

CONVERSION IN THE MEDIEVAL EPIC:
A COMPARISON OF SONG OF ROLAND
AND THE
THREE MIDDLE ENGLISH CHARLEMAGNE
ROMANCES

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by

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AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

1. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

2. The advanced study in the English Language and Literature graduate program of which this thesis is part has consisted of:

- i) Research Methods courses both in the undergraduate and graduate programs.
- ii) English literature as well as American literature including novel, poetry and drama studies, a comparative approach to world literatures, and examination of several literary theories as well as critical approaches which have contributed to this thesis in an effective way.

3. This thesis is composed of the main sources including several books by the major authors discussed in comparison; and the secondary sources including scholarly articles from academic journals and theoretical books on the history and literature including the definition of epic and romance.

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ABSTRACT

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CONVERSION IN THE MEDIEVAL EPIC: A COMPARISON OF SONG OF ROLAND AND THREE MIDDLE ENGLISH CHARLEMAGNE ROMANCES

The aim of the present study is to examine the Song of Roland and Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances (The Sowdone of Babylone, Otuel and Roland and The Tale of Rauf Collier) which are created under the effect of the Song highly known by the English audience, and to show the importance of conversion in these poems focusing on the importance of religion and the image of the Saracens together with the function of the converts in these poems.

The first and the third chapters are devoted to the introduction of the backgrounds for the eleventh and the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in which those poems were written. In the second chapter, the importance of conversion in Song of Roland related with the images of Saracens and the importance of religion will be examined. In the fourth, fifth and the sixth chapters the importance of conversion related with the importance of religion and the image of the Saracens in Charlemagne romances (The Sowdone of Babylone, Otuel and Roland and The Tale of Rauf Collier) will be examined.

Key Words:

English Romance, Song of Roland, Chanson de Roland, conversion, Charlemagne, Charlemagne romances, Middle English, Medieval, Epic, Otuel, Sowdone, Rauf Collier Saracen.

KISA ÖZET

AHMET R. SALMAN

HAZİRAN 2008

ORTAÇAĞ EPIK ŞİİRİNDE DİN DEĞİŞTİRME: ROLAND DESTANI VE ÜÇ ORTAÇAĞ İNGİLİZ ŞARLMAN ROMANSININ KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI

Bu çalışmanın amacı İngiliz halkı tarafından çok iyi bilinen Roland Destanı (Song of Roland) ve bu destandan etkilenerek üretilen üç orta İngilizce Şarلمان Romansını (Sowdone of Babylone, Otuel ad Roland, The tale of Rauf Collier) incelemek ve bu şiirlerde mevcut olan din değiştirme öğesinin önemini din değiştirenlerin bu şiirlerdeki fonksiyonlarının yanısıra Mağripli imgelerinin ve dinin önemine odaklanarak ortaya koymaktır.

İlk ve üçüncü bölümler birer arka plan olarak incelenecek olan şiirlerin yazılmış olduğu onbir ondört ve onbeşinci yüzyıllara ayrılmıştır. İkinci bölümde ise Roland Destan'ında din değiştirmenin önemi Mağripli imgeleri ve şiirde dinin önemi ile birlikte ele alınacaktır. Dört, beş ve altıncı bölümlerde ise Üç İngiliz Şarلمان Romansında din değiştirmenin önemi Mağripli imgeleri, şiirde dinin önemi ve din değiştirenlerin şiirlerdeki fonksiyonları ile birlikte ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

İngiliz Romansı, Roland destanı, Şarلمان, din değiştirme, Orta İngilizce, Ortaçağ, Epik Şiir, Otuel, Sowdone, Rauf Collier, Mağripli.

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INTRODUCTION

Song of Roland was written in an age defined by one of the greatest religious wars took place. It is proper to consider the First Crusade as a world war of the Middle Ages. Religious fanaticism might not have been the only reason for the crusade but, it is certain that it was the most effective way to gather millions for an objective. Song of Roland which was very popular in its age highly affected the late middle ages. Roland and Charlemagne's adventures were very popular throughout the middle ages. It is impossible to think that conversion has little importance in a text created in an age defined by religious antagonism. However, in primary sources about the Song, conversion has a little place contrary to its importance in the poem.

Middle English Charlemagne romances, works created under the influence of the Song, bear certain similar characteristics with Song of Roland. Charlemagne becomes the leading hero of those poems and the religious stress is more vigorous. In order to understand the late Middle Ages and the values present in these poems it is necessary to compare these romances with the Song. They reflect the feudal and Christian ideal, though it had gone under a certain change in the late Middle Ages. By focusing on the theme of conversion, it is both necessary and inevitable to see the European understanding of the "East" represented by the Muslim Saracen images in these poems.

Conversion, transformation of "the other" into you/ us, bears a critical role showing both the understanding of the Christianity of the English and French and their attitude towards the non-Christian communities reflected by the Saracens in the poems.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND TO THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH CENTURIES

1.1. The Condition of Europe

In the eleventh century Europe was in transition. After the collapse of the Carolingian Empire there was no social constitution to mark the eleventh century. Europe was almost totally Christianized but it was devoid of a political unity despite its religious analogy. The Iberian Peninsula had been under Arab Control for nearly three centuries and there were still strife and wars. The raids and attacks of Magyars, Slavs and Moslems were calming down. In eleventh century Europe, the Franks (the French) were the leading nation that had the potential and energy for both extension and development. Both the advantages and disadvantages of the Feudal system – the prominent system in Europe since the times of Charles Martel- were apparent. The people of Central Europe were poor indeed; however, knighthood, as a result of the feudal system, created a well-trained army of knights.

1.1.1. Feudalism

Feudalism was the economic and social structure of the Middle Ages in Europe during the time of Song of Roland. As a system, it was established during the Carolingian Empire for a more effective usage of the lands and for the supply of well-trained soldiers. During this period “[l]ands were owned by nobles and given to their vassals who were tenant-farmers, one who gave total allegiance to a feudal lord in return for protection and the right to occupy and cultivate land”.(Chodorow & Hoyt 232) Everything on the land was believed to belong to the lord and sometimes the taxes put by the lords could be on everything from the usage of water to mills. “By the tenth century feudalism had come to be almost entirely based on the laws of hereditary.” (Oldenbourg 11) The lands granted by the barons did not usually change hand.

Mayer discusses that the Carolingian system that allowed the inheritance of the lands by the heirs of the family caused a great problem in Europe and “in North France they developed a system of primogeniture, the right of the eldest son to succeed into the heritage. “[Therefore,] the younger sons had to look after themselves, whether by entering the Church or by going in for a military career.”(Mayer 23) Also the crises caused by droughts or infertility of the soil swelled the problem of feeding the population. Pope Urban II in his crusading speech explained that the violence infesting the Frankish lands was due to scarcity of land and wealth.

‘[T]his land which you inhabit, shut in all sides by the seas and surrounded by the mountain peaks, is too narrow for your large population; nor does it abound in wealth; it furnishes scarcely food for its cultivators. Hence it is that you murder one another, that you wage war, and that frequently you perish by mutual wounds’ (Mastnak 53)

Knights were the soldiers supported by the noblemen to defend their lands against external dangers and the other lords. Before the eleventh century, knights – or the security officers of the society- had an important role: they were security valves against the invasions that the European society often experienced. “Most of these men were younger sons of feudal nobles who shared the mores of knightly society but had little hope of gaining a foothold in the feudal hierarchy. (233 Chodorow & Hoyt,).

Therefore, this created a social tension, which caused many people to seek their future outside their families either by entering the church or cultivating their own lands or by looking for adventure. As the invasions and strifes in the country decreased, the knights sought adventures in the borders of their country, or mostly in Spain. The transformation of

the knighthood mostly depended on the general rise of susceptibility to the religious way of living, which urged twelfth century people of Europe to seek some way to serve for the “right cause”.

At first, the knighthood was secular and based on the customs in the society. But later, beginning in the eleventh century, as the fight against the Muslims took the place of the civil wars and shedding the blood of Christian brothers, knighthood with the interference of the church transformed the soldier of the noble (Lord) into the soldier of Christ.

[Later,] knighthood became sanctified. The new knight was expected to confess his sins, keep an all- night vigil of fasting and prayer, lay his sword on the altar as a symbol of his service to God, hear Mass, be dubbed while kneeling before the altar and finally be girt with the sword.(Chodorow & Hoyt 234)

In the eleventh century the Church, in the dispersed social and political structure of Europe, started looking to establish its own army to protect its lands and exalted the service to the Christ’s army and started playing an important role in the determination of the codes of knighthood. This was one of the prerequisites for the Crusades which affected the eleventh century world in many aspects.

1.1.2 The Vassalage

The French (or West European) society was a hierarchical one, the limits of which were drawn by the feudal system. Those limits were not written but they were accepted as norms by the society. Lords were the sovereigns and their castles were like their small states, the lands of which were run by the vassals. According to Oldenbourg, apart from defending their suzerains in the event of an attack, vassals had a few main duties to their lords none of which was demanding enough:

1-Military service, this was generally a fixed number of days in a year (usually forty). 2-Financial assistance [in some occasions such as] wars, knighting of the eldest son and the marriage of the eldest daughter and the payment of the ransom ... 3- Attendance at councils ...(12).

Although sometimes there were vassals serving more than one suzerain at a time, the bond between a vassal and a lord was supposed to be very strong. Loyalty to the lord was highly regarded and with the doubling influence of the church in the society in the eleventh century, this loyalty gained a somewhat religious cachet.

“Feudal nobility was[...] almost exclusively military”(Oldenbourg 14) and the whole system created a net of internal strife which generally in the eleventh century was caused by the controversies among the lords because of the fact that the invasions by the neighboring clans (or pagan nations) declined greatly.

1.1.3. The Church

In the eleventh century the church was getting more and more effective in society. The social and political crisis and the void of a potent king, along with civil strife among the Christians, gave opportunity to the church to establish peace in the society by using an important catalyst: religion. The social and economic congestion mentioned above led the Christian society (especially Franks) to look out of their borders. With the movement of *Pax Dei*, the church forbade spilling the blood of Christians. Church authorities called for peace, focusing on the illicitness of fighting and shedding blood. However, the church, at the risk of contradicting itself, took the peace endeavour one step further by using its economic power to create its own peace armies which fought against the “peace- breakers”. Although

“[a]ccording to the traditional ecclesiastical doctrine, clerics and monk were barred from participating in any military activity, and were not allowed to bear arms there are some occasions in which attending to the campaigns were allowed.”(Mastnak 13) These may not seem poitically important but they bear the signs indicating the change taking place in the church’s attitude towards arms and its effect on the military campaigns.

The Church’s effectiveness throughout Europe and the ineptitude of the political powers to obstruct the strife among people invigorated the Church’s role in maintaining peace; however, the Church, rather than extirpating the use of arms completely canalized it towards the borders of the Christian lands against the “infidels”. “So in order to punish the disturbers of the peace, the Church became involved in organizing and directing military campaigns.”(Mayer 17) St. Augustine’s just war theory was highly regarded by the Church. Long before Pope Urban’s speech in Clermont and the itinerant monks’ propaganda for the holy war against “the heathens”, (In the ninth century) “Popes Leo IV and John VII promised eternal life to all those who fell in battle against the Arabs or Vikings.”

The Cluniac reform that had made a great contribution to maintaining internal peace, approved the use of armed force against the “infidels”. Pope Alexander II in a letter justified the use of arms against the infidels though fighting is forbidden in Christianity:

“‘All laws, ecclesiastical as well as secular, forbid the shedding of human blood.’ But he made two exceptions. Bloodshed was allowed as a punishment for crimes and to counter hostile aggression, as in the case of Saracens” (Mastnak 21) Therefore, with the peace movement, the use of arms in Christian society became harder and illicit, turning the attention of the society which have redundant knights and armed force, to the borders.

Mastnak states that Pope Gregory VII claimed that the shedding of blood is a sinful action and in order to avoid sinning, a soldier should either give up fighting or fight according to the directions of the church. (29- 30) This was a great chance for a Christian knight to justify

his deeds and also it created an ideal which opened the gates of heaven. In the poem – as we shall see- angels’ taking Roland’s soul to heaven can only be explained by these beliefs that prevailed in the eleventh century. French knights’ attending the campaigns against Muslims and the desire for fighting on the side of Christian brothers against the “heathens” cannot said to stem from only the feudal delimitation.

1.1.4. Franks in the Eleventh Century

Compared with Charlemagne’s era, in the eleventh century royal power was far less strong and effective society. Lords in their castles were the points of military and social power. Meanwhile, the Church was maintaining its power; actually it was becoming more and more decisive in every aspect of life. “Men thought of themselves first and foremost as religious beings, members of the community of the faithful.(Oldenbourg 28) The Church had investiture controversies with the leading secular powers of Europe: Henry IV of England(1056- 1105) and Philip I of France(1060-1108)”.(Mayer 2)

However, we know that Pope Urban II was touring France before he called Christians to the first crusade. His invitation to Christians to fight for the sake of the holy lands was metwith enthusiastic response. Also “Alphonso’s appeals to the French may have evoked some popular response and brought his son-in-law, Raymond of St.Gilles, south of the Pyrenees in 1087”(Newhall 36) Moreover, Mayer points out that the fight against the Almoravives were like a crusade(19).

With the Christianization process of the knighthood and the transformation of the soldiers to the *Militia Christi*, and the aforementioned effects of the *Pax Dei*, the French and the rest of Europe were experiencing the authority of Church over themselves: the royal power could make the promise of wealth status and success but not of eternal life. Moreover, in this period the Church was making all of those promises. The social hardships mentioned before in

Europe eased the compliance to the call; but it concomitantly resulted in the “otherizing” of the enemy. Considering the international balances, this otherness was equivalent to the black-white world seen in Song of Roland.

According to Matznak, the relationship between Charlemagne and his contemporary Muslims were not as harsh as we see in the Song of Roland. His wars were defensive and his Spanish campaign was no more than siding in an Arab conflict. He considers the later exaltation of Charlemagne as a triumphant warrior against Muslims unbalanced as both the Carolingian diplomacy was on good terms with Muslims and the Muslims were only one enemy among many.(106) Also Chodorow states that when Charlemagne’s grandfather Charles’ army beat the Muslim army near the borders of the Franks in around 730, the contemporary chroniclers attributed a very small amount of attention whereas, these small wars were exaggerated later.(142-3) Therefore, we see that the enmity and the importance of the historical events changed in the eleventh century with the effective propaganda of the Church and this was responded to by the French enthusiastically which explains in some way the creation of both the Chansons de Geste, epic poems in French literature written mostly in twelfth and eleventh centuries dealing with the heroic deeds, in general and Song of Roland.

