequentia inter reges super hoc colloquia fuerunt."

(Grim, ch.68, p.419)

Only the word instantius conveys anything to us which might carry an echo of Guernes' high esteem for the French king. Grim is more reserved, almost more resigned, and certainly less dramatic than the French poet, who is much more concerned to create the impression of valiant, if incidental, hero.

When we come to consider William of Canterbury's treatment of the two kings, we discover that it is in many respects a paler version of Edward Grim's approach. Here is what William has to say about the early stages of the dispute between Becket and the king:

"Videns et invidens hostis antiquus novum hominem multiplici virtutum gratia pullulare, ne flores meritorum prodirent in fructus praemiorum, zizania superseminavit quae fructum

veteris amicitiae regis et pontificus suffocarent.
 Et inde seminarium sumpsit: nam cum primas onere
 pastoralis curae premeretur, mittens regem rogavit
 cancellarium sibi providere, quia ipse non uni,
 nedum duobus, officiis posset sufficere. Secundam
 vero causam irae dedit... "

(William of Canterbury, ch.11, p.12)

William continues in this vein, and thus gives a picture of King Henry which is less sharply delineated than that to be found in Edward Grim's account. William concentrates on the figure of the archbishop to the exclusion, it seems, of most of the other personalities in the history, who remain figures rather than personalities. In William's account, King Louis becomes a little more voluble in his praise of Thomas Becket when he is confronted by Henry's mission,¹⁰ and he recommends the archbishop's cause to the pope, but the French king does not assume the importance in William of Canterbury's account which he holds in Guernes', any more than he did in Edward Grim's treatment. Neither Latin author makes a consistent or serious attempt to delineate the character of King Henry beyond the initial account of the disagreement with Becket, and neither attempts the remotest depiction or delineation of character in the case of King Louis of France.

We can see, therefore, that Guernes achieves a much sharper, clearer and more vivid delineation of character than either of his two principal written sources, even if that delineation is, especially in the case of King Louis, little

removed from a stereotype. We must suspect that in this Guernes is responding to what he may foresee as the requirements and tastes of his audience. His delineation is simple, and for that memorable and identifiable. We may accuse him of oversimplification, of an unreal resolution into black and white of characters who obviously could never have been so; yet he has attempted and achieved a vivid and dramatic portrayal of character which neither Edward Grim nor William of Canterbury was concerned to achieve.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MINOR CHARACTERS IN GUERNES' POEM

We saw in the previous chapter how Guernes treated material concerning one of the figures, Louis VII, who, whilst not playing what might be termed a minor part in Becket's story, does not appear regularly throughout the poem, but rather enters spasmodically as events demand; it now remains to consider certain characters who play a similar part in Guernes' work. In some cases, as we shall see, some figures will appear with less frequency than King Louis and yet still have an important function to fulfil at critical moments as the story develops.

The first and perhaps most obvious group which we should consider is the other English bishops. Guernes mentions in his poem the bishops of eleven English sees, in addition to mistakenly naming the Bishop of Ely, when evidently the reference should be to the Bishop of Norwich, following William of Canterbury in this error.¹ The bishops who figure in his poem are, apart from Becket himself, Roger de Pont l'Évêque, Archbishop of York, Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, earlier Bishop of Hereford (a point which escapes Guernes when he talks of Becket's election to the See of Canterbury), Jocelin of Salisbury, Hilary of Chichester, Roger of Worcester, Henry of Winchester, Bartholomew of Exeter, Robert of Lincoln, William of Norwich, Robert of Hereford and Walter of Rochester. Of the seventeen sees, the only bishops who are not mentioned at some point in the poem are Robert, Bishop of Bath and Wells, who died in August 1166, having been ill for some time before, Richard Pecke, Bishop of Lichfield and Hugh du Puiset, Bishop of Durham; the See of Carlisle was vacant throughout the period of the

controversy between Becket and King Henry.

However, several of the bishops merit scarcely more than a passing mention in Guernes' poem; for example, the Bishop of Rochester is mentioned only as being one of those who scourged King Henry at the time of the monarch's pilgrimage to Canterbury in 1174. Other bishops figure only marginally more often. The only reference to Robert of Lincoln suggests, early in the poem, that he would oppose Becket; references to Hilary of Chichester, who died in July 1169, before the dispute was resolved, are slightly more frequent, and in one of them, we are told that Hilary's attitude to Becket is that he ne l'ama neent (Line 1775). References to William of Norwich, Bartholomew of Exeter and Robert of Hereford are relatively anodyne, although between them they earn no more than six or seven mentions in the poem; in the case of the latter, we are told that he did attempt to dissuade Becket from carrying his cross into the courtroom at Northampton, but for this action he receives neither praise nor blame from the poet.

Only two of the bishops come out of Guernes' poem with any degree of credit; these two are Roger of Worcester and Henry of Winchester. Roger seems to be the only bishop to offer Becket any measure of support over the carrying of the cross at Northampton; when Becket was in exile on the continent and summoned his bishops to his presence, Roger, Guernes tells us, was the only one to respond:

Dunc manda saint Thomas ses evesques par cunte.

Nuls d'els n'i volt aler fors Rogier, fiz le cunte.

Erramment passa mer senz cungié de vescunte;

Ne fist a sun primat n'a saint'iglise hunte.

Set anz fu en eissil; mult enprunta a munte.

(Lines 2676-2680)

Becket later states that he will trust Roger's judgment; it is no doubt for these reasons that when Guernes is recounting a list of bishops whom Becket's enemies in England will not see, that the Bishop of Worcester is mentioned with such approval as is withheld from others:

N'i voldrent pas avoir l'evesque de Win-cestre
 Ne dan Bertelemeu l'evesque d'Execestre,
 Le gentil e le buen Rogier de Wirecestre
 Ne l'evesque d'Ely, qui n'i out cure d'estre.
 A tel sacre ne dut produem metre sa destre.

(Lines 4786-4790)

This passage, which contains the erroneous reference to the Bishop of Ely which we have already considered, shows Roger in a favourable light; there can be little doubt that Guernes looks upon him in kindly fashion because of his apparent support for Becket. It therefore follows that his character must be as Guernes describes it.

Henry, Bishop of Winchester, is instrumental in helping Becket at the time of his election and ensures that he is acquitted of all debts to the king which might arise from his period as chancellor. It is he who at that time convinces Becket that it is fit and proper that he should become Archbishop of Canterbury:

"Fiz, si seras, ceo dit l'eweske de Wincestre;
 Si purvers as esté al servise terestre,
 Mielz e plus volentiers serf le seigneur celestre.
 Tu fus lus as ueiles; or seies pastre e prestre.
 De Saul persecutur Pols seras e deiz estre."

(Lines 486-490)

A little later, we find Henry arguing successfully Becket's release from any debts, and Guernes lets his audience know his approval of the bishop at this stage:

L'eveske de Wincestre, ki mult sot de raisun,
Ne voleit k'il en fussent pris a nul' achaisun.

(Lines 514-515)

Later, when faced with King Henry's very considerable wrath, the Bishop of Winchester, replying because he is, according to the king, the most senior and respected of the bishops, reminds the king that Becket was given this acquittal which he himself did much to achieve.

When the bishops are thrown collectively into confusion at the time of the events at Northampton, Guernes tells us that Henry of Winchester, in much dismay, advises Becket to resign his archbishopric, but the poet is very careful to explain his motives for such advice:

Dunc fu cil de Wincestre durement esmaiez.
"Sire, fait il, pur Deu, car entendez a mei:
Rendez en sa merci l'arceveschié al rei.
N'avrez pes autrement; tut clerement le vei."
Il nel dist pur nul mal, mais en conseil de fei.
Surdre i vit grant peril e mult mortal desrei."

(Lines 1760-1765)

We have already established Guernes' tendency to investigate motivation only when it is likely to be favourable to Becket's side of the argument, or when, as is the case here, it is necessary to

explain or rationalise actions or words which seem contrary to the furtherance of Becket's cause.

Such is the extent of Guernes' praise or approval for the bishops and the part which they played in Becket's history. No doubt he approved them when, as he tells us, they elected Becket to the archbishopric a grant joie,^(Line 471) with the notable exception of Gilbert Foliot, who strongly opposed Becket's election, because he had, Foliot claimed, de saint' iglise ad persecuturs esté (Line 479). Guernes makes Foliot's voice sound isolated and unconvincing. But, despite an assurance which all the bishops - and Guernes makes a point of telling us that Roger, Archbishop of York included himself in this promise - gave to Becket that they would support him over the question of the criminous clerks, the bishops have soon given the poet reason to deliver a long attack on them:

Lungement ad duré entre els dous cist estris.
 L'arcevesque ne puet flechir li reis Henris;
 Tut adès mainteneit les fols clers entrepris.
 Tut sul se combateit, n'i ot gueres amis,
 Car tuit pres li evesque s'esteient al rei pris.
 Li autre l'unt laissié tut sul enmi l'estur,
 E le corn unt baillié en main al pecheur,
 Ne l'espee Deu traire nen osent pur pour;
 Car plus criement asez le terrien seigneur
 Que il ne funt Jesu, le puissant creatur.
 Ahi, las e chaitif! Dites mei que cremez?
 Cremez vus que vus toille li reis vos poestez?

Par me fei, nel fera, se tenir les osez.

Vus n'estes pas evesque, le sul nun en portez.

Ço que a vus apent un sul point ne gardez.

(Lines 1181-1195)

He goes on to accuse them of neglecting their flocks, their duty to their mother church, of supporting the king instead of standing up to him; he calls them ^(Line 1206) mercennier, and warns them ^(Line 1207) plus vilz vus avra when the king in heaven, as opposed to the King of England, calls them to judgement. This attack is surprising in its damning virulence, and emphasises the extent to which the poet judges the bishops to have failed Becket by abandoning him. At Northampton they beg him, imploring at his feet, to lay aside his cross, and round on him when he refuses. When he feels himself threatened with death, Becket, Guernes tells us, sees his bishops in silent acquiescence. Eventually they agree to appeal against their archbishop to Rome, not wishing to have the opprobrium for Becket's death attached to them. At this stage Guernes tells us that some acted in good faith, some in bad, but their arguments are made deliberately to sound weak and fearful:

Li un i entendirent mal, e li autre fei.

Dunc sunt venu a lui. Tuit erent en esfrei.

"Nus apelun, funt il; car trop sumes grevé.

Car ço que nus eumes ainz al rei greanté,

E par obediēce l'eūstes comandé,

Or l'avez defendu. Pur tel deslealté,

U vus nus volez metre, vus avuns apelé.

(Lines 1799-1805)

We are shown all the bishops, admittedly led by two prominent members, the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London, in collusion with the king to bring about the downfall of their own archbishop. Such events, as retold by Guernes, could not fail to dispose his audience strongly against the English bishops as a group.

None of the bishops actively opposes Henry's decree that they should neither obey the pope, nor receive letters from him, nor help Becket and his followers; if they do not swear to abide by the decree passed at the Council of Clarendon, they turn a blind eye to what Guernes sees as their duty to combat it. As we have seen, only Roger, Bishop of Worcester, obeys Becket and goes to visit him in France, in open defiance of King Henry.

If, as we have seen, most of the bishops rarely if ever speak or act in a manner which Guernes can report with anything less than implied censure, three of their number meet with much stronger opprobrium than the rest: Roger de Pont l'Évêque, Archbishop of York, Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, and Jocelin de Bohun, Bishop of Salisbury. We have already seen in the previous chapter how Becket's excommunication of these three indirectly brought about the murder in the cathedral, through the medium of Henry's wrath and the reaction of four of his knights to it; let us begin our consideration of the three by looking at the event which prompted Becket to excommunicate them, namely the coronation of Young Henry as King of England; we have seen elsewhere that Guernes is mistaken

over the chronology of events here, so the link between the two events seems more tenuous in his poem than was in fact the case. We should note in the first instance how Guernes refrains from naming other bishops who might have played a part in developments here in order to concentrate the attention of his audience on those whom he sees as chiefly responsible :

Od l'arcevesque i sunt dui evesque assemble,
 Gilebert Foliot de Lundres la cité,
 E Jocelins i ad, de Salesbire, esté,
 Pluisur autre ensement, qui ci ne sunt numé.
 Sur ces treis fu li fais, e par els fu ovré.
 Or unt emuint l'enfant icil trei boiseur.
 Deus li creisse ses anz e vertu e honur!
 Mais n'apartint a els, fait s'en sunt robeur.
 N'en sunt de rien li mot del sacrement peiur,
 Ne il rien mains sacrez, Deus li doinst sue amur!
 Senz raisun unt enpris en autrui poesté,
 A faire autrui mestier; mais chier l'unt comperé.
 A Rome en sunt sumuns, mais pas n'i sunt alé:
 Par l'apostolie sunt de lur mestier sevré.
 Pur la pour del rei unt Deu tut adossé.
 Deus, quel duel des prelaz qui lur mestier ne funt!
 Mucie est la lumiere qui esclaire le munt.
 Il sunt li pullent sels qui l'esperit corrunnt.
 Chien mu n'abaient pas; suz le banc lié sunt.
 As larruns conjoissent, al mesfait od els vunt.
 Tut de but se teneient par tut cil trei al rei;
 N'il ne voleient faire pur Deu ne co ne quei.

En fause trinité erent en un tut trei,
 E de la verité esteient par tut quei,
 E voleient turner les custumes en lei.
 Ne voleient de rien lur seignur adrecier;
 Mais contre saint' iglise le faiseient plaidier,
 E se peneient mult des escriz encergier,
 S'il peüssent trover nule rien n'espier
 Dunt la cause le rei peüssent esforcier.

(Lines 2751-2780)

This long attack, and appraisal of the duties of a conscientious bishop, which continues for another fifty lines, is worth studying in detail; it contrasts in the strongest terms the reprehensible actions of the fause trinité^(Line 2773) with the upright, solitary, painful stance made by Becket against the king; the three bishops, Guernes tells us, are guilty of fear, usurpation, treachery and wilful refusal to perform the duties which their office demands. Guernes rarely misses an opportunity, when talking of the three in concert, to remind his audience what the actions and thoughts of a good bishop should be; it is a theme to which he returns several times; Roger, Feliot and Jocelin, on the other hand, on more than one occasion are guilty not only of the most reprehensible actions on their own part, but of poisoning the actions of others by their nefarious advice; Ne sunt pas fil Jesu, ainz sunt tuit forsalignié^(Line 4811). They are not, Guernes tells us né del ciel^(Line 4814). There can be little doubt that the poet wishes us to see them not only as intractable enemies of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the ecclesiastical dispute, but iniquitous agitators who influence the king to evil thoughts and

deeds, and as such they should bear a share of the blame for Becket's death.

Of the three, Jocelin de Bohun is least clearly delineated; we rarely hear of him except in conjunction with the other two; on one occasion he seems to doubt Becket's word in a most invidious manner, over the oath to observe the king's customs, and early in the poem there is the puzzling statement li uns de Salesbire, que li reis ot en hé,^(Line 932) a point which the poet does not expound upon nor return to. For the rest, he remains, it seems, very much the junior partner in the unholy triumvirate.

The picture which Guernes paints of Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of first Hereford and later London, is of a man intransigent in his opposition to Thomas Becket, virulent in his hatred, and only years after Becket's death seeking repentance and gaining absolution for his stance whilst the archbishop was alive. He alone, among the bishops, we learn early in the poem, opposed Becket's election, for reasons we have seen earlier in this chapter. But this is the only firm reference to him in the first fifteen hundred lines of the poem; when next we encounter him it is to hear how he recounted the mass celebrated by Becket at Northampton to the pope, manifestly trying to discredit the archbishop. Guernes is delighted to add that in this he is actually distorting the truth into lies:

Purquant pur cele messe que il dunc celebra,
 Li evesques de Lundres, qui pur le rei parla,
 Par devant l'apostolie puis l'en acaisuna,

E dist pur sorcerie cele messe chanta,
 E el despit le rei. Mais le veir trespasa.

(Lines 1556-1560)

He is one of those who tries to prevent Becket from carrying his cross at Northampton, using the rather strange reasoning that, being his deacon, the Bishop of London had the right to carry it rather than the Archbishop of Canterbury. He fails to gain release from Becket's appeal against his bishops to Rome.

It is at this time that Guernes tells us of l'evesque de Lundres,
 (Line 1774)
quil haï durement, 'le' being Becket; he advises the king that stealth, rather than an open show of force, might be the best means of defeating Becket at that time. The irreconcilable hostility which Foliot bears to Becket throughout the poem has already been made manifest to us, and will alter little in succeeding encounters and exchanges.

Guernes attacks him roundly at the time of Henry's embassies to King Louis of France, delighting no doubt in being able to remind his audience how one day Foliot will come to recognise the utter folly of his ways; but the attack is none the less biting for that:

En cel message vint Gilebert Foliot.

Des lettres sout asez, e servi Astarot.

(Mais puis avint tel jur que il s'en tint pur sot

Qu'encontre le saint humme eut parlé un sul mot:

De Sodome est eissuz e siut les traces Lot.)

(Lines 2171-2175)

It is unusual for Guernes to indulge in hyperbole, if hyperbole this be. It is surely intended to emphasise at one and the same time how ill-advised the Bishop of London is, and how strongly the poet feels in the condemnation of his behaviour throughout the years of the dispute; even so, it is scarcely a statement the poet could make without some reference to Foliot's ultimate repentance of his actions.

Guernes quotes at length a letter from Foliot to Becket in exile, and prefaces his remarks by accusing Foliot of sending it in the name of all the other English bishops whilst withholding his own name. In it he informs Becket of the intention of the bishops to appeal against him, reproves him for fleeing from the country, thereby obviating any possibility of peace and throwing the Church into confusion; also for threatening the king with excommunication, for lack of humility and gratitude towards the mother Church, for excommunicating the Bishop of Salisbury and his deacon. He counsels him to be better advised, to avoid confrontation or open warfare with the king who is, for his part, willing to redress any wrongs he may have done if Becket will agree to meet him halfway. All this might be convincing enough, were it not for the fact that Guernes allows the arguments to build up simply in order to demolish them point by point as he gives a full and faithful translation of Becket's answering letter, in which all the charges are more than competently met or refuted. When Foliot acted as ambassador to Henry on a journey to the pope, Guernes derided the embassy for its faulty grammatical delivery and the lack of

co-ordination between the members of the party; here Foliot is discredited by the power and logic of Becket's reply. But Guernes is very careful to ensure that Foliot's interpretation of the problem never gains credence, that his actions are never shown in the light of justification.

Foliot appears in one of Becket's dreams as one of his main persecutors, as does Hilary, Bishop of Chichester, who repents of his involvement. Guernes warns Foliot to do likewise, and not only that, to ensure that it is la pleniere amendance (Line 3889). His repentance may have been gradual, but it must be complete and unequivocal - altrement en prendra Deus la dreite vengeance (Line 3890).

Guernes allows no relief in his picture of Foliot; his opposition and hatred of Becket seem total and all-consuming, and no redeeming characteristics appear at any stage to alleviate the blatantly vitriolic and critical impression which is given of him; none that is, until, at the time of King Henry's pilgrimage to the martyr's tomb, the Bishop of London delivers a sermon in which he confesses his own, as well as the king's, confession for any part they may have had in the archbishop's death. At this juncture the poet relents, and after the sermon, when Foliot comes to scourge the king and again beg forgiveness for him, Guernes has to admit that Foliot's soul was saved by sincere repentance, not, however, without making mention firstly of the saint's bountiful love, and secondly, by way of stark contrast, of Foliot's hard-hearted opposition during Becket's lifetime:

En fei e en amur oi li sainz cestui,
 Qui li out fait al siecle sovent mult grant enmui,
 E or l'aveit requis pur sei e pur altrui.
 Li martyrs vit li quers e del rei e de lui:
 En veire repentance furent salvé andui.

(Lines 6016-6020)

However damning the poet may be about Jocelin of Salisbury and Gilbert Foliot, he reserves his most savage anger and condemnation for Roger de Pont l'Évêque, Archbishop of York. From the earliest reference to him in the poem, we sense the hostility which he feels towards Thomas Becket, and from what we have already observed in this and the previous chapter, we should not be surprised if we find this hostility, which in time grows to animosity and eventually to open hatred, reflected in the picture of Roger which Guernes paints. But let us consider the evidence dispassionately before we reach any conclusion on this matter.

The first reference in the poem to Roger occurs when Guernes is describing the time which Becket spent in the service of Theobald, Becket's predecessor as Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket, Guernes tells us, excels in his duties and gains Theobald's trust, respect and affection. Roger was also at Canterbury in the household of Theobald at this time, and Guernes describes his reaction to Becket's success:

Rogier del Punt l'Eveske envie li porta,
 E par lui e par altres, quanqu'il pot, l'esluine,
 E le clerc Baille-Hache plusurs feiz le nume.

(Cil ot issi a num ki a curt l'amena.)

Mes Thomas fu senez, e sil survezia.

(Lines 256-260)

Both are subsequently advanced by Theobald, Roger becoming Archbishop of York in October 1154 on the death of Archbishop William, and Becket replacing Roger as Archdeacon of Canterbury, as well as receiving other benefits, as Guernes goes on to tell us. Thus early is the rivalry between the two men established, and Guernes succeeds in conveying to his audience the impression that Roger's jealousy is born of inferiority and envy, and provokes him to low jibes at Becket's expense; Becket, according to Guernes, remains wisely aloof from any such behaviour and potential conflict.

There is no word of disapproval from the Archbishop of York - as we have seen there was from the Bishop of London - when Becket was elected Archbishop of Canterbury, and the next time we hear of him he is promising, along with all the other English bishops, to stand by Becket against the king over the question of the customs:

Tuit ensemble li dient: tienge sei ferment.

Od lui tendront par tut; si l'en funt serement.

Rogiers del Punt l'Eveske li pramet ensement

K'il se tendra od lui, ne li faldra neient.

(Lines 847-850)

Guernes has only one purpose in singling out the Archbishop of York for our attention here: He wishes to emphasise the degree of Roger's treachery to the Archbishop of Canterbury, for within the matter of a few lines the poet tells his audience that the king

has been advised by Arnulf, Bishop of Lisieux, that he may
 (line 855)
veintre l'arceveske by recruiting a number of the English bishops
 to his side. Immediately, with no suggestion that the matter was
 heavily considered or required any degree of persuasion, Roger has
 sworn allegiance, along with the bishops of Chichester and Lincoln,
 to the king's cause. Guernes does not pause or dwell on the latter,
 but the very haste with which he relates events here surely implies
 criticism of these bishops, especially Roger, whose oath to
 Becket has so recently been brought to the attention of the audience,
 for their complete and abject desertion of their archbishop. When
 Hilary of Chichester goes to see Becket with a view to gaining
 his acceptance of the customs, Becket reveals immediately that he
 knows what has happened, and we should note the contrast between
 the behaviour of the bishops and Guernes' description of their
 primate:

"Ja ne m'i turnerez, ceo respunt li bon prestre.

"L'arceveske Rogier e vus ad aturnez

Li reis a ceo ke vus ses leis li guarderez.

Pur ceo m'i volez mettre; mes ja ne m'i metrez.

(Lines 870-873)

The opposition between Thomas Becket and Roger de Pont l'Évêque
 has been established; there will be no relaxation, no reconciliation
 between the two men.

The tension and the divide between the two is heightened at
 the meeting at Northampton, where we are told that Roger, acting in
 concert with Gilbert Foliot, as we have seen, advises the king to

attempt to deal with Becket when it may be done by stealth,
rather than in the public eye:

Li prelaz d'Evrewic, cil de Lundres, ço qui,
Conseil li unt dune priveement andui
Que, veant si grant gent, ne li fesist amui;
Mais l'endemain le mant, quant n'i avra nului;
Priveement le mete senz noisse en sun estui.

(Lines 1826-1830)

When the barons and nobles pass to judgment on Becket at Northampton, Guernes describes those who sat in judgment in the most severe terms, and it is interesting to note how, having given such a black description, he goes on to incriminate Roger by telling us immediately of him, and indeed Becket's repudiation of him, brief and lacking rational weight, is done in almost biblical terms, evocative of Christ's repudiation of the devil in the wilderness:

Al jugement en vunt la maisnie Nerun.
Lur pere espirital jugent comme bricun
Que li reis le presist e mesist en prisun.
L'arceveske Rogiers d'icel conseil eissi.
Fait il a l'arceveske: "Aiez de vus merci,
De nus ensement: car mal sumes bailli,
Se ne faites del tut le voil lu rei Henri."
Sainz Thomas li ad dit: "Satanas, fui d'ici.

(Lines 1863-1870)

The words of Sainz Thomas are obviously intended to strike home to Guernes' audience, and to remain, moreover, as a fitting description of the Archbishop of York.

We are not told of Roger's reaction to the legation which he receives from the pope, partly because it was so limited in its authority, partly because Guernes judges, no doubt correctly, that his audience will be more interested in the reaction of King Henry. Moreover, the poet knows that he is about to describe events at the papal court in Sens (where Alexander III was in exile), during the course of which Becket will fling himself at the pope's feet, and also read out in full the sixteen Constitutions of Clarendon. Although Guernes himself later describes this as a mult grant digressiun^(line 2561), he knows that it is of a vital and dramatic nature, and not unnaturally, we tend to lose sight, albeit temporarily, of Roger during these proceedings .

When, however, Henry discovers the difficulties involved in trying to subdue Becket by means of a legation, he resorts to other measures, and Guernes does not hesitate to implicate the Archbishop of York in Henry's plotting. Henry, to counteract a series of letters by the pope to the English bishops, had summoned them to Clarendon in order to extract certain promises and assurances from them:

Quant ot li reis Henris de la pape conter
 Qu'il feseit par ses briefs les evesques mander,
 A Clarendune ad fait sun concilie asembler.
 Iluec voleit il faire as evesques jurer
 Que nuls d'els pur apel ne passereit mais mer,
 E qu'a pape Alissandre de rien n'obeireient,
 Ne pur ses mandemenz nule rien ne fereient,
 Ne que nul de ses briés des or ne recevreient,

N'a Thomas ne as suens de rien nen aidereient.
 Il ne l'unt pas juré, mais ensi l'otrieient.
 Li lai en furent mis par tut al serement.
 (Rome est a Evrewic, Rogier a trop argent;
 Cil ad Angot od lui, dunc ad Rome en present!
 Engleterre est enclose e de mer e de vent:
 Ne crient Deu ne ses sainz par un poi de turment.)
 Encore aveit li reis comandé e bani
 Que, s'en tute sa terre eüst clerç si hardi
 Qui a Rume apelast, a l'ués le rei Henri
 Sereient erramment tuit si chatel saisi
 E il mis en prisun, cum s'il eüst mæl cri.

