

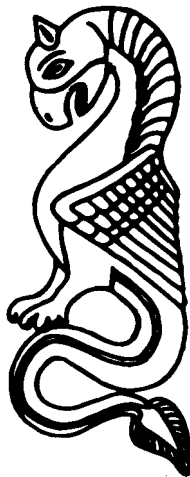
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LANVAL AND SIR LANDEVALE: A MEDIEVAL TRANSLATOR AND HIS METHODS

By ELIZABETH WILLIAMS

It has long been recognized that Thomas Chestre's Middle English tail-rhyme romance of *Sir Launfal* is based mainly on the earlier, anonymous couplet version of the same story, usually distinguished by the title of *Sir Landevale*, which is itself a translation of the lay of *Lanval* by Marie de France.¹ A. J. Bliss's edition of Chestre's poem,² with its useful appendix containing the texts of both *Lanval* and *Sir Landevale*, invites comparison of the versions, and to a study of this full and convenient edition the present paper owes much.³

Sir Landevale inevitably suffers in such comparisons. Beside *Lanval* it must appear crude, while Chestre's poem has not only survived in a manuscript earlier and better than any known of its predecessor, but is also generally considered the more effective of the English versions and is the one represented in most of the major anthologies. Its qualities, however, are very different, since Chestre's interpolations tend to dissipate the compact folktale logic which is one of the characteristics of *Sir Landevale*. Though closer to the French than *Sir Launfal*, *Sir Landevale* is not a slavish rendering: shorter than its source by some 90 lines, it nonetheless makes some additions as well as omitting and compressing, with the alterations tending in the main to produce certain emphatic effects. The major changes have often been noted,⁴ but most commentaries are slanted towards the poetically superior versions of Marie and Chestre, with less attention paid to *Sir Landevale*. In this fresh examination it is hoped to show, by comparing *Sir Landevale* with *Lanval* at certain points, that the first English translator of the lay was working at least with method, if not conscious principles, and that his changes produce a work of art of a simple but definite kind. Writing for a less sophisticated audience than Marie, he could concentrate on the more obviously dramatic elements in his tale, but did not feel bound to add substantial incidents to the action as Chestre did, thus disrupting its unity. The result is something close to an unadorned folktale, with characteristically simplified issues and emotions, rising to a single dramatic climax. The merits of a narrative of this kind, however modest, do not deserve to be constantly overshadowed by Marie's courtly lay or Chestre's lively but much expanded romance.

Of the extant manuscripts⁵ of *Sir Landevale*, even the best, (R), is at least one remove from the original translation and the others show wide variation. R is used in the following comparison, with some reference to the more interesting variants, but Chestre's poem represents a distinct version and is cited only occasionally. Manuscripts of *Lanval* are more uniform, but even so any comparison of the poems is inevitably qualified by textual un-

certainty: the terms "translator" and "translation" therefore carry this qualification throughout.

(1) *The cause of Launfal's poverty* (L18-38; R15-24)

In this vital point of motivation L and R show a marked difference of emphasis. L18 states merely that King Arthur neglected Lanval but gives no explicit reason; R21-24, however, make it clear that Launfal is himself to blame for his own poverty through extravagance. Elsewhere in R Launfal's generosity receives greater emphasis than in L: e.g. the Fay's injunction to him to spend freely at 131-133 and 155; the formal list of his charitable activities at 173-180; and the plea of the Earl of Cornwall at the trial, urging the injustice of putting to death anyone so generous as Launfal (341-344), a point also made at 324-326. L is less emphatic about the hero's generosity: at L21 *largesce* is merely mentioned as one among several more or less conventional qualities for which Lanval is admired; the same applies at L231-232, where R194 speaks only of *largesse*; L30 observes, *Tut sun aueir ad despendu*, a fairly colourless statement without the implications of R23, *So wildely his goode he sett*; the Fay urges him to spend only once at L138-142; the list of Lanval's charities at L205-214 contains fewer items; and generosity is not mentioned at all in the speech of the Earl of Cornwall.

Marie, then, though noting generosity as a quality Lanval possesses, does not give it quite the prominence it acquires in the translation. Instead, as E. A. Francis⁶ has pointed out, she is more interested in his position as an alien at a foreign court, which renders him especially vulnerable when he falls from favour: the point is made at L27-28, and expanded at 36-38 in an adjuration to the audience. This "alien" theme recurs at L428-430, and at L397-401, where Lanval, as a stranger, is hard put to it to find a surety and is saved only by the generosity of Gawain. R, however, touches only briefly on this aspect of Launfal's situation at R27-28, and it is hardly mentioned again (except once in the P MS where it has a different significance: see below (7)). A further difference of emphasis is also seen at L31, where Marie repeats the King's failure to reward Lanval for his feudal service, but R at this point expands on the knight's generosity. Where Marie's hero is at the mercy of others, the translator's is at the mercy of his own virtues.