1.1.5. Charlemagne

While the war against the Saxsons is being fought energetically and almost continuously, he [Charlemagne], having stationed troops at strategic places along the borders, attacks Spain with all the forces that he can muster. He crosses the Pyrenees, accepts the surrender of all the towns and fortified places that he encounters along the way, and returns without his army having sustained any losses except that, during the

withdrawal while traversing the Pyrenees, he happened to experience Gascon treachery. While his army was marching in a long column, because of narrow pass, some Gascons lying in ambush at the top of the mountain- for the thick woods which are very plentiful in that area afford a great opportunity for sneak attacks- swoop down on the last elements of the baggage train and on the rearguard protecting the main body of the army. They drive them back into the valley, join battle, and massacre every one of them. In this battle were slain Eggihard, the royal seneschal; Anselm, count of the palace; and Roland, prefect of the Breton march, and many others. This reverse could not be avenged immediately because the enemy, having done this deed, dispersed in such a way that noone could even tell in which direction he might have been sought. (Brault 2)

This is the most accurate and trustworthy narration of the war (or we can say ambush) that took place in Rocevaux. It is impossible to talk or write about Song of Roland without mentioning Einhard's Vita Caroli Magni. It is the leading historical text providing information about the life of Charlemagne. At the request of his successor Louis the Pious, Einhard, (770-840) a counsellor of Charlemagne wrote a biography of him. It is really marvelous to imagine that so many lengthy epics have been created out of this text. Neither the great king of the Franks nor the martyr Roland could have guessed that there would be such a chain of epics and stories about an unsuccessful campaign that ended with a rout. "[Roland] became a European hero, whose legend, along with that of Charlemagne, was adopted and adapted readily by most European literatures during the Middle Ages."(Pratt, vii) As mentioned above, the impact of this war on its contemporaries was not so profound; however, in the

beginning of the twelfth century the date when Song of Roland was “probably written-between 1098-1100” (Calin 15) – the great transformation in Europe was in its climax and therefore the poem constituted both the ideals of its age and also an longing for the past. “ No doubt the poet and his public are also reacting against the slothful king of France they know, Philip I, looking back nostalgically to a bygone golden age when Charlemagne led his troops on fruitful campaigns”(Calin 20). This was not felt only by the twelfth century French people and Troidus, the supposed writer of the Song, only; it was also felt by the English poets whose feelings and works we are going to discuss in the second Chapter.

1.2. Islamic World

1.2.1. Spain

Through the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth centuries, the West had been living under the danger of invasion since the birth of Islam in the seventh century. Arabs, who had been living as tribes in the Arabian Peninsula, united under the banner of the Islamic empire. In a very short time they spread over North Africa, converting Berbers and other nationalities there, and conquered the Persian Empire and some of the Byzantium territories. In the eight century Muslim armies conquered most of the Iberian Peninsula and from then on appeared in the European territories by intermittent attacks, none of which were particularly threatening, except some in Italy.

However, the Muslim expansion came to a halt at the end of the eleventh century and their threat declined. “Reconquesta” had already started in Spain and one of the most critical cities of Andalusia, Toledo, fell in 1085. King Alphonso, under the leadership of the papacy, enjoyed a great victory over the Muslims. Meanwhile, in North Africa, Almoravives were getting stronger day by day and their rapid expansion and efficacy were a hope for the Andalusians. In the 1080s they responded to their brothers’ calls and were effective in Spain

but it could not help with the conquest of Toledo by Alphonso. During this period, borders and powers were being fortified. French mercenaries and some French nobles were fighting against “infidels” in Spain, as were Muslims with their coreligionists. In Song of Roland, to help their Spanish comrades, an army from North Africa comes to fight against Charlemagne. Perhaps this is an explanation for why Balignant, the Saracen Emir, comes from North Africa to Andalusian Lands. However, Europe was going to deal with the Muslim problem for at least more than four more centuries (including The Ottomans) and

[t]he Christian advance and Muslim retreat was so gradual (lasting at least from 1085 to 1492), and Christians were so used to seeing themselves as the underdog in this struggle, that even when Muslim power was seriously depleted in Spain, it took literary discourse on both sides some time to catch up.(Mohja 17)

In Song of Roland, though the poem tells the story of the invincible Christian army of Charlemagne, a victor army which can easily demolish an enemy greater in number without its most gallant warriors, this fear is expressed all the same. After Charles takes revenge for Roland and is about to take over Saragossa, we learn that from North Africa a Great King the diabolic equal of Charlemagne intends to invade France:

I go to fight to Charles to the death
If at my feet he bow not down his neck,
If he renounce not the faith of Christian men,
Then will I take the crown from off his head. (2681-85)

Unlike the conversion ideal in Song of Roland, which we will see in the first chapter, neither the speech of the Pope in Clermont, nor the Crusading army shows any intention for converting the Muslim enemy. “Efforts at conversion of the Muslims were quickly abandoned, if they were even tried. There was no attempt to impose European language, customs or culture on the indigenous population.” (Mohja 17) The reason for this might be the Muslim image at that age as well as European frustration with the enemy’s power. As Mohja claims:

Negative images of pagan civilizations that preceded the Islamic, including Roman and Old Testament pagans, were absorbed into the image of the new enemy. From approximately the beginning of the eleventh century, Islam began to acquire a special and negative meaning in European discourse. (14)

This may also be a proper explanation for the misrepresentation of the Muslim religion and the diabolical and exaggerated Saracen images in the poem. Islam was the arch-enemy of the Christian world; a really “corrupt one”, and the possible change of the enemy from its present condition to a better one seemed not probable to the twelfth century Europeans. Muslims, despite the effort given in Spain and the Byzantium borders, did not seem so susceptible to a possible surrender and they were getting stronger day by day by adding new forces into their chamber.

1.2.2. Turkish Expansion

“In the tenth century, however, The Byzantine Empire was able to do more than merely defend its frontiers.... For twelve years in the latter half of the tenth century, under the leadership of Nicephorus Phocas (963-969) and John Tzimices (969-976), a holy war against

the infidels[Muslims] was waged victoriously.” (Newhall 7-8) The Byzantine army even threatened Baghdad.

Through the end of the ninth century Turkish nomads in Central Asia converted to Islam in great numbers. They were in contact with the Caliph of Baghdad and some of them were working as mercenaries. “Individual Turkish chieftains with their warrior bands appeared on the Byzantine frontier in effective numbers as early as 1048.” (Newhall 28) Turks under the banner of Seljuks expanded both with the help of their military skills and perseverance, and moreover, politically they were on the side of the Caliph. In the eleventh century there was the rise of the Seljuks who added Jerusalem and most of Anatolia to their territories. The Mazkiert War (1071) was a decisive step on behalf of Turkish settlement on Byzantine lands and the Turkish advance went on with some intervals (such as the Crusades) and ended with the Conquest of Istanbul by the Ottomans in 1453.

Turkish expansion was actually very crucial neither for the Franks nor the rest of Europe; however, the ascending Christian fraternity and the availability of a possible campaign against the Turks for the Papal policy, as well as Alexius’ desperate calls for help, seem to constitute the primal causes for the first Crusade in 1095. Turkish advancement triggered the two-polar world, as conceived in the Song of Roland. Although the enemy is generally embodied as Saracens, the two great actors in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Franks and Turks, seem to be the two ascending stars of the two clashing civilizations.

CHAPTER II

SONG OF ROLAND

2.1. About the Text

Song of Roland is thought to have been written “between in 1098-1100.”(Calin15) during or just after the First Crusade. The poem is one of the Chanson de Geste, actually, considered to be the best of them. Although there are some references to Chanson de Geste and books, there is no other Song of Roland story found before the famous poem. There are nine extant manuscripts of the Song of Roland in Old French. Its authorship is debatable though the name Tuoldus is written at the end of the Oxford manuscript “the copy preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford [...] Digby 23 is a twelfth century hand in Anglo Norman dialect.”(Brault 5) It is not probable that the Song is an oral work due to some differences in the text and is believed to be the work of “Tuoldus” mentioned at the end of the poem as the author. “Jean Rychner [...] finds only one instance of recapitulation in Tuoldus’ poem (vv. 2769-2787), a technique which the singer of tales often utilized to refresh his listeners’ memory when a new session was beginning.”(Brault 4) Therefore, the impossibility of being a version of the oral tradition reinforces the possibility of Tuoldus’ being the author of the poem. For this reason, I’m going to mention Tuoldus as the author of the poem throughout the essay.

2.2. About the Poem

Song of Roland is comprised of 4004 lines written in ten-syllabled lines and every group of stanzas is called “laisse”, which are of irregular lengths in themselves. Every laisse ends with an exclamation “AOI” which means “probab[ly] that they represent some kind of shouted refrain (“Ahoy!”), analogous to the refrain of a ballad.”(Song 41) The narrative, which is fast paced at the beginning, gives the impression of watching a slow motion movie,

through continuously repeating the same scenes, such as Roland's breaking his sword Durrendal. With this technique the poem gains a more exciting atmosphere and has more literary value than Chansons de Geste.

[The]Oxford version of the Text, being the most comprehensive and literary version, is generally accepted as the main text by scholars. "Scholars have established the relationship between the extant manuscripts of the *Roland* and in general, agree that the copy preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford offers the oldest and the best surviving version of the poem."(Brault 5).

The text I am going to use is a translation of this Oxford version by Dorothy L Sayers published by Penguin books in 1957. There is an endless debate among the scholars about the importance and function of the death of Roland and the rearguard at Roncevaux narrated in this (Oxford) version. In the story, Charlemagne has been fighting in Spain for the sake of Christendom for seven years. He together with his valorous knights – especially with Roland and the twelve peers- has taken many cities and brought down many castles with his catapults.

Carlton the King, our Emperor Charlemayn,
Full seven years long abroad in Spain,
He's won the highlands as far as to the main;
No castle more can stand before his face,
City nor wall is left for him to break,
Save Saragossa in its high mountain place; (1-6.)

Charlemagne and the Franks- although there are many nations in the army mostly it's referred to as Franks in the text (line 50, 167, 177, 192....)- are about to strike the last blow to the enemy. Marsile's ambassador, the king of the Saracens, Blanchandrin contrives a treachery saying that all the Spanish Saracens are going to give Franks precious gifts and convert to Christianity by automatically entering in to the vassalage status under the pyramid of Frank Feudality on the condition that the Franks return to their own country in the shortest time. To ensure the pact, they guarantee giving sureties most of which are comprised of the sons of the most outstanding people of the Saracens. The offer is accepted unanimously by the French council, except one opposition by Roland, Charles' nephew. The responsibility for conveying the message of the Franks to the King of the Saracens, Marsille, who has slain two French ambassadors before, is given to Ganelon, Roland's stepfather, upon the suggestion of Roland. This is the turning point in the story, which plants the seeds of enmity between Roland and Ganelon, and causes Ganelon's betrayal by collaborating with the Saracens against Roland- consequently his own country- and by having Roland appointed to the command of the rearguard, thereby causing the massacre of the thousand score Franks. This act of treason and the last stand of the French army is a most famous and effective scene in the Middle Ages. The story ends with the resounding victory of Charlemagne over the Saracens, after having arranged the trial of "the villain" and converted Bramimunde, the Saracen Queen.

Scholars such as Brault and Cook try to evaluate and read the work in its own context; for instance, Brault considers the death of Roland as a catalyst and a sacrifice that has caused the conversion of the people at the end, and the victories of the Franks. (Brault 245) He especially tries to stress the religious elements and importance as well as the iconographic connections of the scenes with the iconography of the Middle Ages. Cook tries to stress the feudal properties of the story by evaluating them in accordance with the values of its own age.

He in a way justifies the death of Roland and tries to show how Roland's stand was regarded as something normal by the twelfth century audience.(Cook XIV, 86) On the other hand, Alan Renoir points out the role of *Desmesure* in Roland's death: his pride that caused the horrific consequences (Renoir 577, 579). Owen tries to illuminate the nonreligious aspects of the Song -especially Roland's- and aims to show the heroic impulse of the text that lies under the religious elements which are only a "backcloth". (390)

My aim is to deal with the theme of conversion in the Song and to show its significance throughout the Song. Conversion in Song of Roland and the Middle English Charlemagne Romances, which are highly affected by the Christian zeal in the poem and the images of the Saracens, is very prominent symbolizing the real success of the Christian armies and the only possible way of salvation for the enemy in a world divided into two polar the only criterion of which is religion.

The theme of conversion, although mentioned by virtually all of the scholars has not been given importance enough and its role in the Song has been underestimated. Following the first chapter, I will discuss the conversion theme in Middle English Charlemagne Romances which are, in a sense, the rewritings of the French Epic and will try to show its realtion with the images of the Saracens and the Christian zeal.

2.3. Before Roncevaux

2.3.1. Christian Ideal/ The Importance of Religion

The lines I quote below are the lines of the first Laisse. From the beginning to the end, religion constitutes the most important identity in the poem as the first Laisse end with a mention of the religion of the enemy in the voice of the author:

Marsilion holds it, the king who hates God's name,

Mahound he serves, and to Apollyon he prays:

He'll not escape the ruin that awaits. (7-9)

Mentioning the ruin that awaits the enemy just after the names of the gods' that they worship, is a good example to show the great tension between the Franks and the Saracens as well as the plot of the story around which the events are going to take place. Actually, the importance of the theme of conversion does not only stem from its impact on the events that pave the way for the Battle of Roncevaux, which I will discuss later; but from the polarization that completely stems from the disparity of the religious beliefs. "Païen unt tort e chrestiens unt dreit" (Pagnims are wrong Christians are right) (1015) is one of the most famous expressions of the Song and also an essential aphorism that constitutes the philosophy of the poem. However, according to Owen, "this much-quoted line bears no particular ideological emphasis. Indeed, in the later echo line the distinction has become that between Frank and non-Frank rather than that between Christian and pagan" (391) However, throughout the poem the superiority of the Frankish army and the warriors' valour is directly associated with their being Christian:

Now God be on our side!