(Lines 2641-2660)

Much of the factual detail in this passage can also be found in the account of Edward Grim, whom Guernes is clearly following closely at this point. But when we compare the two accounts, we shall be interested to note not only the points of obvious similarity, but also a difference of emphasis which is not without significance. Here is an extract from Edward Grim's account of the king's oppressive measures:

"Audiens interea rex quod episcopus Angliae dominus papa mandasset, Clarendunam coegit concilium ubi juramentum exegit a pontificibus ne quis eorum pro quavis appellatione patria egrederetur, nemo mandatum domini papae susciperet. Et quidem in hunc modum episcopi promiserunt, a laicis vero juratum est. Clamatum est ex ore regis, quod si quis pro quocunque negotio sedem apostolicam appellasset, omnia quae

illius essent scriberentur ad opus regis, et ipse
 truderetur in carcerem. Proh pudor! ubi tunc timor
 Dei? ubi reverentia legum? ubi pontificalis honor?
 Omnes iudicium regis et praesentiam appellabant.
 Causas ecclesia tractabat populus qui ignorat
 legem Dei."

(Edward Grim, ch. 56, pp.405-406)

Both writers clearly feel angered not only by the king's measures, but also by the failure of the Church to protect those in need of protection, the failure of the English bishops to stand up to King Henry with greater resolution. Grim maintains his criticism on a general level, without mentioning any one by name. Guernes, however, in a parenthesis which has no surviving written source, introduces the name of Roger, Archbishop of York. Guernes tells us that Rome is now at York; since, as a result of the king's action, it was forbidden to appeal to Rome, appeals now went to Roger at York. Guernes goes on to add that Roger has plenty of money, and now he has Rome to himself; the implication here is that Roger's pockets are full - presumably as a result of the large number of appeals, and that he is in this happy position because the appeals must necessarily go to him now. Thus, in a sense, he has Rome to himself. The punitive measures which, Guernes goes on to tell us, are threatened against those who disobey the king's orders reinforce the impression that Roger is now in a powerful and pre-eminent position. Thus, without stating directly here that Roger is party to the king's actions, Guernes adroitly gives his audience the impression that the Archbishop of York benefits from them in an unbecoming manner. The tone and the implication of the passage are clearly intended to reflect badly upon him.

We do not have to wait long before we find Roger once again offending against his archbishop, although in this instance Guernes' chronology is very inaccurate, as we have seen. The poet follows Edward Grim in relating at this stage the coronation of Henry's son, young Henry, as King of England. Both authors are wrong in placing the event a number of years before it actually took place. As we have seen, it was the event which declenched the rapid developments in the second half of 1170. Grim² relates it immediately after a letter from the pope to the Archbishop of York and the other English bishops which was sent in 1166, whilst the events which Guernes has most recently been describing took place in 1166 and 1167. The purpose of Grim is to show the degree of opposition and provocation which Becket had to suffer during his exile in France, and to that extent, the coronation of young Henry did fall in the period of Becket's exile, although it came right at the end of it, indeed precipitating its end, rather than in the middle of it. For Guernes the theme is the same; the disloyalty, tantamount to betrayal by the English bishops, led by Roger of York, to their archbishop. It is perhaps in this spirit that he includes the material concerning the coronation at this juncture, although as we have already seen in an earlier chapter,³ there is no really convincing reason why Guernes should consciously ignore the evidence of William of Canterbury and follow Edward Grim in his error if in fact he knew the information in Grim's account to be inaccurate.

Grim's account of the coronation opens in the following way:

"Episcopi autem, si dicere licet quod ipsi facere non formidarunt, praevaricationi junxere contemptum. Nam cum filium suum coronari rex vellet, coronationis officium Eboracensis implevit, junctis sibi Gilleberto Lundoniensi, et Saresberiensis Jocelino, contempta auctoritate et postposita reverentia domini Cantuariensis, ad quem de antiquo jure regum inunctionem certum est pertinere."

(Edward Grim, ch.58, p.407)

Grim goes on to dwell on the irregularity of proceedings which saw young Henry crowned by the Archbishop of York, but when we turn to Guernes' poem we shall find a much stronger note of opprobrium, and far harsher judgement passed on the three bishops, led by Roger:

En cel contemple ad fait li reis Henris jurer
 Henri sun fil a rei, e sil fist coruner.
 L'arcevesques Rogiers, qui nel volt refuser,
 L'aveit emuint a rei. Nel se deust penser,
 Car oil de Cantorbire deit tuz les reis sacrer.

(Lines 2746-2750)

We have already seen in this chapter how Guernes goes on here to expound upon bishops who fail to do their ecclesiastical duty. Guernes does not pass up the opportunity to illuminate the great failings of the English bishops, and once again here we are shown the Archbishop of York in a highly unfavourable light. Guernes' judgement of the three bishops, and of Roger de Pont l'Évêque in particular, is far less inhibited and far more damning than that of the Latin biographer.

For some two thousand lines, however, Guernes makes no further mention of the Archbishop of York; throughout the remainder

of the period of Becket's exile, we hear no further news of Roger, although we do hear, fleetingly, of the two other members of the fause trinité, Jocelin, Bishop of Salisbury and Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London. During the long negotiations leading up to the reconciliation effected between Becket and King Henry, and the former's return to England, the poet has no reason to introduce the figure of the Archbishop of York; historically, Guernes must have judged, Roger was of little significance at this stage of Becket's story, and when Becket was so evidently in conflict with the king, there would be little interest for the poet's audience in Roger de Font l'Évêque, despite the great antipathy which had existed between him and Becket in earlier years. Guernes also follows his prime written source, Edward Grim, in neglecting to give information about the Archbishop of York at this stage of his account; Grim only makes mention of Roger in giving the text of a letter from Becket to the pope, in which the former complains, amongst other matters, about the conduct of some of the English bishops, and Guernes, in his poem, gives only a brief summary of the content of this particular letter, thereby omitting the names of any of the bishops.

Thus the next direct reference to the Archbishop of York in Guernes' poem does not occur until the poet has reached the point at which he is telling his audience of what happened on Christmas Day 1170. After his return to England, and his attempts to seek out young Henry, Becket had returned to Canterbury, where, after delivering his sermon, the archbishop went on to pronounce a

number of excommunications:

Mais le jur de Noël, quant il out sermuné,
 De saint' iglise aveit Robert del Broc sevré,
 Qui l'autre jur devant li eut fait tel vilté
 Qu'il li eut sun sumier de la coue escurté,
 E altres qui aveient envers lui meserré.
 De l'evesque de Lundres ra al pueple mustré,
 De cel de Salisbire - Jocelin l'unt nomé -
 De celui d'Evrewic, qui par s'auctorité
 Out sustrait a l'iglise de Sainte Terneté
 Des reis l'emunctiun e si grant dignité;
 E de Randulf del Broc, qui l'out forment grevé
 E out maint de ses hummes sovent enprisuné.
 Dunc ad maudit tuz cels par qui out mal esté
 Del rei, e qui a tort li aveient meslé
 E qui le meslereient mais a sun avoé.
 "De Jesu Crist", fait il, "seient il tuit maldit!"

(Lines 4951-4966)

Roger is thus accused of inflicting great indignity on the Church, of usurping the privilege of the see of Canterbury, of fostering discord and friction between Becket and King Henry. The quaint detail that Roger is excommunicated in almost the same breath as Robert de Broc, whose offence was to dock the tail of one of Becket's pack-horses, should not distract our attention from the gravity of the circumstance for the Archbishop of York and his colleagues. Indeed, Guernes probably preferred to despatch the excommunication of Robert de Broc early in his catalogue,

in order to concentrate upon more weighty issues, and knowing his historian's reluctance to omit detail, we should not be too surprised to find the list of excommunications opening with that of Robert. Thus Guernes is able to build towards his conclusion, in which two of Becket's most implacable enemies, Roger and Randolph de Broc, are dealt with. These two perhaps, in the poet's mind, are most worthy of opprobrium, most deserving of their fate and the Archbishop of Canterbury's condemnation. The implication that they have deliberately poisoned relations between Becket and Henry is clearly contained in Guernes' lines here. We should perhaps be mindful of the fact that Roger has been absent from the audience's thoughts, in all probability, for a long time - we have discussed at length elsewhere Guernes' misplacement of the coronation of young Henry - and, since the audience may momentarily have forgotten Roger's offence and the depth and intransigence of his opposition to Thomas Becket, Guernes skilfully makes the most of this opportunity to refresh the memory of his audience. Moreover, Guernes precedes this outburst in which the guilty are rightly punished by the archbishop with a brief but striking account of his piety, telling his audience how Becket had pity on the poor, how he helped the sick and needy in his see as much as possible; Guernes concludes this brief description in the following way:

El servise Deu s'a jur e nuit traveillié.

Bien saveit sun martirie, si l'aveit denuncié.

(Lines 4949-4950)



This skilful juxtaposition of material, with the emphasis upon Becket's presaged sanctity, followed by the sharp reminder that, despite his piety, he felt it his duty to excommunicate those who had offended against himself or against the church, serves to remind the audience of Roger de Pont l'Évêque's offences. Grim follows the same ordering of material, but lacks Guernes' subtlety, and fails to name Roger, referring merely to tres quoque pontifices.⁴

Guernes relates in very vivid terms Roger's reaction to the news of his excommunication; this is a very important and interesting part of Guernes' account, and one which bears consideration in some detail. As we have just seen, Guernes has been using Grim most recently as his written source, but Grim goes on to relate not the reaction of the three excommunicated bishops, but the reaction of the king when they go to him with the story of their excommunication. Guernes, interestingly, turns to William of Canterbury and bases most of the next forty lines of his poem very closely on William's account. Let us consider then what William of Canterbury has to say on this subject:

"His auditis duo episcopi decreverunt veniam et misericordiam
 pii patris postulare. Sed dissuadens Eboracensis fertur
 dixisse, "Octo millia librarum numeratae pecuniae, Deo gratias,
 adhuc apotheca nostra reservat, quae, si tanta dispendia necessitas
 exigerit, ex asse demolienda est ad reprimendam contumaciam
 Thomae, dissipandamque arrogantiam, quae major est quam
 fortitudo ejus. Ne, quaeso, fratres, vestram religionem
 circumveniat. Adeamus potius dominum regem, qui usque in

hodiernam diem causam, quae inter nos et illum diutius vertitur, fideli patrocinio prosecutus est, et de caetero, nisi per vos steterit, ad consummationem expedit. Si resilieritis adhaerentes ei, quem habet adversarium (numquam enim post tantas inimicitias et inexorabiles redintegrabitur gratia) nos de ratione tamquam transfugas iudicabit. Et si districte egerit vobiscum, de juris aequitate vestris a possessionibus dejiciet. Quid ergo facturi estis? Dicite, quibus in terris, inopes rerum familiarium, mendicabitis. Si vero e conservo steteritis cum quo stetistis, quid amplius facturus est qui vos damnavit? Fecit quod potuit; in vos sententiam per pravam suggestionem extorsit." His et hujusmodi persuasi mare transierunt."

(William of Canterbury, ch.10 p.105)

Let us now look in some detail at the forty lines of Guernes poem which correspond to this passage. M.E. Walberg says in his "Tableau détaillé des sources du poème" that Guernes has composed a translation "presque littéral; seuls les trois derniers vers sont originaux."⁵ Although there is no doubt that Guernes has used William's account as a very firm basis for his own poem here, and within the exigencies of poetic form has produced a version which contains much the same material as that contained in William's account, it is not true to say that his is a literal translation; nor, as we shall shortly see, is it true to say that only the last three lines of Guernes' section are original - although original they most certainly are - other lines seem to me equally to be original to Guernes' poem.

Firstly, where William simply writes dissuadens, Guernes has a much longer and more damning passage in which he relates Roger's reaction, in which dissuasion becomes les ad fait meserrer, contre Deu e raisun e drecier e aler (Lines 4981 - 4982). He seeks compaignuns volt aveir al malice mesler (Line 4983). For once, even Gilbert Foliot and Jocelin of Salisbury are shown in a favourable light, for they wish to faire a lur arcevesque e dreiture e raisun (Line 4979). (It is a significant variation that in Guernes these two bishops are shown to acknowledge tute lur mesprisun (Line 4980), whereas William says that they simply wished veniam et misericordiam pii patris postulare.) But more damning are the words which Guernes writes as the introduction to this section on the reaction to the excommunications, which constitute an unequivocal statement that Roger is, far from being a worthy and pious archbishop, possessed by the devil himself, who occupies a heart filled with vice:

Rogier del Punt l'Evesque, quant vit e entendíe
 Qu'en escumengement fu mis e en devíe,
 Ne volt venir a dreit, ne n'a merci prié.
 Car mult out felun quer e gros e surquidié,
 E li diables out dedenz lui pris sun sié.

(Lines 4971-4975)

These lines have no equivalent in William's text, and they represent another of the claims, unsubstantiated by any of Guernes' written sources, which Guernes makes, that Roger is essentially an evil, malicious man who intends nothing but harm, if not to the Church itself, then to its head in England, Thomas Becket. It is

quite conceivable that there were some people at Canterbury when Guernes arrived there who held this opinion privately of the Archbishop of York, and it is equally possible that such was Guernes' personal estimation of the man, but it is nonetheless exceedingly surprising to find that Guernes is prepared to express himself so categorically and vividly in a poem recited regularly in public. We should perhaps remember that we hear of no expression of sorrow or regret from Roger later in the poem, as we do with Gilbert Foliot at the time of King Henry's journey to Canterbury, for example. Roger is never prepared, in Guernes' poem, to admit that he was wrong, to express anything other than hostility for Becket. Nor is Guernes writing and reading in the safe knowledge that the Archbishop of York was dead and beyond hearing, for he did not die until 1181. Thus it cannot be argued that Guernes was safely attacking Roger in the knowledge that he could afford to speak ill of the dead, as might have been the case. We may speculate at length on what may have been the causes for the poet to blame and condemn pre-eminently and beyond all his colleagues the Archbishop of York; very possibly Guernes did in all honesty hold a very poor opinion of him and indeed felt him to be gravely responsible for many of the sour and contentious events of the years of Becket's primacy, and felt that in the matter of the coronation of young Henry especially, he played a principal and fateful part - as indeed he did; he may equally have felt that as the second most prominent leader of the English Church at a time of crisis and controversy, he could have done very much more to support the Archbishop of

Canterbury in his struggle for the Church against the State, instead of betraying him with calculated malevolence and animosity. We might find many people in the months and years following Becket's murder in the cathedral willing to interpret the actions of Roger de Pont l'Évêque in this or a very similar manner, and with the immediacy of events still clear in their minds this becomes quite understandable. Just how many of these people would have been prepared to be as outspoken on the issue as is our poet is a rather different question. We may presume very many less, although most of course would not be involved in Guernes' activity of producing poetry.

It is perhaps here that we may find a clue, at least, to Guernes' attacks on Roger, although it would be wrong to suggest or to assume that this provides anything approaching a complete answer on the subject: Guernes, writing for an audience who needed to be entertained as well as edified, and who had to be kept clearly informed on the main issues at stake in the conflict, would be tempted to simplify the character of Roger. The Archbishop of York does, after all, appear at best intermittently in the poem, disappearing for long periods, and it would undoubtedly help the audience to have an established and reliable picture of him. This may help to explain how Guernes has come to paint in such black and unremittingly malevolent hues. The poet has, to some degree, created a popular villain out of Roger de Pont l'Évêque, and one to whom the audience would definitely respond. He was, after all, a natural candidate for such a role, being a rival of Becket since the first days of Becket's arrival in Archbishop

Theobald's household at Canterbury, and remaining a steadfast opponent throughout Becket's rise in fortune. Indeed we may observe that when Becket and Roger are in direct and open rivalry in the poem, Becket appears less in the guise of saint than that of hero; admittedly to no very marked degree, but there is some truth in the belief that Roger has become a permanently blackened figure in the eyes and minds of the audience, and a certain cause of their anger, abhorrence, horror and resentment. Guernes has simplified the issue for his audience, although it is quite possible that the picture which he paints of the Archbishop of York is extremely faithful to the one which he himself held to be true and accurate.

M. Walberg is correct in suggesting that Guernes does convey very accurately the words which William of Canterbury attributes to Roger as he persuades his two excommunicated colleagues that their best course is not to go to Becket to seek forgiveness and reconciliation, but to take their grievance to the court of King Henry in France. Guernes' translation is quite faithful and conveys William's Latin accurately, if with a little more asperity and bitterness than the Latin text. Both relate Roger's determination to bring down Becket's pride, which according to Roger major est quam fortitudo. Both record Roger as stating that he is prepared to expend a large sum of money to this end; William says Octo millia librarum numeratae pecuniae, whereas Guernes tells us dis milie livres, en mun tresor d'aveira.
(Line 4987) The major difference, as M. Walberg has correctly pointed out, comes after the conclusion of Roger's speech to his two colleagues (he himself

was in fact only suspended, whereas Gilbert Foliot and Jocelin of Salisbury were excommunicated, although such a detail need not and would not detain Guernes' audience, and may possibly have escaped him at this moment) when Roger, according to Guernes, makes a highly incriminating prediction, filled with bitter glee, of what may befall the Archbishop of Canterbury, as the three bishops are in transit across the English Channel on their way to see King Henry in France:

Tant les ad enchantez qu'od sei les fist aler.

A la nef sunt venu e entrerent en mer.

Rogiers del Punt l'Evesque n'i pout sun quer celer.

"Thomas, Thomas, fait il, mar m'i faites passer!

A vostre chief ferai mal chevez a turner."

(Lines 5006-5010)

Whether Guernes heard these words from one of his oral sources at Canterbury, or whether he is allowing himself to record the sort of expression which he would have expected Roger to make under such circumstances, we shall not know. It is quite possible that Roger should have made such a pronouncement - more possible, in fact, than that Guernes should have come to hear it - but whether it is a factual or projected utterance is of less significance than the influence the words are evidently intended to have on the thinking of the poet's audience. The audience know perfectly well what is soon to befall Thomas Becket, and Roger's words here are intended to reinforce and perhaps establish beyond doubt the impression that Roger would go so far as to instigate Becket's murder. It is quite feasible to imagine that, even if Roger did

utter some such promise or threat and even if it did come to Guernes' ears, the poet proceeded to imbue it with an importance and a meaning far beyond what Roger himself intended.

Thus we can see that Guernes may well have drawn much of the material for this section in the first instance from the account of William of Canterbury, as M. Walberg has suggested, but he is far more assiduous in his poem to use the material to prove the evil intended to Becket by Roger de Pont l'Évêque, and therefore Roger appears as a far more sinister, malevolent character in the French poem than he does in the Latin biography.

When the three bishops arrive at the court of King Henry, the story which they bring excited his fury and leads to the outburst which sent the four knights on their way across the channel and towards Canterbury. Guernes describes the distress of the three bishops rather more graphically than his main written source, William of Canterbury, here. Both authors inform us that it is Roger who accepts the king's invitation to speak, but Guernes adds the detail to describe Roger which is missing from William of Canterbury's account; Roger, Guernes reminds us, mult seut mal mesler e deriere e devant^(Line 5050). In view of the opinion which the poet has so recently expressed of the Archbishop of York, there scarcely seems to be any need for him to emphasise the point here, but in fact he does so. Roger cogently and emotively expresses the griefs of the three bishops, so much so that the court is incensed by the reports of Becket's behaviour, and the king is moved to fury. Roger explains that their main source of grievance is not the actual suspension or excommunication, or the fact that they have

suffered for trying to serve their king, but that they have been treated comme malvaises genz huniz e defamez,^(Line 5077) that their treatment is quite unjustified. According to Guernes, Roger goes on to offer the king what we may interpret as some very provocative advice:

"Se vus en faites el, n'en serez mais blasmez;
 Mais or atendez tant qu'il seit aseurez:
 Bien e tut choiement vengier vus en purrez."

(Lines 5078-5080)

These lines are based quite closely on William of Canterbury's account, although Roger's words in Guernes' version contain a greater element of malice, a greater suggestion of a desire for spiteful revenge:

"AEquanimiter ferenda tempestas est, quam declinare non potes, ut ex quieta mente et modestia tolerantiae lacessitus et passus injurias videri merearis. Quod facile fieri potest, si dissimulare potes inpraesentiarum irrogata, et injuriantem quasi securum ad tempus dimittis."

(William of Canterbury, ch.30, p.123)

Perhaps the most damning, certainly the boldest and most unequivocal statement which Guernes makes about the Archbishop of York is reserved for the final reference to him in the poem. Here Guernes states quite baldly that Roger was directly responsible for Becket's death, in that he summoned the four barons, explained to them the benefits to be gained from Becket's death, and bribing them to do the deed:

Rogiers del Punt l'Evesque les aveit conveiez,
 E a faire le mal les ad mult enticiez:

Par Thomas est li regnes troublez e empeiriez;
 S'il esteit mort, ço dit, tut sereit apaisiez.
 De quanqu'il en ferunt prent sur sei les pechiez.
 La cause e tuz les moz lur a dit e formez
 Qu'il unt puis l'arcevesque^{en} sa chambre mustrez.
 A chascun des quatre ad sessante marz donez.
 La fu li justes sancs venduz e achatez:
 As Gieus est Judas li coveitus alez.
 Cil firent saint Thomas ocire e detrenchier
 Qui deussent al bien le rei mielz conseillier
 E de la male veie turner e raveier.
 E cels en deit hum plus blasmer e chalengier,
 E li reis les devreit de sei mult esluignier.
 Nes deit pas apresmier, se il bien se repent.
 Car lur conseil li fu a mult grant damnement,
 E mult en est blasmez de ço qu'a els s'entent.
 E il l'unt conseillie tuzdis a sun talent:
 Conseil a volente ne vait pas lealment.

(Lines 5126-5145)

Such a passage needs little commentary; its meaning is quite explicit. However culpable King Henry may be, the first responsibility for sending the barons to Canterbury, for bribing them to commit the murder, even so far as the responsibility for instructing the four men what they were to say to Becket when they arrived at the cathedral, lies with Roger de Pont l'Évêque. He states that he will be responsible for their actions, and pays them in advance for services to the crown. It should not

surprise us, in this context, to find Guernes comparing Roger to Judas Iscariot. Not until we reflect that the man so described was still one of the leading churchmen in England at that time, indeed one who held the most important see in the land after Canterbury - and Canterbury was still vacant. The picture of Roger remains one of constant, unrelenting malevolence and evil towards Thomas Becket, from the earliest days of their rivalry in Theobald's household in Canterbury until the time of Becket's death. In no other biographer is the character of the Archbishop of York painted so black. We should note that again there is no exact written source for Guernes' assertions here - they amount almost to accusations against Roger - for neither William of Canterbury nor Edward Grim make any mention of such a meeting or arrangement between Roger and the four barons. Guernes inserts this passage between two which he has quite clearly borrowed from William of Canterbury.

It simply is not possible to know if there was any substance of truth in what Guernes alleges here. Presumably he had some oral source for this information, although it is quite possible that this was a popular notion or theory in and near Canterbury at the time Guernes was working and reading there, to blame Roger for sending the barons to kill Becket. But again it is surprising that Guernes is prepared to be so categorical in his allegations, for it is certainly a bold and firm stance which he takes on the issue. It is also surprising that, having made so much of an issue, having championed alone the written accusations against Roger,

he does not pursue the matter further. We hear no more of Roger in the poem, and the allegations are seemingly forgotten when Henry comes to Canterbury to repent his part in Becket's death, when Guernes tells us that both the king and Gilbert Foliot, who repents any part he may have played in Becket's death, having confessed, are saved. No mention is made of Roger at this juncture, nor anywhere else in the later stages of the poem. Perhaps this is understandable when Guernes is relating the dramatic events at Canterbury and the aftermath, but having attacked Roger so virulently so often in the poem, the poet might have pursued this material further. It is possible that, having too little matter to substantiate these claims, he wished to say no more, for this is a technique we have observed Guernes use in the past in connection with material of doubtful historical authenticity. But the allegations seem to be made too firmly for this to be the case, and certainly Guernes would have taken delight in including material in his poem which condemned the Archbishop of York so roundly in the minds of his audience. Perhaps he simply felt that he had said enough, or as much as was expedient.

We may be surprised that Guernes' allegations here have not received more attention. They seem to have been largely ignored by historians and commentators. This implies that they are not taken very seriously, but as we have seen, it is impossible to substantiate the claims, or indeed to do little more to speculate on their possible origins and authenticity. But their purpose in Guernes' poem, whether the claims are justified or not, is undoubted. They serve to confirm in the minds of Guernes'

audience that Roger de Pont l'Évêque was not only an implacable rival of Thomas Becket, but a malevolent, vicious, scheming man with no scruples about plotting the murder of the leader of the Church in England, a man who in the end would stop at nothing to triumph over his adversary, a man quite unworthy of the office and the trust he held, and whom the king was most unwise to call a counsellor. We may, like the historians and commentators before us, hold serious doubts as to the validity and truth of some of the statements made by Guernes about Roger, but we can be in no doubt as to Guernes' opinion of the man, nor of the impression which he wished his audience to gain. Indeed, the fact that in the case of Roger de Pont l'Évêque we may cast doubts on the veracity of Guernes' account demonstrates that this is something of an exception, that under normal circumstances his word seems generally to us to be trustworthy, and that, while his credibility as a historian is inevitably impaired in this instance if we choose to believe that he has himself fabricated the evidence against Roger for the purpose of defaming him, we should perhaps reflect on the light which this throws on the rest of Guernes' evidence; the accuracy of much of his historical material may be heightened, rather than diminished, by our interpretation of his original material on Roger de Pont l'Évêque. But there can, in the last analysis, be little doubt that the picture which Guernes paints of him is a popularist one, intended to convey an impression, unalleviated, unremitting and consistent, of an evil, malicious man. Guernes no doubt had his audience very much in mind when he

delineated, in so far as he did so, the character of Roger, and he fulfils his intention to paint a black and malevolent character with expert ease. It is inevitably a simplified, simplistic, one-dimensional characterisation, intended as such and none the less effective with the audience for whom it was intended.