(2) *Launfal's laments* (R26-30, 43-48; cf. L30-38)

These two passages in R illustrate the translator's "sense for sense" technique, being the first of a number of places where he inserts a passage of direct speech, either based on a piece of reported speech in his original, or expanded from hints already present elsewhere in L, or supplied from his own imagination. Launfal's laments over his poverty seem mainly of the second kind, apparently suggested by L30-38. R27, *And J am here in vncuth londe*, is the translator's sole concession to Marie's concern over the lot of the alien, and Launfal's refusal to beg in R44 seems to derive from L32, *Ne Lanual rien ne li demanda*. R45-48, referring to the sorrow of his fellow knights of the Round Table for him, are an addition by the translator, which the redactor of the P MS prolongs into a formal valediction, mentioning several knights by name (P25-50: this manuscript shows a number of such extended independent additions). The device of Arthurian name-dropping is an obvious way of establishing atmosphere: Chestre uses it at the opening

of his poem to lead up to the introduction of Launfal. The P passage, however, is more than a merely mechanical insertion: the moment is well-chosen, and although many of the lines are trite and repetitive the text of this whole manuscript is very corrupt, and even in its present state the lament is not without a certain *ubi sunt* quality, adding poignancy to Launfal's situation.

(3) *Launfal's ride* (L39-50; R31-42)

In setting the scene for Launfal's meeting with the maidens from the Otherworld the translator makes some interesting additions. Some of Marie's details are simply reproduced: Launfal's arrival at a river, his folding of his mantle and his lying down. The *Tut sul* of L44 becomes the more explicit *Withoute grome or squier* of R32. But R varies Marie's statements that Lanval was depressed and had ridden out to divert himself: these are represented in the laments (see above (2)), in the translator's comment on them (R49-50), and probably also in a couplet for which the K MS reads,

and raid so furth in great murning
to dryve away his soir langing. (K37-38)⁷

Further details are then added: he rode towards the west (R35); *Betwene a water and a forest*, where L has only *une ewe* (R36, L45); he lay in the shadow of a tree (R41-42). R37 adds that it was *underntyde*, a point also emphasised by Chestre at C210 and 220, but not by the other manuscripts of *Sir Landevale*, though most agree that it was hot (R37, 39; K43; M43). Anton Kolls⁸ has pointed out the presence of forest and river together in the anonymous lay of *Graelent*,⁹ a close analogue of *Lanval* which Chestre is known to have used to supplement *Sir Landevale*, but it cannot be proved conclusively that it was also used by the author of *Sir Landevale*. Indeed, most of the additional details here, the forest, the reference to the west, *undern*, the heat and the tree shadow can be paralleled in similar situations in tales of contact with the Otherworld,¹⁰ and it is not unlikely that the translator supplied them himself from his knowledge of the conventions. P60, M56 and K56 add the further point that Launfal actually went to sleep under the tree and saw the Otherworld visitants on waking. The absence of this detail in R suggests that it may be a late insertion, although it too can be paralleled in similar situations.¹¹ This may indicate that later redactors of *Sir Landevale*, as well as the original translator, felt themselves to be working in familiar territory and therefore free to add such further conventional details as they knew to be suitable.

(4) *The Fay's messengers* (L54-76; R52-76)

The arrival of the two maidens offers a much clearer example of the translator expanding a description by means of particular detail, largely conventional. Points taken over from the French include the tight lacing of the dresses, the basin and towel, while Marie's *blians de purpre bis* (L59) become *Kyrtyls . . . of purpyl sendell* (R55). To this costume, however, are added in the English gold-trimmed mantles of velvet (green in RC, red in MPK) and head-dresses (R59-60). All MSS also contain a couplet about the maidens' colouring, probably best represented by C241-242:

Har faces wer whyt as snow on downe,
Har rode was red, her eyn wer browne.¹²

R64 (supported by KM) adds the hyperbole, *They semyd angels of hevin hie*. Two further alterations appear in the ensuing conversation. First, in L

the maidens' message is not explicit: they merely invite Lanval to speak with their mistress. The translator, by including the word *paramour* (R72), makes it clear what she wants him for. Second, where in L the knight follows the maidens without comment, the translator gives him a reply (R75, longer in PMK). PK add a compliment on the maidens' beauty and P produces one of its more successful individual expansions, where a neatly turned observation is introduced in a further speech by the maidens who declare that their mistress is far lovelier than they (P95-98). As with Launfal's lament, the P text is marred by obvious corruption, but the speech represents a not inartistic anticipation of the arrival of the Fay in the trial scene when similar comparisons are made.

PMK at this point provide a use for the washing equipment carried by the maidens. Bliss (see note to 11.244-5) maintains that "the water was clearly intended for the hero's refreshment after his ride," though it has also been seen as a relic of an earlier version of the story in which the knight found the Fay bathing in a spring, as Graellent does.¹³ Neither L nor R mentions the matter, though MK allow Launfal to wash before going to meet the Fay, and P, perhaps by some confusion of pronouns, makes it communal (*they washed their hands & face alsoe*, P99).

(5) *The Fay's pavilion* (L80-92; R77-90)

This description again shows a process of adaptation and expansion. Marie's *peissuns* become the translator's "pommels," each of which *Was worth a citie, or a towne* (R82), a conventional hyperbole of value replacing more general comments by Marie. The translator adds that the whole thing was *werke of the faryse* (R80), and substitutes the more familiar figures of Alexander, Solomon and Charlemagne (R87-89) where Marie refers to Semiramis and Octavian (L82, 85). The eagle of gold surmounting the tent at L87 acquires in translation a carbuncle in its mouth which shines like the moon, an exotic detail for which the credit must presumably go to the English writer; the bird, however, remains an undoubted eagle only in Chestre (C268), appearing as a *gripe* at P105 and a *heron* at R83, though G. L. Kittredg¹⁴ has plausibly suggested that the latter is an error for *ern*, the word used by Chestre.