We'll not fail Carlon: Carlon is in the right! (3358-59)

Roland, who is criticized for not using Christian terms in the battle, also utters the righteousness of his cause:

First blood to us! Go to it gallant Frenchmen!

Right is on our side and wrong is with these wretches! (1212)

Religion throughout the poem is a premise which determines the strong and the weak on account that it is impossible to win without divine help. This is why the Christians, unlike

Saracens, in their council are animated (Brault 130); and this also explains the confidence of Roland, who is sure of the revenge of his death: The Christian cause cannot be subdued or defeated:

See now these Paynims- a craven folk and mean,

Their false gods' help not worth a penny peace!

Who cares, my lords, how great their numbers be? (3337-39)

Therefore in the poem, Christianity is not just a “backcloth” (Owen 575) but a true and righteous cause that enables one side to coast to the victory. It should not be forgotten that *La Chanson de Roland* was written in an age when Feudalism was at its peak. Roland was not only a *Militia Christi* but also a vassal responsible to his lord. Cook discusses that

[w]e should recognize instead that any desire for peace, stability, and their concomitant beliefs to humanity may appear in early medieval literature as an idealization of a firmly established system of relationships among the vassals and lords. The force of the Song of Roland, then, can be said to lie in what John Benton has so cogently described as ‘the power men to re-think their self interest in terms of higher ideals, to the point that in real life as in epic imagination they might actually prefer honorable death to shameful flight group loyalty to limited personal advantage, and in the process build stronger governments and assure peace and stability.’ (202)

In the poem, Roland's most famous words on the vassalage are generally quoted by the scholars and they clearly denote this ideal rather than focusing on nationality or self interest:

Here must we stand to serve on the King's side
Men for their Lords great hardship must abide
Fierce heat and cold endure in every clime
Loose for his sake, if need be, skin and hide. (1009-12)

Expression of this ideal is finished with the words "Paynims are wrong Christians are right." (1015) reminding Franks the rightness of their cause and needlessness of fear as everybody in the Middle Ages knows what will happen if they die. It is guaranteed by the Pope that if they die in a war fought for the Christian cause: "All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins. This I grant them through the power of God with which I am invested." (Bongars 513-17)

As for patriotism, which is claimed by Owen to be more prominent in the text by the Christian ideal, (laisses 397,399) it should not be forgotten that Charlemagne's army is not only composed of Franks but many Christian nationalities that have come together to fight for the cause of the Christ. According to Brault "Patriotism as we conceive it today was non-existent in the Tuoldus's day. National and ethnic stereotypes, extending down to the regional level, were common places [...] the poet's use of *dulce France* may be an imitation of the classical models." (16) Actually Roland's own words show what he generally means with the word "Frank": "Staout are the French, they'll do battle bold, / These man of Spain shall die and have no hope. (1080-1) This sentence is a convincing proof that shows the idea of nationality in the poem. It is not my postulation that every time in the text Roland means the Christian side by saying Franks; actually, there is not enough proof in the text to say such

a thing. However, it clearly signifies the futility of taking every “Frank” as an indicator of national zeal. Brault also concludes that

The sense of belonging to Christianity imparted a much stronger feeling of solidarity than any corresponding national identification, but religion then as now affected individuals’ outlook on life and ethical behavior in a variety of ways. The notion of Christian unity and of certain internationalism was enhanced during the course of the eleventh century by a growing concern over the Saracen peril
[.] (16-17)

In the Song it is obvious that neither Roland nor Charlemagne is fighting for the sake of the French nation. Their initial aim is not to enlarge the realm of the Frankish Kingdom but to enlarge the Kingdom of the Christ. When Ganelon goes to the court of Marsile, he lies to the king saying that Marsile is to share half of Spain with Roland. As Cook points out, Charlemagne has no aim to conquer the rest of Spain “This is no Reconquesta. Charles’ war is not a war of territorial aggrandizement, despite Blancandrin’s assumptions (370-74, 392-94).” (Cook 34). Cook also suggests that in the letter sent by Charlemagne, there is no such thing written. Therefore, we can say that it is the lies of Ganelon and the treachery of the Saracens that causes the fall of Saragossa. Considering the twelfth century, we can say that it is not the Frankish nationality but their capacity and desire to serve Christianity that is expressed in the text. This must be the reason why Charlemagne was resurrected from his grave two centuries later to fight against the “mischievous and aggressive” Saracens. Although, as I explained above, Charlemagne’s compulsory conversion of the Saxons’ -though done with the political zeal rather than the religious enthusiasm and duty- and his fight with the Pagans and clearing them off the map- like Avars- which concluded with their eventual conversion and

assimilation, and also his collaboration with the Papacy must be the real reasons for Charlemagne's emergence as the leader of the Christian world in the poem. Urban's speech at Clermont is an obvious proof of the amalgamation of the national feelings with the religious one:

Let the deeds of your ancestors move you and incite your minds to manly achievements; the glory and greatness of king Charles the Great, and of his son Louis, and of your other kings, who have destroyed the kingdoms of the pagans, and have extended in these lands the territory of the holy church. Let the holy sepulchre of the Lord our Saviour, which is possessed by unclean nations, especially incite you, and the holy places which are now treated with ignominy and irreverently polluted with their filthiness. Oh, most valiant soldiers and descendants of invincible ancestors, be not degenerate, but recall the valor of your progenitors. (Quoted in Munro 5-8)

2.3.2. Conversion

I think the problem is that when scholars discuss the Song of Roland, they generally stress the scenes of Roland's death and his critical decision whether to fight the Saracens. However, this decision is given in the middle of the poem where a good deal of narrative proceeds. I think we should, in the light of the historical and religious context given above consider the role of conversion in the poem, which is generally underestimated or disregarded. The theme of conversion connected with the Christian ideal is closely related in the first part of the poem. "The Christian religion has been mentioned several times thus far in the Song of

Roland, and it has nearly always been related to the Theme of Conversion (vv. 38, 85, 102, 155, 190, 431, 471, 686).” (Brault 179)

Charlemagne has been fighting in Spain for seven years, which has a religious significance: “the biblical number seven ... which, since Genesis 2:2 suggests a great task being brought to a satisfying close.”(Brault 117) And his army is near victory. Saracens, who behaved boldly before, are seeking a concession with the Christian army. While discussing in the council Blanchandrin, one of leading nobles of the Saracens and the Saracen ambassador, gives counsel to his king:

Be you afeared for nought,
But send to Charles in his pride and in his wrath
Your faithful service and your friendship henceforth.
Promise him lions and bears and hounds galore,
Sev’n hundred camels and a thousand mewed hawks,
Four hundred pack mules and with gold and silver store,
And fifty wagons, a wagon train to form
Whence he may give his soldiers rich rewards.
Say, in this land he has made enough war;
To Aix in France let him go home once more;
At Michaelmas you’ll follow to his court,
There you’ll submit into the Christian law,
And be his man by faith and fealty sworn. (27-39)

These lines trigger the catastrophic events that will end with the annihilation of the Saracen civilization in Spain and the massacre of the thousand score men in the poem.

Blanchandrin is so sure of himself and of Charlemagne's acceptance of their terms that he assures his king in a very confident manner. The only reason for his confidence is the attraction of "conversion". It is easy to guess that the real reason for the agreement cannot be the heaps of presents. Blanchandrin saves the last strike to the end. All those presents and the king's swearing fealty are the secondary elements which are only the signs showing their sincerity. Also, they're ready to give sureties, their own sons, to dispel the enemy via diplomacy and treason.

The plot is accepted by Marsille, who is aware that the war between the Saracens and Franks depends on a holy cause. It is the war between Crescent and Cross. And the essence of the message is repeated by Marsile :

My Barons go with speed;
Bear in your hand boughs of the olive tree.
On my behalf King Charlemayn beseech,
For his God's sake show me clemency.
Say, this month's end he shall not see
Ere I shall seek him with thousand vassals leal.
The law of Christ I'll then there receive
In faith and love I will his liegeman be.
I'll send him sureties if thus he shall decree."
Quoth Blachandrin: "Be sure he'll grant your plea. (79-88)

Here, it is obvious that being a (feudal) liegeman is the natural conclusion of the conversion. It is not only the acceptance of the faith but also the social status. This is only a feudal degradation showing that Charles is at the top of the Pyramid: He is the sovereign of all Christians. However, he does not have any intention for the lands of the Saracens. They do

not offer any land in their agreement. Conversion is enough and it enables them to keep their lands apart from remaining alive:

Better by far the heads of them should fall
Then we should lose honour, estate and all.
And be reduced to beggary and scorn.(44-46)

“Be sure he’ll grant your plea”. This is a proof that shows how things work in the world of Troldus. Conversion is a key that opens all the gates. It is in a way an ultimate goal that should be reached. According to Brault “the christening [...] holds out the promise of universal conversion and peace, one of the fondest hopes of the Middle Ages.”[55] All of the religious struggle is done for the ultimate conversion of the pagans. This is a struggle of sink or swim:

“Nothing at all can ever end their strife
Till one confess he’s wrong the other right” (3587-88).

It is obvious in the passage that being right or wrong directly depends on religion. Confession, in the Catholic Church, is an expression of what you have done wrong: it enables at first awareness, then confession and the resolution for doing it. This line provides us the ideology of the poem: ultimate Christian victory, the transformation of the world into an earthly heaven before the Second Coming. Therefore, Owen’s supposition that “the principal events of the story hold no particular religious significance and the religious conflict of Christian versus pagan provides a rich backcloth” seems not applicable here.

Moreover, considering the attitude of the poem towards war and the theme of conversion in the age in which it was created, we see that unlike the “Crusading mentality” which is genocidal by stipulating the eradication of the “infidel” for everlasting peace, Song

of Roland gives importance to the “conversion” of the infidel which is considered to be the best way of subjugating the enemy and serving to Christendom. This attitude of course the lesser of two evils: At least, it says, “do or die” instead of “die” only.

Blanchandrin comes before Charles to convey the message of his king. He now pretends to be a Christian and tries to create an impression of a mutual agreement rather than a compulsory conversion. There is an allusion to the people of Nineveh who accepted the word of God – from king to slave- after understanding that his wrath was going to strike them.(Jonah 3:5)As Charlemagne is an instrument of God in the poem, the conversion of the Saracens seems to have a biblical impression which probably causes Charles to think as though there was a sign of Divine grace. “Finally - and this is Blanchandrin’s most perceptive intuition- Charles has his blind faith in the mysterious workings of grace, which can bring about miraculous conversions.”(Brault 123)

God gave his grace to you

The glorius God to whom the worship is due.

Thus speaks the king, Marsilion, great in rule:

Much hath he studied the saving faith and true. (123-126)

However, a few lines above, we have been told the fates of the Saracens in Cordova which clearly show the ultimate fate waiting for Saracens in case of a resistance as “the Emperor and his men brutally slaughtered every man, woman and child, except the ones who have accepted baptism” (Brault 129):

“In all the city now no paynim appears

Who is not slain or turned to Christian fear (101-2)

Knowing this, Blanchandrin enters into the presence of Charlemagne with olive branches in hand. This signifies peace and as Brault says

The Saracens now set out to trick [Charlemagne] visually as well, by aping Christ's entry into Jerusalem. The Savior's humble mount symbolized the peaceful nature of his rule and alluded to the characterization of the Messiah as the Prince of Peace(Isaiah 9:6) The gospel's do not specify the color of Christ's donkey, but Medieval art made it white, a sign of victory.(Brault 126)

These are the crucial scenes that determine the battle of Roncevaux. The debate between Roland and Ganelon is generally brought to the foreground by the critics. Cook says that "[Charlemagne] does not give any indication of his own opinion of this conditional surrender -saying only with a nuance of suspicion- 'I do not know what he really means to do'"(9) Also, Alan Renoir makes the same statement(575). However, when Charlemagne accepts Blanchandrin, he is not alone: Brault says that "six of the Twelve Peers plus Geoffrey of Anjou are probably positioned with an eye to achieving maximum psychological impact upon the pagan emissaries" (129). However in the poem, we see that in the same scene in Laisse 8, except the aforementioned peers (Roland, Olivere, Samson de Duke, Anseis the fierce, Geoffrey of Anjou) there were many others: "where these were was many another fere- / Full fifteen thousand of France the fair and dear.(107-108). What I want to say is that all those Frenchmen most of whom probably constitute the council, have the probability of eye-witnessing Charlemagne's reaction to the proposal of Blanchandrin:

"With lifted hands to God Emperor sues;/ Then bows his head and begins to brood" (139-140).

Cook's and Renoir's statements about Charlemagne's objective conveyance of the Saracen proposal seem to be groundless here. And it is easy to guess that what this graceful

leader of Christians who is depicted as a 200 years old prophet-like king, thinks is important for the Franks. Now, most of the Franks know what Charles is thinking about the proposal. This is one reason why the French Council remains silent. According to Owen:

In Charlemagne's first council [Roland] boasts gratuitously of his own previous deeds of arms, but argues that the war should be continued to final victory in order that the Christian emissaries whom Marsile had earlier put treacherously to death might be avenged (Laisse XIV). He does not, we notice, consider the religious aspect of the struggle. (575)

Also Calin supposes that “Roland loves fighting for its sake, for the sheer joy of wielding a trusty blow of sword or lance.”(16) Roland, being an experienced and capable warrior, knows by experience that the Saracens will not keep their promises. As far as we understand from the text, the resemblance of this situation with the former, the execution of two French emissaries by Marsile, and his fear for the recurrence of a similar treachery are Roland’s arguments against the terms of the Saracens. It is not very sensible to think the situation as a struggle between Pro– peace and Pro– war which turns Roland into an unswerving fanatic warrior rather than a soldier who knows his enemy well. Just as the Christians who are on the right we see that Roland is also right.