We have now completed our survey of the English bishops at the time of Becket's conflict with King Henry. There are other important characters who, whilst they do not appear consistently throughout Guernes' poem, nevertheless play significant parts in the history of the quarrel. The first of these is the pope, and it will prove convenient to consider, at the same time as Alexander III, the poets' treatment of the cardinals.

If it is true, as we have seen, that Guernes introduces the various bishops into his poem if and when they are of direct importance to the fate of Thomas Becket, we should not be surprised to find that the same is true of the pope, Alexander III. For the major part of Guernes' poem, the pope remains a distant, imprecise figure, to whom the various parties write with some frequency, whose decisions and deliberations are from time to time shown to be of great weight by one side of the dispute or the other, but who only very occasionally comes into sharp focus as a immediate character in the unfolding of the story. This is no doubt how the pope had appeared to many in England at the time, and how he continued to appear in the years following Becket's death when Guernes was reading his poem at the martyr's tomb. But although our

general impression is no doubt of a distant and long-suffering correspondent in the affair, there are a number of occasions when the poet gives us a rather more clear picture of Alexander III. But even before we consider these occasions, we should perhaps consider the pope for a moment from a wider aspect than that which is to be found in Guernes' poem, for this will shed some light on how the poet approaches his subject.

As we saw in the first chapter, the position of Pope Alexander III was often very far from stable; from the time he succeeded the Englishman Nicolas Breakspear (Pope Adrian IV) in 1159, he was threatened by a succession of four anti-popes, mainly supported by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa; three of these anti-popes, Victor IV, Paschal III and Callixtus III, opposed him in succession during the period of Becket's dispute with Henry, or during his exile from England. Henry II, in turn, threatened on occasions to switch his allegiance to the anti-pope, and if there was a certain amount of bluff in Henry's threats, Alexander could ill afford to ignore them altogether, for Henry was far too powerful a figure for the loss of his allegiance to an already relatively strong opponent to be countenanced with equanimity. Alexander III had to tread warily. As it was, he spent long periods in exile from Rome, notably at Sens. Yet he remained pope for some twenty-two years, and, as Professor Ullmann has pointed out, the papacy during this period demonstrated that ... " as an institution it could weather the very severe storms affecting it ".⁶ He may concede that Alexander was a "mediocre and entirely unoriginal pope", but he does defend him as having some, at least

of the qualities of the jurist and the administrator, and shows him in a light where it is possible to see him as not so much weak and vacillating but patient, long-suffering and skilled in the art of negotiation. The four and a half thousand decretals which came from his pontificate are some testimony to this.

It is important to re-acquaint ourselves with some of these facts at this juncture precisely because none of these issues will be raised in Guernes' account. It would be churlish to expect him to be well acquainted with the finer points of Alexander's administrative duties or commitments, but the point is that he makes no mention whatsoever of the pope's situation. The poet's sole interest in the pope extends as far as the pope's involvement in and commitment to the Becket controversy and above all to his support for the cause of the Archbishop of Canterbury in his struggle. We should not be surprised at this - Guernes has after all made very little attempt in the course of his poem to explain what motives, what thinking may have prompted the actions of Henry II, so we should scarcely expect the pope to receive any greater consideration in this respect, and in fact he receives none. Our opinion of him is formed, influenced by the poem, on the strength of the help, support, encouragement which he can offer to Thomas Becket. Anything less than this risks, if not open opprobrium, a stony silence. There are perhaps some two dozen references to the pope in the poem, several of them informing us simply that Becket or one of the English bishops had written to him, or that he had written to one of them. In no sense are we kept in close

or constant touch with the pope, for Guernes will tell us nothing of him when he is not directly involved with Thomas Becket, the English bishops, the King or the legations which are sent to him. None of this is in the least surprising - we should indeed be surprised if Guernes had in fact approached the material in any other way, but it leads him to give us a very narrow and restricted impression of Alexander III, one which is insufficient for any modern reader to base a judgment of the man upon, although Guernes does several times suggest to his audience the nature of the pope in the course of his poem. This, without so much as explaining to them, or possibly reminding them, when he states that the pope was to be found in Montpellier (line 600) or Sens (line 2240), why it should be that the pope was to be found there and not, as one would have expected, in Rome. (In this respect it is interesting to note that, as we shall see, of Guernes' two main written sources, William of Canterbury does offer his reader an explanation, albeit a brief one, as to why the pope is not in Rome, whereas Edward Grim does not). The pope's circumstances are of no interest, in Guernes' eyes, and consequently it is not necessary for him to remind or inform his audience of them.

The most Guernes ever tells his audience on this subject are the following two rather tantalising and enigmatic lines, which seem to owe their existence as much to the demands of poetry, fulfilling a strophe, as to the cause of information - they are not

in the source, Edward Grim, whom Guernes is following closely at this point :

Li apostolies ert de Rume idunc fuitis,

E surjorna a Sanz meis, semaines edis.

(Lines 2244-2245)

The first mention of the pope in Guernes' poem occurs when, following Becket's election to the See of Canterbury, the archbishop sends the Abbot of Evesham, Adam de Senlis, to Montpellier as the head of an embassy to receive from the pope the pallium, which represents confirmation and recognition of his authority as archbishop. Despite the undoubted skill and learning of this embassy, and the diligence with which they pursued the archbishop's cause, the pope would not initially grant the pallium to them:

E pape Alisandre unt a Mumpelie^r trové.

Bon clerc furent des arz, de decre e de lei.

Se peticiun fist des treis chescon par sei,

E mult parlerent bien e clergilment tut trei.

E Alisandre pape les oi bien, ceo crei,

Mes il ne lur fist pas del palliun l'otrei.

(Lines 600-605)

This presents an enigma. There is no obvious reason why the pope should hesitate or refuse to grant the pallium. Guernes suggests none, except the fairly strong implication that the cardinals intervened and made the task of Becket's embassy much more difficult than would have been anticipated;

Il en sunt plusurs feiz as cardunals alé.

Li cardunal lur unt mainte feiz demené

K'il orent l'apostoile e a els aporté;
 K'il esteient de Rome chacié e debuté,
 N'aveient de lur rentes un denier muneé.

(Lines 606-610)

The messengers replied that they had come a long way,
 had spent all their money and were humbly requesting the pallium
 saintement e a nu^(Line 614), and that ja pur simonials n'en sereient tenu^(Line 615).

(The reference to the fact that in any case their long journey
 had exhausted their funds is, to the modern reader, a charming
 example of medieval logic). The implication is clearly that
 the cardinals were demanding some form of gift to themselves, and
 to the pope, before the pallium should be granted; this seems
 to contradict the evidence given earlier - only a few lines
 earlier, indeed - that Alisandre pape les oi bien^(Line 604); although
 he does qualify this by eo crei^(Line 604), this is probably no more than
 a convenient form of words, perhaps for the purpose of scansion
 as much as anything else. The presence in Line 606, of en,
 meaning "because of it", persuades us that the order of strophes
 is correct. This is perhaps the first example in the poem
 of Guernes' scant regard for the cardinals as a class. He rarely
 seems to regard them with anything less than suspicion, and
 sometimes, as may be the case here, with what amounts to contempt.
 At all events, when the Abbot of Evesham sees the opportunity,
 he makes a fine and persuasive speech in the presence of the
 cardinals and the pope, quoting the Bible "knock, and it shall
 be opened unto you."⁷ The pope is immediately won over and the

pallium is granted forthwith and with a very good grace. This still does not remove the difficulty which arises from the fact that Guernes has told us that the pope listened attentively in the first place. But it seems fairly clear that Guernes wishes the blame for the difficulties encountered by Becket's embassy to be laid at the door of the cardinals and not at the door of the pope. Guernes does not allow this episode to pass without drawing a moral conclusion from it:

Le pallium lur a l'apostoile chargié,
 E il s'en sunt od tut ariere repairié.
 Eins i vint Thomas senz dun e senz pechié;
 N'i ad pur ceo denier ne or n'argent baillié.
 Essample i deivent prendre li successur del sié.

(Lines 636-640)

The pope emerges from this incident in a more favourable light than the cardinals who surround and advise him. It is worth, before we leave the question of the granting of the pallium, considering what Guernes' written Latin sources have to say on the matter. Grim, in fact, remains silent on the issue, but William of Canterbury does include a brief chapter, which, whilst it mentions the reason for the pope's absence from Rome and presence in Montpellier,⁸ presents the ceremony as being very much more simple and straightforward than Guernes gives his audience to believe :

"A quo a publicis negotiis absolutus, post modicum,
 ipso et episcopis cunctis praesentibus, in Cantuariensi
 ecclesia consecratus est. Consecratus vero infra tres

menses consecrationis suae ad exponendam fidem suam, pelliumque suscipiendum, (quia in propria persona proficisci non potuit), mittens ad Montis Passulani (civitatem) pellium transmissum accepit. Ea enim tempestate pontifex Romanus Alexander, vir magnus et sanctitatis exemplum, Gallicanis in regionibus schisma Romanae ecclesiae declinabat."

(William of Canterbury, ch.8, pp.9-10)

There is no implication here of difficulties presented by the cardinals which Guernes implies, and certainly William cannot be said to be the source of Guernes' account of any difficulties here. Guernes presumably had some oral source for this piece of evidence, and, being prepared to believe that the cardinals were capable of placing obstacles in Becket's way, included it in his poem.

We do not hear of the pope again until relationships between Becket and King Henry had been strained for some time. On this occasion Philippe, the abbot of L'Aumône, Robert of Melun, shortly to become Bishop of Hereford following the translation of Gilbert Foliot to London, and Jean, Count of Vendôme came to Becket, in the wake of the case of Philip de Brois, which we discussed in the first chapter, and during the course of Henry's attempt to bring the English bishops to swear an allegiance that they would abide by the customs of his grandfather Henry I. Guernes follows Edward Grim closely in reporting that the pope had sent letters and messages to the effect that Becket should make peace with the

king if this proved at all possible; like Grim, he tells us that the pope will take upon himself the responsibility should anything go wrong:

Ke il s'acort al rei, face sa volenté.
 En peril de sun ordre li aveit bien lóe;
 E ad tut pris sur sei, s'i ad rien meserré.

(Lines 893-895)

The messengers also brought Becket letters from the cardinals, and assured him that the king intended no harm to the Church -

ne ja cuntre sun ordre ne li ert demandé custumes a tenir ultre sa volenté^(Lines 901-902)

These were among the various pressures and influences which brought Becket, and the English bishops in his wake, to the momentous meeting with the king at Clarendon. Guernes attaches no great importance, on Becket's behalf, to the pope's messages and letters at this juncture. In this, he is following Edward Grim.⁹ Guernes' audience is at liberty to deduce that the pope, fearful for the clergy, earnestly desires and seeks to promote peace between Becket and the king.

We next hear of the pope not long afterwards when Becket has, despite the content of the pope's messages, suspended himself from saying mass, and Rotrou, Bishop of Évreux, attempts to mediate between the two factions. As a result of Rotrou's intercession, Becket sends the pope a copy of the customs, and requests him to approve them and append his seal. But the pope refuses - bien sot que par destrece la requeste fet a^(Line 1045). This corresponds closely to Grim's account, which Guernes is following at this point, where

we read that the pope realises that hanc petitionem archiepiscopus summa constrictus necessitate fecisset, and he rejects Becket's request cum indignatione quadam - a phrase which finds no equivalent in Guernes' poem.¹⁰ The pope, we are given to understand, is fully aware that Becket has been forced to make this appeal only because he finds himself sorely distressed. The king, angered by the pope's refusal to sanction the customs, applies for a legation for Roger de Pont l'Évêque, hoping no doubt in this way to gain sufficient power over the see of Canterbury to be in a position to defeat Becket. To this end he sends an embassy to the pope, but, we are told very succinctly, il les a repueiz^(Line 1060). Guernes takes a certain amount of pleasure in demonstrating the skill and wisdom of the pope in this instance:

Car l'iglise, ceo dit, de Sainte Ternité
 Fu e est e deit estre de grant auctorité;
 Ainc cele d'Everwiz n'ot sur li poesté,
 Ne par lui nen avra en trestut sun eé;
 N'unkes cil dui prelat n'orent ami esté.
 Mes li uns des messages fu forment malveiziez.
 A la pape jura sur sainz agenuilliez,
 De la legatium se li reis n'esteit liez,
 Si tost cum les verreit el país repairiez,
 L'arceveske serreit del chief amenuisiez.
 Mes l'apostoile fu hum de mult grant saveir:
 Veit bien ke l'um deit fere mal pur pis remeneir.
 Dit: la legatium fera al rei aveir;
 Mes de nullui grever n'avra pur ceo poeir,
 Ne celui d'Everwiz n'i purra aseer.

(Lines 1061-1075)

The reason for Guernes' evident pleasure is not far to seek; although the pope has granted a legation to the king himself, its nature is so limiting, its powers so restricted, that not even Henry could sustain the pretence that he had won a victory over Becket. The pope has manifestly supported Becket in this issue - hence he was hum de mult grant saveir,^(line 1071) we may not unreasonably suppose. The poet must have been particularly pleased at the slighting references which the pope made about the Archbishop of York. Despite a further attempt by the king's emissaries to persuade the pope to grant more power to the king, Alexander III stands firm, stating autre legatium .. n'i avrez.^(line 1091) He duly sends the letters to the king, who, after an initial show of triumph and success, returns the letters to the pope in disgust in order to seek new means of achieving his end of bringing Becket to submission:

Quant il n'en put faire el, griefment li anuis,
 E a pepe Alissandre les letres renveia.
 E clers e saint'iglise durement guerrea,
 E par tut la u peut les clers forment greva,
 E mult mortal semblant l'arcevesque mustra.

(Lines 1101-1105)

Guernes doubtless felt that in this instance the pope had performed his duties in a very admirable fashion, and the absence of any mention of the cardinals and their influence may be purely coincidental. They are not mentioned in Edward Grim's account, which Guernes is following faithfully at this point. It is worth

considering what Grim has to say here, for we shall find that Guernes has borrowed many of his details from the Latin account - the threat that Becket may lose his head if the king's wishes are not granted, the pope's terse replies, his refusal to increase Henry's powers - all are to be found in Grim's account. As is frequently the case, Guernes translates his written sources most literally when he has, or seems to have, no other source with which to compare, temper and modify the material before him, and when he feels that his source is both veracious and wishes to make or emphasise the same points as Guernes himself. It is rarely that we can distinguish a passage of Guernes' poem as being a literal, or almost literal translation of one or another of his written Latin sources, and whilst this could to some extent be explained by his skill as a poet - and he is undoubtedly a highly skilful poet - it is surely more a result of his care to report in nearly every case only evidence which he himself accepts as true and fair, and to express only views which he himself shares. In this respect the question of whether his material is original or not, and clearly most of it is not, is of secondary importance and interest only. He is more prone, as we saw in his treatment of Thomas Becket himself as it develops throughout the poem, if not actually necessarily to omit, then to tone down material which detracts from the archbishop's cause, rather than to introduce a false note into his poem by including material which does not bear his stamp of approval. Equally, at the opening of the poem,

we saw him omit material which, although it might enhance the reputation and figure of the saint, he could not accept as proven. Obviously a poet who borrows so much of his material from other writers is open to the accusation of plagiarism; whilst the wealth of material to be found principally in the accounts of Edward Grim and William of Canterbury no doubt greatly facilitated Guernes' task - his poem would have been vastly different without them - we cannot in truth say that ease was his main concern. He rarely borrows unthinkingly or uncritically, even when he manifestly borrows slavishly. Here then is Grim's account of the encounter between Henry's embassy and the pope:

"Hoc autem sensere domestici, ut si Eboracensi archiepiscopo posset impetrare a papa regni legationem, facile dominum Cantuariensem hoc modo quassaret. Transmissis ad papam duobus clericis, multa instantia laboratum est ut effectum consequeretur voluntas regis; sed hoc post alia legatis responsum est, quoniam Eboracensis inferioris omni tempore fuerit dignitatis et auctoritatis quam Cantuariensis ecclesia, "et erit," adjunxit, "quoad vixero." Referunt nuncii protestantes quia nisi regem postulata legatione placasset, archiepiscopus capituli sententia puniretur. Et papa quidem hoc audiens ex animo suspiravit. Considerans autem, ut vir sapientissimus, leviori nonnunquam consentiendum noxae, ut perfecte gravior evitetur, legationem quidem transmittit regi, sed penitus potestatem interdicit gravandi quemquam

sive promovendi Eboracensem contra dominum Cantuariensem. Instabant nuncii affirmantes non esse in conscentia regis hac occasione velle gravare quemquam, sed ut hac permissione contradicentem humiliet archiepiscopum, et devotiorem efficiat regiae majestati. Super omnia autem ne in regis injuriam infames ordinatorum ausus actionesque insolescant, cum regi perspexerint non deesse facultatem gravandi archiepiscopum, sub cujus tuitione clerici temerare leges publicas non verentur. Sed nuncii aliam quam dictum est nulla ratione poterant extorquere legationem; quam tamen in publicis conventibus ostentans, divulgari fecit potestatem obtinuisse se a domino papa, qua posset archiepiscopi praesumptiones refrenare, cum, sicut dictum est, omnem cum permissa legatione nocendi sive promovendi aliquem auctoritas apostolica potestatem ademerit.

(Edward Grim, ch.33 pp.384-5)

The closeness of Guernes' account to Grim's hardly requires emphasis. Both writers clearly felt that the pope on this occasion was very wise, levelheaded and resolute, all of which serves to help Thomas Becket and thwart King Henry II.

It is more than a thousand lines before the pope enters the scene again. In the interim, Becket has felt himself so hounded that, following the council held at Northampton, he has fled the country, and is in the domains of Louis VII, King of France, who has a high regard for his troubled guest, and recommends him to the pope,

telling the latter that he should afford him all help and protection. Guernes, who follows Grim mainly here, although he does consult William of Canterbury, tells us that Louis summoned frere Franc l'aumocnier,^(Line 2226) and instructs him to go with this message with some urgency to the pope, telling him to tell the pope pur rien qui seit el mund qu'il ne s'en leist pleissier.^(Line 2230) Guernes now includes what appears to be an original piece of information to the effect that the pope listened carefully to what his diligent servant had to say - but before he could receive Becket, an embassy arrived from King Henry II.

Guernes indeed appears almost better informed than Grim, in that he includes all of Grim's information and, in addition to the information concerning frere Franc, is able to provide with the names of some of the king's delegation which are missing in the Latin account. Grim names the Archbishop of York, and the Bishops of Worcester, Exeter, Chichester, and aliasque persones nobiles et nominatas.¹¹ Guernes can do considerably better than that, and in addition comes as near to explaining the pope's absence from Rome as he ever does - that is to say, he openly admits it:

Mais ainceis que venist a Sanz li Deu amis,
 Eut li reis a la pape ses messagiers tramis,
 Evesques e baruns e chevaliers de pris.
 Li apostolies ert de Rume idunc fuitis,
 E surjorna a Sanz meis, semaines e dis.
 L'arcevesques i vint qui d'Evrewic ert maistre,

Vuit li Rus, e l'evesque i vint de Wirecestre,
 E li quens d'Arundel e Richarz d'Iwecestre,
 Johanz d'Oxenford, l'evesque d'Execestre,
 Hue de Gundevile, Hylaires de Cicestre.
 Cil de Saint Waleri, Renals, i est venuz,
 Henris li fiz Gerold, qui ert des reaus druz,
 Gilebert Foliot, qui ne s'i fist pas muz,
 E des autres plusurs, e jovenes e chamuz.
 Tels i parla purquant qui fu pur fol tenuz.

(Lines 2241-2255)

There is no doubt that Guernes enjoys being able to impart all this information to us, and we must presume again some well-informed oral source. But it is not only the desire for completeness which is satisfied by his drawing up of such a long and impressive list: he can also discredit them by showing their incompetence in handling the Latin language and generally reducing themselves to a state of embarrassing confusion. The pope is able to address them with contrasting calmness and due gravity, rebuking them for their agitated and excessive language. The pope emerges from his confrontation with credit, and of course Becket's detractors, more importantly, are shown in a very poor light. The humour with which the poet is able to achieve this picture distinguishes him quite markedly from the heavy and ponderous approach of the Latin biographers, and he was no doubt correct in judging that this approach would produce the desired response from his audience:

Devant la pape esturent li messagier real.
 Alquant diseient bien, pluisur diseient mal,
 Li alquant en latin, tel buen, tel anamal,
 Tel qui fist personel del verbe impersonal,
 Singuler e plurel aveit tut parigal.
 Tel i out des prelaz parla si egrement
 Que la pape li dist: "Frater, tempreement;
 Car mesdire de lui ne sufferai neent."

(Lines 2256-2263)

Guernes tells us that there is nothing but treachery and deceit and no word of truth in their words, but they are unable to deceive the pope. He replies to the demands of the royal embassy for two powerful cardinals to intervene in and decide the case firmly and unequivocally. But before we consider Guernes' words, let us study what his principal source here, Edward Grim has to say :

" Papa autem sanctissimus, considerans statim fraudem latere in verbis, respondet hanc potestatem nulli concedendam cardinalium, ut locum papae obtineat;" nec per ipsum, " intulit, " quicumque contra rationem cardinalibus concedetur."

(Edward Grim, ch.52, p.402)

William of Canterbury's account contains a very similar message, but what is of particular interest here is not Guernes' translation, for such it is, in this instance, of these words, but the lines which he inserts on the subject of the nature of cardinals, which are entirely original to his own account, and which we can safely take to be his personal opinion on them:

Li reis ert riches huem, sages e de grant art;
 Sout bien que chardenal sunt pernant e lumbart:
 Coveitus sunt d'aveir plus que vilain d'essart.
 Li reis ad dous privez, Sorel e dan Blanchart:
 Tost funt del buen malvais e del hardi quart.
 Ne porent l'apostolie par engin deceveir.
 Il lur ad respundu cum huem de grant saveir:
 "Tel poesté ne puet nuls chardenaus aveir.
 Par mei n'avra nul d'els de desraisun poeir;
 En poesté de pape ne voil nul aseer."

(Lines 2281-2290)

Guernes therefore echoes the sentiments of the two Latin biographers that the pope was wise and judicious, but is singular in his antipathy to the cardinals, who receive at his hands a treatment similar to that meted out to Roger de Pont l'Évêque, although on a lesser scale. Guernes is consistent in his suspicion of them, never crediting them with other than unpraiseworthy motives unless they are active in the support of Thomas Becket.

Guernes now includes a passage in his poem which is somewhat obscure, and which owes nothing to either of Guernes' main written sources. In it, he tells us of a strange sequence of events involving Reginald FitzJocelin. Reginald FitzJocelin was at this time archdeacon at Salisbury and abbot of Corbeil; later, after Becket's death, he became Bishop of Bath and was elected Archbishop of Canterbury in 1191, but died before he could be consecrated.

Guernes informs us of his status of archdeacon, and tells us that he interceded with the king's messengers on their way to Rome, informing them darkly that he knew of a way to help them, and would do so if they would consent to lodge with him - which they had shown themselves reluctant to do:

-Ne porrez, fet il, tot a la pape espleitier.

Mes se volez od mei a mun cust herberger,

D'un de ses enemis porrez le rei vengier."

(Lines 2303-2305)

There seems no doubt that Reginald's sympathies lie with the king. We are told no more of the outcome of his encounter with the royal party, but pass immediately onto an account of what happened shortly afterwards, when the embassy had reached the pope in Sens:

Dunc sunt avant a Sanz a l'apostoile alé.

E quant ne porent faire ço qu'orent demandé,

Un afaire lor ad la pape graenté:

Que Rogers d'Everwic ert legaz del regné.

Li bref en furent fait; mes ne furent livré.

Mes Reinald li Lombard fud de la curt privez.

Quant sout que cist afares fu issi atornez,

De nuit est a la curt priveement alez.

Car li reis d'Engleterre ert le jor mult dotez,

Ne il ne voleit pas que il fust encusez.

A l'apostoile ad dit:" Sire, ne fetes ja.

Si Roger d'Everwic la legation a,

Les prelaz que li reis het, toz desposera."

Tant fist que l'apostoile toz les briefs detrencha
 Qu'il aveit ainz fet fere, e altres lor livra.

(Lines 2306-2320)

This is indeed a strange passage, and it appears to be original. M. Walberg¹² discusses the issue at some length and admits to finding no really satisfactory solution. He is led, briefly, to question its authenticity, although he does accept it as authentic without much hesitation. The history of Reginald Fitz-Jocelin does suggest that he was capable of changing sides in the dispute, and changed his allegiance more than once. But why should he do so within such a short time of having been a willing conspirator in a plan to defeat Becket? Guernes obviously believes the story, for we can be sure that he would hesitate to include it if he were dubious of its veracity. Nevertheless, it remains an obscure incident, and throws no favourable light on Becket; if anything, it shows the pope in poorer light than if the poet had omitted the passage, which would obviously have been possible, at a stage in the poem when the pontiff is generally looked upon favourably by Guernes. Nor does it do anything to discredit the king's ambassadors, and as Reginald FitzJocelin appears nowhere else in the poem, Guernes has little reason to show him either favour or disfavour in his treatment of him. If we wish to find an axe which Guernes could possibly be grinding, perhaps we should in fact consider the light the incident throws upon the Archbishop of York. As we have already seen in this chapter, Guernes was never averse to vilify Roger, and there are other instances of

people drawing back from actions not because they would not serve the king's cause, but because they would run the danger of serving it too well, of going too far, so that blame, discredit or opprobrium might fall upon the king for the actions taken in his name or on his behalf. This, he protested, was what happened, after all, in the cause of Becket's murder. If we consider the incident at Northampton, for instance, when Becket was abused and threatened as he left the council, we shall remember the king's reaction:

Dunc fu al rei nuncié cum hum le fist huer,
 E que l'um le voleit e laidir e tuer:
 Li reis sereit huniz s'um nel laissout ester.
 Dunc comenda li reis e fist par ban orler
 C'um laissast quitement lui e les suensaler.