(6) *The Fay* (L93-106; R91-112)

Following his customary process of emphatic expansion, the translator begins by explicitly identifying the lady as

The kyngys daughter of Amylion;¹⁵

That ys an ile of the fayré

In occian, full faire to see. (R92-94)

Marie leaves this identification until the end (L641-643), where she mentions only Avalon, not that the lady was a "kyngys daughter." As for the descriptive details, Marie's references to the lily and the new rose (L94) reappear at R105 and 109-110, the translator adding that it was a *lily in May* — a conventional, almost an inevitable addition, as are the comparisons with snow (R106) and gold wire (R111), neither of which occurs here in L. The *Blossom on brere* (R107) may have been suggested by Marie's *flur d'espine* (L106), but the comparison is not followed exactly. The *lit mut bel* of L97 becomes a *bede of mekyll price* (R95): Marie describes the covering (*drap*)

rather than the bed itself in terms of price (L98), but the translator prefers a covering of the romance-writer's favourite *purpill byse* (R96). The lady's ermine cloak, however, *Couert de purpre alexandrine* (L102) is rendered almost exactly at R101-102.

So the details of the description in the translation clearly derive from Marie, expanded by conventional additions, but the total effect is remarkably different because the translator lays a far greater emphasis on the lady's state of undress. Marie works this in tastefully with the other details, but where she begins by mentioning the one garment which the lady wore under her cloak, the translator instead draws attention to those she has discarded (L99; R98-99). Besides this emphatic opening, he makes the point again where Marie does, in the description of the cloak, and the lady's nakedness is far more complete, for he denies her even the *chemise* of L99 and allows her only the cloak: R100 actually uses the word *Syngly* to apply to it, echoing the *senglement* which in L99 applied to the *chemise*. Finally, where Marie says that the lady had drawn the cloak round her for warmth (L103), the translator states that she had discarded it for the heat (R103-104).

Two particular changes of emphasis emerge here. First, the lady is explicitly identified as a creature from Avalon (and therefore to be associated with the supernatural), and her pavilion is also the *werke of the faryse*.¹⁶ Second, she is far more obviously voluptuous: in place of Marie's neat and tasteful picture the translator supplies something with a far cruder, more dramatic appeal.

(7) *Launfal and the Fay* (L107-200; R113-168)

The translator condenses considerably here, particularly in the courtly exchanges between Launfal and the Fay. Her opening gambit is startlingly changed: L111-112 describe the distance she has travelled to find him, but in R114 she tells him, *For thy loue now J swete*. Then his vow of fidelity at R122-124 is a mere blunt capitulation compared with the reverent, formal speech at L121-130, and the Fay's warning is also much shorter (L143-150; R162-164). The bestowing of the gift of wealth is given in direct, not reported speech at R129-134, prefaced by an addition of the translator's: the Fay, having the foreknowledge of the supernatural, observes, *J know thy state, every ende*, and invites a pledge of faith (R126-128).¹⁷ The consummation of the affair has also been characteristically altered. In L the Fay first makes her vital warning that Lanval must not boast of her; he then remains with her until evening when they wash and eat together and he departs. In the translation the eating and washing take place before bed, Launfal remains with the Fay all night, and she does not deliver her warning until next morning when he is about to leave. (Her parting speech also includes the additional injunction to him to spend freely; see above, (1)).

As with the description of the Fay, some of these changes would appear to be characteristic of a translation of a courtly tale made for a less courtly audience. A night together, for instance, might seem more natural than a sophisticated afternoon *affaire*. The saving of the warning to the end is perhaps a dramatic touch of the translator's own, in good folktale manner. There is also some suggestion that the translator is continuing his policy of emphasizing the Fay's supernatural quality. Her mysterious knowledge of Launfal's situation is significant. For all her forwardness she remains an

enigma: her words and actions are the only clues to the workings of her mind.

The P MS shows as before a few individual features. At first sight of the Fay, Launfal greets her *as though that shee had come from heauen* (P136), a conventional hyperbole but one which the P redactor seems to use consistently to emphasize the Fay's unearthly quality (cf. below, (14); RMK use it also in the description of the maidens, and as P shows evidence of many lost lines it may originally have been present also at that point in P). At P149-152 Launfal adds to his vow of fidelity an admission of his poverty and inability to support the Fay in the manner to which she is accustomed. This speech contains the only real suggestion in any of the manuscripts of Marie's recurrent theme of the hard lot of the alien (see above, (1)), but it here leads neatly up to the Fay's following statement that she knows all about him, and the P redactor may well have inserted it from his own imagination. On the whole, P is even less courtly than R, and contains a good deal of redundant matter. If R is unsophisticated by comparison with L, P is at times crude, some of the conversation being thoroughly frank.¹⁸

(8) *Launfal's distribution of gifts* (L201-214; R169-180)

L209-212 consist of a formal list of charitable actions, each line beginning with a repetition of the hero's name:

Lanual donout les riches duns;
 Lanual aquitout les prisuns; 210
 Lanual uesteit les iugleurs;
 Lanual feseit les granz honurs.