Ganelon surely desires peace, but so, in his way, may Roland. That is not where their disagreement lies. They disagree about whether peace is within their grasp. To describe the traitor as representing a “peace faction” in the Franco –Christian army,

and Roland as obsessed with warfare [Le Gentil, Chanson (1st. ed), 122] is to misunderstand not the inevitability of war as the poem presents it ... the hero is not saying war is desirable he is saying it is unavoidable 'Do you trust Marsile? his last words are 'Avenge your men whom the evil Foe killed' (Cook 15)

It is impossible to disagree with Cook here however it should not be overlooked that it is the theme of conversion that makes all the Franks accept the terms as Blachandrin foresees in Saragossa. And this refutes the arguments of Renoir and Owen suggesting his rudeness and pride in the council with his later reaction in Roncevaux. We obviously see that Roland's opposition to Charles and Ganelon stems from his own experience rather than others' goodhearted perceptions of the offer. Cook says that "the forces of evil have played on the very humanity and sense of decency of good men to put their enterprise into jeopardy. (17)

However, it is not their decency that causes them to accede to the Saracens' peace terms; it is the unavoidable attraction of the conversion that makes them agree with a man whom they do not trust at all.

Why does Ganelon get furious? Why does he threaten Roland? According to Jenkins this is not new and has other reasons:

Ganelon, by reason of Roland's greater wealth, was already jealous of him; exasperated anew by being singled out for a dangerous mission by the person who had already irritated him; probably also suspecting that the emperor's haughty nephew was seeking to make him laughable by using the ambiguous word *parrastre*, Ganelon flames out in violent quarrel the moment

Roland speaks; he vows Roland's destruction by fair means or foul, not neglecting, however, the *défi* in due form; having decided on this, he is not in the least averse to rich gifts which may enable him to surpass his step-son in magnificence and display. Covetousness, greed, *auri sacra fames* the ancient sin, is thus the cause of Count Ganelon's epic wrath and tragic downfall; and it needs no general justification. (132)

Ganelon's nomination- though done to drive him up the wall- has a symbolic meaning: Ganelon is the count who enthusiastically defends the peace terms of the Saracens. Therefore, in a way, he is hoist with his own petard. He becomes a part of the play that he wanted to watch. Unlike his intellectual and rhetorical competency, he is not spiritually ready for such a mission:

If God but grant I ever thence come back
I'll wreak on thee such ruin and such wrack
That thy life long my vengeance shall not slack
Roland replies: "This is all boast and brag! (289-92)

The expression of so much wrath by Ganelon against his stepson is only because of the fact that he does not believe- like Roland- the sincerity of the Saracens. They killed Basan and Basille before, and now it is probable that they kill the next emissary. Considering Saracens' recent conversion, (their so-called intention to convert to Christianity) Ganelon's fury is meaningless except his disbelief in their sincerity that proves two things: First Ganelon's unwillingness to support the Christian cause, which is a sign of his playing the

Judas; second, Roland's righteousness in the debate, which shows that his objection does not stem from his pride.

As I have tried to show above, in diplomatic relations in the Song, the most important cause is generally expressed at the end of the speech. Ganelon, while defending the acceptance of the Saracen offer mentions their conversion *par amour* at the end of his speech, therefore, creating an impression that this is the most important subject and he's deeply concerned with this:

If King Marsile informs you by this message
He'll set his hands in yours, and fealty pledge you,
And hold all Spain from you, at your good pleasure,
And to that faith we follow give acceptance
The man who tells you this plea [Roland] should be rejected
Cares nothing, Sire, to what death he condemns us. (222-227)

However, his fury and his later actions show us that Ganelon does not really care about the aspect of this agreement which is directly related to the Saracens' conversion. As Ganelon with his speech puts forward in the council "And to that faith we follow give acceptance" is not really what he cares. He must be well aware of the fact that by secretly agreeing with the Saracens he is inhibiting their conversion by opening to them a new way to escape the impending end that awaits them soon. However, he does not care about it and as Calin says: "A false concept of honor brings Ganelon to betray Roland; a false desire for peace, comfort and domestic order brings him to betray Christ." (19) He is, as Brault says, a Judas figure: "In a striking biblical allusion (v. 178: *Guenes I vint ki la traïsun first*), the audience has been informed that Ganelon will play the part of Judas in the unfolding drama." (134) He also supposes that Ganelon is also a Satan figure (143) and shows that this

was stated itself by Charles (746). Ganelon does symbolize the Satan figure when he is on trial: Like the fallen cherubim, Satan, Ganelon drags his relatives into the bad situation he is in. (Matt 25:41) As Calin puts forward: “ By having him killed, Ganelon hurts his lord, and by implication Charles’s kingdom and the Christian faith”(18). As Charles and his council do not know whether the Saracens will convert or not, Ganelon mars the further diplomacy that could be done for the conversion *par amour*.

“Roland’s volunteering for the mission shows he has accepted the group decision” (Cook 19) he is ready to endure the calamities that will come forth because of the fact that there is a chance to serve Christ as he is a *Militia Christi*.? Not only Roland but other Lords including Turpin volunteer to go for the dangerous mission. They have an opportunity to show the ways of God to men: preaching the gospel and playing their part in the conversion of the Saracens. “And the gospel must first be published among all nations.” (Mark 13:10) Of course it is a military campaign against the “unbelievers” by which, just as in the tenth century world, the “believers” of the Song are conceiving of “publishing the gospel.” Calin states that

Since Saracens, by the virtue of their ‘Saraceness’ have rebelled against God, it is Charles’ duty to avenge his Lord and decline all the peace terms until the rebels have returned to the fold. By advising Charles to make peace with the infidel and by destroying the rearguard, Ganelon commits an act of treachery [.] (18)

Considering Charles’ reaction “With lifted hands to God Emperor sues;(139) and the silence of people in the council, as well as the aim of the ongoing war “Till one confess he’s wrong the other right” (3588), it is impossible to accept this statement as we have seen the

essence of the diplomacy is solely built up on the condition of conversion. The French in the council after listening to Ganelon's offer indicate their superego that is, the way they're supposed to behave as Christian knights, to which they feel to agree: "The Duke speaks as he ought" (241) As Blachandrin foresaw at the beginning, it is impossible for the French to act differently. And Ganelon vocalizes the thoughts of the Council on account that they do not have any other chance. However, the fact that the council does not trust the Saracens is only vocalized by Roland and the council responded to the man who verbalizes their own suspicions with silence. Roland in the poem is by no means a Cassandra figure; neither is he a Hotspur: "Roland's promises are characterized rhetorically by a consistent meiosis, a reverse Delphism in which he raises minimal expectations and then exceeds them." (Cook 162) Cook takes his promises before the Roncevoux that he would strike great blows (1055-56) (Cook 162) and concludes that unlike Ganelon, Roland's deeds are in accordance with his words. This is, in my opinion, a complementary to the state of being "in the right" and a sign of Roland's sincerity in the Christian cause. This also shows that in the Song religious zeal is more important than the feudal one, which entails the revenge of the former slain ambassadors.

Count Ganelon implies Blanchandrin his distaste for Roland and the collaboration he can make against him, however when he is before the King, he seems to be a stout ambassador who is intended to fulfill his duty lest he die:

When Guenes heard he shook his blade on high,
And set his back to the Trunk of a pine. (499-500)

Actually how Ganelon betrays the cause does not concern us directly; yet, Cook's comment is worth reading: "[Ganelon's] is a complex and multilayered betrayal [...] and he is not a negotiator here but a messenger. He has a letter but he does not deliver it. Instead he speaks, [...] his words are carefully chosen deliberately offered." (425-27) He then with harsh

words reminds Marsile to convert and as Cook says, starts the conversation with the name of Christian God unlike Blanchandrin. (Cook 30) “Why is Ganelon shown as taking such a risk? The plan is surely to set up the ambush he will soon suggest to the Saracens. For that purpose he must turn their minds away from their offer.”(Cook 31) Therefore, Ganelon’s personal grudge prevails, his main concern, that is, the conversion of the Saracens and the enlargement of the realm of Christ. In the text this is shown as one of the deadliest sins that one Christian can commit and his faith as we see, has left him: “He sware the treason and sware his faith away” (608) Ganelon acts the Judas figure to the bitter end and relieved the Saracens by not forcing them to think the terms of conversion. His acceptance of the rich presents is nothing more than a complement to his treason. Charlemagne’s proposal that Marsile ought to give his uncle the Caliph as surety has a symbolic meaning: He is the Muslim equivalent of the Pope and symbolizes Islam; Charlemagne with his proposal symbolically wants to take Islam under his control and guarantee their conversion. However, Ganelon with his treason enables them to escape from complete submission. And he makes up a lie which has in itself a “phallacy “in Brault’s term (65) and says that the Caliph with his 40.000 men did not accept conversion- if we think Caliph’s so called reaction with its symbolic meaning it is a probable reaction- and they were drowned while escaping. This is a well- contrived lie as it has also the Biblical allusion to the story of Jonah, who while escaping from the Word of God, was drowned and caught by a big fish. According to Brault:

[I]t is the manner in which they have died – according to Ganelon- that strikes Charlemagne most. Ganelon knows perfectly well that one of the Emperor’s most cherished beliefs is that through conquest and conversion the whole world will someday come under his sway and everyone will worship the true God. (160)

Therefore, it is obvious that in the first part of the poem everything is somehow connected to the theme of Conversion. Before Roncevaux, consummation of the goals seems to be the ideal of conversion. Charlemagne- the priest king- puts preaching the Gospel before everything, even of his feudal priorities. In the text, religious zeal, especially the theme of conversion, as we have seen, directly affects the battle of Roncevaux and every development in the poem. It is related to the vital events such as the treacherous offer of the Saracens, its acceptance by the French in spite of their strong suspicions, Ganelon's treason- his opening an escape hatch for the Saracens- and all the risk taken by the French on the way to Roncevaux as well as the stubborn and treacherous resistance of the Saracens. We can say that conversion (I mean making converts) is an ideal which is directly related with serving one's religion – an important issue in the eleventh and twelfth centuries- in which people lived in the form of communities (I mean religious) not as nationalities; this is the time when the “notion of Christian unity and of a certain internationalism had begun to take hold in that area we have come to know as Western Europe” (Mohja 24). And without religious transformation of the enemy, the real victory cannot be said to have been won. This understanding, besides a strong notion of feudal liability and heroism, as far as we have seen, is prominent in the Song.

2.4. After Roncevaux

2.4.1. Saracens and the Two Types of Conversion

The authors of the earliest Chansons de Geste were[...] perfectly faithful to the contemporary facts when they represent the wars between Christians and Saracens as *religioz~swars*, and when they emphasize religion as the rock upon which these two hostile parties split, as the chasm

which it was impossible to bridge except by conversion or death.(Comfort 628)

The structure of Song of Roland in a sense has a dual characteristic. The peoples of the epic are divided as Christians and Muslims (Paynims); that is, as right and wrong. However, Muslims are presented as polytheistic, even idolatrous, people like the former pagans of Europe in the time of Charlemagne. In addition, “Crusade propaganda figured Islam as an inassimiable body exorbitantly marked by racial difference and threatening the corporate integrity of Latin Christendom.” (Cohen 200) They appear to be believeing in Termegant (Muslim’s supposed god in the Middle Ages) Mahound – though he is a prophet in Islam, he is depicted as one of the gods of the Saracens- and Apollon.Of course these images of Muslims do not reflect reality, but a prejudice, that in a way continues in the English Charlemagne Romances. Actually, the bigotted attitudes towards Muslims (Saracens) had started long before the Song was written:

Christian views of the Muslims began to shift in the mid-ninth century.The episode of the “martyrs of Cordova” aside (where, in the 850s,some Christian fanatics sought martyrdom by publicly insulting Islamand reviling Muhammad), 117 the impetus for this change came not fromthe imperial court but from Rome.(Mastnak 107)

In the Song, it is an open contrast to the “Holy Trinity” of the Christian side which constitutes an important part of the duality in the poem.The Muslims’ way of life is not given in detail and we are not introduced to a different culture having neither different language nor way of government: All the difference except for some detailed appearance of some Saracens is limited to the invalidity of the Muslims’ faith. Their false belief is the main reason for their

iniquity and defeat in everything. This understanding goes on throughout the poem and in the cases of conversion. The tactics of the two sides, their evaluation of the other, are all imbued with this strict difference parallel to this dual world. The Crusade's zeal is always at the top and the Christian knights try to deal with these "diabolical creatures" against which they have to fight and defend their religion. Turpin, the archbishop,- whose presence in the battlefield itself is a symbolization of the Church and the Crusade image in the 11th century, calls for the knights in the battle to defend their religion:

By God I charge you, hold fast and do not fly
Lest brave men sing ill songs in your despite
Better it were to perish in the fight
Soon very soon we all are marked to die,
None of us here will see to-morrow's light;
One thing there is I promise you outright:
To you stand open the gates of paradise,
There with the holy sweet innocents to bide.(1516-23)

Turpin is an opposite figure to the diabolical Saracens in the poem. His fight with the Abyss is a good example of this:

"Then first Rides out a Saracen Abisme
In all that host none was more vile than he,
With evil vice and crimes he's dyed full deep,
In Mary's Child, God's Son, he has no belief
And Black he is as melted pitch to see. (1470-74)

This Saracen is the most wicked one and these lines show that his badness is not only caused by his false belief but also that he is bad in nature and deeds. He is in a sense, in Dante's terms, from a lower degree of Hell. Abysme's blackness is stressed and according to Cohen "The extended visualizations of 'lusty, black skinned people' in Chanson de Roland, [...] brought the 'darkness of Africa' queerly close to Christianity, a temptation within a threat.(200) His blackness "as melted pitch" is a sign of his corrupt morals. As in the Bible when Jesus is mentioning about people who went after Cain he stresses that blackness awaits them:

"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain,
and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and
perished in the gainsaying of Core." Raging waves of the
sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to
whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. (Jud
1:11,13)

It can also be connected with the stress of the author at the beginning of the poem that there are some Saracens living in some countries where sun never raises thus a connection between blackness and the corruptness that is embodied in Abysme:

Better he loves murder and treachery
Than all the gold that is in Galicie
None ever saw him in mirth or jollity;
But bold he is Rash to a degree,
And for that reason he's loved for King Marsile. (1471-75)

His fight with Archbishop Turpin is completely a symbolic one; "Turpin's duel with Abisme recalls the Harrowing of Hell formula [.] And the name can also be associated with

Abyss which is a symbolic representation of his ill faith.”(Brault 209) We can associate with him everything that heresy can be associated with. In Derrida’s terms he is everything on the right side of the binary oppositions of the Western Culture... (good/ bad, believer/ paynim, white/ black ect...) And to Turpin who is “a champion of Faith and like an old Prophet (2255-56) this is a good match, a good reflection showing the fight of good and evil and the duality of the poem.