(Lines 1946-1950)

A similar instance occurs when John of Oxford, accompanying Becket as he returns to England after his six years abroad, prevents the archbishop from coming to harm - at the hands of Roger, among others - precisely because he knows li rei en sereit mult blasmez (Line 4729) and that li reis en sereit retez de traïsun^(Line 4735). It is not impossible to surmise, therefore, that once Reginald FitzJocelin hears that the pope intends to go so far as to grant a legation to Roger de Pont l'Évêque, he realises the lengths to which Roger, so he thinks, will go, that is he thinks that Roger will actually depose all the bishops who have the king's hatred (a highly fanciful and improbable supposition, but that is what Reginald professes to believe) and

that the king will be blamed or criticized for these resulting excesses, and that, far from changing sides in order to give Becket his support, he acts swiftly to prevent positive harm being done to the king's cause by any ill-judged action on Roger's part. This could easily, in fact, be the import of two lines towards the end of the episode:

Car li reis d'Engleterre ert le jur mult dotez,

Ne il ne voleit pas que il fust encousez.

(Lines 2314-2315)

Although this is a far from perfect explanation, it does seem to me preferable to any of the explanations offered by M. Walberg, who suggests either revenge on the king's messengers for their refusal of his invitation, or part of a devious manoeuvre to deceive them.¹³ Guernes, therefore, seems to include this incident in his poem for two reasons: firstly, the perfectly natural one that he judged it to be accurate and true, and secondly because it serves to add to the mounting store of evidence against Roger de Pont l'Évêque, shewing him once again to be capable of the most reprehensible actions; that the pope emerges from these lines as strangely vacillating at a moment when he seemed firm and wisely resolved in his opposition to the king's party, and had indeed to be shown the error of his action by an obscure archdeacon who was indeed opposed to Becket in the first place, is, in the light of the damage intended, if not, due to a lack of clarity on the part of the poet, done to the image of the Archbishop of York, of only secondary importance and value. I do not think that Guernes' intention

here was to imply weakness or vacillation on the part of the pope.

Within four days of the departure of the king's embassy from Sens, Guernes tells us, Thomas Becket arrived there; Guernes' account of this serves to emphasise the firmness of the pope's resolve, and demonstrate that the flirtation with the idea of granting a legation to Roger was only a temporary aberration, for it is sandwiched between the pope's reception of firstly the king's messengers, and then the other faction, Thomas Becket himself, and in his dealings with both Alexander III is shown to be clear in his thinking and decisive in his action. It could hardly have been Guernes' intention to temper that picture with a sobering example of the pope's inconstancy, inconsistency, or untrustworthiness. Guernes follows the example of Grim in passing on rapidly after the departure of the king's embassy, frustrated in their designs and objectives, to the arrival of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Sens. Both authors are aware of the appeal which this scene must naturally hold for any audience, and neither is slow to turn this to account. Both tell us that Becket fell at the pope's feet, and in a vivid and dramatic gesture held out to him not the customary gift of gold or silver, but the copy of the constitutions which he had accepted, to his subsequent chagrin, at Clarendon from the hand of King Henry II. Becket states that therein lies the cause of all his troubles, the reason for his exile from England. There is a small number of significant differences between the two accounts, however. Guernes, in fact, is rather more reluctant to admit the emotional side of the meeting than is Grim, and he does not tell us, as Grim does, that Becket resigned the archbishopric to the pope, who immediately

restored the position to him. Grim prefaces this piece of information by the clause ut mihi pro certo dictum est, which may have been sufficient, paradoxically, to make Guernes hesitate over the truth of this statement, especially as he could see in it an admission of weakness on the part of the archbishop, a breach in his defences. Both Grim and William of Canterbury mention mutual tears, a detail which Guernes omits. If we compare the accounts of Grim and Guernes, we shall find that the Latin biographer gives a more emotional version than the French poet, who is more factual and down-to-earth in his treatment, although not lacking in a sympathetic approach. Here is what Grim has to say :

"Sanctus autem papa elevans filium amplexatur, osculatur, lacrymas lacrymis immiscens, et Deo gratias referens, quod virum tam humilem spiritu, pastorem tam sollicitum in salute ovium, advocatum tam constantem in causa, imo in multis causis, Deo invenisset."

(Edward Grim, ch.53, p.403)

Alexander then, according to Grim, goes on to restore the archbishopric to Becket, saying that he knew no one stronger for the task. Guernes, on the other hand, conveys a picture of greater strength and fortitude, and indeed delays giving his version of this section of Grim's account for some thirty lines, until the incident with the cardinal, William of Pavia, to which we shall shortly return, has been retold. He merely contents himself with stating that the pope listened attentively to Becket, and to his spirited and detailed argument against the customs, which were read

out, then he tells his audience:

Bien unt e cleric e lai sa parole escultee;
 E l'apostolies l'out par tuz les puinz notee.
 L'apostolies l'asiet juste lui erramment,
 E bien seit il venuz, co li ad dit suvent;
 E mult li seit hon gré que si grant fais enprent
 Qu'encontre rei de terre saint'iglise defent.
 Par tut li aidera, la u raisuns consent.

(Lines 2379-2385)

Perhaps the phrase la u raisuns consent is a keynote to Guernes' view of this encounter. He was cautious of sweeping promises of help, and does not choose to make much of the pope's promise of assistance. Despite the obvious emotional appeal of the scene, Guernes prefers to concentrate his attention, and consequently that of his audience, on the appeal of reason rather than sentiment. The poet does not entirely neglect to evoke the sympathy of his audience, but one feels that he could have made much more of the distressed position of the archbishop, had he chosen to do so. The emotions of both the pope and the archbishop are tempered in Guernes' account, and we hear much more emphasis placed on Becket's carefully reasoned and argued attack on the constitutions, and of his detailed defence and successful running feud with the cardinal William of Pavia, who interrupted him with tiresome frequency. It is significant that Guernes includes his very accurate translation of the constitutions at this point, unlike either of the Latin biographers,

and that he himself presents an argument, albeit a brief one, against each of the sixteen clauses in turn. Nor does Guernes neglect the opportunity to show one of the cardinals worsted. Mention has already been made here of William of Pavia's continual interruptions, and how Becket dealt with them. Guernes takes obvious pleasure in showing how the archbishop was able calmly, and in Latin which compared most favourably with that of the king's ambassadors of which the poet has recently told us, to win his argument, with a wisdom which at one point is compared to Solomon's:

E quant li arcevesques comença a parler
 E sa cause en latin gentement a mustrer,
 Cil le comença lués par tut a traverser.
 Quida qu'um li eüst fait la cause fermer,
 E, s'um le desturbast, ne seüst parfiner.

(Lines 2361-2365)

Becket is inspired by sainz Espirz^(Line 2366), which, presumably, facilitates his task in disproving William's argument, and he is able to destroy the constitutions per raisun confermee e par trestut raisun e provance mustree^(Line 2377-2378). What is of greater interest to us here is the motive behind William of Pavia's interruptions; Grim's information on this point, which was presumably Guernes' point of departure, is a simple statement of facts:

"Sed causam regis tueri conatus est contrariis objectionibus Willelmus de Papia cardinalis; alii quoque de cardinalibus multa pro lege locuti sunt."

(Edward Grim, ch.54, p.403)

Guernes adds significantly, if briefly, to this information:

Un chardenal i out qui mult ameit le rei,

Vuillaume de Pavie, einsi out nun, ço crei.

(Tuz les chardenaus out treiz li reis pres a sei,

Car tant lur out d'ine e fait bien le purquei

Qu'en apert mainteneient sa cause e en requei.

(Lines 2356-2360)

Nothing in Guernes' written sources suggests that the king was in any way providing such incentive to the cardinals; this seems to be a further instance of the poet's desire to attribute some of the archbishop's discomfort to the illwill of the cardinals as a group, although on this occasion he was more than able to defend himself. Nor is this the last time that we shall find the poet charging the cardinals with being open to bribery. Just as he is able to mitigate the blame attaching to the king by thrusting much of the responsibility for his actions on to those who advised him badly, on such figures as the Archbishop of York, so the poet attributes many of the difficulties encountered by Becket at the papal court not to the highest authority there, the pope, but to those who surround and counsel him, that is to say, the cardinals.

Guernes tells us that the pope has no hesitation in condemning the Constitutions of Clarendon and anyone who observed them, that Becket thanked him for his ^(Line 2387) bel aculleit, and - after the text of the constitutions has been translated and Guernes' views given briefly on them - the archbishop spent a month at Sens before the pope commended him to the abbey of Pontigny.

For some three hundred lines now, we have been in the presence of the pope: this constitutes, in fact, the longest and most important contact which Guernes' audience is to enjoy with the pontiff. Only for a line or two, henceforth, will the poet take us back to the papal court, and mainly we shall hear of the pope only when he is mentioned in correspondence between Becket, the English bishops and King Henry, when letters or edicts from Alexander III may be discussed or quoted to prove one point or another. But in terms of assessing the role and the significance of the pope in the poem, the poet has by this stage placed most of the evidence before his audience, so we may be entitled to review our opinion of him at this point.

Even when we are in closest contact with the pope, he seems, from the evidence of Guernes' poem, a distant, aloof character. It is not really apparent from Guernes' poem what degree of involvement he had in the dispute between Becket and King Henry, but the poet does not credit him with great power or influence. Certainly appeals are made to him, his words are cited in evidence on one side or another, the king may fulminate when he feels that he has been beaten, deceived or disappointed by the pope's actions, but we are not concerned at all with his position as head of the Church - he inspires no great awe, no deep sense of respect. He is not a commanding figure, and this possibly is an unintended reflection of the political weakness of his position, both in respect of the schism manoeuvred by Frederick Barbarossa, and in respect of his relationship with England and the English Church.

We shall see an instance where Henry is said to be afraid of the pope, and the power behind his letters is sometimes made apparent, but, not surprisingly, more often Guernes seems to be showing his decisions as merely confirming earlier decisions taken by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket, as we have just seen, has a sympathetic ear at Sens, but the tone of Guernes' poem suggests that the poet felt that this was no less than he deserved. Indeed, as the tenor of the poem as a whole is based on just that premise, the pope serves as only marginally more than a further plank in Becket's argument. We have already established that Guernes does not wish to interest his audience in the history of schisms and schismatics; it becomes clear that his interest lies predominantly in the history of Thomas Becket, and the cause of the mother Church comes a long way second. Guernes is of course sensible of the dangers inherent to the Church, and reminds his readers and listeners not infrequently what it was that Becket was fighting to defend. But it is also true that the poet sometimes pays little more than lip-service to the cause, excepting his eagerness to prove that Becket was right in what he was doing. In so far as the pope can be shown to be justifying and sanctioning what Becket does, Guernes will focus the attention of his audience in the direction of Sens or Montpellier, as the case may be. But it is not the head of beleaguered Church we are shown, it is a figure whose influence is considerable, and whose considerable influence should naturally be employed to good effect in Becket's cause. But we must bear in mind that in a sense

Guernes was at Canterbury preaching to the converted, in that many, if by no means all, of those who came to hear his poem were already in no doubt that Becket had fought and died for the Church, and therefore did not need reminding of the fact quite so frequently. At the start of the poem Guernes is at pains to tell his audience that Becket fought and died pur les clers surpris ^(lines 62-63) pur amur Deu, both of which would be in any case more accessible and comprehensible concepts for his audience than the Church, a large and illdefined body. One suspects from the tone of his treatment of Becket's visit to the pope at Sens that Guernes felt that the pope owed more to Becket than Becket did to the pope. Certainly the cardinals did him no favours according to Guernes, and from the picture which he paints of them, it would have been surprising if anything other than the reverse had been the case. He clearly had no respect whatsoever for these members of the hierarchy of the church to which he himself belonged.

Indeed, when we next hear of the cardinals, they are forming what must, in Guernes' mind, have been the most unhealthy of alliances. Guernes tells us that the pope has sent for the English bishops, and Henry, in order to preempt this has called a council of bishops, intending to require them to ignore the edicts of the pope and they, (to the consternation of Edward Grim¹⁴) if they do not swear an oath to obey the king, dare not do otherwise. Guernes, rather than following Grim in reproving the timidity of the bishops and publishing the pope's indignant letter

to the English bishops addressed to the Archbishop of York on the same theme, reveals that some of Alexander's messages were brought, despite the threat of the severest penalty. Guernes is indeed about to catalogue what may befall any clerk who has the temerity to appeal to Rome, but before he does so he informs his audience of one of the indirect consequences of the most recent measures taken by King Henry:

(Rome est a Evrewic, Rogier a trop argent;
 Cil ad Angot od lui, dunc ad Rome en present!
 Engleterre est enclose e de mer e de vent:
 Ne crient Deu ne ses sainz par un poi de turment.)

(lines 2652-2655)

As appeals may not, according to the king's restrictions, be made to Rome, they go to York, and Roger, Guernes implies to his audience, benefits greatly from this practice. This information, for which Guernes has no written source, is clearly intended to damage the Archbishop of York in our eyes. Perhaps Guernes adds the comment about the physical isolation of England from the continent as some form of explanation as to why King Henry and Roger appear to be scoring a victory over Becket and the pope in this instance. When Becket, a little later, summons his bishops to him by letter only Roger Bishop of Worcester is bold enough to obey. Guernes has in the meantime given graphic details of Henry's threats in order to prepare us for this information.

In these exchanges, the cause of the pope and that of Becket are briefly united in the poet's mind, and he states

a little later, using as we saw in the previous chapter heavy irony to make his point, that the king should indeed be able to claim Saint Peter's Pence - after all, Guernes tells us, apostolies, legaz, arcevesques esteit(Line 2742). Neither pope nor archbishop could effectively put Henry's lands under interdict, and indeed, Guernes concludes ironically, n'i poeit saint'iglise vers li mustrer nul dreit(Line 2745).

Such discussions, even the issue of communication with the papal court, now restored to Rome, are hastily dropped when Guernes, mistakenly as we have seen, introduces his account of the coronation of Young Henry as King of England by Roger, Gilbert Foliot and Jocelin. The pope, stung into action by this slight to the dignity of Becket's see, promptly summoned them, and according to Guernes, when they failed to go, excommunicated them. Then we hear little more of the pope for more than a thousand lines, except that Becket and Foliot argue about him obliquely in their heated exchange of letters, Foliot claiming that Becket was harming his own, the Church's and the pope's cause, and Becket replying that the pope had no reason to support Foliot when the latter would not obey his own master:

"Plus est fermes que la pierre qui siet sur vive mole.

Vicaries est saint Piere, bien seiz n'est pas ventvole;"

(Lines 3363-3364)

But Guernes is translating Becket's own letter here, not giving his own view, which may be very different, and in any case Becket was giving an opinion of the pope which he himself needed to parade and promote, and which might not necessarily coincide at all with his private view of the pope at that time.

The pope does figure in a strange dream which Becket had

at Sens, when he was in the dream deserted, oppressed and attacked by all, fors de pape Alissandre, kil maintint sulement^(line 3870). Even in this dream, which was widely reported among the biographies of Becket, Alexander's help was of little use to Becket, for he awoke, according to Guernes, in cold fear, having in his dream laughed at Henry's failure to cause him pain, despite the most terrible tortures, and so incurred his wrath. Guernes, however, goes on to add an important detail which does not occur in any of his written sources, and which appears to be his own opinion:

En la cause veimes l'apostolie afeblir,
 Qu'il ne pout l'arcevesque contre tuz maintenir.

(Lines 3881-3882)

If this does imply some criticism of Alexander III, a weakening of his zeal, then it does also seem to imply that he had, to his credit, being attempting, up to then, to support the archbishop contre tuz, although in this Guernes, whose tone does sound critical, may have said more than he intended.

At all events, the pope's credit is restored in the minds of the audience shortly afterwards when the poet tells us that l'apostolies i ad sovent ses briefs tramis as concilies qu'il unt^(line 3984-3985) de l'acorde entre els pris. Guernes is alone amongst the biographers, moreover, to tell us that the first meeting was arranged to take place at Pontoise, and that the pope was on his way there, and had reached Paris, when news reached King Henry that the pope was to be present at the meeting, whereat he smartly turned around and marched away, a story which redounds mainly to the discredit of the

King of England, but at least associates the pope with Becket's camp, and thus does him some credit in the eyes of Guernes' audience.

Guernes tells us next of a meeting at Montmirail, where two cardinals play an important role. According to Guernes, who again is alone in reporting what proves to be an abortive attempt to find an agreed settlement, these two are John of Naples and William of Pavia, so we should not be surprised at his opinion of their allegiances and intentions:

Dui chardenal de Rume i sunt al rei venu:
 Vuillames de Pavie e dan Johans i fu
 De Naples, qui al rei se sunt del tut tenu,
 E l'arcevesque eüssent volentiers deceü.

(Lines 4017-4020)

The king allegedly tells them that tant se volt humilier
 qu'il free l'arcesvesque ^(Lines 4021-4022) quanqu'il voldrunt jugier; if, that is,
 Becket will equally agree to abide by what they decide. The
 cardinals do not believe that Becket can fairly reject or resist
 this offer, but that night Becket had a dream in which he sees the
 king offering him a golden cup of wine, which, when he is about
 to drink, the archbishop discovers to be cloudy, and to contain
 two large spiders. The dream is interpreted for him: the king
 will make a tempting offer, but it will not be all that it seems;
 as for the spiders les dous granz iraignes sunt li dui paltenier
 cardenal, qui nus volent, s'il poent, enginnier^(Lines 4049-4060). It comes as no
 surprise then, to Guernes' audience, to learn that the archbishop

rejects the blandishments of the two cardinals when he discovers they are indeed present and do make a tempting offer. No progress can be made. This strange incident, reported only by Guernes, is included, if it has any ulterior motivation beyond a desire for completeness, to demonstrate that the king chooses unworthy, untrustworthy, deceitful emissaries when he chooses cardinals, and Becket, who would otherwise seem very foolish to reject what on its face value is a sound and fair offer, is in fact showing himself to be most prudent.

In contrast to the underhand methods of the two cardinals, we are next shown the pope labouring to promote and arrange by letter another meeting at Montmirail. Guernes evidently has a far higher respect for the two papal envoys involved in this meeting, for he gives us a favourable opinion of them - when he expresses no opinion on such men, he is generally concealing disfavour:

Car de part l'apostolie de Rume i sunt alé
 Danz Bernarz de la Coldre, sainz hum de grant bunté,
 Li priurs de Munt Deu, huem de grant honesté,
 Arcevesque e eveque e priur e abé,
 Pur faire cele pes. E mult s'en sunt pené.

(Lines 4076-4080)

This time agreement is almost reached, but a difficulty arises when Becket comes to kiss the king with the words
 (line 5157)
a l'onur de Deu e la vostre, Geoffrey Ridel quickly points out
 (line 5159)
 to the king ci ad soffisme ades, the agreement breaks down, with

all present attaching the blame to Becket, who is so distressed that he writes to the pope, explaining the events and begging to know the pope's wishes in the matter. However, Guernes is at pains to point out that the king in fact reflects, realises that it is he who was wrong, and attempts, too late, to accept Becket's terms.

When at last an agreement is reached, and peace is projected, if not finally achieved, at Fréteval, it is made to seem in Guernes' poem that the initiative that the pope appears to be making is prompted in fact by Becket himself:

Dunc a li arcevesques l'apostolie mandé
 Qu'il out fait vers le rei, coment il out finé.
 Or li mande e requiert, pur sa sainte bunté,
 Al rei mand que tuit seient si pechié pardoné,
 Que l'arcevesque baist en pes e seürté.
 L'apostolie manda li ber de grant sciéence
 Que il li comandast, par sainte obediéence,
 Le rei baisast de pais, venist en sa presence.
 Madoc bailla les lettres, qui de l'aler contence;
 Il les bailla la pape, quant il en out licence.
 Erramment fist ses briés l'apostolies escrire:
 Manda le rei Henri, qui d'Engleterre ert sire,
 De pais baist l'arcevesque Thomas de Cantorbire
 E del tut li parduinst e maltalent e ire,
 Que Jesu Crist li seit de tuz ses pechiez mire;

(Lines 4281-4295)

The pope goes on to outline further demands. He then writes to Becket - as Becket himself had wished and requested:

Par sainte obedience a mandé saint Thomas
 Que, s'il puet faire pes, qu'il ne la refust pas;
 Mais prenge s'en mult pres, ne s'en face puint quas.
 Car l'apostolies ert de la guerre tut las;
 N'eut de tut' Engleterre qui valsist un sul as.

(Lines 4301-4305)

The pope, then, according to Guernes, is tired of the Becket controversy; hence his sudden activity - or hence the need for Becket, apparently, to force him into action. What Guernes had not said, and quite possibly not understood, is that both Becket and the pope were forced into action because of the coronation of young Henry - the bishops must be brought to heel and the king, who in any case would now be eager for a settlement, brought to terms. Guernes, as we have seen, retold the story of the coronation mistakenly some sixteen hundred lines earlier. The pope did in fact write very strict letters as a result, and it was as a result of these that Henry sought peace; in Guernes' account, it reads as if the king has suddenly and unexpectedly capitulated:

Li reis Henris lur ad pramis e graanté
 Qu'il fera volentiers ço qu'il li unt loé
 E ço que l'apostolies li aveit comandé.

(Lines 4311-4313)

The poet attributes this initially to Becket's zeal, then to the pope's letters, then to the intervention of King Louis VII of France, then, almost cryptically, to Alexander III once again:

Tant a reis Loëwis rei Henri enchalcié,
 Arcevesque e evesque od cel altre clergie,
 Dit qu'or frea tut ço qu'il li unt conseillie.
 (Il cremi l'apostolie, qui l'aveit manecié.)

(Lines 4321-4324)

Thus Henry agrees to grant whatever they will advise him to grant, and even the difficulty over the kiss of peace will, it is projected, be overcome at a further meeting to be held at Tours. Guernes seems almost reluctant to admit that the pope had had any influence in this matter. It is possible that Guernes himself was not aware of the current political background, and that, having so misplaced the coronation of young Henry, could not explain, even to himself, why Henry II should have suddenly reacted in this way. But it is equally feasible that, after the efforts of Becket and of Louis VII of France failed on so many occasions in the past, he was not eager to admit the pope had been able to instigate the reconciliation; hence his attempts to attach much of the credit to Becket himself, and some of it to King Louis. William of Canterbury equally gives some of the credit to the King of France, but is rather more explicit on the nature of the pope's role in the matter, and his threat to King Henry:

"Cum autem dominus papa de concessione regis Anglorum, tum mandato ipsius tum viva voce suorum, quos in Franciam miserat, accepisset, gaudio gavisus est. Nam sollicitavit eum rex Francorum in virtute amoris, et sub impensi protestatione beneficii, ne dilationes ulterius frustratorias prorogaret; sed et Willelmus Senonensium venerandus antistes, qui Anglicanae ecclesiae miseratus sedem apostolicam adierat, praesens et petens instabat ut rex Anglorum anathemati, regnum interdicto subjiceretur, nisi Cantuariensi pax ecclesiae redderetur."

(William of Canterbury, ch.68, p.76)

This, basically, is the last we are to hear of the part played by Pope Alexander III in Guernes' poem. Becket later makes much of the papal consent and power which lies behind his excommunication of the three bishops, of his insistence that, while he himself can absolve the Bishop of London and the Bishop of Salisbury, only the pope can absolve the Archbishop of York. This is a double-edged sword, for it once again strikes out at Roger, emphasising the enormity of his transgression, and emphasising also the authority invested in the pope, who is shown to be behind all of Becket's decisions at this point. But once again, we may suspect that Becket is deliberately bolstering the public image of the pope for his own ends. But we hear little else about him; we learn nothing of his reaction to Becket's murder; nothing of the part he played in Henry's acts of repentance, in dictating the terms on which Henry was to be readmitted to

the Church. That triumph must be seen to be Becket's. Therein lies the keynote to Guernes' attitude towards, and therefore treatment of the pope: he was a useful adjunct to Becket's cause, and at times proved extremely important as a source of help, encouragement and support, both moral and political. But Guernes does not attempt to induce or inspire his audience to revere, admire, venerate or stand in awe of the pope. Such feelings should rightly be reserved for Becket, and the pope will be introduced only when he has to be. In a sense, one feels that it is almost more important in Guernes' mind to establish with his audience that the cardinals represent a source of constant, unjust and unhealthy opposition to the archbishop's cause. As we saw with the bishops, especially with Roger de Pont l'Éveque, it is more important to Guernes to illustrate those who make life more difficult for Becket, thereby enhancing him for us, than it is to remind us of what succour he received, which might diminish his achievement. This may have been no conscious or coherent policy on the part of the poet, but if we compare the treatment of the pope with that of the cardinals in the poem, we can see that this is so.

It is of interest to consider, briefly, Guernes' treatment of some of those characters who appear very briefly in his poem. Although some of these figures may have played quite significant roles in the history of Thomas Becket, they may not figure conspicuously in Guernes' poem; others, like the four knights

who murdered him, appear only at the end of the account, but there, naturally figure largely.

Let us consider two people who were, in fact, close companions of Thomas Becket at certain periods in his life. Firstly, Robert of Merton was Becket's chaplain and confidant, and went with him into exile. We hear virtually nothing of him, with one important exception. When Guernes, following Grim, wishes to give us details of the hardships which Becket imposed upon himself in that period of exile, details which Becket himself was at pains to keep secret, Robert of Merton was one of a very small group - three, according to Guernes - who knew these details. When, therefore, the poet is recounting them, in some awe and reverence, to his audience, he quotes Robert as a reliable source. Grim had referred to him as venerabilis; Guernes says of him that he is a man qui saint' obedience n'en escout (Line 3945) trespasser, and who en sot le veir cunter (Line 3944). It is typical of Guernes to wish to stress the veracity of what he is reporting. But he does not feel the need for the support of Robert's presence or evidence elsewhere in the poem, despite the fact that Robert must have been almost constantly at Thomas' side. In this Guernes is admittedly following the Latin biographers, and may have had no access to other material, but one senses that it does not serve his purpose ill at times for Becket to be seen to be alone. This is borne out, perhaps, when we look at the second figure, John of Salisbury. In a similar way to Robert of Merton, he was regularly a companion of Becket since the days in the household of Archbishop Theobald, and one of the few people

who might claim to be a friend of Thomas Becket. Apart from mentioning John once, when Becket sent him to expedite his affairs at Canterbury after the reconciliation with Henry and before the archbishop's return to England, Guernes tells his audience nothing of John of Salisbury until the confrontation with the four knights at Canterbury; when they leave Becket briefly (to arm themselves) John tries to press his opinion on to him:

Johans de Salisbire li aveit dunches dit:

"Sire, tuzjurs avez nostre conseil desdit,

Fors ço qu'avez tuzdis en vostre quer eslit.