R173-180 expand this formal arrangement of lines:

Landavale makyth nobile festys;
 Landevale clothys the pore gestys;
 Landevale byith grette stedys; 175
 Landevale yeuyth riche wedys;
 Landevale rewaredith religionse,
 And acquiteth the presons;
 Landevale clothes gaylours;
 Landevale doith each man honours. 180

R178 clearly goes back to L210, and R180 to L212. Some of the references in R to feasts and clothes probably derive from the lines which precede and follow the formal list in L and which occur less fully in R. The *gaylours* of R179 are puzzling, and presumably arose by some kind of association with the *presons* of the preceding line when the R scribe, or a predecessor, could not read his original and required a rhyme for the following *honours*. Chestre, who is here following *Sir Landevale* closely, writes *gestours* (C430), which is much closer in meaning to the original *iugleurs* of L211, and suggests a process of corruption also involving R174, *Landevale clothys the pore gestys*: the equivalent line to this in P reads *Lambewell feeds minstrelsie their Iests* (P210), and in M, *Lamwell fynde mynstrelles that gestes* (M194). The meaning of these lines again indicates L211 as their source, though they occur in the position of R174: neither P nor M has equivalents to R179-180. Presumably the original translator derived the "poor guests" of R174 from the preceding description in L of Lanval helping needy knights, but in later MSS confusion arose between some form of *geste* "guest" and *geste* "jest, entertainment." Whatever word was originally used to translate Marie's *iugleurs* at 211

(perhaps Chestre's *gestours*, perhaps some form of *jogelours*), the scribe who wrote *gaylours* in R was unable to read it, while another scribe, writing a MS which was perhaps the common ancestor of P and M,¹⁹ found himself with an apparent repetition: a line about "jestes" at 174 and another about "jesters" (or "jugglers") at 179; he therefore omitted the second with its rhyming line.

The reference to *religionse* at R177 is sometimes compared with Graeent's charity towards *croisiés* (see Graeent, 398), but for most of the additions no remoter source is needed than the translator's own adaptation of Marie's suggestions. The main interest of R here is the manipulation of more of the material into the formal repetitive pattern used by Marie for only four items.

(9) *The Queen's view of Launfal dancing* (L219-252; R185-210)

The dancing and the playing *with borde* are the translator's specific interpretations of Marie's more general verb *esbanier*. When the ladies join the knights in L it is clear that what is really going on is courtly dalliance, evidently in pairs: the equation of *trente cheualier* (L221) with *trente . . . e plus ladies* (L247) indicates this. The translator, whose descriptive additions are often aimed at increasing the visual impact, perhaps wanted to make the scene more decorative, perhaps more respectable, with the *borde* as an additional homely touch; but R's *twente or moo* knights (R188), while retaining the thirty ladies (R204), would make havoc of the described structure of the dance²⁰ which demands equal numbers. A speech is also added: in L the Queen watches Lanval in silence, but in R she makes her intentions clear in a short and sinister soliloquy:

"Yender," she said, "ys Landavall;
Of all the knyghtys that ben here
There is none so faire a bachyler;
And he haue noder leman ne wyf,
J wold he louyde me as his lif.
Tide me good or tyde me ille,
J wille assay the knyghtys wille." (196-202)

Again, matters left unexpressed, or subtly hinted at in L, are dramatized and emphasized.

(10) *The Queen's accusations* (L277-324; R223-252)

The Queen's outburst when Lanval refuses her advances is greatly reduced in the translation. As has often been noted, the explicit charge of homosexuality (L281-282) is toned down, leaving only ambiguous abuse:

"An harlot ribawde, J wote, þou harte;
That thow liuest it is pité:

Thow lovyst no woman, ne no women the!" (R224-226)

A perhaps unexpected omission in the translation is the Queen's expressed vow of vengeance at L308-310: R speaks of her chagrin only in more general terms, though the translator usually enjoys an opportunity for melodramatic expostulation. Some lines later, the Queen's complaint to the King is characteristically changed from reported to direct speech.

(11) *Loss of the Fay* (L331-351; R260-274)

In his account of Lanval's reaction to his loss, the translator follows his usual method of selection and adaptation by taking over from L, in a different order, his repeated callings (L339, R263), his begging for mercy (L343, R266), the beating of his body (L348, R267)²¹ and the cursing of his mouth (L345; R268). Marie's *D'ures en autres se pasmot* (L342) is given dramatic emphasis by forming the climax of the scene (R274). Some of the material in L is also characteristically transformed into a lament in direct speech (R269-273).

(12) *Lanval's trial* (L352-632; R275-492)

E. A. Francis²² and J. Rychner²³ have shown that Marie's account of Lanval's trial represents the actual procedure of a contemporary trial for felony. The translator, however, has not adhered to its details.

The trial falls into two parts. In L, Lanval is first summoned before the King to answer a twofold charge of dishonouring the King by attempting to seduce the Queen, and insulting the Queen by his apparently foolish boast. When he has answered this charge, the King commands his knights to give judgment. They appoint a day for doing so, Gawain standing surety for Lanval. On the day appointed the second part of the trial takes place: the verdict is that Lanval must make good his reply to the charge by producing his mistress, or suffer exile. Lanval is not himself present: messengers are sent to him to deliver the verdict, and on their return they meet the first of the maidens who herald the approach of the Fay.

All this reflects actual twelfth-century practice at a trial for felony, that is, a case concerned with a breach of feudal faith, of which Lanval might be considered guilty in insulting his overlord's wife. His denial of the seduction charge in the exact words in which it was made (*De mot en mot*, L373), and his avowed readiness to accept the verdict of the court (L379-380), are all part of the procedure. In normal practice such a reply would require the support of a guarantor or oath-helper, and the verdict of the court is that Lanval's guarantor must be none other than his mistress. Hence it is her formal statement of denial (L621) which technically releases him, though her presence serves the additional function of proving the truth of his boast. In other words, justice is not only done, but is seen to be done.