Saracens in the poem go to Hell as a result of their false beliefs. “The Adversary bears off his soul to Hell” (1553, 1391) Similar to Angel Gabriel’s coming and helping Charlemagne (2262, 2390-5, 2526, and 2847) the Saracens have relations with the infernal forces:

Archbishop Turpin has overthrown Sigrorel,
The Sorcerer, who’d once been down to Hell,
With Jupiter for guide, by magic spells.
Quoth Turpin then:” Ear-marked was he for death! (1390-93)

Also he has some friends who have infernal contact too:

(Emir Galafe gave it him for a boon
Whom in Val Metas a Devil gave it to.) (1502-3)

The Song is full of xenophobic elements and therefore, conversion for these Devilish creatures seems not probable, or at least easy in the Song. Nevertheless, while they cannot be said to be angelic people all the same, not all the Saracens such as Queen and the King Emir are depicted so; Some live in places “where Sun never rises” (980) and some have so thick skins that they need not wear armor. (3249-50) However, they belong to a Feudal structure where there are Lords and Kings and their feudal system is the same as Christians’. The only significant difference is the religion. In a way, this is why they are here in the poem: “Had it

not been for the Crusades against an opposing religion, the Saracens would have cut little figure in Old French literature.”(Comfort 628)

An example of a scene where some Saracens are not depicted as being so wicked (l'iasse 72, 228) The Great king Emir, symbolic leader of the Islamic world is not depicted so badly “The great Emir is mighty and renowned”.(3265) “Praise of the hated infidel is merely a device serving to enhance the Christians’ eventual triumph, for unless regenerated through the saving grace of baptism, no Saracen, in the poet’s view, can have any intrinsic worth (Brault 296) Emir is just the opposite of Charlemagne, and he is defeated only because of his false beliefs. He is even wise enough to understand that he is in the wrong side: “Then Emir begins to be afraid/ The wrong’s with him, the right with Charlemany.” (3553) However, he has a false wisdom and fights for the worldly things like his soldiers: “I’ll give you women noble and fair of hue,/ Honors and fiefs and lands I’ll give you”(3998-99) This is also fallacy of the Saracens because when they’re making an agreement with Charles, they offer him presents to distribute among his soldiers: “ [This] functions as a first example of the errors of the Saracens, with their flawed view of the world, are destined to make.”(Cook 5)However, Christian soldiers are the opposite of the ones above who have a mundane worldview; they fight neither for money nor women. Charles, after invoking them to take the revenge of those who died in Roncevoux, stresses that he fights against the infidels: “Justly you know I fight the infidel” (3413)

We come across with the wrong assessment of the Saracens in the court of Marsile: “The reason Charles is fighting, according to Ganelon here, is not that it is God’s will that he defend his people and his religion. It is because someone is pushing him to make a war. He will not stop as long as his nephew ... is alive.” (Cook 35) They of course with their “wrong beliefs” think that it is not God but Roland who urges Charlemagne to fight against the

infidel. The last stanza of the Song is enough proof to see who is behind the Christian cause: God himself.

We can at the same time suppose that the Saracens' worship of the "false trinity" is an open symbol for their material affection. It is obvious that Muslims are "uncompromising monotheists" (Bellamy 269). Apart from the common medieval misrepresentation of the Muslim belief, the reason why Saracens are considered an idolatrous community is directly related with their materialization of everything including the spiritual. Blanchandrin's aforementioned reasoning at the beginning of the poem is an embodiment of the worldly affection:

"Better by far the heads of them should fall
Then we should lose honour, estate and all.
And be reduced to beggary and scorn. (44-46)

When Emir and Charlemagne encounter in the battlefield, their speech shows us the real concerns of the two sides: Emir offers Carlton to become his vassal and Charlemagne offers him conversion:

Emir:

"Become my man, and I will be thy liege;
Then come and serve me from here unto the East."

Charlemagne:

"Nay, I'd hold it treachery;
Never to Paynims may I show love or peace.
Do thou confess the Faith by God revealed,
Take Christendom, and thy fast friend I'll be.
The King Almighty then serve thou and believe."(3596-99)

And the plans that the Saracens contrive seem to be not failure on account that their worldly wisdom shows them the wrong side only: As Marsille with help of Ganelon contrives to cut the right hand of Charlemagne via killing Roland, his own right hand is cut by Roland himself, which has a Biblical connotation: “Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.” Exodus 15:6. Here, the right hand is associated with power and, thinking in the “dual context” of the poem, Marsile’s own power is cut off meaning that it is impossible for him to be successful anymore. It is proven by Emir’s defeat, which also causes his death. Moreover, this also symbolizes a castration at the same time, the end of the Saracen reign in Saragossa, which is ironically reinforced by Emir’s sending him a right glove – an obvious feudal inability to continue reign. However, as the opposite of Marsile, Roland gives his glove to the Angels coming from above to take his soul to heaven.

Ganelon, the Judas of the poem, has also false wisdom as Cook explains. First he convinces the Saracens that Roland is the person who urges Charles to fight against them. Without Roland he implies the fight will stop and they’ll see no more war. (Cook 35) However in contradiction to Roland, Ganelon has a wrong wisdom and whatever he says turns out to be wrong because of the fact that at the end of the poem Charles goes on fighting and defeats a much bigger army than Marsile’s. (Cook 36) This false wisdom of Ganelon also shows itself at the time of returning home. He thinks that Roland will not blow the horn as he is a proud man. However, he is wrong again. According to Brault:

Wisdom in the Song of Roland implies unswerving faith in God, absolute confidence in the inevitability of Christian victory, and total commitment to the view that immediate and spontaneous compliance

with the Divine promptings is the way to the personal
salvation and to the edification of Mankind. (42)

It is indubitably certain that Saracens are void of such wisdom and their actions turn out to be false and ineffective. Their false conception of the divine wisdom leads them to the wrong path and in the poem we see that most of the Saracens are wrong in their decisions and when they intuit what is right, like the Emir did above, they are unable to implement it. Nevertheless, they continue to work for their wrong cause that shows their stubbornness. Jongleu's advice to Emir is a good example:

“You're dead Balignant;
Not all your Gods can save you from mishap.
Carlou is stubborn, his troops most valiant ;
.....
Let come what will, delay not, but attack.”(3513-3515, 3519)

As the Saracens- Muslims- are doomed to eternal punishment for the repudiation of God and vice versa, although the, Muslim point of view is not given in the Song- any agreement between these people is impossible in Turoldeus' poem. The real cause for the mutual enmity, of course, is this outlook. In this context, conversion seems the only way out of this predicament. That is why in the poem, conversion is the only way to remain alive for the defeated. (Muslims are defeated all the time, except in the case of Roncevaux which ended with complete the Massacre of the Franks.) This explains the reason why Song of Roland is actually a war of two religions: it equates the enmity with the difference of religions that constitute its own morals and thus the warriors of the two causes receive help from their god; which of course results in the victory of the Christians as the gods of the Saracens are depicted as false, that is, unreal.

Many times in the poem Charlemagne is helped by God through his angel. His spiritual purity and the rightness of his cause are confirmed by celestial support. He is shown visions some of which are to help the Emperor. "Dreams I and III are clearly warning dreams."(Krappe134). In his other dreams incoming events are shown in symbolic representations. The help coming from God is not restricted to dreams only; Gabriel before the night of the battle descends onto the earth to defend the emperor of the Franks and helps him in his duel with the King Emir. The achievements of the two sides are therefore directly attached to the rightfulness of their God(s) and their causes. Roland's death as I've quoted above from Brault is an *Imitatio Christi* and the price paid for the conversion of the Saracens. However, nobody from the French army including Roland either assails their God for their ostensible defeat nor arouses a suspicion in them (especially in Roland). This is the main difference between the French and the Saracens. The Saracens denounce and curse their "gods", firstly in a scene where Bramimunde observes the defeat with twenty thousand people near her:

Apolloyn's grotto they make for in a rout,
With ugly insults they threaten him and shout:
"Aha! Vile god, why must thou shame us now?
Why let disaster befall this king of ours?
To faithful servants a generous Lord art thou!"
They snatch away his scepter and crown,
By his hands hang him upon a column bound,
And with thick cudgels belabour him and pound;
Then with their feet trample him on the ground.
Termagant gets his carbuncle torn out;
Into a ditch they boot away Mahound

For pigs and dogs to mangle and befoul. (2580-91)

After Marsile comes home having lost great many soldiers in the skirmish and with a missing hand, Bramimunde confesses the ineptitude of their “gods”:

Truly our gods acted very basely

Who in the battle forsook and failed him! (2600-1)

These are only two examples of the Saracens cursing their gods. As is obvious, the success of the warriors are directly associated with the rightness / generosity of the God(s). The lack of Divine help is the direct cause of a defeat and this automatically means the defeat of that religion because of the fact that the defeated will be either convert or die; he has no right to maintain his beliefs.

The Bishops next the water sanctify;

Then to the font the Paynim folk they drive.

Should Carlon's orders by any be defied

The man is hanged or slain or burned with fire. (3667-70)

2.4.2. Conversion of Queen Bramimunde

Therefore, at first glance we see that in Tuoldus' poem to convert the enemy whether via sword or persuasion is of utmost importance. The aforementioned lines, and lines(101-2) at the beginning of the poem are the only two places where the conversion by sword is mentioned. There is another act of conversion in the Song, which is different than these ones: Bramimunde after the fall of Saragossa is taken by Charles to France to make her convert willingly through sermon. Charles has her best interests at heart:

-... only the queen fares otherwise:

She's to go captive to far France by and by,

Her would the King convert by love to Christ. (3672-74)

In the poem, Bramimunde first appears in the Council of Saracens giving a present for Ganelon's wife. She is in a way playing the role of a First Lady in the poem.

She is a character with a distinctive voice. It can be bitter: "E! Sarraguce, cum ies oi desguarneie . . ." (O Saragossa, today you've been despoiled . . .) (laisse 188). It can be stingingly caustic: "Mar en irat itant!" (He needn't go so far!) (196). It can be whining: "Dolente, si mar fui!" (I've been doomed to wretchedness!) (201). It can rise shrilly in desperation: "Aiez nos, Mahume!" (Give us aid, Mohammed!) (264). But it is ringing, emphatic, unmistakable. It is textually produced and acknowledged: "A l'altre mot, mult haltement S'escriet . . ." (She cries out in a piercing voice . . .) (188); "A voiz s'escrie . . ." (She screams out shrilly . . .) (264). Her speech has plot repercussions. Bramimonde's lament for Saragossa in laisse 188 is the first mention of the emir; she is the one to introduce, through speech, this important new element in the story. In the scene in which the emir's envoys arrive in Marsile's court to bring news of reinforcements, the overactivity of her voice twice interrupts the message being delivered. The envoys begin by asking the gods to "[s] alvent le Rei e guardent la Reine!" (protect the king and keep the queen from harm)[.](Mohja 21)

According to Mohja, Bramimunde is the opposite of Aude, Roland's fiancée, who dies after hearing of Roland's death at Roncevaux and does not speak much. She, for Mohja, is the

true reflection of the Christian woman - according to the twelfth century criteria- and not insolent and male like Bramimunde (24). Actually, unlike Aude's, the Saracen Queen's character is repeated and developed enough to let us know her. She is not a minor character; her presence is felt on the Saracen side. When Marsille is beaten, she is the Saracen who reacts in a way that the Christian audience would like to hear:

“Truly our Gods acted very basely
Who in the Battle forsook and failed him!” (2600-1)

And upon hearing the praise of their Gods when Emir and his man come to save Marsile and his country she reacts harshly:

“Why, there is a foolish saying!
These Gods of ours are miserable traitors!
They have worked wonders at Roncevaux , the caitiffs!
They let our knights be slaughtered there unaided.
As for my lord, they have utterly betrayed him;
His right hand's gone there is not a doit remaining;
(2714-18)

Of course both Brault and Mohja agree that these reactions are the preparation for the conversion of the Saracen Queen. She is the one who vocalizes the defeat of Emir's army. Hearing this, her husband dies with grief. According to Mohja “Bramimunde is more interested in the significant action out on the battlefield than in the traditional female role of nurse maid to the wounded man in the bed behind her; in a sense her shrieks ill him.”(23) Her character is not a meek woman doing only what is said to her. She is the person who meets Emir on his arrival and she is “indisputably *embramie* – an impassioned figure, inflamed with the anger and grief. She tears her hair in despair over the mortal wound of her husband and the collapse of the kingdom and rages against her Gods” (Burch 80)

According to Brault “Bramimunde is the only Saracen dignitary who survives the stunning double defeat.” Her repeated references to Charlemagne (640, 2605-2608, 2721, 2736-2740) “are a clear indication that her role is inextricably linked to that of Emperor.”(Brault 106) And the fact that she surrenders the keys of Saragossa to the King is because “Bramimunde carries the gold of Islam. The association of the war loot and women is an old familiar one. That is why not only must Saragossa be conquered, but Bramimunde must be carried back to France” (Mohja 44). These are the associations done for the conversion of Bramimunde.

It is true that Trolodus developed this character for the theme of conversion. What does Bramimunde’s conversion signify in the poem? For Calin, it is the negation of the Ganelon’s treachery. (33) According to Brault

it makes the edifying conclusion of the poem possible.[and]
“it is Bramimunde’s repudiation of her pagan gods and her adoption of Christianity *par amour* that offer the most significant manifestation of the Theme of Conversion in Turolodus’s epic.(106)

Harrison stresses her connection to the Emperor Charles claims that,

[t]he most important facet of Bramimunde’s presentation by the Roland poet is her close association, specifically stated in each instance, with Charles. Every time she appears, without exception, she or the poet makes explicit reference to Charles the Emperor. And this link, forged from her debut as gift-giving queen, to the great king, with a divinely bestowed mission of subduing or converting the pagans, brings Bramimunde into contact with the major theme of the poem.

(679)

There are only two places as I mentioned above in the text where conversion with force takes place. These events are not stressed by Tuoldus and narrated just like daily occurrences. Roland's deal with his sword is much longer than the conversion of thousands of Saracens in the text. (Laisses 170-3) Does this show the unimportance of the Theme of Conversion in the poem? Or is it only an edifying conclusion?

Firstly it should not be forgotten that in the first part of the poem the Theme of Conversion constitutes an important role. As I tried to explain above, everything done for the agreement of the two sides and the treachery itself was around the axis of conversion. What Charlemagne was grateful for was the Saracens' willing conversion.