-Que volez que jo face, dan Johan? fait li ber.

-Vostre conseil, fait il, deüssiez apeler,

Quant li chevalier vindrent chaienz a vus parler.

Fors achaisun ne quierent de vus a mort livrer.

Mais de vostre corine ne vus puet nuls geter."

Fait li dunc sainz Thomas: "Tuz nus estuet murir;

Ne pur mort de justise ne me verrez flechir.

E pur l'amur de Deu voil la mort sustenir;

Ne il ne sunt pas mielz apresté del ferir

Que mis curages est del martire suffrir."

Fait li maistre Johans: "Ne sumes apresté

Que voillum mes encore estre a la mort livré;

Car en pechié gisum e en chaitivité,

N'un sul ne vei, fors vus, qui muire de sun gré.

-Or seit, fait sainz Thomas, a la Deu volenté."

(Lines 5363-5380)

Much of this is based on the written account of Benedict of Canterbury, from whose work Guernes borrows frequently towards the end of the poem:

"Unus autem clericorum suorum, videlicet magister Joannes Saresberiae, vir litterarum multarum, eloquentiae magnae profundique consilii, et, quod his majus est, in Dei timore et amore fundatus, conquerenti tale dedit responsum:

"Domine", inquit, res nimis admirabilis est, quod nullius admittis consilium. Et quae necessitas fuit tantae excellentiae viro ad ampliorem malignorum illorum exacerbationem surgere, et post eos ad ostium usque procedere? Nonne satius esset, communicato cum his, qui praesentes sunt, consilio, mitius eis dedisse responsum, qui tibi quidquid possunt machinantur mali, ut te ad iracundiam provocatum in sermone saltem capiant?"

Sanctus autem, qui pro justitia et libertate ecclesiae ad mortis angustias, tanquam ad quietis delicias, suspirabat, inquit, "Consilium jam totum acceptum est. Novi satis quid agere debeam." Et magister Joannes, "Utinam, annuente Deo, bonum sit."

(Benedict of Canterbury, fragmentum I, p.9)

The debt which Guernes owes to Benedict is evident.

What is interesting is that Guernes portrays John of Salisbury here as a hesitant, fearful figure; whilst suppressing Benedict's words of praise for a wise, eloquent and learned man, he attributes to John a physical fear which serves to emphasise the gulf between

the saintly Becket and other less courageous and resolute men. Guernes seems to wish Becket to stand clearly apart, and a disagreement as to policy at this juncture would be confusing rather than edifying for his audience. He achieves his effect, in fact, by attributing to John of Salisbury emotions which another of the Latin biographers, William of Canterbury, acknowledges as his own:

"Ego qui loquor, hoc verbo, sicut et caeteri, arbitrans me gladio pariter percutiendum, tanquam peccatorum conscius et minus idoneus martyrio, celeri tergiversatione gradus ascendi, complodens manus. Protinus quidam stantes adhuc ad orationem dispersi sunt."

(William of Canterbury, ch.39, pp.133-134)

Guernes is able, a little later, to emphasise the fact that John fled with many others, when he follows William of Canterbury in telling us of William de Tracy's boast that he had wounded John of Salisbury in the arm, when in fact, as is pointed out to us, it was Edward Grim who was trying to protect the archbishop at the last. We hear no more of John of Salisbury. Guernes' picture of him, sketchy and incomplete as it is, is less than flattering; certainly it does not afford the same credit to him even as he receives from the Latin biographers.

A third figure who at the end of Becket's life was closer to him than anyone else scarcely fares better in Guernes' poem: this is Edward Grim himself. Guernes first mentions him when he refers to the small group of monks who stayed with Becket and

hustled him into the main body of the cathedral, of whom
 (Line 5417)
 he says i out mult vaillanz. It is true that Grim himself,
 in his own account, from which Guernes does not borrow, is modest
 to the point of grave self-criticism in his account of how he
 behaved, and William of Canterbury has him fleeing in fear to
 join the others hiding by the altar after he has been wounded,
 but Guernes is less than generous in his treatment of this
 incident:

E le braz Eduvard pres tut en dous colpa.

Dunc l'aveit a cel colp maistre Eduvarz guerpi.

(Lines 5590-5591)

Guernes does, strangely, attribute a speech to Edward
 Grim, which neither Grim himself, nor William of Canterbury,
 nor in fact any of the witnesses who were in the cathedral and
 would presumably have heard it, records. Grim himself, under
 the circumstances, could easily have forgotten what he said, or
 indeed that he said anything, but we must presume an oral source
 for Guernes here, unless we wish to allow that he is taking a
 little poetic licence, and putting into Grim's mouth the general
 feeling prevalent, before the murder actually happened, amongst
 those still in the cathedral - which is what he did, after
 all, without saying so, in the case of John of Salisbury which
 we have just considered. What Guernes reports Grim as saying
 again emphasises the position of the archbishop:

Maistre Eduvard le tint, que qu'il l'unt desachié.

" Que volez, fait il, faire? Estes vus enragié?

Esquardez u vus estes e quel sunt li feirié.

Main sur vostre arcevesque metez a grant pechié!"

Mais pur feirié ne l'unt, ne pur mustier, laissié.

(Lines 5571-5575)

If we seek praise for Grim's words and actions in Guernes' poem, however, we shall be disappointed. The attention, awe and respect and reverence of the poet's audience must be focussed exclusively on the figure of Thomas Becket at this point above all others.

Two bishops on the periphery of the dispute between Becket and King Henry figure fleetingly in the poem. These are Arnulf of Lisieux and Rotrou of Évreux, later Archbishop of Rouen. The first reference to Arnulf in the poem shows him advising the king, in the initial stages of his quarrel with Becket, to win some of the English bishops over to his cause, and thus instigating, so it seems, the alliance of Roger and the other bishops against Becket. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Guernes implying that Arnulf's actions are invidious:

L'eveske de Lisewis vint puis a Salesbere.

Entre li e le rei ot un poi d'ire amere;

Tant a fet vers le rei ke l'amur i fu clere:

Le rei duna conseil a deceivre sun frere;

De veintre l'arceveske fu funteine e matere.

(Lines 851-855)

This, despite evident earlier differences between Arnulf and the king. The only other reference to Arnulf shows him, apparently genuinely, attempting to reconcile Becket and Geoffrey Ridel, a move hardly likely to endear him to Guernes' audience. (The outcome of this attempt is enigmatic).

Rotrou, who on two occasions acts to help Becket on the other hand, and who, we are told mult le conseil^(line 1041) and comes pur els dous acorder^(line 1037), creates an accordingly far better impression with Guernes' audience. (As Rotrou had been translated from Évreux to Rouen between the two incidents, it is not clear whether even Guernes is aware that he is speaking of the same person, interestingly. There is no mention in the Latin biographers of the name Rotrou. But the tone of the two references is generally the same favourable one in both cases.) In the first instance, to which we have already referred in this chapter, he bears a copy of the Constitutions of Clarendon to the pope, who refuses to sign it. Much later, we find him at Becket's side at the time of the meeting at Tours, when a reconciliation with King Henry was being sought.

Let us now return to the enemies of Thomas Becket. Despite the evidence of Arnulf of Lisieux' attempt to reconcile the two men, following the peace agreement between Becket and the king, and despite the fact that Arnulf tells Becket that Geoffrey is vers vus meslez, that Becket had excommunicated him, that if Geoffrey wishes to adrescier le mesfait, Becket will forgive him, there is in fact no direct evidence in the poem which points to any cause of dispute or disagreement. We know that Geoffrey is in the king's

camp, so to speak, for we are told that he and John of Oxford formed the delegation to the pope by which Henry attempted to secure a legation for Roger de Pont l'Évêque, and we are told that li uns des messages fu forment malveizie^z, and that he attempted, unsuccessfully, to deceive the pope into thinking that Becket's life might be in danger. Guernes also tells us that li mesagier le rei furent mult vezié^e, and that they made further attempts to try to deceive the pope. (Grim, Guernes' source for the relevant section of his poem, does not in fact name either of the messengers). But this is the only substantial evidence against Geoffrey. It is interesting, although not really very surprising, that a man may be mult vezié^e, but to employ such talent in favour of the king and to the detriment of Thomas Becket makes him, by implication, forment malveizie^e.

John of Oxford, in fact, is treated very similarly. He was named by Guernes, as we have already seen in this chapter, in the ill-fated and ridiculed embassy to the pope, whose Latin was so unpolished (and he was excommunicated by Becket, although this does not happen in Guernes' poem). Much has been made by historians of the fact that when Becket was set to return to England, Henry did not go with him, as had been arranged, but, being ill, sent John of Oxford in his stead. But whether this was intended as an insult or a gesture of goodwill, Guernes reports, without attempt at bias, the good offices of John in preventing harm being done to Becket on their arrival on the English coast. He admittedly has John point out the damage that would be done to

the king's name should harm befall Becket, but in this he is surely repeating accurately John's own arguments, and the poet implies no discredit to John because of this. Possibly he judged that the ill-feeling between Geoffrey and John on the one hand, and Becket on the other was well enough known, perhaps he did not consciously know of it, or possibly he felt that the enmity of such men was unimportant compared with that of the King of England and the Archbishop of York.

If Guernes did entertain such scruples, he certainly did not employ them in the case of Randolph de Broc, nor indeed of any of the de Broc family or followers, for whom he has a collective name, li Brocheis, or Brokeis, which he uses with consistently pejorative force. Randolph himself is guilty of such a long list of black deeds that Guernes can never have a good word to say in his favour. Nor indeed, does Randolph for Becket, according to Guernes. The first time that Guernes mentions him, Randolph is crying li traitres s'en va,^(Line 1929) as Becket is leaving the courtroom at Northampton. There may be some confusion among the other biographers as to the exact identity of the person responsible,¹⁵ but Guernes has no doubts, telling us unequivocally that if Becket was suffering indignities similar to those that the Jews inflicted on Christ at his trial, then Randolph was to blame:

Li malvais qui quidierent le rei servir a gré
 E garcuns e putains, unt saint Thomas hue
 E derochié de torges; car Randul l'out rové.
 Mais cil qui Deu cremirent e qui l'orent amé,
 En unt od grief suspir celement pluré.

(Lines 1941-1945)

It is worth pointing out that Guernes would certainly be aware that the people who were shouting at Becket were precisely the sort of people whom Becket, according to Guernes, would normally champion, and if Guernes does refer to them here in a distinctly pejorative fashion, he attached even greater opprobrium to Randolph. That Randolph did turn such people against Becket is a detail to be found only in Guernes' account.

Equally reprehensible is Randolph de Broc's misuse of the funds of the See of Canterbury, to which Guernes refers on more than one occasion. He tells us that Randolph diverted all the monies due to the archbishop into the king's coffers, and even after peace had been negotiated between Becket and the king, we are told that Randulf del Broc out tut pris e fulré (Line 4560). This second instance leads Guernes to question whether, at the day of judgment, Randolph or King Henry will be responsible for such misdeeds; Randolph comes slightly the worse out of the discussion, which, once again, is an original piece of writing on the part of Guernes, and one which we may judge by its content rather bold:

Liqueus rendra raisun de ço qu'en ad eü,
 U li reis u Randufs, al grant jur irascu?
 La ierent coveitus senz fin mort e perdu,
 La ne purra nul d'els faire de l'autre escu.
 De quanque Randuls fist, adrecement n'en fu.
 Deus adrecera tut, qui tut seit e tut veit;

(Lines 4561-4566)

Guernes begins, with this last line, a strong apostrophe against the blindness of the times, and states that God will be the final judge.

He is implicated in a plot which aims at the death of Thomas Becket; Becket includes him in his list of Christmas excommunications, because Randolph l'out forment grevé e out maint de ses humes sovent enprisuné (Lines 4961-4962); when he heard the news he nearly killed the messenger, according to Guernes. Guernes would certainly agree with Edward Grim, who described Randolph as malitiae totius incentorem. Finally, Randolph meets, conducts and accompanies the four knights who came to confront Becket. He took part in the long night of plotting and conspiracy which was held there.

Robert de Broc, Randolph's nephew, although appearing far less frequently in the poem than his uncle, is treated in the same vein. In Guernes' poem, he heads the list of those excommunicated by Becket on Christmas Day 1170, for the heinous crime of docking the tail of one of Becket's packhorses. On a more sinister note, he is of very practical assistance to Becket's pursuers, leading them into the cathedral when they found their route blocked. Guernes says of him that he sout le mal mult enginnier (Line 5397). He took part in the pillaging of the cathedral after the murder, and rejoiced that the traitor was slain.

The whole of the de Broc family and following, in fact, are portrayed in Guernes' poem as unremitting persecutors of Becket and those in England who remained faithful to him; Guernes compares them to the Jews who killed Christ. Randolph

is principally to blame, but he is shown to have a considerable following; Becket was buried hurriedly in the crypt pur pour des
(line 5824)
Brokeis. In what is again a passage for which Guernes has no written source, the poet tells us:

Dunc unt l'arcevesquié saisie li Brokeis.
Mult feluns arcevesques i aveit mis li reis,
Car sulunc ço qu'il furent, establirent lur lèis.
Les proveires faiseient chanter tut sur defeis;
Del tut esteit turnee saint'iglise en decreis.
Randulf del Broc fu dunc chief de l'arceveschié;
Quanqu'il fist e desfist ert par tut otrié.
Les rentes e l'aveir ad al rei enveié:
Ja mais tut cil denier n'ierent bien enpleié,
Quant sunt de felunie conquis^e gusaaignié.
Quant cil denier serunt despendu e alé
E en malvaisses genz e en guerre guasté
(Malvaisement conquis, malement alué!)
Li dé serunt mult tost sur ambes as turné
Qui unt esté sovent sur sines ruelé.

(Lines 5831-5845)

Li Brokeis, with Randulph de Broc especially at their head, are represented as an unmitigated evil, and Randulph, against whom Guernes, as we have seen, inveighs with some weight and much feeling, assumes the nature of a black and thorough-going villain in the eyes of Guernes' audience.

The last group which we should consider is the barons. Clearly, the four men directly responsible for Becket's death

attract most attention, and the section which deals with the murder, the immediate actions of the four barons and their direct consequences is a long one, nearly eight hundred lines. But briefly, before we pass on to a consideration of these four in particular, we should note that Guernes does, on two occasions, refer to the class of barons as a whole. At Northampton, the king stays out of the actual courtroom, in private, as Grim says, cum domesticis in interiore conclavi. Some of these must have been barons. Guernes refers to these as ses druz4,^(Line 1691) which is hardly a flattering term, and one deliberately chosen for this instance. For the poet goes on to add, in an original reflection:

Ire e malveis conseil unt le rei deceu"
 Qui l'unt vers le saint humme isi fort commeu".

(Lines 1696-1697)

Guernes is eager, in fact, to apportion blame to others, to deflect it from the king. The barons serve the purpose here; Guernes does not have to be specific. Similarly, when the judgment is passed on Becket at Northampton, the poet can say al jugement en vunt la maisnie Neruna.^(Line 1863) Again this must imply the involvement of some barons. There are other occasions, as we have already seen, when the poet blames bad advice for some reprehensible action on the part of King Henry. He implies the barons. It is safe, and no doubt popular, to do so.

When we pass to a consideration of the four men who sought, found and killed Becket, we shall discover that Guernes does not indulge in unmitigated condemnation. Certainly he does not

hesitate to excite the horror of his audience, to show them the atrocities that the four barons committed, to evoke their pity and wonder. But at the opening of his poem, the poet, in a dramatic appeal, addresses the murderers:

Ohi, mal euré! Pur quei l'avez ocis,
 Cel seintisme arceveske? N'i avez rien conquis.
 Il n'aveit rien mesfet; trop i avez mespris.
 Car vus repentez tost; volez en estre pris?
 A amender avez, se viviez tuzdis.

(Lines 121-125)

These lines do contain pious hopes, an element of religiosity; the poet no doubt felt the need and the justification to express himself forcefully. But it contains, for that matter, an element of understatement, and it would be unfair to suggest that Guernes is less than sincere in wishing for their repentance. He is genuinely pleased, much later in the poem, at Henry II's reconciliation and amendment at Canterbury some three and half years after Becket's death, and not only because this confirmed Becket's victory, in his mind and in the eyes of his audience. Guernes continues, in the early part of his poem, to hold out positive and sincere hope to the murderers, even if it is tinged with, almost inevitably, a considerable degree of piety:

Li plus Deus e li veir ot saint Thomas mult chier.
 Ocis fu en bel liu e en un saint mastier,
 Si l'ocistrent baron e vassal chevalier.
 La perdirent lur pris. N'i poent repairier?

Bien se poent vers Deu, s'il volent, amaisier.
 Nul pechiere ne pot faire pechié si ord,
 Si tost cum s'en repent e del tut s'en resort,
 Ke Deus ne li pardoinst e ke il nel cumfort.
 Kar pur ceo suffri Deus pur pecheurs la mort,
 Quant se prendront a li, ke il les maint a port -

(Lines 131-140)

If Guernes goes on to express elsewhere in his poem, as he does in relatively lengthy sermons, a view of salvation which is very close to the spirit of Saint Augustine, he is here addressing the barons in a spirit of Christianity, even if we may be tempted to feel that he is more Christian through the magnanimity which Becket's martyrdom allows him than he shows himself to be at other points in the poem.

When we reach that point in the poem when Guernes begins to recount the events leading up to the barons' departure for England, we find overtones of this attitude remaining:

Tut li mielz de la curt se sunt entrafie'
 De faire e de furnir cele grant cruelté.
 Mais en mun livre n'erent ne escrit ne nome':
 Quant par amendement lur ad Deus pardoné,
 N'erent par mun escrit el siecle vergundé.

(Lines 5101-5105)

This contains the same mixture of charity and piety. There is no written source for Guernes here, and it is perhaps malicious to suggest that he might in fact have been hard-pressed to name any of the conspirators other than those who carried

out the deed (having implicated the three dissenting bishops, led by Roger, who we may presume to be the felun susduiant (line 5106) here. Certainly Roger, as we have seen, is accused by Guernes of inciting and bribing the four barons to murder Becket.) We may, however, suggest that as Guernes passes on quickly to name the four barons, he feels that their repentance is very far from assured:

Mais cil quatre felun e li Deu enemy
 (Par lur malvaise vie furent de Deu hai)
 Hue de Morevile, Willaumes de Traci
 E Reinalz li fiz Urs e li quarz altresii,
 - Co fu Richarz li Brez, - sunt de la curt parti.

(Lines 5121-5125)

Their names would not be unknown to many of those at Canterbury even before they heard of them in Guernes' poem, and if Guernes himself needed to find them he could do so in William of Canterbury's account, and Guernes' desire to add names wherever possible, quite apart from his desire to be truthful, would have made it difficult for him not to name them.

As we have seen, he also names Robert de Broc, and names Hugh Mauclerc, who aided the knights. He was, Guernes tells us, mult plains d'iniquite,^(Line 5469) and was guilty of the atrocity of putting his foot on the dead archbishop's neck, poking at his spilled brains with his sword and shouting alum nus en ...
^(Line 5636)
je mais ne resurdra![^] He was one of li Brokeis. In his desire for completeness, he introduces, due to a failure to understand

what William of Canterbury means by quatuor aliis irrumpendibus, four further knights, who of course, do nothing except rush in.

Guernes' account of the actions of the four barons does not vary greatly from those of other biographers. Nor does there appear to be much substantial evidence in the surviving fragment of the first draft to suggest that Guernes felt any necessity to amend his views of them between his first and his second drafts. This would be the best known part of the whole story, just as today people who know nothing of the reasons for his death, know how and where he died. It would quite possibly be that part of the poem which Guernes would be called upon to recite most frequently, and would do so most willingly. The attention of Guernes' audience is fixed most firmly on Becket, and with foreknowledge of the enormity of the crime, that audience scarcely needed telling the nature of his murderers. Guernes does however give a very full account, and his collation of his written sources, plus the inclusion of such information as local oral sources could provide him with, such as names, suggests once again his desire for accuracy and completeness. No doubt his audience craved every detail with which the poet could provide them, and he would be reluctant to disappoint them in this.

That he should refer to the four knights as li ministre enragié (Line 5531), li serf d'iniquité (Line 5641), li quatre forséné (Line 5221), cil quatre felun e li Deu enemi (Line 5121), is in the circumstances to be expected. But the very fullness of his account does allow something of the

point of view opposed to Becket's to come across, even if it were bound for instant dismissal by Guernes' audience:

D'entur furent somuns serjant e chevalier
 Pur la hunte le rei d'Engleterre vengier:
 S'um volsist l'arcevesque desturner, ne mucier,
 Que l'iglise volsissent l'endemain asegiar
 E de fu enbraser e tute trebuchier.

(Lines 5166-5170)

This does have the additional effect of showing, even exaggerating the awesome brutality which Becket's opponents were prepared to carry out. But Guernes tells us also when Becket's words provoke anger in his unwelcome guests. There is little reason for him to be anything other than truthful as he recounts the last hour of Becket's life and the outrages that followed his death. His audience is predisposed to judge the issue in the only possible way, in Becket's favour, so, with the exception of his occasional tone of piety and horror, the poet's desire for accuracy and completeness served his own interests, as well as those of history, well: occasionally he cannot resist the temptation to moralise:

Caitif, me^uleuré, que est ço qu'avez fait?
 De Deu ne de mustier ne tenistes ainc plait.
 Tant cum li siecles dure, iert a voz eirs retrait.
 Cil dort qui pur les bestes les beaus hummes desfait,
 Deus est la sus el ciel, e li regnes mesvait.

Pur l'iglise del Nort, e en l'ele del Nort,
 E vers le Nort turnez, suffri sainz Thomas mort.
 Pur sa mort l'ad Deus fait e si halt e si fort:
 Tuit cristien li quierent e salu e confort.
 Les perillez en mer mainé il a dreit port.

(Lines 5646-5655)

This pious attack on the four knights is original to Guernes' poem; it reveals that he has a desire to eulogize when Becket is suffering, or has suffered, most, and that, although it is controlled, he will allow this desire to find expression even when his historical accuracy is effectively telling the story for him.

Although they obviously figure to the exclusion of almost every other enemy, (excepting some of li Brokeis) in the dramatic later stages of Guernes' poem, it is not the four knights who emerge from Guernes' poem as the most reprehensible of the archbishop's adversaries. Clearly Guernes apportions them their share of the blame, of his and his audience's horror and opprobrium as we have just seen, and they continue to live in the memory as perpetrators of the most iniquitous and horrifying crime. But the poet has equally singled out other figures for particular scrutiny, inspection and ultimately condemnation by his audience. He has, moreover, produced evidence strikingly lacking in any of the other written biographies. In three instances, those of Roger de Pont l'Évêque, of the cardinals and of Randolph de Broc and his entourage, Guernes has maintained a hostile and virulent

attack, implying frequently that their motives drive them inexorably and relentlessly to seek nothing less than the ignominy and defeat of the archbishop, and latterly in the case of Roger and Randolph, his death. Such a policy, which Guernes has clearly and consciously chosen, has two definite effects, apart from the obvious one of enhancing the image and reputation of Thomas Becket in the minds of his audience. Firstly, it creates for that audience popular villains, characters whose unmitigated blackness enables the listeners immediately to identify them, without any need to modify or monitor their bad opinion of them. That these figures are black and beyond redemption in the opinion of Guernes' audiences necessarily lays the poet open to the charge that some of the characters in the poem are two-dimensional, especially some of those who appear only occasionally; but this would almost certainly have been the case anyway, and it is equally true of some of those figures who were basically on Becket's side, as we have seen in this chapter. Secondly, it serves Guernes' purpose in that it deflects much of the necessary blame for Becket's death from the figure of King Henry II. Obviously Henry is shown to be responsible for much of Becket's hardship and adversity in exile, and initially, for that exile itself. To blame him for the death, especially after his oaths protesting his innocence and his readmission into the body of the church, would have been dangerous, and possibly, in view of the king's more recent exploits and actions, unpopular. As it is, we have

already seen in previous chapters, Guernes seems to have adopted a much less tolerant view of the king in his second version than he had in the first draft. In the first draft, Guernes states explicitly that the king attempted to prevent the knights from their murderous action, and had never wished such an outcome, which he grievously regretted. This evidence does not appear in the second draft. By blaming the king frequently in the main body of the poem, and then switching the emphasis to the plotting and malevolence of others such as Roger and Randolph and the four barons, Guernes skilfully covers himself against the charge that he is directly accusing the king. This is not to say that he necessarily felt that the responsibility lay anywhere else than where he placed it.

Those who supported Becket can never be shown to be too effective in their support and help; firstly because history does not support such a claim, and secondly because it serves the interest of the hagiographer to emphasise the isolation, independence and self-reliance of his saint.