These technicalities have been criticized as unduly prolonging the trial in *Lanval*, though Miss Francis²⁴ defends them as a part of Marie's method of emphasizing Lanval's helpless position as an alien. They were, however, clearly of little interest to the English translator who telescopes and simplifies the whole procedure in a manner which, while obscuring the legal processes involved, undoubtedly adds to the dramatic impact.

The first major change of emphasis is the greater prominence given in the translation to the seduction charge. Marie was more interested in Lanval's position as a foreigner than as a victim of jealousy, and may not have wished to blacken Guinevere's character, although a literary tradition of sympathy for the Queen was not yet fully established.²⁵ Lanval defends himself by a simple denial and the trial then proceeds on its formal and impartial course. In the translation, however, the sympathy of the court is ranged much more obviously on his side. The knights who in the French sit in judgment on him now act as oath-helpers, supporting his denial, knowing full well that the

Queen was "wyckyd, oute and oute" (R298) and that any seduction must have been the other way about. They are united in this, though in L there are some who are willing to see Lanval condemned in order to curry favour with the king (L431-432). When judgment is given, the translator is in little doubt than Launfal is to produce his mistress not to perform a merely legal function but to justify his boast. This is made quite clear by the fact that his acquittal is to depend on the beauty not of the Fay herself but of her maidens, which was after all the original point of contention:

. . . yf he myght hys leman bryng,
 Of whom he maide knolishyng,
 And yef her maydenyse bryght and shyne
 Wern fairer than the quene
 Jn maykyng, semblaunt and hewe,
 They wold quyte hym gode and true. (R305-310)

R is consistent in keeping this emphasis on the maidens: where in L, at the climax of the trial, Lanval is enjoined to produce his *guarant* (singular, L451, 458), R331 uses the word *borowis* (plural): *guarant* may mean "proof" rather than "guarantor," but *borowis* must refer to the maidens; P377 here reads *lemman*, D30 *lemon* and C382 *lef*, restoring the limelight to the Fay. The exact terms of the quarrel are also remembered at R356, when the court judges the maidens so fair *That ouer Dame Gaynour they myght be a queen*, a comment not found in L. The break in the proceedings is, moreover, differently placed, coming after and not before the verdict: the adjournment that follows is in order to give Launfal time to produce his *borowis*, not to allow the court to deliberate. The procedure in L may be legally correct and also heightens the tension for the defendant, depicted as he is as a helpless victim of an alien legal system, but the translation clarifies the process by making it logical rather than legal, and replaces the subtler tension of L with a climax that is more obviously dramatic.

The second part of the trial in the translation consists only of Launfal's appearance for the purpose of producing his mistress. The plea of the Earl of Cornwall on his behalf still takes place, though it has a different emphasis (see above, (1)), while the details concerning the verdict have been transferred to the earlier hearing, where they are given in reported speech and not assigned to the Earl. Moreover, all are present, King, Queen, Launfal and the entire court. The whole affair is dramatic and public, and Gawain has no need to act the role of liaison officer that he has to perform in L in order to keep Lanval informed.

Another change of emphasis in the translation is the greater insistence on death as the penalty for Launfal's offence. In his first moment of anger in L the king says of Lanval *Jl le ferat arder v pendre* (L328), but he does not repeat this and leaves the judgment to his court, whose verdict Lanval himself is also ready to accept (L379-380). The translator transforms this general willingness into *And he was ready forto die* (290), and makes the Earl of Cornwall observe

". . . yf we go by the lawe,
 Landevale is worthy to be drawe." (R339-340)

The emphasis on the death penalty and the denigration of the Queen are brought together at the climax of the trial, when the translator uses the presence of all his characters on stage at once with good effect. The arrival

of the maidens interrupts the proceedings; the King urges the court to reach a decision, incited by the Queen; and in the translation, at the second interruption, the Queen, suspecting who is coming, bursts out into a characteristic tirade insisting on Launfal's death (R415-422).

(13) *Entry of the messengers* (L471-546; R349-422)

The speeches of the two pairs of maidens are similar but not identical in L; R, unusually, changes the first from direct to reported speech, and adds a comment by the King after each. MP, like L, allow the first pair of maidens to speak for themselves, ascribing to them (as L does) the instructions about the hangings for their mistress's chamber²⁶ which R transfers to the second pair. The *ambling palfrays* of P417 are a literal rendering of the *palefreiz amblanz* of L473, where RM read *whyte palfrays*. MP also add that one pair of maidens made obeisance to Launfal who remarks that though neither is his mistress they may be her servants. P, here and elsewhere in the trial scene, has a number of additional passages of speech and dialogue.

(14) *Entry of the Fay* (L547-610; R423-476)

The details of the Fay's appearance are adapted and rearranged in the translator's usual manner. Thus L provides the source for R's comment *On erthe fayrer was neuer none* (R426), for the white palfrey (R427), for the comment on its value (R428-430, though this applies to its trappings in L), for the reference to gold wire in connection with the lady's hair (R437), for her *body gentill* (R442), and for the purple mantle with the skirts folded out (R441, 443-444), though the translator omits to mention the elegant but revealing garments she wears beneath it in L: Marie's description is largely conventional but he may have considered the degree of undress less relevant to a scene of triumph than to one of seduction. L's sparrowhawk²⁷ is also reproduced at R447, though Marie's *un leuerer* has multiplied to *Three white grehoundys* at R446. Of several physical features mentioned at L563-567, the translator singles out only the *jeen lofsum, bright and clere* (R432), adding the jewelled crown (R439-440), and some other general or conventional comments. L's description of young and old coming to watch her is found, slightly shortened, at R449-454, while R425, emphasizing her solitary splendour, seems to be a touch of the translator's own.