Thus speaks the king, Marsilion, great in rule:

Much hath he studied the saving faith and true. (126-7)

Therefore, we can say that there are many lines devoted to the act of conversion in the first part of the poem. Actually, the treachery of the Saracens and the events leading to the Battle of Roncevaux were the signals of the ineptitude of the "wicked Saracens" for conversion. Thus, Bramimunde symbolizes the potentiality of the Sarcens' "true" conversion.

For Harrison,

she is ... a living example of the most lasting and benevolent side of his [Charlemagne's] assigned earthly task- the flower of the pagan world converted to Christianity, admitted in honour to the very center of Christendom, and the only preoccupation of Charles when the vengeance is over."(679)

She, after witnessing the defeat of the Muslim armies, realizes the Divine help coming to the Franks because of their rightness, and through “sermon and story on her heart.”(3979) accedes to being a Christian.

Here, I think it is necessary to distinguish two types of conversion from each other because of the fact that there seems a clear distinction between conversion by force and *par amour*. And in my opinion, the distinction grounds in Christian morals concerning the theme of conversion in the Bible.

c. Between Old And New Testament

The association of Song of Roland with the Crusades is not only made by the literary critics but also by historians. It is easy to see some reference to Song of Roland in any book dealing with the First Crusade. The speech of the Pope in Clermont is a good example in reflecting the understanding of Christianity at this age. Before discussing the effects of the Testaments in the epic it is crucial not to forget the late 11th Century atmosphere.

But if you are hindered by love of children, parents and wives, remember what the Lord says in the Gospel, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."(Matt 10:37) "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life."(Matt 19:29)(Quoted Dana C. Munro, 5-8)

These verses of the New Testament are from the narrated speech of the Pope Urban at Clermont. Of course, these verses cannot be said to command the believers to fight openly but the Pope's arguments put it into the context of war. Here, I will not discuss the comments of the verses in the late Eleventh Century, nor shall try I make out any meanings from the scriptures.

However, conversions in the New Testament (Acts 2:36, 8:12., 8:35, 9:5; 2 Tim. 1:12., 11:14; Rom. 10:17, 16:14; Rom. 10:17, 16:31., 19:4., 18:8) are realised mostly with divine help and through a sermon. The conversion of Bramimunde in a sense is aimed to have more of a New Testament effect rather than the Old Testament in which there are justified wars against the infidels. Although there is no miracle of God in Bramimunde's conversion, the presence of sermon- an effort to show her the right path- can be said to be within the domain of New Testament. Bramimunde neither hears a divine noise nor sees cloven tongues of fire (Acts 2:3) but she is meant to understand in piecemeal by witnessing the victories of the Christian armies throughout Spain, although the Christians are fewer in number. She is not a Ruth-like figure who has a heartfelt desire to come and embrace the God of another. (Ruth1:16) The fact that there is a deliberate preaching of the Gospel and a conscious acceptance is brought to the fore by the poet.

Here, it can be concluded that the intentioned portrayal of the Queen's willing conversion is a fallacy in itself. The Queen, as a prisoner of war, has no choice but to listen to the preaching of the nuns. We do not know exactly for which reasons she accepted the word of Christ. The preparatory events for the conversion mentioned above, which are based on her own experiences and views, in a way, have been discarded and she is converted via the indoctrination of the nuns, whose arguments are not known by the reader. What I mean is that the conversion of Bramimunde, which, with its precursory events is meant to be the alternative to conversion by force, is far from being a proper alternative. Considering the rules

and the criteria of the poem, as has been proven both by the defeat of the Saracens and Ganelon, and by the utterance of the Queen herself, the victory of the Christians is an open proof of the righteousness of their cause. However, it has not been enough for the conversion of the Queen who needs extra indoctrination sessions. This signifies both the arduousness of the conversion of a “wicked nation”, which has been proven by the earlier treachery of the Saracens, and the need for the crusading endeavour which ensures conversion after the total subjugation of the enemy.

Bramimunde’s role and her reflection in the Song after her conversion is also important. According to Mohja, the Queen is silenced after

[h]er surrender of the towers in *laisse* 265[and it] is also the surrendering of her character’s voice in the poem; this is the first *laisse* in which Bramimonde is spoken of and does not speak. Up until this point, Bramimonde has spoken every single time her name has been mentioned in a *laisse* (50, 187, 188, 195, 196, 201, 264). (30)

In Song of Roland her silencing represents her conversion to proper womanhood, as exemplified by Aude, who utters only a few sentences and who dies upon hearing of the death of her beloved. Therefore, can we say that she has been transformed into a proper character.

In the last *Laisse*, the Saracen Queen is called by her Saracen name, Bramimunde, instead of the Christian, Jullien. For Mohja

The poet is not in full possession of Bramimonde’s meaning; he has difficulty making her “Juliennicity” stick. The “Theme of Conversion” backfires. It is the bad Bramimonde, the “tort” Bramimonde, whom the poem

has convincingly brought to life and cannot seem to kill.

Bramimonde is simply a more successful creation than

Julienne. (33)

We could say that it may be simply a mistake of the poet, maybe a lapsus, but of course this would be a naïve approach and wishful thinking. The conversion of Bramimunde, as we said above, seems to be a consciously developed plot from beginning to end. Her being called by her pagan name shows the inability of the Christian society in the Song to accept “the other.” Therefore, we can say that although there is a high ideal of conversion reflected in the poem, neither the poet nor the society is ready for such a development that creates a close relationship with the “other”.

When we consider the space that Bramimunde’s conversion has in the text, we do not see many lines; there is much more focus on Roland’s death and the fighting scenes. We can say that Bramimunde’s conversion, with all its symbolic meanings (Transformation of Saracen Gold and personal and imperial wealth), is an edifying end reflecting the hopes of the Middle Ages. The conversion of the “nonbelievers” with dialogue and true understanding of the Christian religion seems not probable connected with the Saracens’ being corrupt and stubborn thus not ready for such a dialogue. The intention of the poet, to end the poem with a “true conversion” seems unsuccessful and thus impossible in the age of Crusade(s).

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

3.1. The Condition of Europe

Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries were years of transformation in the West. They were years of calamity imbued with wars, strife, droughts and religious conflicts. Economical and social changes affected the daily lives of people. Commerce was gaining importance, the effects of which were to be seen through the end of the fourteenth century. The stringent feudal system was in languish and the proliferation of commerce created a new political and social system which enabled another possible shift for a lower class member (for example a commoner or serf); the only way out was not knighthood anymore.

Black Death devastated Europe and the crisis was experienced by all classes of society. “[It] was arguably the worst natural disaster in western history [and it is estimated that by the time it ended,] it had killed thirty-five million people in Europe.(Backman 375) It was not the only epidemic that affected Europe bitterly. Drought was also notorious for paring down the population. The only way out for the hungry masses, not able to find something to eat, was to remain vigilant. There was also “celestial embargo”; “pollen analyses indicate that over the course of the fourteenth century, Europe’s average annual temperature declined approximately two degrees Celsius (Backman 370) which hampered the social system still depending on agriculture in all terms.

If we add the incessant war traffic, both civil and international, it is easy to see that all these calamities reached genocidal proportions. Edward I (1272-1307) conquered Wales and died before a campaign against Scotland. Edward II (1307-1327), murdered by the treachery of his own wife and when he was king, was defeated by the Scots in 1314 and in the reign of Edward III The Hundred Years War started and some of the aforementioned calamities

continued. After Edward III, Richard II in his first years of his juvenile reign had to face the peasants' revolt and baronial opposition that show the discontent of people in England.

The Hundred Years War was in the years following the Black Death. After the succeeding deaths of the French kings without an heir, Edward III, the son of Isabelle of France, claimed the throne of France. Naturally the French turned down such a claim and with this conflict the war broke out. Crecy was the first decisive battle of the Hundred years war and resulted in the victory of the English.(1346) However, according to Backman," It was a fascinating struggle, one in which England nearly won every battle, yet in which France ultimately triumphed"(383) The Poitiers war was the other climax; King John of France was captured and taken to England afterwards. These wars finally ended in 1453, marking the longest continuous war in the history of Europe. However, in England the War of the Roses broke out within the same year. The conflict between the Houses of Lancaster and York, (Richard III and Henry IV) lasted many years though small battles they were; extra expenses and discontent as well as destabilization were its natural outcomes. More than a hundred years England saw a turbulent political history which gives an impression of the Dark Ages.

3.1.1. The Peasants' Revolt

These ubiquitous wars and polarizations exuded despair in the society, combined with the epidemics and the heavy burden of the French Wars.The poll tax, first levied in 1377, caused great dissention and protest among people. The crowded city centers, swollen with migration at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and the cancellation of wages caused a peasants revolt. "The most serious immediate effect was an acute shortage of labor to till the fields and a sharp rise in food prices. The laborers who were left immediately demanded higher wages or, if they were tenants, more favorable terms." (Painter 375)

The People of England, fed up with the inexorable economic crisis and the ongoing inequity in the society, as well as the impotence of the young King Richard, with a complete belief that the King was being manipulated, revolted and, according to Froissart, gathered 60-70 thousand people, walked to London, and wreaked destruction, killing John of Gaunt, the uncle of the King, and the Archbishop. After talking to the King, most of them dispersed except Wat Tyler- the supposed leader- and his friends. They were killed and the peasants' revolt ended without a solution, marking the great dissatisfaction and displeasure of the people in England. The sermon of John Ball a precursor of the revolt -later arrested and released- is a good summary of the discontentedness of the common people:

‘Good people, things cannot go right in England and never will, until goods are held in common and there are no more villeins and gentlefolk, but we are all one and the same. In what way are those whom we call lords greater masters than ourselves? How have they deserved it? Why do they hold us in bondage? If we all spring from a single father and mother, Adam and Eve, how can they claim or prove that they are lords more than us, except by making us produce and grow the wealth which they spend? They are clad in velvet and camlet lined with squirrel and ermine, while we go dressed in coarse cloth. They have the wines, the spices and the good bread: we have the rye, the husks and the straw, and we drink water. They have shelter and ease in their fine manors, and we have hardship and toil, the wind and the rain in the fields. And from us must come, from our labour, the things which keep them in luxury. We are called serfs and beaten if we are slow in our service to them, yet we have no sovereign lord we can complain to, none to hear us

and do us justice. Let us go to the king -he is young- and show him how we are oppressed, and tell him that we want things to be changed, or else we will change them ourselves. If we go in good earnest and all together, very many people who are called serfs and are held in subjection will follow us to get their freedom. And when the king sees and hears us, he will remedy the evil, either willingly or otherwise.’(Froissart 212-3)

3.1.2. Feudalism

The change of Feudalism, the effects of which could be seen overtly later in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, started in the thirteenth century. Two changes have affected the transformation of the Feudal system deeply: The incipient commercial activities exempt from the control of the nobility and the changes in the form of warfare. According to Ault, “the most important effect of the Crusades was the increase of commerce between east and west ... The crusaders were representative of every social class.” (359) Therefore, the control of money shifted from the hands of Aristocracy to the other classes. This also caused a change in the political system, as the expenditures of warfare during the reign of Edward III entailed taking money from the other classes and had a great impact on the formation of the House of Commons which served to the development of the parliamentary system. The yeomen also gained great importance with the emergence of the Black Death. There were not enough men to work, therefore the old style of serf- service was not profitable and in a sense impossible to maintain. Farmers could change their ideas about for whom they were going to work. This ... situation created a crisis and expedited the transformation of the feudal system. Also “[n]obles who could not make their manors pay a profit in an age of uncertain markets, declining agricultural prices and depreciated currency were no longer able to maintain their status.(

Chodorow & Hoyt 645) This caused a crisis for the small vassals and lords who could not make a profit and had to sell their lands which could only be overcome in one of two ways: firstly, by dealing with the commercial activity; secondly, by depending on war loot.

The shift from the classical feudal system is obvious here: instead of unwavering agreements with the vassals, the renting system gained more importance. Furthermore, hemmed in by the need of money, insolvent lords coerced their peasants to leave the lands and instead used hired labour and converted their lands to sheep farms, which was a far more lucrative work as the wool trade was gaining importance in the period. This naturally reduced the necessary workforce and the population of the cities swelled with the unemployed. The classic relationship of a serf or peasant with the upper classes came to an end.

Also the alteration of warfare contributed to the collapse of the traditional position of the knighthood. The Hundred Years War witnessed the ineffectiveness of the armoured knight. With the introduction of the longbow, crossbow, pike the “wealth tended to concentrate and warfare became more demanding, the character of armies were changing.” (Mundy 190) The association of warfare with money and the necessity and ineffectiveness of full-armor, which could not stand the vigorous shots of the crossbows and the longbows, diminished the need for feeding knights. Instead, with considerable less cost, a hired army could be gathered. In England, the knighthood became widespread but at the same time lost its importance. “In brief, the numbers of those considered fully armed knights was declining.” (Mundy 190) England, in the Crecy war beat the French army which outnumbered the English, with the help of its new war techniques. Knights collaborated with the merchants as “[t]he common interests of both classes in the wool trade, the willingness of the burgesses to accept the leadership of the knights of the shire...” (Chodorow & Hoyt 840) intersected. Therefore, knighthood transformed into more of a social function rather than a military and although the importance of knighthood changed, as we see, stress to the declining institution

gathered importance. “As the realities of feudal society gave way to a new social order, in its military economic and political aspects, the ideals and values of feudalism were asserted more strongly than ever.” (Chodorow & Hoyt 648)

This is a most probable explanation of the Charlemagne Romances in English, which nostalgically exalted the feudal world and oversaw the rapid change that was taking place in 14th and 15th century Europe.

3.1.3. The Church

The Church was the leading and most ostentatious dynamic in the first crusade (1095), gathering masses despite its crisis with the monarchies of the leading countries, who paved a new way for the European communities by uniting under the banner of the crusading army of the papacy. Though its effects were devastating and it did not bring long-term success, the Church played a critical role in obliterating the fractions between the Christian communities and stopped the ongoing internal strife. However, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Church was far from having the clout to handle such strenuous campaigns. According to Painter, the “gradual secularization” of the societies of Europe was bearing a greater threat than the “strong tendency to worldliness” (400) of the Church. The Church was now struggling with the strengthening monarchies of Europe and it was also dealing with an internal. Two events mark the great change in the Church: the controversy of Boniface VIII with Philip IV of France, and Edward I of England and the great schism of the papacy.