CHAPTER NINE

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE POET

Thomas Becket was canonised with unusual swiftness on 21 February 1173. This fact would allow us conveniently to classify all the contemporary writings on the subject of Becket as hagiography, and this has frequently been done; but to do so begs a number of important questions: were biographies of Becket undertaken simply because he had recently been canonised? Can we accurately classify all such writings in the same way? Does the classification of hagiography have, in this context, a precise enough meaning to serve us usefully in an evaluation of the works under consideration? In answer to the first question, we may remark that whilst the writings were part of an effusion of popular feeling in the murdered archbishop's favour, it was this very popular acclaim which accounted to a considerable degree for both the extent of literary activity and the relative rapidity with which Becket was canonised. Several written accounts, including Guernes' first version, were indeed undertaken before the canonisation, and the reaction among such writers to the news can only have been that confirmation and justification had been given to what they had believed to be true for more than two years. It can scarcely have affected the light in which

they viewed their material, although it may have strengthened their resolve and inspiration. We should evidently be unwise if, in the light of sometimes superficial and sometimes striking similarities, we were to assume that every writer began his task for motives and objectives identical with those of other biographers. The subject-matter may clearly be the same, but, as we have seen to be the case with Guernes, we may be rewarded and enlightened by closer investigation of the author's approach and methods. In answer to the third question, it is clear that to say a work is a piece of hagiography may be true, in so far as it treats of a saint's life, but this tells us little or nothing of the nature of the work under review. We may presume connotations of piety, of godliness, of evangelical and religious intent, but such presumptions may prove vague or confusing or ill-founded. A closer examination of the work is required in order to enable us to decide what manner of hagiographical material is before us. We must now review in this light the evidence which this closer examination of Guernes' poem La vie de saint Thomas Becket has presented to us.

Firstly, we should observe that Guernes initially refers to his work as a vie. In this, he is doing no more than reflecting the Latin vita of the writers who were known to him. But he has indeed spent much of the poem discussing and describing in great detail Becket's life, and if the preponderance of the text concerns Becket's time as Archbishop of Canterbury, the poet has expended some time and effort on the period before Becket's consecration.

It is worth noting that at other places in his poem Guernes refers to his work as a sermun or a romanz, so that we should be wary of stating that the poet was concerned with the title given to it. But clearly he has dealt with much more than the passion, from which, as we saw in the third chapter, the earliest hagiographical accounts took their inspiration and on which they concentrated their exclusive attentions. At the conclusion of his poem he tells us:

Guernes li Clers del Punt fine ici sun sermun
Del martir saint Thomas e de sa passiu.

(Lines 6156-6157)

In that section of the poem which deals with Becket's life before the question of his succeeding Theobald at Canterbury is first raised, some three hundred lines, Guernes is very far from painting the picture of a perfect saint. In chapter four we saw how the poet gave a concise account of Becket's life up to that time, neither lauding the young Becket as a paragon of virtue, nor dwelling on those incidents and aspects of his life which might be thought harmful to the image of a man who was to die for the Church. But there is, as we saw, ample evidence that the poet was very aware of the difficulties which this period presented - the opulence of Becket's chancellorship, his worldliness, to a lesser extent his exploits in war. (In this last respect the figure of the warrior archbishop fighting literally for the Church would be more familiar to Guernes' audience than it would to us.) Whilst emphasising Becket's virtues, which were not necessarily very saintly ones at this time, Guernes seeks to

resolve his difficulties by rationalising Becket's actions. This, as we learn later in the poem, he only feels to be necessary when not to do so would imperil the interpretation of events which his audience might make. Thus, throughout the poem, such explanations of Becket's actions tend to be a revelation to us of the poet's natural parti-pris. Instances of such rationalisation of actions of King Henry or Roger de Pont l'Évêque would be difficult to find. Hence we find Guernes, in an original passage, explaining that:

Cum plus crut e munta Thomas seculerment,
 Plus fu umles de quer, queus qu'il fust a la gent.
 Pur le rei mesfeseit en plusurs lius suvent,
 Mes vers Deu l'amendeit les nuiz priveement.
 Pur c'ad Deus tant ovré sur le bon fundement.

(Lines 331-335)

Thus Becket's misdeeds are in a skilled manner laid at the king's door, whilst Becket makes his peace with God in private! On other occasions Guernes points out that whatever appearances might suggest, Becket knew where his duty to God lay, and moreover suggests that God was already guiding the career of his future archbishop.

What is more striking even than the poet's rationalisations is his reluctance to recount miracles. This reluctance effectively swells into refusal. We saw in the fourth chapter that the Latin biographers, Grim and William of Canterbury, were ready to use accounts of miracles in their works. But Guernes eschews them and evidently deprecates them. He is prepared to report

visions, to retell dreams, to attribute significance to such dreams, to make biblical comparisons. But he will normally not attribute an event to divine or miraculous intervention. In this, as we have seen, the poet differs markedly not only from Edward Grim and William of Canterbury, but also from the main body of Latin biographers. It is true that on two occasions Guernes does enumerate the miracles which follow Becket's death, once at the beginning and once at the end of his poem. The form of words in both is strikingly similar.

This is the first of the two occasions; Guernes has just told us of the great numbers of people of all distinctions who flock to the shrine seeking cures:

Li muët i parolent, li surt i unt l'ole,
 E de lepre i guarissent maint, e d'ydropsie;
 Li contreit i redrecent, li mort i unt la vie,
 Li avogle i alument; seint Thomas tost aie
 Celui ki par bon quer le requiert e deprise.

(Lines 71-75)

Guernes goes on to tell his audience that, miraculously, and this is a word which he uses sparingly, the water in which Becket's bloodied clothes are washed after his martyrdom is used as a cure, both by drinking and washing. The poet goes on to tell us par beivre e par laver mil en i ad sanez, e plusurs morz i ad par ceo resuscitez^(lines 79-80). This is almost as close as we shall come to a specific example given by Guernes, and it is very unsatisfactory and imprecise. Guernes in fact does little more in this first instance than give a brief and rapid catalogue

of miraculous cures, where surely one concrete and specific example must have been more striking and convincing. His lines here do little to compel his audience, and we are surprised that he has apparently a lack of will or of means to provide it with evidence which is more inspiring. Instead, Guernes passes on quickly to a different, although related topic.

Let us pass on to consider the second passage:

En terre est Deus od nus pur amur al martyr,
 E les morz fait revivre, mutz parler, surz oir,
 Les contraiz redrescier, gutus, fevrus guarir,
 Ydropikes, leprus en santé restablr,
 Cius veer, en lur sens^{les} desvez revenir.

(Lines 5886-5890)

Again, we should consider these five lines in their context. Firstly, they occur towards the end of the poem, and Guernes has carefully prepared his audience by emphasising the efficacy and grace of God's power and might, and his desire through miracles to glorify his servant. He states that:

Ne fu unches oï des le siecle primur
 Que Deus a humme mort mustrast si grant amur:
 Mult granz miracles fait pur lui e nuit e jur.

(Lines 5883-5885)

Immediately after the bald list of miracles, strikingly devoid of specific examples, Guernes returns to what God has effected on Thomas' behalf, describing how the phial, which allegedly was first used to collect Becket's blood from the stones at the scene

of his murder, became a universal symbol of the saint.

Thus the poet emphasises that it is God, rather than the saint, to whom we must attribute miraculous happenings.

Moreover, the two passages before and after the enumeration of miracles are original to Guernes; he therefore is careful to prepare the context into which he is to set it; yet the enumeration itself is borrowed directly from the account of Edward Grim, whose approach has been somewhat different:

"Recondito igitur in crypta venerando corpore cum quo decuit honore et reverentia, sanguinem sacrum quem de pavimento susceperant, cum cerebro, extra tumulum collocarunt, superna inspiratione praecavaentes ne cum corpore clauderetur; cujus haustu saluberrimo tanta in brevi beneficia collata sunt, ut si scriberentur per singula, fidem excederent infirmorum. Hic est enim fratrum amator et populi Israel, hic est qui multum orat pro populo, et pro civitate sancta Jerusalem, cujus triumpho laetatur coelum, cujus passionibus sancta in fide confirmatur Ecclesia, cujus meritis et interventu caeci vident, claudi ambulant, leprosi mundantur, mortui resurgunt, et pauperes resonant gloriam Christo, qui electo suo in prime vocatione dedit fidem, in passione constantiam, et tandem consummato per martyrium plenitudinem gratiarum ad laudem et gloriam nominis sui, Qui est cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto Deus benedictus in saecula. Amen."

(Edward Grim, ch.88, p 442-443)

A comparison of the treatment of the French poet with that of his original source, who invokes a much more pious and solemn response

from his reader, would seem to suggest that the inclusion in Guernes' work of the lists of miracles, rather than proving that he was eager to incorporate the testimony which they could offer, demonstrates the poet's mistrust of them. We have seen in previous chapters that miracles were popularly claimed within days of Becket's death, and the unabating stream of miracles which continued to flow and to be attributed to Becket's intercession was a major factor in hastening his canonisation. Yet, as we have seen, Guernes almost systematically avoids any relation of miracles, until at the conclusion of his work he does include a very rapid and unsubstantiated list; there is no doubt that had he wished to do so, the poet could have found many examples in his available written sources, whilst, during the time which he spent at Canterbury in the preparation and completion of his second version, his ears must have been filled almost daily with excited claims of new miracles or the reaffirmation of earlier ones. Should we deduce from this that Guernes did not believe in miracles, or in such miracles as were then being claimed? It is unlikely that he did not, for he would have been most singularly perverse in the prevailing climate at Canterbury and among biographers at that time. Rather it would be safer to conclude that he felt that the accounts of miracles, whatever their merits, whatever their efficacy might be, were best dealt with elsewhere. Given the circumstances, he could only with difficulty have avoided mention of the miracles altogether,

but he does in fact spend very little time on them. We shall return shortly to consider one of the very few occasions on which Guernes does give details of a professed miracle, during Becket's time in exile at Pontigny. He does not allow the attention of his audience to dwell on the possibilities of the miraculous, but emphasises the power of God before pressing on with his account. His list does include more types of illness cured than does Grim's but some of these are related and in no instance are specific details given. This may be the result of no more than a desire for greater explanation, or simply the requirements of scansion.

We have dwelt long upon the question on Guernes' treatment of miracles because I feel that from it we may learn significant facts about the approach of our poet to his material as a whole. We should remember that many of Guernes' audience had been drawn to Canterbury and thus before him because of their interest in the saint; some no doubt came in a spirit of awe, some of curiosity, others of festivity, but some, indeed many, in a spirit of hope, seeking a cure for their ailments, a confirmation of their faith. Others would certainly have come in a spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving, for supposed miraculous cures effected sometimes at great distance from the shrine, but in answer to a prayer for intercession offered to the saint. For Guernes to give them so little scope to admire and stand in awe of the miraculous is therefore striking. We have seen from the selective policy which he followed towards the material available to him in Edward Grim's account that it was a conscious

and deliberate choice to restrict his borrowings to the area of dreams, visions and religious comparisons, with the two exceptions which we have considered at length, and one which we shall shortly consider. Whilst we would not expect that our poet should rival the collections of miracles which were compiled at Canterbury by William and Benedict, we should not have anticipated that a piece of hagiographical material produced within a small number of years of the saint's death, and composed in great part at the scene of the murder, for the benefit of pilgrims and travellers to the shrine, should offer so little on the subject of the miracles which had led to Becket's rapid canonisation. We shall pause to consider the possible reasons for this.

It is unlikely that Guernes felt unwilling to compete in this field because he felt that the competition was too strong. It is certainly true that as well as the Latin biographers whom we have discussed, there would have been vernacular writers who would have produced many accounts of the miracles, even if these have not come down to us; Guernes was not afraid to compete with them in the first instance, and when he reached Canterbury and found that his initial attempts did not satisfy the standards which he desired, he was not afraid to revise and, effectively, to begin his task afresh. There seems therefore little reason why he should have felt inhibited in the restricted, if important, area of miracles.

If we feel, and there is some ground for interpreting the evidence in this way, that Guernes himself was too sceptical

of many of the professed miracles to wish to include them in his work, or at least to give them prominence in the event of his rare mentioning of them, then we must credit him with a greater spirit of discernment than most at Canterbury at that time. It is true that some claims for miraculous cures were dismissed by the recorders at Canterbury, but official recognition was not always a prerequisite of popular belief. Nor can it be said that Guernes approached all his material in an unreceptive spirit - the evidence elsewhere consistently demonstrates the opposite - and he would scarcely have been inspired to begin such a work as he did had that been the case. We may fairly impute a critical spirit more acutely developed than most in his circumstance, and certainly than we might have expected to discover in him, but I feel that this is only one part of the answer, and the full answer reveals a slightly different aspect of this critical spirit.

If Guernes did not dwell on the subject of the miracles, it is because he did not choose to. He felt that, whatever their merits, miracles were usually best dealt with elsewhere. This is not to imply that Guernes did not believe that any of the acclaimed miracles actually took place; from his limited inclusion of some material it could be argued that his faith in them was demonstrated - the incidents at Pontigny, to which reference has already been made, and to which we shall return shortly support this theory - and that he simply failed to make as much use of them as might have been anticipated. But he felt that miracles had

only a very limited place in this account because he himself envisaged his own work as a true account of Becket's life. He emphasised this fact repeatedly, on occasions when to do so was merely to conform to literary device, and on occasions when to do so was not, as we have seen frequently in the course of our investigations. Although we should not expect Guernes to see his work in exactly the same light as a modern writer would see it, it is clear that he himself had a very strong sense that what he was composing was a piece of history: an accurate and veracious account of verified events. We cannot of course demand those standards of objectivity which we may try to demand of a twentieth-century historian, but nor does, as we have already seen in this chapter, the author's undoubted parti-pris necessarily invalidate what he has to say. It is as true today as it was in the twelfth century that those most disposed to write on any given subject can be at once those with a declared interest or bias and those who do it best. If one could achieve a wholly objective account, which is still hypothetical, it might make for very torpid history. Guernes might see himself as an impartial reporter of historical fact whilst fully aware that his own sympathies lay firmly with Becket, in the same way as an English historian might contemplate his account of Agincourt, or Waterloo, or of the second world war; but even if he did not it would not instantly invalidate everything that he had written on the subject. Although Guernes would not consciously see his work in the same terms as we would today, he

was actively concerned with the composition of a piece of historiography. This does not mean that the poem is not also hagiography: it is, but there are very many times in the poem when we sense that the historiographer in Guernes is actively at work.

Perhaps we may dwell a little longer on the place of miracles in Guernes' poem, as to do so will to throw into relief his concept of their value in it, and his concept of the work as a whole. We have already mentioned that one of the few occasions when Guernes allowed himself to treat miracles was when dealing with Becket's stay at Pontigny. At this stage Becket is under intense pressure, and has been suffering physically not only from his self-imposed rigorous routine of vigil and abstinence, but also from an abscess in his mouth; Guernes then tells us that Becket begins to have visions whilst kneeling in prayer. A lay brother - Guernes tells us clearly that he does not know his name - is brought to Becket suffering from dropsy, which, interestingly, is one of the ailments which Guernes includes in his list at the conclusion of his poem which Edward Grim had not mentioned specifically in his corresponding passage. By laying his hands on the lay brother, by giving him something to drink - Guernes carefully tells us that he does not know what it is - and by causing him to vomit, Becket cures him. As we saw in chapter six when we considered this incident, Guernes is much more circumspect than his written source here, an anonymous passio. Nevertheless, he tells us unequivocally par les mains al saint humme de s'enferte (Line 3670) guari, even if he does not tell us, as does the passio, that the

lay brother vomited cum immensa sanie undecim ranulas. Moreover, Guernes goes on to tell us:

Mulz malades guari de sun relief demaine.
 La fille a un riche humme en devint tute saine,
 Qui out esté fievrose mainte lunge semaine.
 N'out el país nul humme si plain de fievre vaine,
 Par sun relief n'eüst santé tute certaine.

(Lines 3671-3675)

Given his reluctance elsewhere to discuss or describe miracles, we may be a little surprised that Guernes should address his audience in this way. We should reflect, however, that certain of the surrounding circumstances may help to explain this; firstly, Guernes has, in the instance of the lay brother, carefully prepared the ground, by his picture of the archbishop suffering, in exile, praying devoutly and experiencing visions. He has told us that these details were told directly to him. Then, as is the case at the end of the poem, he does not allow his audience to dwell on the subject of the many cures effected - indeed, he rapidly changes the scene and tells us of King Henry, of whom we have not heard directly for some little time. What perhaps goes farthest towards an explanation of the inclusion of such material here, when it is expressly excluded elsewhere in the poem, is, as we saw in chapter six, Guernes' desire to create a more pitiful and pious picture of Thomas Becket than is normally the case. Even so, he does not indulge in panegyric - only on the rarest occasions does he do so in his poem. He does not refer, for example, as he does at the beginning of the poem, to cel

(Line 122)

seintisme arceveske. He simply comes much closer to it than he normally does. He does not actually say that miracles are performed, but that cures are effected - in this instance a cure from dropsy, which is an illness after all, rather than a permanent physical disability such as blindness or lameness. The contrast between this episode, which reveals Guernes much more in the guise of a hagiographer than we normally encounter him, and his more restrained treatment of miracles, demonstrates at one and the same time that Guernes can countenance the intrusion of miracles into his account, albeit with less excitement than most of the other hagiographers, and that it is much more readily the historiographer in him which is to the fore in his poem. Even where he has admitted the miracles, he has restrained the more excessive of the claims, and has tried to rationalise the evidence as far as the material will permit. As we have observed already in this chapter, rationalisation on Guernes' part often means that he is less than happy with the import of what he is presenting.

If we require one final piece of evidence concerning Guernes' treatment of miracles and the light which this sheds on his work, we should consider the little poem which in the Wolfenbüttel manuscript follows the main body of the poem, and which has been published, firstly by I. Bekker and secondly by E. Walberg.¹ M. Walberg calls this un poème anonyme relatif à un miracle de saint Thomas de Cantorbéry. This poem, seventy-six lines long, relates the case of a doctor called Pierre, who, having in his time cured many of their ailments, himself

falls ill with an incurable form of dropsy, and is given up as a helpless case by all his friends save one, who implores him to think of the salvation of his soul; he does so, and experiences a vision, first of the Virgin Mary and then of Thomas Becket accompanied by two illustrious physicians who perform a strange and miraculous operation upon him, which involves removing his liver, washing it in gold basin, replacing it and stitching him up again. When he awakes from his avisium, Pierre is uncertain as to whether he has dreamed his operation or not. The stitches and the fresh blood on the sheets resolve the problem, and restored to health, he broadcasts his story. The bishop of the area, Périgord, refuses to believe that a miracle has taken place, until he sees the evidence for himself. He it is who has told the poet this strange tale. M. Walberg demonstrates that it is quite probable that Guernes in fact was the composer of this poem. Whilst it is not proposed to go into all the details for and against this theory, we may pause to reflect that, whilst the lines cannot have ever been intended for inclusion in the main vie - the stanzas contain four lines only - certain elements in this short poem do suggest that Guernes may have been the author. Apart from the reasons adduced by M. Walberg², it is interesting to note that the poet has been precise in telling us his source, that a vision or dream is involved - we have seen that Guernes is prepared to lend these greater credence or at least give them greater prominence in his vie than has generally been the case in his treatment of miracles - and that the cure involves the illness of dropsy, albeit in an allegedly incurable form here; we have

already noted that Guernes seems to emphasise dropsy for some reason, where it is ignored by other writers on the miracles.

Our initial reaction, if we accept that Guernes is in fact the poet here, is that the poet has modified his approach to miracles somewhat. Nowhere in his vie does a miracle achieve such authority and prominence, or demand so much time, space and attention. I, with M. Walberg, although for slightly differing reasons, think it highly probable that Guernes was the author of this little poem, which he found and translated with considerable accuracy in William of Canterbury's collection of miracles. I think, moreover, that the fact that Guernes is prepared to devote such time and space to this strange miracle outside the main vie, to treat it as a distinct entity, reinforces what I have said about Guernes' treatment of miracles within the longer poem; that whilst Guernes may not have entirely rejected the evidence and value of attested miracles, he felt that that evidence needed to be very compelling before it became admissible, or deserve more than the most summary treatment. More than this, the poet conceived his great work as history, and that the true place for long descriptions of particular miracles lay outside it, in the accounts of writers such as William and Benedict, or in poems such as the one which we have just considered, which he may have composed specifically for this purpose and in this spirit. To have included a number of such miracles, when accounts of miracles were rife and might be in some cases sober and genuine and in others wild and exaggerated, without a semblance

of authentication, could only have damaged the value of his poem as a document of historical value. He must have felt this strongly to have resisted the temptation to satisfy the desires of some at least of the audience listening to him in the cathedral, for some there must have been who would have liked nothing better than a string of awe-inspiring and dramatic miracles to fill them with a sense of mystery and of God's marvellous intercessions on behalf of his saint.

If, as I have suggested, Guernes was deeply concerned that his poem had historical value, we must now review evidence for this which we have studied in detail in the preceding chapters.

We have seen and discussed in detail how at the beginning and the end of his poem, Guernes makes determined and sweeping claims for the authenticity and veracity of his work, and its superiority over all other works, whether in verse or in prose, in Latin or in French, in this respect. But we have already seen that such claims were habitually made by writers in his position, and might be regarded as pure convention, without which audiences might be tempted to think that the author had no aspirations for his work. But this type of convention makes it particularly difficult for a genuine and justified claim to be distinguished from an empty and meaningless one; rather than dwell long on the form of Guernes' claim, which we have considered before, we shall review the evidence which Guernes has produced in the main body of his poem to support his claim.

Perhaps the first striking element in Guernes' presentation of his material is his independence of spirit. We have seen

repeatedly in the course of our study of the poem occasions on which Guernes is indebted to written sources for his information. On many other occasions we have imputed oral sources. Although we could not claim that the whole of Guernes' poem is attributable to other sources, only a small proportion of the total seems to be truly original. We have seen instances when the information given by Guernes, events, names, places, incidents which he himself witnesses on rare occasions, seems to have been the product of his own researches. Sometimes, as in the case of Avice of Stafford, the information is of direct interest; sometimes the poet's contribution adds a little, but adds considerably to a confused picture, as is the case with the long series of meetings arranged in the hope of effecting a reconciliation between the exiled Becket and Henry II. But we saw, in chapter two and chapter three, that to regard Guernes' poem as merely a 'compilation' is to do it less than justice. We have seen repeatedly throughout our study, and once again in this chapter, that whilst Guernes may use one of his written sources to discover information, once he has garnered that information, he may use it in a different way from the original source. He may present it differently, but more probably he will treat it in a different tone, a different spirit from the author in whose work he found it. We have seen how he will rationalise and explain where his original source will leave his reader in uncomprehending awe, how he will shun the pious conclusions which William of Canterbury or Edward Grim might draw from some incident in the archbishop's life, and present his audience with a more modest and subdued interpretation. A good

example of this is the account of the day when the young Becket fell into the river whilst out hunting with Richer de Leigle, and was carried by the current towards the millwheel, which most fortunately stopped just before Becket was swept into it. Guernes does not make as much of the incident, or imply God's hand so heavily in the incident, although not unnaturally he does do this to some extent, as does his original source, Edward Grim. Guernes tells us simply:

Quant il dut en la roe chair, le chief devant,
 Li molniers out maulu; mist la closture a tant.
 Si guari Deus de mort a cele feiz l'emfant.

(Lines 222-225)

Although Guernes does go on to draw implications from the event, he tones down the account of Grim, who goes on to say that the hand of the Saviour had protected the young man in this desperate strait, ne exstingeretur lucerna futurus in Israel, cujus morte pretiosa tanta cernimus beneficia provenisse.

This is not to say that there are no occasions on which Guernes does not follow his written sources so closely as to render what is effectively a translation of their words, and to give the same conclusion as they; but such instances are much less frequent than those in which we observe the poet develop the material in his own manner. If he does this, it is a reflection of his temperament, for we may suppose that the pious, sometimes panegyric purposes to which the Latin biographers can be seen on occasion to put their accounts did not appeal to a nature which seems to

have been modest, clear-thinking, and usually undemonstrative. The restraint which Guernes often exercises is surprising when we consider the prevailing atmosphere at Canterbury at the time at which he was working there. In approaching his material in a more circumspect manner than that shown by his sources, both written and oral, he must often have found himself swimming against the tide. He may not consciously have attempted to moderate the views and expressions of others, but the effect of his approach to the material was frequently to do so. Much of his poem was concerned with Becket in adversity, and he was perspicacious enough to see that often the simple statement of fact would be sufficient to convince his audience; here we have the essence of his approach: he himself felt strongly that what he was writing was history, and that repeatedly excessive or exaggerated claims would detract therefore from his work; but at the same time the poet was always aware that he was writing for a present audience, whose demands might be and frequently were different from the exigencies which the approach of the historian imposed upon him. He was in fact attempting to satisfy two masters, an internal one who demanded historical accuracy as the cornerstone of his work, and an external one, the immediate audience, who demanded history certainly, but whose historical acumen was not nearly so sharp as the poet's own, and who demanded history among other things; this audience would wish for instruction, enlightenment, thrill and entertainment. The story of Thomas Becket could give them all these things, but Guernes would not necessarily have had to

treat his material in the way in which he did in order to present them to his audience. That he succeeded in satisfying his audiences as clearly he did by means of the approach which he adopted, is a testimony to the combined skills of the poet, the historiographer and the hagiographer.

We should not believe, however, that Guernes' only motivation was historical accuracy. What evidence have we seen to suggest that it was even a major force?

Firstly, we have remarked upon his independence of spirit. His skill as a poet and his undoubted ability in Latin would have enabled him, had he so desired, to produce accurate but unoriginal, uninspired translations. He chose not to do so, or not to do so for a preponderant part of his poem. His method was not without dangers, and his work is not without its errors. On the one hand, by following his written source too closely he is sometimes led astray. Like his written source Edward Grim, he misplaces completely the coronation of young Henry and thus contorts the history very badly: this event no longer has the great significance in his account which historically it deserves, for Guernes is thus unable to relate it as the deliberate move on King Henry's part which precipitated the reconciliation between Henry and Becket, the latter's return to England and his assassination shortly afterwards. On the other hand, when Guernes rejects the accounts of his written sources, or chooses to essay a conflation of various sources, the result is not always as happy as he would have wished. It is largely as a result of this approach, for example, that Guernes' account of events leading up to the election

of Becket to the see of Canterbury is often confusing, contradictory and illogical. We saw in chapter five that Guernes was clearly at pains to present us with an accurate account of events, but in his attempt to do so had destroyed the clarity of the picture. But if Guernes' approach occasionally leads him into such difficulties, we should not feel that his approach is invalidated, nor should we lose sight of the fact that he is clearly attempting something more than slavish translation or compilation of more than one translation. His debt to his sources is beyond doubt, but the poet has not allowed them to dictate to him the general presentation and interpretation of his material.