The P MS here produces some perhaps accidental effects. The description is much condensed, but in this corrupt and generally verbose manuscript there is always a possibility that lines may have been lost. There is no mention of the mantle or the lady's golden hair, and one image has been startlingly transformed:

This lady was bright as blossom on brere,
Her jeen lofsum, bright and clere;
Jentyll and jolyff as birde on bowgh . . . (R431-433)
her eyes beune blossomed cleere & faire,
lolly & locund as the falconer
or the lay that sits on a bough . . . (P511-513)

Some process of corruption is obvious and more must be suspected, but the result is arresting. The P MS gains its real impact here, though, from the fact that the first part of this description is in direct speech, giving an additional touch of drama:

“peace,” said Sir Haion, “noe more say yee,
ffor yonder I see her come rydinge
on whom Sir Lambwell made his auanting,
a damsell by her selfe alone,
on earth was fairer neuer none . . .” (P504-508)

The comment that all came to gaze has an original touch also, for the redactor adds a simile of his own:

& all still vppon her gazinge
as people that behold the sacring. (P525-526)

Again a religious image is used to emphasize the Fay's unearthly quality (cf. above, (7)).

The translator gives the maidens another special mention where they hold the Fay's stirrups (R467), and he also adds that the Fay's beauty was such that all about her *were allso donn/As the monelyght to the sonne* (R473-474; cf. P547-548). Finally, by having Launfal actually present when the Fay arrives, the translator is able to render his reaction more dramatic than in L, where he recognizes her only from the reported description and gives vent to a heartfelt, but entirely courtly expression of hope. The English version, with its repeated *Now*, seems far more spontaneous:

“Now comyth my loue, now comyth my swete!
Now comyth she my bale shall beete!
Now J haue her seyn with myn ee,
J ne reke when that J dye.” (R457-460)

(15) *The Departure* (L611-646; R477-538)

Of the Fay's speech to the court, two points are linked with alterations already observed in the trial scene. First, in supporting Launfal's denial of the seduction charge, the Fay adds in the translation an explicit counter-charge against the Queen: *He bad her not, but she bad hym!* (R484). Second, when dealing with the boast, she declares in L:

“Si par mei peot estre aquitez,
Par uoz baruns seit deliuez!” (L623-624)

— an ambiguous statement which could apply as well to her legal as to her purely visual function. The translator is not interested in legal technicalities and renders this simply and dramatically:

“Loke anone yf yt so bene!” (R488)

It is to be noted that it is not at herself that the court is invited to look, but at her *lothliet maide*, the translator still bearing in mind the original terms of the quarrel (cf. above, (12)).

The translator's additions to Marie at the departure of Launfal with the Fay have often been commented on. No further dialogue follows the Fay's speech of deliverance in L: Lanval leaps uninvited on to her horse with her, though a reconciliation scene in which the hero pleads for forgiveness exists in the analogue of *Graelent*. The translator adds a similar scene. The P MS is the least effective here, tailing off in an excess of pleading in which Launfal is never explicitly forgiven. The balance of action and dialogue is far better in R: Launfal, seeing the Fay about to depart, leaps on to the horse with her, declaring that he will not be parted from her; she reminds him of his fault, he begs forgiveness, she grants it and they ride away together to the *joly yle/That is clepyd Amylyon* (R532-533). The forgiveness Marie

leaves unresolved, saying only that Lanval was carried off to Avalon, which she now mentions for the first time, with the qualification, *Ceo nus recuwent li Bretun* (L642), which is not quite the same as the translator's *That knowith eury Brytan* (R534).

The main features of the translator's method which emerge in the above passages clearly illustrate an adaptation of a courtly poem for a less courtly audience. But the fact that *Sir Landevale* is less sophisticated than *Lanval* does not mean that it fails to achieve its own success.

Thomas Chestre has often been accused of crudity, both artistic and emotional, in retelling the tale of Launfal. B. K. Martin²⁸ has put forward a defence against these charges on the ground that Chestre's poem was properly a folktale and should be judged according to the specialized criteria governing that genre, which deliberately presents a somewhat flat surface without much complexity of character or environment, and with the hero often occupying a position of isolation or rootlessness — an orphan or a younger son. Although Chestre has clearly borrowed widely from romance to adorn his tale, Martin finds that *Sir Launfal* is nonetheless "perhaps a little 'purer' as folktale than Marie's *Lanval* and . . . *Sir Landevale*. The evidence for this suggestion lies in Chestre's additions to what he found in his main source, in his omissions from it, and in his emphasis on action and movement rather than on statements of feeling."²⁹ Thus, in Martin's opinion, it is chiefly the added passages of exclamation and soliloquy which make *Sir Landevale* less "pure" a folktale than *Sir Launfal*. No doubt such passages are a characteristic of romance rather than folktale, but even so, many of the changes made by the translator of Marie can perhaps be seen as an attempt, conscious or otherwise, to restore something of a folktale quality to the story by removing Marie's graces and telling it in a simpler, more basic form.