In the fourteenth century, calamities in Europe caused a great tendency towards the Church as a Saviour. However, the Church during the time of the Black Death was not believed to have shown great concern towards the people subject to egregious problems. Of course, the succeeding calamities of the thirteenth century were, in the medieval mindset, believed to be a punishment of God.

There seemed to be a greater and greater distance between the values and ideals of the Christian community and the realities of the opulent Church. The papal court at Avignon had become one of the richest and most splendid in Christendom and now became the target of severe criticism.”
(Chodorow & Hoyt 596)

Upon the attempt of Philip IV and Edward I to tax the Church of their countries for a war they were thinking of declaring on Gascony, the response of the Pope was harsh. Boniface VIII promulgated two bulls, *Clericis Laicos* and *Umam Sanctam*, declaring that the Papacy had the right to interfere in both the secular and religious affairs of the countries. According to Painter, Philip IV – taking advantage of the protest of people towards the papacy- entrusted his man Nagoret with accusing the Pope of many crimes, including being a sodomite. Also, Nagoret is supposed to have found witnesses for his accusations and, with the help of the Colonna family, beleaguered the pope’s house. Boniface VIII died upon the shock of the audacious and unforeseen insult.(404). It is apparent how the unattainable condition of the papacy now was degenerated; “Philip Augustus would have been aghast at the suggestion that he would be justified in destroying the papacy if the interests of France demanded such a step, but such an idea would not seriously disturb Philip IV.”(Painter 401)

The Schism, which took place at a time when the centre of the Papacy was in Avignon, was simply the dissention between the Roman popes and the Avignon popes. When the popes became under the influence of French Monarchy they moved to a place near the borders of French realm (Avignon). All the popes were French during this period. When the Pope Gregory XI wanted to visit Rome and died there, Italians (Romans) made pressure to the council to elect an Italian pope. First selected pope died one day after his coronation and

Archbishop of Bari, Urban VI was selected thereafter (1378). But the council after a short time vetoed his papacy and elected Robert of Geneva as a rival pope in the same year. Thus the Great Western Schism started which was coined by Petrarch as the Babylonian captivity, weakened the domain of the Church greatly. The Papacy had been regarded as the projection of the Godly realm; the pope being the instrument of God. Excommunication for any king, including Philip IV, was one of the biggest threats he could encounter. However, after the schism, people became confused as to which Pope to acknowledge; the political aspect of the Church became more evident. The Schism lasted 36 years leaving arduous discussions, political intrigues, and antipopes behind.

The Fourteenth century also saw the emergence of widespread heresies throughout the Christendom, which paved the way for the Protestant revolution, which deeply belabored the Papacy. Some of these heresies did not have long term effects (like the Flagellants), however, the ideas of John Wycliffe and John Hus are accepted to have been the precursors of the Protestant movements in the following centuries. According to Wycliffe

True dominion only belongs to God; man acts as his deputy on earth. All righteous men have an equal right to dominion, that is, to the goods of the earth. Before Adam's fall all property was common, but the introduction of the sin brought private property into existence, The Church, however, should not take advantage of this fact. It should adhere to the higher law that banned the property... (Painter 421)

Backman stresses that in the Jubilee event that took place in 1300 nearly one million people visited Rome, and the luxury of the Papacy invoked the criticism of the people; this

also shows that the distaste towards the Church's possessions goes back earlier. He also claims that, despite the calamities that the Church had been experiencing, [in society] "strict Catholic orthodoxy may have been on the wane, but not Christian zeal; the religious energy that had so long characterized medieval society still reigned supreme, but now flowed through a plethora of channels." (414)

3.1.4 The Crusading Zeal and the Ottomans

The Fourth Crusade – the last one- took place at the beginning of the thirteenth century. (1202-4) Historians regard this war as a crusade that gave rise to the invasion of the remnants of the Byzantine Empire and the foundation of the Latin kingdom (1204-61). Naming this war as the fourth of the four crusades does not mean that there were not more thereafter. European Christians tried not to remain aloof to the inexorable rise of the Ottomans. We do not count the fifth, sixth and seventh crusades, which were very weak and only can be classified as unsuccessful attempts. The war of Nicopolis was a climax in the unification of Europe against the Ottomans in fighting for the same ideal and as a later attempt at a crusade. However, despite the overt advantage of the Christian army, the war ended with a grave defeat taking the wind out of the crusaders' sails. Nevertheless, this war can be taken as good proof of the ongoing crusading zeal felt in Europe and

[w]hat was surprising, though, was the degree to which the westerners put aside their own squabbles in order to bring the crusade to pass. The English and French temporarily halted their Hundred Years war conflicts, the Burgundians joined as well, and even the two rival popes set aside their differences."(Backman 416)

The real cause, of course, for the new crusading endeavours were neither French chivalry - dying for fighting in the name of Christ- nor Europe's hedging its bets considering the inner strife. It was solely the rise of the Ottomans in Anatolia after the big crises, such as the invasion of the Crusaders and the Mongols, which make up the nadir in Anatolian Turkish history of that time. The Ottomans were a very small emirate (Beylik) in north-west Anatolia near the borders of the remnants of the Byzantium Empire. Its official date of stepping into the scene of world history as a state is accepted to be 1299. However, in a short time the Ottomans developed and expanded quickly, so in a hundred year they were as big as the former Seljuk state. The Ottoman advancement before Bayezid I (1389-1403) was almost solely aimed through the Balkans, and this advancement towards Europe caused distaste among the Europeans. The Ottomans became an element of fear because the Ottoman advancement went on incessantly till the death of Suleiman the Magnificent (1566).

Pope Pius II "[o]n August 1464, received communion and addressed his cardinals for the last time, exhorting them to carry on with the work he had begun. 'Woe onto you woe onto you, if you desert God's work.' he warned before dying [...] a few hours later. (Housley, 39) This shows clearly that the crusading zeal goes on, though not effective, in the middle of the fifteenth century. The Pope, of course, wanted to benefit from the great shock that the Conquest of Istanbul created among the Europeans in 1453. He was not successful in gathering a new Crusade, however hard he worked for it. He saw, after gathering a council for the crusades, that the delegates from all over Europe were not impressed with his speech (Housley 44) According to Bisaha, Pius II was able to become a Pope mostly because of his zeal for a new Crusade. (41) He is also famous for sending a letter to Mehmed II to convert him to the Christian religion which, according to the pope, would make him the most renowned King of Europe.

Although the crusading project was at an impasse, it is obvious that the European fear of an impending invasion of the Muslim army went on with the advancement of the Ottomans. The flourishing of the Charlemagne Romances in English can be seen as a result of the inability of the Europeans to resist the Ottoman army, a longing for the past as an escape from the social and political turbulence of the fourteenth and the first part of the fifteenth centuries that deepened the despair of the medieval audience.

3. 2. English Medieval Romance

Bearing the typical features of the romance tradition, English Medieval Romance focuses on historical events that are mostly fictitious and hence reflects an ideal past which never happened. In this way, it gives some hints about the tendencies of the age in which it is produced. It has high ideals, such as service to Christendom, but the events are generally adventurous and symbolic rather than being serious and catastrophic, as in Song of Roland or any heroic epic covering similar topics. Courtly love elements are also present, exalting the love between male and female. Courtly love bears a code of behavior, which aims to redound to the credit of the court and knightly living.

When English romances were being written and were in their heyday in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, most of the issues taken in these romances did not reflect the realities of English society. As Mehl puts it, in the fourteenth century

The ... period that saw the emergence of the English romances, also saw the steady decline of the knight, who had been such an essential part of the courtly society. Just as the knight's armour began to prove useless and obsolete during the French wars, the courtly etiquette likewise seemed to become outmoded. Where it was kept alive artificially, as was the case

all over Europe, it bore no significant relation to life and had only the charm of antiquity. This is why from the beginning, the English romances were fairy-tales, stories from a distant past [..](4)

We can assume that in an age full of calamities, strife, and wars, these romances were an escape for the society in a sense of a utopic realm where the sun could be stopped, and the Moslem threat would fade into obscurity in the armour of the knight. People could find themselves in an imaginary kingdom where the ideals of the supposed system could be encountered. It was obvious that then present conditions of Europe and the situation of the society did not allow such an embodiment of the ideals. “And as they move from the realms of the common experience the romance writers, of necessity, move into the realms of analogy; those realms in which, as in the realms of the religious experience, actuality can be described by metaphor.”(Barron 5) In the romances, the ideal characters go through many problems and tests that have symbolic meanings and similar paternal specialties, in which they are tested and mostly succeed. Generally, they have a symbolic victory hidden in their material superiority in these stories. Barron says that

their roles are representational rather than individual, and in so far as they're subject to social criticism [...] it is their conduct in relation to the ideal which is under scrutiny rather than their personal, psychological motivation[...] the figures of romance are essentially stereotypes in the service of its didactic purpose. (5)

It is probably this representational function of the ideal that made Charlemagne, the king of Franks, a popular hero in England during the Hundred Year Wars. These Romances are considered under three titles: The Matter of Rome, The Matter of England and The Matter of France. The Matter of Rome deals with the adventures of old Roman and Greek heroes such as Julius Ceasar and Alexander the great. Matter of England is known to be the adventures of Arthur and the knights of the Round Table. And The Matter of France narrates the deeds and adventures of Charlemagne (and Roland).

3.3. Charlemagne Romances

Charlemagne Romances in English are concentrated in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They are, according to Malone, “except for the late Rauf Collier(Coilyear), separated into two groups as The Freumbras Group and the The Otuel Group.”(186) The Freumbras Group which “treats the incidents found in two French Chansons de Geste, The Destruction of Rome and Fierebras “(186), includes The Sowdone of Babylone and Sir Ferumbras. The Otuel Group comprises Roland and Vernagu, The Sege of Melayne, Otuel and Roland, Duke Rowland and The Sir Otuell of Spayne, and Otuel.

These romances bear some common specialties, such as the exaltation of the past and “pietistic [elements, such as the] glorification of the Christian faith” (Malone 188).The presence of the priest king Charlemagne, who has a direct relation to God, as well as the presence of “malicious heathen” Saracens are among the characteristic features of these romances. Religious zeal seems to be the combining element of these romances which is more important than the chivalric elements and the national zest present in Song of Roland.

Now that the legends of Charlemagne had assumed the character of a saint’s life, converts to the true faith required to complete the analogy. Poets engaged on

romanticizing the Chansons de Geste supplied them from among the Saracen ranks, converting them by force of armor mystical experiences modeled on the Grail romances, and attaching them to the Geste du roi in defiance of historical probability. The historicity of Matter of France meant even less to fourteenth-century English audiences, but the flavour of the Saint's life apparently appealed to them. (Barron 92- 93)

Three romances will be discussed in this chapter one from Ferumbras Group, Sowdone of Babylone, one from the Otuel Group, Otuel and Roland, and one from the late (parodic) romance The Tale of Rauf Collier (Coilyear).

CHAPTER 4

THE SOWDONE OF BABYLONE

4.1. About The Poem

The poem recounts the destruction of Rome by a Sowdone of Saracens (meaning Sultan in Middle English, equivalent to the “king” in European political system) and Charlemagne’s recapture and defeat of him via the help of his children who have converted to Christianity. Sowdone (Laban) sets out for a campaign against Rome because they stole his ships. He gathers a big army in which there are Asians Ethiopians, Africans, Turks... and attacks the city. The council of Rome, under the Pope’s leadership, decides to fight against them rather than calling for help from Charlemagne. They, though having a small victory on the first day, are beaten by a war trick after which the Pope himself, gathering some troops, fights and the city of Rome falls. During the skirmish, when he sees the Pope in the battlefield, Ferumbras, the son of the Sowdone, doesn’t kill him. Saracens eventually conquer the city, slaughtering many a Christian. Charlemagne, upon hearing the news, launches a campaign. When the army arrives to the city they have some battles with Ferumbras, who is a valiant warrior. Ferumbras cannot be successful and, with the aim of getting Roland and Oliver, he goes to Charles and challenges them to a duel. Roland, arguing with Charlemagne, refuses to fight the Saracen and Oliver, though being ill, accepts the challenge and beats him. Ferumbras, having been wounded, accepts conversion and is later captured by the Franks. Roland, who goes to help his friend, is captured by the Saracens with Oliver and both are taken before the Sowdone. Laban, angered by their refusal to convert, wants to have them killed but, upon the intervention and council of his daughter, Floripas, who is in love with Guy of Burgundy, whom she later marries, he puts them into prison. Meanwhile, Charlemagne argues with his councillors about whom he should send as an ambassador to Sowdone. Upon the disagreement he gets angry and sends all his ten “dussippiers” to Laban.

He, again, wants to kill them but he is convinced to put them in jail by the council of his daughter, who says that she wants to take back her brother, Ferumbras, as a pretext. Later, Floripas, by killing her mistress and the jailer, takes control of the prison. She feeds and entertains them there and later gives them a castle full of armour and food. Laban gets very frustrated on hearing this and surrounds the castle to starve them. Floripas helps them with a girdle which is captured later by a man of Sowdone. They anticipate help from Charlemagne to whom Naines carries the news. With further struggles Charles captures the city as well as Laban in the war, with the help of Ferumbras. Upon Ferumbras' council Charles renounces from killing Laban and lets him be a convert. However, being neither a faithful believer in his gods nor in Christianity, he spits into the baptismal font and is killed immediately thereon.

4.2. About The Text

The poem is thought to have been written around 1400 and “survives in only one manuscript, Garrett No. 140, which passed from the Garrett collection in Baltimore to Princeton University [and] the manuscript dates from the mid-fifteenth century.” (Lupack 3) Its author is not known and only a copy of it survives to our day. The poem belongs to the Ferumbras group that “derives from a lost twelfth- century chanson celebrating the role of the French in relieving Rome from the Saracen conquest”.(Barron 100) Sowdone of Babylone is believed to be “based on an Anglo-Norman retelling of Fiererbras rather than directly on the French romance itself”(Lupack 4)

4.3. Saracens

The Sowdone of Babylone shares similar characteristics with Song of Roland considering the Saracen imagery, the Muslim threat, and the type of conversion. In the poem the Saracens are depicted as diabolical enemies from whom every kind of malice could be

expected. Though being an alien culture, they speak the same language as the Franks. In the Song, there is no instance (apart from the names) in which the difference of their language is stressed. Similarly, in most Charlemagne romances, the Saracens mostly share the same characteristics- that is knighthood, courtesy, bravery... -However, religion and the belief system sharply separate the two people from each other.