Secondly, the very length of the poem suggests a desire for completeness, for as much accuracy as the poet could achieve. Indeed, it might be said that the one excess which Guernes did permit himself was the luxury of length. The fullness of the poem when dealing with events at Northampton, with events leading up to the arrival of the four knights at Canterbury, or with the details of the murder itself, is, if not essential, then quite defensible as necessary to our comprehension of events; but at other points in the poem we may begin to question whether the same is true, and to wonder indeed, if Guernes did regularly submit his audiences to such long and sometimes tedious passages, or whether he quietly omitted them or substituted a briefer summary of events; there is no evidence to support a theory that he did so, but logic would dictate that, as it is unlikely that he could complete the whole

poem at one single session, certain parts of it must have proved more popular than others, and this demand may have been reflected in performances. This theory would again suggest Guernes was trying to serve two masters, that of historical accuracy, and that of his immediate audience. If some of his audience truly did listen attentively to some of the long, tortuous and relatively less important passages in Guernes' poem, one can only admire their stamina, perseverance and ability to appreciate and take in material that is frequently complex. There must at times have been a temptation to turn away - for we cannot suppose that all paid in advance to hear the poet's work - and that Guernes' attitude towards his own performance of the work at Canterbury is one of evident pleasure and satisfaction is a testimony to his skill as a poet. If he has succeeded in giving a full enough account of events to satisfy his own historical initiative, he has done so whilst retaining the interest and attention of his audience.

But it is more than the mere length of the poem which suggests a desire for historical accuracy and completeness. The same poet who will give only the briefest list of miracles attested and proclaimed in the saint's name goes to considerable trouble to include other material which is patently of a more historical nature. Not only does Guernes include much detail from his sources where he believes this to be appropriate or necessary, he includes various other types of information when he thinks that they will add to his picture. To this end he includes a small number of personal anecdotes, but at far greater cost in time,

space and effort he translates in full, for example, and very accurately, the sixteen Constitutions of Clarendon which were the cause of early dissension between Becket and the king; later, when the discord is at its height, he produces for his audience long and very faithful letters from the exchanges between the exiled archbishop and his enemies in England. Some of these letters have since become famous in the dispute - Becket's letters to the king Exspectans expectavi and Desiderio desideravi, the letter of English clergy to Becket Quae vestro pater, and Becket's reply to this Mirandum et vehementer stupendum; but they can have meant little to Guernes' audience in their own right, yet he chooses to translate them most faithfully for his audience, where if criteria other than historical accuracy had been uppermost in the poet's mind, a brief résumé must have sufficed. His translations of some of these letters are almost two hundred lines long. He has obviously translated them directly from the original, or copies of the original, rather than from his normal written sources. Not all of these letters appear in his written sources, which tells us something about Guernes' approach on two counts - his desire for information, and his desire for accuracy of information. This is not simply a question of Guernes' including everything which came before him - evidence considered earlier in this chapter refutes this - and Guernes' careful treatment of this material does increase the historical authenticity of his poem. It typifies his approach to much of the material in his work.

If further proof is needed that the poet considered historical accuracy to be of massive importance in his work, we

should find it in the form of the two fragments of the first draft of his poem which have recently been discovered. We have seen how Guernes protests, at the beginning and end of his poem, the accuracy of his poem, and the particular way in which he turns to advantage the loss of his first draft, before he had had the opportunity to revise it to his own satisfaction, necessitating the enterprise of a second and more truthful version, the one which survives to us to-day. This, Guernes implies, has none of the failings of the first version; certainly he does not feel it to be mencungiers e senz pleneirete^(Line 156). But it is not so much what Guernes says about the differences between the two versions as the evidence of the two fragments of the first version and their contents which persuade us of the validity of his claims. We have discussed in detail the wide differences between the two versions; in a sense, regardless of the nature of these differences, and their significance for our evaluation of Guernes' opinion of the characters concerned, regardless of what these differences may mean in terms of a shift in position or outlook on the part of our poet, the very fact that there are differences of such magnitude is sufficient support for Guernes' claims: he found his first version unsatisfactory and, for whatever reason, modified it radically. On this basis alone we could present a case for the defence of Guernes' claim that he was preoccupied to achieve an accurate and valid historical account of events. In this context it scarcely requires reiteration that Guernes had made the decision to seek greater reliability and accuracy of information by travelling across the channel to Canterbury.

An objection could be raised, an objection whose foundation permeates the whole of the theory of Guernes' claims of meticulous historical accuracy: surely Guernes has modified his account because he found material which enabled him to show King Henry in a new and, importantly, less favourable light? Of course, the fragments are so restricted, as we have already said, as to make great assumptions on the basis of their evidence perilous. But the evidence clearly shows that Guernes becomes much more critical of the king in the second version than he had been in the first, and this must have had wider repercussions in the first draft as a whole. But the basis of the objection still remains: that what Guernes purports to be a search for historical accuracy is an attempt to present the figure of Thomas Becket in the most favourable light. It would be pointless to try to argue that Guernes has no bias towards Thomas Becket. Had he had no such bias, he would in all probability never have undertaken his poem. Certainly he was eager to present a sympathetic character, and we have seen how he was careful to explain any actions on the part of Becket which did not seem readily to fit in with the picture of the archbishop which he was painting. But we have noted that Guernes does not make as much as some of his Latin sources of the opportunity to depict Thomas as a pious, saintly figure, beginning with the presages before his birth, throughout his childhood and youth, and naturally, throughout the period when he was archbishop until his martyrdom. We have considered already in this chapter Guernes' depiction of Becket at Pontigny, and seen that that constituted a rather unusual picture for the poet; but just such a picture is presented with a certain

regularity by certain of the Latin biographers. Guernes is far less interested in convincing us of the sanctity of Becket throughout his life than are the Latin biographers. There will be scope enough for that at the end of his poem. We do get a biased view of Thomas Becket in the poem; what is surprising is that it is not as biased a view as it might well have been, given the atmosphere at Canterbury and the undoubted partiality of most members of his audience there, a partiality which the poet must have anticipated. But Guernes' lack of objectivity in his depiction of the figure of Thomas Becket would not in any case be sufficient reason to declare his work invalid as a piece of historiography.

If our objection has validity, it does not lie in the figure of Thomas Becket, but in the case for Thomas Becket. Within seventy lines of the start of his poem, Guernes has told us bien est aparissant saint Thomas aveit dreit.^(Line 61) Throughout the poem, Guernes will stress this aspect. He is insistent on this point, that Becket's long struggle was beyond question justified, that Becket was right. We have already seen how Guernes gives a full and accurate translation of the Constitutions of Clarendon, but interspersed between each clause we shall find that Guernes has usually given a succinct but revealing comment. As we might imagine, they contain little which supports the royal interpretation of the customs of the land. Sometimes Guernes' judgment is very brief: a tort deit um perir dous feiz^(Line 2410) d'un sul mesfait. On other occasions, he expresses himself a little more expansively :

Senz le congié le rei ne deüst nuls duner
 Iglise en tut sun fiu. - Bien poëz veer cler
 Tuz li regnes est suens, tut le deit gouverner.
 Par cele lei poust trestuz ens-offimer,
 E tutes les iglises a sun dun aturner. -

(Lines 2401-2405)

On one occasion Guernes allows himself a relatively lengthy personal reflection in which he recounts how in his experience in places which the king has demanded or claimed for his own he himself had been put out of the door - ^(Line 2494) carité n'i fu pas [^]. What never varies, however, is Guernes' conviction that Thomas is right and Henry therefore wrong. This tenet is not tested, not in the fundamental question of the dispute between the two men. We should be surprised if Guernes did not display the goodness, occasionally the sanctity of the archbishop in support of his cause. But we have observed that he does not do so as much as he might. But he does reiterate Becket's struggle for his cause, for his God, for his Church, for his oppressed clergy, for the poor and the down-trodden of the world. We are told that saint Thomas aveit dreit ki pur les clers surpris ainsi se combateit [^]. ^(Lines 61-62) We are told pur amour Deu le fist, si cum feire deveit ^(Line 63)

Conversely, the king must be wrong:

Mult poëz bien veer mal conseil ot li reis.
 Il ne deit fere a clerc n'a iglise defeis
 Ne tolir rien del lur, mes mettre i pot acreis.
 De l'iglise prent il la corone e les leis.
 Mes Deus l'ament, ki est uns en persones treis!

(Lines 56-60)

Such sanctimony we might expect to find attached to the person of the archbishop, but we often find it attached to his enemies. It is clear that from the outset the lines are drawn up. There is little need, even if Guernes dared, to say that the king is bad. It will suffice to say that he is wrong; the advice which he is given is habitually bad, and his advisers are unnamed, although we can sometimes guess at their identity. Guernes reserves that judgment for characters rather less important - Roger, Archbishop of York, and members of the Broc family for example. Guernes holds firmly to his view of the two parties with the strength of a firm political conviction. This indeed is what it is. It is here, and not in the matter of Becket's personal qualities, in questions of sanctity, piety and religious inspiration, that Guernes reveals a strong bias. When discussing Becket's sanctity, he stresses more than some of the other biographers the intercession of God. But he expresses much more strongly than they his concern for the clergy and for the poor, and at frequent intervals in the poem Guernes turns his attention, and that of his audience, to the plight of the poor and the oppressed. Rarely does he miss an opportunity to impress upon us that Becket was fighting for them. It is here that we find the greatest evidence that Guernes has allowed his objectivity to be affected, that we can trace the surest signs of bias in his work. Guernes would never have seen matters in this light; it would scarcely be conceivable to him that anyone, whether he had pretensions to be a historian or not, could

approach the history of Thomas Becket in a different light. He certainly would not have thought that it affected his fitness as a historian or his ability to tell the truth. A modern reader must of course make allowance and admit that we shall see Becket's interpretation of matters and not the king's, that we shall be shown letters from Becket to the king containing his side of the argument and not see the king's reply. Indeed, a modern eye, seeing as we have done, Guernes' early and categorical statement, if not of intent, then of belief, should be all the better equipped and prepared to make the necessary adjustment of focus and then evaluate nonetheless his poem as a piece of historiography. To Guernes' audience, the process would not be overt, and Guernes' presentation and argument must have seemed, for those who still required persuasion, very persuasive. In many cases, the members of the audience must in fact have heard what they had hoped to hear, and must have expected to hear, in terms of who was right and who was wrong. We should remember here that Guernes, aiming at the less well educated visitors to Canterbury, among others, in that his audience would contain those with no Latin, would please many ears with the knowledge that Becket was a man struggling to uphold the rights of the poor and the oppressed against the excesses of the rich and the powerful. Indeed, on more than one occasion, Guernes stresses that God does not favour the rich and the mighty

Reis e cuntes e ducs, poi les veum saintir;

Deus les refuse mult, car nel volent servir.

Coveitise les fait suvent del dreit guenchir;

Ne funt rien se ceo nun que lur vient a plaisir;
 Leis funt a lur talent, n'unt pour de morir.
 Les reis n'eslit pas Deus ne ne choisist ne prent,
 Ne les ducs ne les haltes persones ensement;
 Mes chescun ki Deu crient e ki vit lealment,
 U il seit de halt lin u seit de basse gent,
 Deus le munte e eshalce, s'a lui servir entent.

(Lines 81-90)

When Guernes discusses, with equal fervour, those whose worldly fortunes compare poorly with the riches of kings and nobles, we may suppose that there were in his audience, as he must have anticipated, many to whom his words were sweet indeed:

Les umles aime Deus, les povres ensement,
 Car de lur travail vivent, tutdis sunt en turment;
 E aiment seint' iglise e clers e povre gent,
 E dreites dismes donent e vivent nettement:
 Itels eshalcera Deus parmanablement.

(Lines 106-110)

We observed in chapter three the difference in approach here between Guernes and Edward Grim, who wrote a similar type of introduction. Grim concentrates on the pious and noble figure of the archbishop, as does William of Canterbury. Neither of the Latin writers dwells on the fate of the poor and humble, and neither takes an account of what we might term the wider issues, those which Guernes encompasses in his political vision. It is Guernes, rather than the Latin author, who carries out best

Grim's stated intentions:

"Ac ne tanti muneris exsors videatur hic noster dies,
 novus in medium procedat Christi miles et martyr egregius,
 beatus Thomas, sanctitatis spectaculum, justitiae norma,
 incentivum patientiae, virtutis exemplar, assertor invict-
 issimus veritatis. Sed quid mihi, inquis, cum martyrio?
 quid cum miraculis, quae non humanae viribus efficaciae
 tribuenda sunt, sed Deo? Bene: nec nos tibi martyrium,
 nec miracula proponimus imitanda; sed vitam considera martyrio
 plenam, contemplare mores, mirare hominem, inter omnes mundi
 divitias, et quicquid pretiosum aestimatio habet humana,
 tantam animi tenuisse constantiam, ut nec prospera illum ad
 amorem mundi mollescerent, nec adversa quaevis ab amore
 Conditoris, ut primum sensibus ejus cognitio sese veritatis
 infudit, aliquatenus retardarent."

(Edward Grim, prologus, pp. 354-355)

Guernes does achieve much of what he and, coincidentally,
 much of what Edward Grim set out to achieve. But he does not
 do so without the implicit principle that Becket was beyond question
 right in his struggle against the king. This judgment inevitably
 colours his interpretation of numerous events in Becket's history,
 and, as we have seen, when we appraise Guernes' work as a piece of
 historical writing we must bear these in mind. Our reserve is
 not required so sternly when we consider the work as a piece of
 hagiography, for when from this point of view, we compare his life
 of Saint Thomas Becket with other saints' lives, Guernes' restraint

and moderation in what he accepts and what he depicts to his audience are quite striking. In both contexts we should bear in mind Guernes' own words, which show us at once his desire for historical truth, his methods, and what strikes us modern readers as the charming naivety of his approach:

Primes traitai d'ole, e suvent i menti.

A Cantorbire alai, la verité oi;

Des amis saint Thomas la verité cuilli,

E de ces ki l'aveient des enfance servi.

D'oster e de remettre le travail ensuffri.

(Lines 146-150)

Guernes' method would suit perfectly the hagiographer; we should not be surprised that its inherent weakness as a system for a historical approach never strikes him; nor would his audience have been aware of the least contradiction in his statements; they, with him, would firmly believe that those who had known and loved him best were best fitted to provide the poet with an account of the truth. Few indeed at that time would question this; perhaps Becket's enemies might. What is surprising is not that Guernes fails to observe the weakness in his approach to the search for truth, but that, having adopted this method, he exercises such restraint, as we have seen on numerous occasions, in his treatment of the material which this approach presents to him. We are surprised, given the bias which is inevitably thrown upon the work by virtue of Guernes' championship of the martyr's cause, that on so many occasions the events come through their treatment so clearly to present themselves to us, to enable

us to evaluate them; there are many occasions when Guernes' evident partiality clearly has its effect on the presentation, when we, a modern audience, can detect Guernes' determination to prove Becket right. But it is Becket the man, beleaguered perhaps, whom Guernes usually keeps before us; not until late in the poem do we see more than occasional glimpses of Becket the saint. It is true that, as the poem develops towards its conclusion, Guernes' critical standards are gradually and perceptibly modified, so that we sense increasingly the weight of Becket's sanctity. But in view of the prevailing climate at Canterbury in the years immediately following Becket's murder, it is Guernes' initial restraint and historical discipline which is surprising rather than the late, one is tempted to say belated, invocation of Becket's sanctity.

Henry's pilgrimage to the shrine obviously held great significance for Guernes; not only is it an expression of piety, humility, an admission of Becket's goodness and saintliness and an excellent example to the sovereign's subjects, it is also, and, Guernes' emphasis implies, more importantly, a recognition on the part of the king that Becket was right. Guernes does proclaim a victory for piety, virtue, oppressed goodness; he proclaims a worthy and saintly example to mankind; but he also proclaims a victory for the policies and beliefs of Thomas Becket. Earlier in the poem, we saw Guernes argue with great fluency and authority the supremacy of the Church in the debate of the two swords; the passage is too long to quote here in full, but the essence of his argument is given in the following lines :

Li prelat sunt serf Deu, li reis les deit cherir;
 E il sunt chiés des reis, li reis lur deit flechir.
 Deus est chiés des prelaz; pur sa lei maintenir
 Devreient il estendre les cols, prez de murir:
 Deus suffri mort en cruiz pur s'iglise franchir.
 De Deu tienent li rei, de sainte mere iglise:
 A li e as suens deivent e honor e servise,
 Car de li unt il lei e la corune prise;

(Lines 2806-2813)

Guernes' language is intense here; it also conveys to us the impression that Guernes thinks, or has thought, deeply on this subject, and in a sense is giving a simplified version of his own ideas, in order to present to his audience ideas in a form which can readily be understood and assimilated. He wishes to convince them of the truth of his words, but his fervour and commitment aid the audience, for the issues remain admirably clear. Guernes himself fully understands Becket's own interpretation of the doctrine of the two swords, accepts it implicitly, and presents it forcibly to his own audience. Indeed, he presents it with all the dogmatism and determination of Becket himself.

When we considered the minor characters of Guernes' poem, we discovered that they tend to fall into place in the poet's estimation as good or bad, depending on whether or not they support the archbishop in his fight; not unnaturally, the smaller the part played by a character, the less we learn of him as an individual. What tends to remain important is his

position in the conflict between Thomas Becket and King Henry, and it is on the strength of this position, as we have seen, that Guernes tends to present a character to his audience as good or bad. A figure who, like the pope, vacillates and shifts his position, is portrayed as good or less good accordingly, without any reference to any factors which may have in reality influenced his position. There is only one constant touchstone here. The same is true of relatively major characters in the poem, notably of the three bishops, Roger, Foliot and Jocelin, and especially of Roger. We have seen that Guernes portrays them as black characters throughout the period of Becket's archbishopric, with Roger de Pont l'Évêque the most heinous of the three by some considerable margin. We must suspect that Guernes portrays them in this way because they opposed Thomas Becket with such implacable intensity and consistency. By the same token, King Louis is li buens, li honurez, li gentilz reis de France, precisely because of his solid and sympathetic support for Thomas Becket. Nationalism has little part to play in Guernes' portrayal of the King of France.

We have noted how Guernes will address his audience at length on the question of the two swords; this is not the only occasion on which he chooses to address his audience at length on a subject which we might term theoretical rather than historical in content. Perhaps we might fairly term certain of these passages sermons, in that the writer deliberately sets out to edify, to instruct, to impress moral truths. We

shall consider some of these passages now.

The first of these passages follows upon the account of Becket's rather difficult reception of the pallium. Guernes tells us that Becket eventually achieved his aim without recourse to gifts or money, which should serve as an example to his successors. He then begins a long apostrophe which we can only call religious. Guernes enters into a discussion of man's fate after death, and tries to resolve for his audience the vastly difficult problem of free will on the one hand, and God's omniscience and predestination on the other. Guernes succeeds in presenting the problem to his audience in an admirably succinct and clarified manner, as we shall see, for the problem is one which had taxed Saint Augustine of Hippo himself. Saint Augustine has evolved three fundamental principles: firstly, that God, through his grace, is the absolute master of all the determinations of the will: secondly, that man in the last analysis remains just as free under the influence of grace as he is in its absence: and thirdly, that the reconciliation of these two truths depends on the method of divine government. Therefore God, in his creative decree, can be seen to have left man in every instance free to resist sin or give way to the temptation of sin. When we consider Guernes' address to his audience, we can see that he has implicitly understood the nature of this theology, and is able to convey its stern and admonitory message to those who were listening to his account :

Ne het pas Deus les humes, mes il het lur folie;
 E cunuist bien lur quers e trestute lur vie;
 Set bien ke cist sera feniz en felonie
 E cist en bone fin. A cestui Deus aie,
 Si tost cum se repent e mal'ovre ad guerpie.
 Deus cunuist mult bien tuz cels ki serunt salvé;
 Cil sunt tant sulement a vie destiné.
 E si cunuist Deus bien cels ki serunt dampné;
 Nes volt pas rapeler de lur iniquité;
 Purveü sunt a mort, car mal erent finé.
 Cil ki sunt a dampner, purveü sunt a mort;
 De lur dampnatiun n'i a mes nul resort.
 E si Deus les salvot, deable fereit tort.
 En pechié finerunt, ne purrunt prendre port;
 La dunt nuls ne resurt charrunt al pudlent gort.
 Deus n'esforce nullui de fere bien u mal;
 A chescun a duné franche force e igal,
 Ke chescun en pot fere, s'il volt, u bien u al.
 Cel salve Deus e aime que il trove leal,
 E celui het e damne k'il troeve trop charnal.

(Lines 656-675)

We must suspect, from the evidence of this extract, if we did not already know, that its author has had the benefit of some form of theological training. Whilst the argument presented does not hold the logical unity or the tightly argued rationality which a modern reader might seek, its very intensity

and force do much to persuade us. In his way, Guernes is more stringent and less hopeful than Saint Augustine, but the respective merits of the two versions of the theological debate are less significant to us than the very fact of Guernes' grasp of the theme, his passion in conveying it to his audience, and his desire to do so. For we cannot think that he is indulging in commonplace theology for its own sake; he believes in what he preaches, and he believes in the necessity of preaching his message to his audience. He concludes his foreboding sermon in the following way :

Segnur, pur ceo vus di: lessez le mal ester;
 Ceo que avez mesfet pensez de l'amender.
 Ne dormez en pechié, pensez vus d'aprester,
 Quant Deus vendra pur vus, od li pussez aler
 E od lampes ardanz, en pareis monter.
 Se vus ne cremez Deu,, cremez enfern ki art,
 U nuls ki entera n'en istra par nul art.
 As bons humes pernez, ki unt esté, reguart,
 E a meint pecheür que Deus prist a sa part,
 Al seint martyr Thomas, ki fu ocis or tart.

(Lines 721-730)

There is no equivalent passage to be found in any of Guernes' written sources: the same is true of all the longer such passages in Guernes' poem, and all bear the strong personal stamp of the author. We are also struck by the fact that the sermon is linked only in the most tenuous of ways to the main body of the poem; Guernes seems to introduce it almost

gratuitously, and once embarked upon it, he is very willing to dwell on it at length, returning to the story of Thomas Becket, if not with regret, then in a manner which appears almost coincidental or fortuitous. We must therefore conclude that at that time the poet saw the content of this passage as being of paramount importance.

Nor is this the only such example to be found in the poem. Some five hundred lines later, we find the poet discussing the nature of God's laws, and comparing them with the way in which earthly rulers have ordained their own affairs. He has already attacked Becket's fellow bishops for their pusillanimous approach, and having accused them of being mercenary, tells them that the king knows their weaknesses, and will hate them quant se convertira^(Line 1209). This simple faith leads the poet into a succession of pieces of advice, which, although he begins by addressing them to King Henry, come to have a more general application:

Li clerc sunt serjant Deu e de s'electiun,
 Eslit es sorz des sainz; de ço portent le nun.
 Quel qu'il seient, serjant sunt en la Deu maisun.
 N'i as a metre main, nis el petit clerzun,
 Puis qu'est duné a Deu, s'esgardez la raisun.

(Lines 1236-1240)

The poet goes on to make a reasoned and intense defence of what was effectively Becket's interpretation of the problem of the criminous clerks. Unusually for Guernes, he goes on to use a number of comparisons: the first and longest of these is with Adam :

Quant Deus ot fait Adam e mis en paradis,
 Pur le mesfait qu'il fist ne fu il pas ocis,
 Mais del dolerus mund fu en la chartre mis.
 En peine e en tristur fu, tant cum il fu vis,
 E pur espeneir, ço qu'anceis ot mespris.
 E Adam e li clerc nen unt chief se Dieu nun;
 Pur çai fait, ço m'est vis, dreite comparisun
 E se li clers est pris mais a tel mesprisun,
 Face le sis prelaz jeter en sa prisun.
 Bien se puet apuier li reis a ma raisun.

(Lines 1301-1310)

It is perhaps significant that the poet tells us that he considers the comparison to be justified, for we have observed that he is often less than keen to include comparisons in his account. He goes on to make allusions to Cain, to Nebuchadnezzar, to Saint Peter. All this he produces in support of his interpretation of the question of the criminous clerks:

E pur ceo que Deus aime mult mercial justise
 E plus misericorde k'il ne fet sacrifise,
 A li bons arceveske cele bataille emprise
 Pur les clers maintenir e pur sa mere iglise.
 Bien veit laie mein n'i devreit estre mise.-

(Lines 1351-1355)

With this he returns to the narrative of his poem. The tone in this extract is more political than in the first

passage which we considered; yet in it we still find the desire to edify, to convince the audience of the folly of the sinner and of God's love for those who repent and go the right way :

Ne fu unkes oï ne trové en escrit
 Que pechiere nen eit merci, s'il le deprit;
 Mes s'il se desespeire u se neie u ocit,
 Ne pot avoir pardon, quant peche en l'espirit.
 Sur tute riens ad Deu misericorde eslit.

(Lines 1346-1350)

Later in the poem, we find Guernes criticising the actions of the Broc family, which has seized property belonging rightfully to the see of Canterbury. From this, the poet develops, albeit rather briefly this time, the themes of God's judgment and man's folly :

Liqueus rendra raisun de ço qu'en ad eü,
 U li reis u Randufs, al grant jur irascu?
 La ierent coveitus senz fin mort e perdu,
 La ne purra nul d'els faire de l'autre escu.
 De quanque Randuls fist, adrecement n'en fu.
 Deus adrecera tut, qui tut seit e tut veit;
 Deus est si dreiturels ne poet faire fors dreit,
 E il het tut malice, e justisier le deit.
 Les justises erranz ferunt la poi d'espleit;
 Cil les jugera tuz qui nuls d'els ne deceit.
 Deus, cum par est mainz huem pur le siecle avoglez!

N'i est amurs ne fei ne pais ne charitez.
 Se tuz les biens del mund aveie conquetez,
 Si que mes fiz en fust après mes jurs chasez,
 Ja n'en sereie mielz devant Deu apelez.