Marie de France was concerned to tell a story in a way that would appeal to a courtly contemporary audience, and to emphasize those aspects of it which could be adapted to reflect contemporary interests: so the Fay's insistence on secrecy accords with the code of courtly love; the conduct of the trial is modelled on current procedures, with the Fay's role in it gaining legal overtones; the Fay herself, a traditional Otherworld seductress, is invested with as much modesty and dignity as are consonant with her activities; and Lanval's own friendless position is given a particular emphasis.³⁰ Most of this the translator strips away: he is concerned not with contemporary refinements but with the folktale beneath. Because it is a good tale it can stand this cruder retelling: so the trial becomes a triumphant public justification of Launfal's boast, and the Fay a voluptuous, mysterious creature with the frank, unquestioning confidence of the supernatural, who claims foreknowledge of Launfal's situation and for whom mere legal procedures have no relevance — *Loke anone yf yt so bene!* For the translator there can be no legalistic cavilling about appeals of felony, but instead there is a desperate struggle against a threatened death penalty.

Marie beguiles her audience into viewing her story as something as life-like as possible: even in her concluding lines, where she whisks her characters off to Avalon, she tempers her statement with a disclaimer about *li Bretun*. The translator, however, makes it clear from the start what territory he is moving in: he invests the meeting with the Fay with as many forewarnings

as possible by way of undern shadows and forest eaves, and tells his audience at once who the Fay is and who built her pavilion. He is telling a tale of magic and does not pretend otherwise. Finally, he can ram home the visual impact by ransacking the ragbag of conventional description for a maximum of trimming, and can highlight the emotional content at all points with added passages of speech, lament and apostrophe.

The hero who emerges from this treatment is an entirely consistent and sympathetic character. In stressing Launfal's over-generosity rather than his position as a stranger, the translator makes it clear that Launfal is responsible for his own fate. There is no hint of the king's unjust neglect: Launfal spends "wildely," and when all is gone his main concern is that he will be despised: *Men will me hold for a wrech*. He has lived by his own largesse and when he can no longer do so, *Where J become, J ne reche!* This picture of warm-hearted impulsiveness is maintained throughout — the angry boast, the leap on to the Fay's horse — and although several of these touches are already present in Marie the translator's alterations are in perfect accord with them: the greater free-handedness, and the tendency to expostulation and lament.

In Launfal the translator found a hero dear to lovers of romance as well as folktale: open-hearted, generous, subject to misfortune but also blessed with a more than ordinary run of luck. The generous deserve to be lucky, and in the romances they are. A romance hero has to be sufficiently credible to arouse the sympathy of his audience; but, if Martin's arguments are accepted, a romance with so strong a folktale element as this should not be criticized solely in terms of human probability. A. J. Bliss, writing of the identification of listener with hero in a romance suggests that one consequence of it is the certainty "that there will be a happy ending . . . so in *Launfal* there can never be any doubt that Launfal will somehow be rescued by Tryamour, and will live with her for ever and a day."³¹ Acceptance of such a convention of the inevitable, however improbable, could also be applied elsewhere in the story where Bliss seems to deny it. Defending Chestre's interpolation of the episode of the Mayor's daughter, Bliss claims that it "helps to smooth the abrupt transition between the hero's discovery of his poverty and his meeting with the lady, which in *Lanval* and *Landevale* falls altogether too pat."³² He also defends the insertion of the tournament and the Sir Valentyne episode on similar grounds, that they "serve to convey the effect of the passage of time,"³² and he adds: "The main weakness of *Lanval* is that the hero's betrayal of the lady's secret follows too abruptly on his first meeting with her."³² Such criticisms are surely of only doubtful relevance when applied to a folktale, where to fall into destitution is only a necessary preliminary to acquiring a fortune, and prohibitions are made only in order to be broken.

If Marie de France was adding realistic contemporary colour to an unrealistic narrative, Thomas Chestre, with his wholesale incorporation of new material, was (according to Bliss) doing much the same by expanding the time-scale, incidentally increasing (according to Martin) the folktale content. Somewhere between these two, the translator of *Sir Landevale* recognized in Marie's *Lanval* the bones of a good folktale, which he narrated forcefully and without refinement, and for which he deserves the credit.