(Lines 4561-4575)

We have seen in an earlier chapter how the early part of this extract might be considered rather bold; now we should observe the personal approach of the poet, which testifies to the strength of his feeling on this point, and to his desire to warn and to instruct his audience on this matter. On this occasion, the lesson is not a long one, but its fervour is not in question.

Towards the end of the poem, after Becket has been murdered, Guernes reflects on his death, and expresses the belief that, had Becket wished to escape his pursuers and the fate which he knew they brought with them, it would not have been difficult for him to have done so. The poet goes on to reflect on the nature of God's judgment, and the administration of his justice :

Ainc mais si pute ovraigne ne fu el siecle ovree,
 Ne qui a si grant bien seit al siecle aturnee.
 Mais encore ert mult chier al siecle comperee;
 U tost u tart en ert l'ire Deu embrasee.
 Car la vengeance en est a sul Deu graantee.
 Mais la vengeance Deu n'est pas einsi hastee,
 Qui somunt que la culpe seit encor amende.
 Deus ne volt ne desire que l'aneme seit dampnee.

Ne la semaine n'est encore pas entree

U la felunie ert e vengie e trovee.

(Lines 5711-5720)

Here again we have evidence that the poet is struggling with the problems posed by the question of evil, condign punishment and a God of love; again we may suspect that Guernes' grasp of this subject is greater than that of his audience by some considerable degree, and that the poet has made a conscious effort to present the material to his audience in a way which they will find relatively easy to comprehend. It may be true that Guernes' lines do owe something to Grim's quotation from Ezekiel ch.33, v.11 when he writes qui non vult mortem peccatoris, sed ut convertatur et vivat; however, if this is so, it is little more than a starting point, and Grim's version has little of the intensity and directness of appeal to be found in the French poem. Guernes has a demonstrable concern for such taxing religious problems, and a desire to place them before his audience.

Certain distinct characteristics emerge from this brief appraisal of the most significant 'sermons' which Guernes has included in his poem. Firstly we have noted the intensity and fervour of the poet's appeal, his desire to convince his audience; his attempts, which have proved, we may judge, largely successful, to present the problems to his listeners or readers in a simplified and direct manner; although this does not necessarily mean that the poet had recourse to the simple or the simplistic, there is sufficient evidence, beyond the obviously significant fact that the poet was in religious orders, to suggest that he

understood the issues on a deeper level than he expected or demanded of his audience, for whom he produces an admirably clear and succinct version, even if this is a version highly influenced by the poet's evident commitment to Becket's cause. Thirdly, we should note that all these passages, with the possible and marginal exception of the instance where Guernes may have owed something to the account of Edward Grim, are original; there is no existing written source for them, and the highly personal tone suggests indeed that they are all of Guernes' own inspiration. We have established many times that Guernes was not concerned merely to produce a translation from existing Latin or vernacular accounts; his concern with the difficult issues of free will and predestination, of grace and salvation reveals his intention to instruct his audience in this area, an intention which he achieves with considerable competence. Fourthly, it is remarkable that these passages, in which the poet is concerned to edify his audience, to bend them to a consideration of some of the most profound problems of the christian religion, are linked to the main body of the poem in a very tenuous manner: the poet may well take as his point of departure some incident in the history of Thomas Becket, and his sermon may deal with some aspect of religious life which Becket's history illustrates or exemplifies, but the sermon can with ease be taken in isolation and the poet can instruct his audience in religious truth to the point where Becket and King Henry are quite forgotten, and when the poet does return to them it is with an abruptness which may surprise us. This point

may in fact reinforce one which we observed earlier in connection with Guernes' treatment of miracles, that they certainly have a place, but that they are best placed outside the main stream of the poem; in the case of the miracles, Guernes either excludes them entirely, greatly reduces the time and space devoted to them, or possibly, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, deals with them entirely outside the poem. In the case of what we have termed the sermons, they are indeed in the body of the poem, but they are clearly delineated and had the poet so wished, some of them could no doubt have been read in isolation, for the religious instruction which they could offer, or at need could have been omitted altogether when the poem was being read. For all that, Guernes saw them as important enough to devote a few hundred lines of his work to the issues which they contained and treated, and to delay the progress of his own narrative to struggle to resolve or at least to clarify questions which, as we have seen, had taxed the enquiring and clear-sighted christian spirit of Saint Augustine some seven hundred and fifty years earlier. There were clearly times in his poem, as we have seen, when the poet felt that the religious method or instruction which he wished to impart to his audience was of greater importance, or at least of greater immediacy, than the details of some passage in the life of Thomas Becket.

But we must not believe that Guernes' drive to edify his audience was always foremost in his plans; clearly it

was not. What we have termed the sermons may occupy some hundreds of lines in the poem, and when they do so, they exclude all other considerations, but they account for some hundreds of lines in a total of more than six thousand, and their importance in the poem must be seen in proportion. Certainly it was not Guernes' intention repeatedly to impress upon those who listened to him, or read his poem, abstract political theories, theoretical moral lessons, or isolated examples of Augustinian religious philosophy. His grasp of these subjects suggests that had he wished to do so, he could readily have achieved his end, but we should have a work very different in nature from the poem which we now have before us. That he chose to include such material on a relatively small number of occasions indicates that, although he undoubtedly considered them to be important, he did not wish to allow them to obscure the main theme of his work, which was the life of Thomas Becket. That he does restrict himself to a small number of sermons increases their effectiveness without radically altering the nature of the poem as a whole. By nature of their clear delineation from the history of Thomas Becket, they strike the eye and the mind quite forcefully. But, as we sense Guernes himself believes when he returns from sermon to narrative account, the story of Becket is usually a far better lesson and example in itself than a lesson in religious philosophy, whatever the intensity of the poet's personal conviction in the truth and validity of that philosophy.

We have established therefore that Guernes' poem is not a long theoretical or moralising religious tract; such elements of this as it contains are severely restricted, and thus their impact is increased rather than diminished. There is little in the poem which we could describe as truly panegyric. Again we do trace elements of this; on occasion the poet does indulge in reverend eulogy of the saintly archbishop, but with no sustained or planned consistency. Again, the effectiveness of such eulogy is increased by the care, almost the reluctance, which he exercises in his use of this method. There are instances, as we have seen, but Guernes would undoubtedly state, with Boswell "I profess to write not his panegyrick but his life." This has a considerable bearing upon the tone of the poem; Guernes is seldom as lyrical as the Latin biographers who served as his major written sources in his praise of the saintliness of the martyred archbishop.

It would be difficult and unwise to seek in a poem of the length of Guernes' life of Thomas Becket one single and uniform factor which had motivated the poet, and consequently we cannot with honesty claim that the poet's achievement is restricted solely to one field. This would be in any case an attempt to impose upon a mediaeval work strictures which we should only apply to a work produced by a modern mind in tune with modern concepts. Guernes' achievement cannot be limited to or defined neatly in one field and one field only. We have just seen that in terms of religious philosophy and in terms of panegyric, Guernes' intentions were modest, and through his skill as a poet,

his achievement in a sense surpasses his own ambitions, limited as they were. He was not concerned to inspire his readers with great awe and wonder at the spectacle of innumerable miracles performed through the intercession of the saint; indeed, he is exceptionally reluctant to discuss in any detail the performance of miracles in the main body of his work. We have considered the implications of this conscious decision, and this again influences the tone of the poem. All these self-imposed restrictions throw a great burden upon the skill of the poet, for although he is attempting to produce a popular work, he deliberately eschews some of the more obvious routes to the achievement of popular appeal. His achievement in this respect may be considered as all the more remarkable, because the survival of his work, and the popularity to which the poet can point within the body of the poem itself, are testimony to the poet's success in entertaining, in pleasing, in instructing, in satisfying contemporary audiences at the site of the martyrdom. I have mentioned many times the fact that Guernes chose to write in French rather than Latin, and whilst we should not underestimate the extent to which Latin was commonly understood in twelfth-century England and France, we must still recognise that the poet's decision ineluctably meant a commitment to write for an audience in part at least less well educated, less erudite, more demanding of immediate satisfaction and gratification than need necessarily have been the case. Perhaps the very poetry of the work would go some considerable way towards overcoming this self-imposed difficulty,

but, more than that, it is Guernes' literary skill, to which I have not been able, within the scope of this work, to devote as much attention as it deserves, which has enabled him to instruct, inform, edify and entertain his audience in such an eminently successful manner.

His success in this respect is the more remarkable when we consider that the evidence suggests that of the two masters which the poet was attempting to serve, the contemporary audience swayed his judgment and influenced his treatment and selection of material to a degree inferior to that of the influence of his other abiding concern. This is Guernes' unshakeable belief that what he was writing was history. We can raise many objections to this claim; his selection of material, more especially his presentation of material, frequently indicates the poet's inherent bias; we can argue that he was only prepared to enumerate the saint's failings in early life if he can give a full and reasoned explanation of them, if he can demonstrate Becket's own mortification, both then and later, if he can, by such description, prove to the weak and faint-hearted that even a sinner can become a saint, that from a most inauspicious beginning, that of a persecutor of the Church, a man may yet become one of God's saints; we can argue that in the course of his poem, Guernes unconsciously undergoes the process that he would wish to see a sceptic undergo, in that, as he would hope to see a sceptic moved from his scepticism to belief, so this mirrors a shift in the poet's position, whereby he moves from the standpoint where historicity holds sway, to one where the

figure of the martyred archbishop inspires in him piety and eulogy. All of these objections have their substance; it would be foolish to claim that throughout his long work, Guernes is never deflected from the path of his search for historical accuracy. Equally I would not claim that such accuracy as Guernes does achieve would withstand the rigorous objective scrutiny to which the work would, we would like to think, be subjected in the twentieth century. The same, we should observe, has proved true for the works produced in every century up to the present one, and history and evidence suggest that our attempts at historicity, and our claims to historical truth, will prove as fallible in a hundred years' time as others have to us, especially when the work involves an almost immediate appraisal of contemporary or nearly contemporary events, as was the case with Guernes and his poem. What Guernes has achieved, I feel, is an account of the life of Thomas Becket which, whilst not always consistent in its attainment of accuracy, in its balance of material, in its equanimity of tone, nevertheless attains an estimable degree of restraint, a presentation of material in a manner far more sober and circumspect than was probable in the circumstances, and a balance which deserves credit for the painstaking way in which the poet sought the truth in what he conceives as the only means available to him. I have stressed many times that the effort which Guernes expended in the quest of this goal far surpassed what would have been strictly necessary had he not imposed himself

such a severe interpretation of the service of historical accuracy. In this sense, although he did not realise it, he had set himself an impossible goal, but from his attempt to achieve it comes an account which contains much of historical value, and is of greater value in terms of historical perspective by virtue of its care, circumspection and restraint. We may not, in the last analysis, be shown Thomas Becket "warts and all" but we do at least observe some of the warts.

There remains the question as to whether we should classify the poem purely as an attempt at historiocity, or whether it is hagiography. This cannot satisfactorily be settled until we could agree on an acceptable definition of hagiography itself, and until that problem is resolved, all argument is liable to prove circular and hence fruitless. Let us however pause to consider just one interpretation, that of Hippolyte Delehaye, whose words we may translate thus³:

"So we see that to be strictly hagiographical the document must be of a religious character and aim at edification. The term must then be confined to writings inspired by religious devotion to the saints and intended to increase that devotion."

I think that Guernes' poem complies with the prerequisites set out in the first sentence. I think that Guernes was aiming to increase the devotion to Saint Thomas Becket, but I think he was inspired more by devotion to Becket's just cause than to the sanctity of the man - we should remember that he

did begin the draft of his first version before Becket was canonised by the pope. Without the desire to edify and to increase devotion Guernes would not have attempted to produce a work of this nature for popular and immediate appeal within the cathedral of Canterbury itself. What he has written may, within the bounds of the definition given by Hippolyte Delehaye, be termed hagiography. But our very attempts so to define the poem in this way serve to throw into sharper relief the fact that what Guernes was consciously striving to produce, and what he thought he was producing, was a work of history - with what degree of success and consistency we have already discussed. It is in these terms that the poet himself would have felt that his work should be evaluated. It conforms to the stipulations of a definition of hagiography, in that it seeks to edify, it seeks to increase devotion to Thomas Becket, and it is of a religious character. But for much of the poem we must suspect that such conformation is but incidental to the poet's purpose. The poem is hagiographical, because it is inspired by religious devotion to the saint; but, much more than this, it is historical because it is inspired by a desire to prove the validity of the saint's cause by virtue of the incontrovertible evidence of fact. (In this sense we could also term it political). To his own satisfaction, he achieved both; and although in the second instance he could never hope to be entirely successful, the measure of his achievement is that it is his success as a historian, rather than his success as a hagiographer, which

remains more firmly imprinted in our minds when, in the circumstances surrounding the composition of his poem at Canterbury in the early years after Becket's martyrdom, success as a hagiographer was so much more easily attained. Guernes imposed upon himself a far greater task in seeking to win credit and recognition for his work as a worthy recorder of historical events, when a modicum of success in this field, and he achieved more than a modicum of success, could be achieved only with more effort than was needed to gain recognition as a celebrated reporter of miracles or popular writer of devotional verses. Guernes is a very successful hagiographer and a less successful historian. The first achievement is estimable; it is his degree of success, which is a reflection of much painstaking, meticulous and laborious effort on his part, in the second achievement which is more remarkable. I am sure that Guernes, for all his early and late protestations of the absolute veracity of his work, of the fact that he would not stray one inch from the truth, even at the risk of death or perdition, would be happy to accept this judgment, to accept that this was so. What he gives us may not in the last analysis be, as he claims, ^(Line 164) le veir, but if he even approaches it, it is because of his conscientious efforts to furnish his audience with tut le plain ^(Line 164).

APPENDIX

THE CONSTITUTIONS OF CLARENDON

Hæc sunt avitæ leges, quas Henricus rex Angliæ petiit sibi confirmari a beato Thoma martyre.

Capitulum I

De advocacione et præsentatione ecclesiarum si controversia emerit inter laicos, vel inter clericos et laicos, vel inter clericos, in curia domini regis tractetur et terminetur.

(Primum hoc damnavit sancta Romana ecclesia sub Alexandro tertio)

Capitulum II

Ecclesie de feudo domini regis non possunt in perpetuum dari absque assensu et concessione ipsius.

(Hoc toleravit)

Capitulum III

Clerici retati et accusati de quacumque re, summoniti a justitia regis, venient in curiam ipsius, responsuri ibidem de hoc unde videbitur curiæ regis quod sit ibi respondendum, et in curia ecclesiastica unde videbitur quod ibidem sit respondendum. Ita quod justitia regis mittet in curiam sanctæ ecclesiæ ad videndum quæ ratione res ibi

tractabitur. Et si clericus convictus vel confessus fuerit,
non debet de caetero eum ecclesia tueri.

(Hoc damnavit)

Capitulum IV

Archiepiscopis, episcopis, et personis regni non licet
exire de regno absque licentia domini regis. Et si exierint,
si domino regi placuerit, assecurabunt quod nec in eundo nec in
moram faciendo nec in redeundo perquirent malum vel damnum domino
regi vel regno.

(Hoc damnavit)

Capitulum V

Excommunicati non debent dare vadium ad remanens, nec praestare
juramentum, sed tantum vadium et plegium standi iudicio ecclesiae,
ut absolvantur.

(Hoc damnavit)

Capitulum VI

Laici non debent accusari nisi per certos et legales accusatores
et testes in praesentia episcopi, ita quod archidiaconus non perdat
jus suum, nec quidquam quod inde habere debeat. Et si tales fuerint
qui culpantur, quod non velit vel non audeat aliquis eos accusare,
vicecomes requisitus ab episcopo faciet jurare duodecim legales
homines de visneto seu de villa coram episcopo, quod inde veritatem
secundum conscientiam suam manifestabunt.

(Hoc toleravit)

Capitulum VII

Nullus qui de rege teneat in capite, nec aliquis dominicorum ministrorum ejus excommunicetur, nec terræ alicujus eorum sub interdicto ponantur, nisi prius dominus rex, si in terra fuerit, conveniatur, vel justitia regis si fuerit extra regnum, ut rectum de ipso faciat, et ita ut quod pertinebit ad curiam regiam ibidem terminetur, et de eo quod spectabit ad ecclesiasticam curiam, ad eandem mittatur, ut ibidem terminetur.

(Hoc damnavit)

Capitulum VIII

De appellationibus, si emergerint, ab archidiacono debent procedere ad episcopum, et ab episcopo ad archiepiscopum. Et si archiepiscopus defuerit in justitia exhibenda, ad dominum regem perveniendum est postremo ut præcepto ipsius in curia archiepiscopi controversia terminetur, ita quod non debeat ulterius procedere absque assensu domini regis.

(Hoc damnavit)

Capitulum IX

Si calumnia emergerit inter clericum et laicum vel inter laicum et clericum, de ullo tenemento, quod clericus attrahere velit ad eleemosynam, laicus vero ad laicum feudum, recognitione duodecim legalium hominum per capitalis justitiæ regis considerationem terminabitur, utrum tenementum sit pertinens ad eleemosynam sive ad feudum laicum, coram ipsa justitia regis. Et si recognitum fuerit ad eleemosynam pertinere, placitum erit in curia ecclesiastica; si vero ad laicum feudum, nisi ambo de eodem episcopo vel barone

advocaverint, in curia regis erit placitum. Sed si uterque advocaverit de feudo illo eundem episcopum vel baronem, erit placitum in curia ipsius; ita quod propter factam recognitionem saisinam non amittat qui prius saisitus fuerat, donec per placitum dirationatum fuerit.

(Hoc damnavit)

Capitulum X

Qui de civitate, vel castello, vel burgo, vel dominico manerio domini regis fuerit, si ab archidiacono vel episcopo super aliquo delicto citatus fuerit, unde debeat eisdem respondere, et ad citationes eorum satisfacere noluerit, bene licet eum sub interdicto ponere; sed non debet excommunicari, priusquam capitalis minister domini regis villae illius conveniatur, ut iustitiet eum ad satisfactionem venire. Et si minister regis inde defecerit, ipse erit in misericordia domini regis. Et exinde poterit episcopus accusatum ecclesiastica iustitia coercere.

(Hoc damnavit)

Capitulum XI

Archiepiscopi, episcopi, et universae personae regni, qui de rege tenent in capite, et habent possessiones suas de domino rege sicut baroniam, et inde respondent iustitiis et ministris regis, et sequuntur et faciunt omnes rectitudines regias et consuetudines, sicut barones caeteri debent interesse iudiciis curiae domini regis cum baronibus, usque perveniatur in iudicio ad diminutionem membrorum, vel ad mortem.

(Hoc toleravit)

Capitulum XII

Cum vacaverit archiepiscopus, vel episcopus, vel abbatia, vel prioratus de dominio regis, debet esse in manu ipsius, et inde percipiet omnes redditus et exitus, sicut dominicos. Et cum ventum fuerit ad consulendum ecclesiae, et in capella ipsius domini regis debet fieri electio, assensu domini regis, et consilio personarum regni quas ad hoc faciendum vocaverit. Et ibidem faciet electus homagium et fidelitatem domino regi, sicut ligio domino, de vita sua et de membris, et de honore suo terreno, salvo ordine suo, priusquam consecratus sit.

(Hoc damnavit)

Capitulum XIII

Si quisquam de proceribus regni defortiaverit archiepiscopo vel episcopo vel archidiacono de se vel de suis justitiam exhibere, dominus rex debet eos justitiare. Et si forte aliquis defortiaret domino regi rectitudinem suam, archiepiscopi, episcopi, et archidiaconi debent eum justitiare, ut regi satisfaciat.

(Hoc toleravit)

Capitulum XIV

Catalla eorum qui sunt in forisfacto regis non detineat ecclesia vel coemeterium contra justitiam regis: quia ipsius regis sunt, sive in ecclesiis, sive extra fuerint inventa.

(Hoc toleravit)

Capitulum XV

Placita de debitis, quæ fide interposita debentur, vel absque interpositione fidei, sint in justitia regis.

(Hoc damnavit)

Capitulum XVI

Filii rusticorum non debent ordinari absque assensu domini de cujus terra nati esse dignoscuntur.

(Hoc toleravit)

Facta est autem praedictarum consuetudinum et dignitatum regiarum recordatio ab archiepiscopis, episcopis, comitibus, baronibus, nobilioribus, et antiquioribus regni, apud Claredunam, quarto die ante Purificationem Sanctae Mariae (perpetuae) virginis, domino Henrico filio regis cum patre suo domino rege praesente.

Sunt autem aliae multae et magnae consuetudines et dignitates sanctae matris ecclesiae, et domini regis et baronum regni, quae in hoc scripto non continentur, quae salvae sint sanctae ecclesiae et domino regi et haeredibus suis et baronibus regni, et in perpetuum inviolabiliter observentur.

These Constitutions are to be found in this form in Materials for the History of Thomas Becket; Volume V, pp. 73-79.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. See ed.Stubbs, Chronica Rogeri de Hoveden, volume II, pp.3-17.
2. Ed.Stubbs, Chronica Rogeri de Hoveden, volume I, pp.219-220.
 This comparison of Roger of Howden's treatment with that of the earlier biographers is not intended to imply that he used sources of information completely independent of those used by the biographers, or indeed that he did not consult the works of the biographers themselves; clearly he could easily and readily have done so. It is the dispassionate nature of his treatment which I wish to draw out here. See, for example, D.M.Stenton, article Roger of Howden and Benedict, in the English Historical Review, lxviii, (1943) pp.574-582.
3. See Grim, ch.31, pp.382-383.
4. See Grim, ch.55, pp.404-405. Many of the material details are clearly drawn from Grim's account. The passage is too long to be quoted at length here.
5. The wealth of comparisons which Guernes uses here is indicative in itself of the strength of his feelings in this matter, even if some of them have their origin in the passage of Grim's account to which we have just referred. On other occasions, as we have seen, Guernes was quite prepared to admit what he must have considered the more sanctimonious comparisons made by the Latin biographers.
6. Guernes follows Edward Grim very closely at this point; see Grim, ch.56, pp.405-406.

7. See Materials, for the History of Thomas Becket, volume V, p.160; see also FitzStephen, ch.95, p.98 .
8. See Materials, for the History of Thomas Becket, volume VII, p.400 .
9. For the whole passage, which is too long to be quoted in full here, see Grim, ch.22, pp.372-373. Grim goes on to inveigh against those who offer the king bad advice, and quotes from the Psalms in order to emphasise the gulf which exists between the sanctity of the persecuted archbishop and his oppressors.
10. See William of Canterbury, ch.35, pp.44-45; Grim, ch.51, pp.401-402 .

NOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHT

1. See William of Canterbury, liber secundus, ch.11, p.106;
see also Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, pp.xli-xliii.
2. See Grim, ch.58, p.407.
3. This issue was discussed in chapter six.
4. See Grim, ch.74, p.428.
5. Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.xc.
6. See W.Ullman, A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages,
(London, 1974), pp.173-200, especially pp.197-200.
7. See Matthew, ch.7, v.7.
8. The fullest statement to be found in William of Canterbury's
account is given in ch.37, p.46 : "Ibi enim Romanus pontifex
imperatoris Frederici, qui Germanicam Octaviano suo subjecerat
ecclesiam, schisma declinabat".
9. For Grim's account of this, see Grim, ch.27, pp.378-379.
10. For the whole of Grim's account, see Grim, chs.31-33, pp.
382-385.
11. See Grim, ch.51, pp.402-403. For the complete account, see Grim,
chs. 51-54, pp.401-404. See also William of Canterbury, chs.
35-37, pp.44-46.
12. For a discussion of this passage and the difficulties which
it presents, see Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, pp.257-258.
13. Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, pp.257-258.
14. See Grim, ch.56, pp.405-406. In ch.57, pp.406-407, he quotes the
pope's letter of reproof to the bishops, which Guernes, rather
surprisingly, does not.

- 15 See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.lxxviii; see also Grim, ch.48, pp.398-399, and William of Canterbury, ch.31, pp. 39-40 .

NOTES TO CHAPTER NINE

1. I. Bekker, La Vie St. Thomas le Martir, altfranzösisches Gedicht aus einer Wolfenbüttler Handschrift herausgegeben, in Abhandlungen der k. Akademie der Wissenschaft zu Berlin, (Berlin, 1838), pp.25-168; also E. Walberg, Étude sur un poème anonyme relatif à un miracle saint Thomas de Cantorbéry, article in Studier tillegnaide Esaias Tegner, (Lund, 1918), pp.258-276 .
2. See Walberg, Étude sur un poème anonyme, pp.260-270.
3. D. Attwater, The Legends of the Saints, (London, 1962), translation of Hippolyte Delehaye's Les Légendes Hagiographiques, (Brussels, 1905), p.3.

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There are six manuscripts of the second draft of the poem,
plus a short fragment:

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1r^o-84 v^o.
2. London, British Library, Harley 270;ff. 1r^o-122v^o.
3. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, f.fr.13513;98ff.
4. Welbeck Abbey, Library of the Duke of Portland, IGi;ff.9r^o-50v^o.
5. London, British Library, Add.Ms. 59616, ff.16r^o-130r^o.
6. London, British Library, Cotton, Domitian XI;ff.25r^o-43r^o.

Of these, 1 and 3 have some omissions, 6 is seriously defective,
containing only the last seventeen hundred lines. All are by
Anglo-Norman scribes.

Fragment of the second draft : Oxford, Bodleian Library,

Rawlinson C 641. London, Society of Antiquaries, 716, ff.5-6v.

(ff.1-4v contain fragments of the poem which bear close resemblances
to the manuscripts of the second draft, and the two sections
obviously originally belong to different manuscripts.

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Benedict of Canterbury, Passio Sancti Thomae Cantuariensis, auctore Benedicto Petriburgensi abbate, II, pp.1-19.

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William FitzStephen, Vita Sancti Thomae Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi et Martyris auctore Willelmo Filio Stephani, III, pp.1-154

Herbert of Bosham, Vita Sancti Thomae, Archiepiscopi et Martyris, auctore Herberto de Boseham, III, pp.155-534.

John of Salisbury, Vita Thomae: Vita Sancti Thomae Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi et Martyris, auctoribus Joanne Saresberiensis et Alano Tewkesberiensis, II, pp.299-352; III, pp.301-322.

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