NOTES

- ¹ For convenience these three different titles are here retained, the hero being referred to by name as "Lanval" in French, and "Launfal" generally in Middle English regardless of differences of version or manuscript: on this problem see A. J. Bliss, "The Hero's Name in the Middle English Versions of *Lanval*," *Medium Aevum*, XXVII (1958), 80-85.
- ² Thomas Chestre, *Sir Launfal*, ed. A. J. Bliss (London and Edinburgh, 1960): the bibliography includes details of previous editions and translations (pp. 47-50). The Chestre version has since been printed again in Thomas C. Rumble's *The Breton Lays in Middle English* (Detroit, 1965), 3-43, and in Donald B. Sands, *Middle English Verse Romances* (New York, 1966), 201-232. For a parallel text edition of all the ME MSS see the unpublished M. A. thesis by Mary C. Edwards, *An Edition of the Early English Versions of the "Lai de Lanval"* (University of London, 1954).
- ³ My thanks are also due to Dr. Lynette R. Muir for help in matters relating to Old French.
- ⁴ E.g. by Theo Stemmler, "Die mittlenglischen Bearbeitungen zweier Lais der Marie de France," *Anglia*, LXXX (1962), 243-263.
- ⁵ The different versions and manuscripts are here distinguished by letter as follows: (i) Marie de France's *Lanval*: L; (ii) Thomas Chestre's *Sir Launfal*: C; (iii) *Sir Landevale*: (a) Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C86: R; (b) British Museum. MS Additional 27879 (the Percy Folio): P; (c) Cambridge University Library, MS Kk v. 30: K; (d) Bodleian Library, Malone 941 (printed fragment): M; (e) Bodleian Library, Douce Fragments e. 40 (printed fragment): D. For L, C and R, quotations and line numbers are from Bliss's edition; for P, M and D, from J. W. Hales and F. J. Furnivall, *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript. Ballads and Romances* (London, 1867), I, 144-164 (P), 522-532 (M), 533-535 (D); for K, from F. J. Furnivall, *Captain Cox, his Ballads and Books; or, Robert Laneham's Letter* (Hertford, 1890), p. xxxi. Emendations are not indicated in quotations.
- ⁶ "The Trial in *Lanval*," *Studies in French Language and Mediaeval Literature presented to Professor Mildred K. Pope* (Manchester, 1939), p. 124.
- ⁷ For in great mornung R33 has *yn a mornyng*: this could represent the *Vn iur* of L41, but the K reading also has a basis in L in the references to Lanval's depression. K41 (supported by M41) in any case reads *eveningtyd* for the *vndertyde* of R37, so *yn a mornyng* would clearly be nonsense in K. Later events indicate that it was in fact morning, but this does not alter the fact that neither K36 nor R33 is obviously a better reading.
- ⁸ *Zur Lanvalsage. Eine Quellenuntersuchung* (Berlin, 1886), p. 12.
- ⁹ E. Margaret Grimes, *The Lays of Desiré, Graelent and Melion* (New York, 1928), pp. 76-101. The reference is to *Graelent*, 205-06.
- ¹⁰ Apart from other Breton Lays such as *Graelent* and those cited by Bliss (note to 1.227), the forest, the heat and the tree-shadow are found together as the preliminary to a magical meeting in later romances such as the vulgate *Lancelot* (ed. Sommer, V, 87-88), or *La Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne* (ed. H. A. Todd, *PMLA*, IV (1889), II.74-127). In both of these the time of day is noon. The westerly direction is harder to parallel but is the traditional situation of the Otherworld or Avalon (see H. R. Patch, *The Other World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), p. 27 and footnote). The Fay in the Launfal story is said to come from Avalon, and Chestre's phrase of *occient* (C281) to describe its situation has been variously interpreted as "in the west" and "in the ocean": see Bliss, note to 1.281. The detail of the trembling horse in L does not seem to be conventional: see Bliss's note to 1.214.
- ¹¹ E.g. in the *Lancelot* and *Chevalier au Cygne* passages cited above and in *Sir Orfeo*, ed. A. J. Bliss (London, 1966), 1.72 (Auchinleck MS). In the last, however, the magical encounter actually takes place during sleep and not on waking, as in the other examples.
- ¹² In P the comparison is *white as snowdowne* (P73); M71, though a defective line, confirms C; in R61 the conventional *white as lelyfloure* has been substituted and the colour of the eyes lost.
- ¹³ See, for example, T. P. Cross, "The Celtic Elements in the Lays of *Lanval* and *Graelent*," *Modern Philology*, XII (1915), 608-10.

- ¹⁴ "Launfal (Rawlinson Version)," *American Journal of Philology*, X (1889), 9, note 1.
- ¹⁵ On the variant forms of this name see Bliss's note to C278.
- ¹⁶ Not supported in PMK, and the practical-minded Thomas Chestre prefers to call it *werk of Sarsynys* (C266). He also destroys a good deal of the Fay's mystery by giving her a name (Tryamour).
- ¹⁷ The demand for faith is perhaps not strictly an addition, but suggested by Lanval's own statement *Pur vus guerpirai tutes genz* (L128).
- ¹⁸ E.g. "vndight thee, Lambewell, & come to me" (P178).
- ¹⁹ The stemmata worked out by Kittredge (*op. cit.*, p. 16) and Miss Edwards (*op. cit.*, p. xxxi) both allow for such a MS.
- ²⁰ And all her maydens forth aright,
One be one betwyxt eche knyght. (R209-210)
- Chestre, not recognizing the significance of the numbers, makes the Queen's entrance far more spectacular (*Syxy ladyes and fyf*, C657) though he does not specify the number of knights: from his description it might be as few as four.
- ²¹ R267 is supplied from Chestre (cf. M303): the rhyme indicates its presence originally in R.
- ²² *Op. cit.*, pp. 115-24.
- ²³ *Le Lai de Lanval* (Geneva and Paris, 1958), pp. 78-84.
- ²⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 123-24.
- ²⁵ Marie never actually identifies the Queen by name as Guinevere, though the translator refers to her once as *Dame Gaynour* (R356). Marie may have been toning down her source here, as it has been suggested that the "Potiphar's Wife" motif was an integral part of the original folktale that lies behind the Launfal story (see Cross, *op. cit.*, 635-41).
- ²⁶ P actually includes this detail in both speeches; M breaks off before the second.
- ²⁷ Chestre is alone in rendering the bird a *gerfawcon* (C961).
- ²⁸ "Sir Launfal and the Folktale," *Medium Ævum*, XXXV (1966), 199-210.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.
- ³⁰ If Martin is right in recognizing Launfal as a typically "rootless" folktale hero, then Marie's exploitation of his position as an alien may represent another example of her rationalizing of the story to fit a realistic situation.
- ³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 46.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 30.