The Sowdone of Babylone takes the images of Saracens one step further and alienates them by showing the differences of their cultures. There is of course a strong romanticizing of the enemy which opens the door to the exaltation of the victory.

All the familiar stereotypes about foreigners medieval old modern, find their place here: they make too much noise, they smell bad they eat repulsive foods, their excess is disgusting. Delicacies like serpents fried in oil and 'beestes bloode'....are matter that does not constitute human aliment and that therefore allies saracens with antropological unclean. This culinary alterity suggests that, like Estragote's name, Saracen culture is untrasatable, nonsensical, asignifying.

(Cohen 213)

The Saracens cannot be said to be a merciful people, they kill whomever they find on their way; at the beginning of the siege of Rome, Sowdone bids his soldiers to kill ten thousand maidens:

The countrey hade serchid and sought,
Ten thousande maidyns fair of face
Unto the Sowdan hath he broghte.
The Sowdon commanded hem anone,
That thai shulde al be slayn.

Martires thai were everychon,
And therof were thai al ful fayne.
He said, `My peple nowe ne shalle
With hem noughte defouled be,
But I wole distroie over all
The sede over alle Cristianté.'(225-35)

The Saracens bear supernatural elements like magic: Floripas the daughter of Sowdone saves the lives of the knights through using a magic girdle that obliterates the feeling of hunger. They are not normal human beings: there are giants fighting for the Saracens. They are entrusted with the task of holding the bridge against the Frank army The giant couple's children are converted by Charlemagne, but they do not live long. These supernatural associations with Muslims (or "the other") "[also] battles against Muslims, written from a Christian viewpoint, always invest their enjoyment in this way, so that the readers are never permitted to identify with or humanize the enemy. (Cohen 211) Viciousness is their character and they are so diabolical that the author believes that they descend from the offspring of Satan:

With Sarisyns that hade it wone;
And Estragot with him he mette
With bores hede, blake and donne.
For as a bore an hede hadde
And a grete mace stronge as stele.
.....
This Astrogot of Ethiop,
He was a kinge of grete strength;

Ther was none suche in Europe
So stronge and so longe in length.
I trowe he were a develes sone,
Of Belsabubbis lyne.(345-349, 352-357)

Their difference is not restricted to the supernatural elements only; their morals, which were only separated by their religion in Song of Roland, do not consist of the difference between the so-called Islamic creed and the Christian faith. The polarity enlarges and its quality is spread to the whole social life. The funeral process shown us after the Guy of Burgundy kills a Saracen King is a deliberate stress to the difference of the two cultures:

He trumped, his mene to relefe,
For to cease that tyme mente he.
Mersadage, Kinge of Barbarye,
He did carye to his tente
And beryed him by right of Sarsenye
With brennynge fire and riche oynemente
And songe the Dirige of Alkaron,
That Bibill is of here laye,
And wayled his deth everychon
Sefen nyghtis and sefen dayes.(2265- 2274)

There have been many deaths from both sides since the beginning of the romance; this ritual peculiar to Muslims is given when the knights are kept in the castle. Their captivity there enables the western reader to penetrate into that culture and learn their way of life by

which the audience can easily witness their superiority and the seriousness of the ongoing war. Cohen argues that

The Sultan of Babylon takes pains to demonstrate that the rituals of the Quran make culturally specific sense. The author takes every opportunity to display an erudition of foreign customs, filling his interpolations with learned facts and nonjudgemental descriptions not found in his source materials. Religious rites repeat and become comfortably familiar. Patriculizing names and linguistic diversity are bestowed upon what in the romances sources is an undifferentiated Saracen horde. (215)

A similar attitude towards the Saracen culture is apparent in the raid staged by Roland and other dussippiers when trying to kill the Sowdone. Roland asks Floripas about their rituals for the supper.

Tille men to souper shalle gone?'
`Sir, somme men jouste with spere and shelde
And some men carol and singe gode songes;
Some shote with dartis in the feelde,
And somme play at chesse amonge.'
`Ye bene but foulis of gode dissporte. (1990-5)

The last sentence belongs to Roland criticizing their culture saying that “you’re ignorant of good diversion”. In Song of Roland the difference of attitudes of the two cultures is contrasted by the treatments of the two kings toward the ambassadors. While Marsile was killing the Frank ambassadors, the situation was vice versa on the Frank side. This contrast

has not been ignored by the writer of *Sowdone* and whoever comes into the presence of Laban - at least verbally- experiences the fear of persecution. In both scenes where the Frankish knights talk with Laban their persecution was hindered by Floripas.

The low morality of the Saracen side, although she is a convert, is symbolized by the Saracen queen Floripas. Firstly, she converts for a man about whom she does not know anything; secondly her behavior at the castle is a perfect example of the base attitudes of the Saracens. The negative attitudes Mohja attributed to the Bramimunde can be easily associated with Floripas. That is, she laughs loudly after Guy kills the Saracen king and makes such a loud vow that even her father learns whom she loves. “In the misogynistic quasi-clerical bent of [*Song of Roland*], the only good female is a passive one. We observe the behavior of an exemplary Christian woman in Aude, a completely inert figure whose only action is to die”. (Mohja 24) The Saracen queen of the *Song* is now transformed into a flirtatious, somewhat flighty Princess whose not only voice but also behaviour is very assertive and subversive.

Dame Floripe lough with loude steven
And saide, `Sir Gye, my love so free,
Thou kanste welle hit the prikke.
He shall make no booste in his contré.
God giffe him sorowe thikke!(2258-2262)

This is of course of utmost notoriousness considering the role of women in fifteenth century society. The general code of behaviour expected from a Christian queen is being demure and well mannered. However, Floripas never avoids shouting and showing herself. As Mohjha says

Unlike Bramimunde... Floripas [is a] sexy minx, no mistake.
So are numerous other “wanton” muslim queens and princesses

in the chansons and romances. The transgressive quality which is expressed as shrewish loquaciousness in Bramimunde manifests itself in sexual looseness with later Muslim heroines. But they are not merely passively seductive; they are active seducers. These Muslim princesses initiate much action in numerous Chanson de Geste and romances (quoted in Mohja, Daniels 1984, 79 -Warren 357).

Also for a queen in the fifteenth century her sexual harassment and playful talking with the knights is a sign of low Saracen morality. She kisses and makes playful courting to her future husband among the other knights and arranges beautiful Saracen ladies for them.

A similar vanton – queen image is present in Firumbras a different version of the Sowdone narrating almost the same story which has the same characters. The text is “[t]he Fillingham MS.--now British Museum, Additional MS. 37492¹ [and it’s probably written] in the second half of the fifteenth century.”(Sullivan, xi, xx) The text starts with the Roland’s and other duzzippiers’ capture in the castle and the Saracens have similar supernatural and inhuman characteristics as in Sowdone. Floripas, by using magic, controls the flames and saves the castle. After the threat diminishes Floripas suggests that each knight choose a maiden and that they enjoy their imprisonment:

The tour hys strong y-now, *with*-Inne and *with*-oute.

There whyle þat ʒe hit hald, schal no man it wyne.

Take we it alle in myrþe þat we haue here-Inne!

ffyftene maydenes we beʒt now here.

Eche man chese hym a mayde þat hym lyketh to fere!

y haue y-chose þere me lykeþ, my lemman Gy." (854-858)

And also throughout the poem the giants are present in the army of Saracens bearing the same diabolical features as in Sowdone.

Therefore, when we think of snake eating and animal-blood drinking, the Saracens as well as their idolatrous adoration and richness which is stressed many times in the poem (130,135, 1150, 2480) and their keenness for carnal love, a worldly image emerges which is very close to the perception of old pagan societies. Therefore, in a way, Muslims in the romance are descendants of old pagan cultures which are seen as null and void. Considering that Sowdone of Babylon is highly affected by Song of Roland, which has the same main characters, and somewhat similar notion of Saracen in its mind, we can say that the poem sustains the imagery of Saracens who are associated with the old pagan cultures in the Song. This is an entry to announce the victor in the poem on account that in the fourteenth/fifteenth century all the pagan nations of 8th century Europe, against some of which Charlemagne had incessant wars, are no more present on the map.

4.4. The Importance of Religion

Religion, as mentioned above, has a very vital role in the Song, constructing the base of the real strife in the poem. Although there are exaggerated Saracen images, mostly the enemy is more or less the same. The baseness of the enemy and their diabolic characteristics stem from the iniquitous qualities of -the supposed semi pagan- Muslim religion. However, in Sowdone of Bayblone not everything follows the same course. It is indisputable that the theme of conversion is closely related with the images of the Saracens (other side) and the importance of the religions in the poems we are going to deal with just like in Song of Roland. When we consider the exaggerated and romanticized Saracen image, it is highly plausible that the perception of the religion has similar qualities with the a priori Saracen images present for several centuries. The superficiality of the enemy is combined with the Muslim threat which

is readily overcome by Charles and Firumbras. Religion constitutes one of the polarities that are present in the poem.

[Religion] does play a part in defining the characters of Laban and of Charlemagne and in emphasizing the difference in their causes. And it is this polarity that forms the thematic center of the poem. Elements beyond religion enter into the contrast. One of the most important is the matching of words and works. The impetus for all the action of the romance is the robbing of the wealth on one of the Sultan's ships by the Romans, for which he vows to be avenged. But his life becomes a study in frustration. While his vow seems to be fulfilled by the sacking of Rome, he is ultimately thwarted in achieving his revenge by Charlemagne and his Peers, and, worse, by his own children. Laban vows to Mahound that Oliver and Roland will be slain, but is dissuaded by his daughter, whose betrayal assures that they never will be executed. And later he swears that he will hang Charlemagne unless he will return Ferumbras and leave his territory. Of course, Charlemagne is never hung. Even Laban's threats against his gods are never carried out. (Lupack 6)

Compared to the Song we can say that there is no such sentiment such as "Pagnims are wrong Christians are right" which is the building block of the narrative. This becomes clearer when we focus on Charlemagne/ Sowdone and the two converts of the poem.

The pious Charlemagne of the Song, who is protected by the angels of God, mostly prays and acts for the sake of Christianity and is a distinctive priest warrior character as mentioned above. His relationship with God clearly transpires when he is obliged to take action against other heathens with a divine command in the last lines of the poem. His magnanimity is issued throughout the poem and it reflects on his subjects. However, in the fast-paced, adventurous Sowdone, which bears some details of the Song, Charlemagne also transforms into an obstinate king whose feelings are devoid of great passion towards either his nephew or his soldiers. Unlike his unwillingness to send either his duzzippers, as well as Turpin and Naines, or his nephew to Marsile, who is notorious for killing the ambassadors of the Christians in Sowdone, upon the disagreement he sends all his remaining duzzippers to Sowdone:

The Kinge was wroth and swore in halle
By Him that boght him with His blode:
'On my messange shall ye gon alle,
Be ye never so wroth or wode.'
Thay toke here lefe and forth thay yede;
It availed not agayne him to sayne.
I pray God gif hem gode spede!
Ful harde it was to comen agayn. (1731-38)

In the poem Charles prays once and is immediately answered by God via one of his angels: this is the only illustration in the poem of the degree of the relationship between Charles and God. However, on the contrary, in both Song of Roland and in Roland and Otuel, as we will see in the next section, Charles' piety is well constructed and treated more deeply. Similarly the Christian soldiers lack that Christian zeal which peaks with the martyrdom of

Roland. In Sowdone, Roland abstains from fighting with Ferumbras saying that because he has praised the old knights one day before they should go to the fight:

The Kinge lete calle Sir Roulande
And saide, `Thou most with this man fight,
To take this bataile here on honde,
Therto God gyfe the grace and myghte!
Roulande answered with woordis boolde
And saide, `Sir, have me excused!
He saide certeynly he ne wolde;
The bataile uttirly he refused.
`The laste day ye preised faste
The oolde knightes of here worthynes.
Let hem goon forth - I have no haste;
Thai may goo shewen here prowes.'show
For that worde the Kinge was wrothe
And smote him on the mouthe on hye,
The bloode at his nose oute-goth,
And saide, `Traitour, thou shalte abye.'(1079-1094)

Therefore Roland, who was the hero of Christianity in the Song, now becomes a “Traitour” and is beaten by Charles. By doing that he is “robbed of the honour of defeating and converting Ferumbras by Oliver”(Barron 101) In Otuel and Roland, Roland willingly fights with Otuel again and again asking him to convert. Here Roland’s dissidence with Charlemagne displays not his unwillingness of taking initiative for Christendom but its not

being the primary cause of the action in the poem. This fact comes out into the open better when focusing on the conversion scenes in the poem.

The polarity between Charles and Sowdone, mentioned above, is highly stressed throughout the poem. While Charles is victor and a potent king throughout the poem, Laban is, on the contrary, a sultan full of frustration and disappointment. For instance, at the beginning of the poem we learn that his children, Floripas and Ferumbras, are his only joys:

But I be venged, dyen I shalle.

Sire Ferumbras, my sone so dere,

Ye muste me comforte in this case:

My joye is alle in the nowe here

And in my doghter Dame Florypas (92-96)

At the end of the poem both of his children are converted and become enemy to their father, thus being a peak in his frustration. Also, throughout the poem whenever Laban makes a vow, he cannot fulfil it. One of the polarities between him and Charles comes out in the scenes when Sowdone denounces his Gods many times, seeing that none of his wishes are being realised. On the contrary, when Charles prays, immediately he is answered by God. However, these remain but few instances, not affecting the general flow of the poem. Secondly, when Charles wishes to send all of his duzzippiers on a deadly mission, they all accept his decree whereas Laban can not control his own children. While Charles is a stout ruler making everyone obey his commands, Laban turns out to be weak in carrying out something he wishes, although announced by the poet as a “worthy Sowdone” (49) -. Whenever he is resolved to denounce and destroy his gods he is hindered by priests. Moreover, when he wants to have all the duzzippiers (including Roland and Oliver) killed, he is dissuaded by his own daughter. The only war the Saracens win is achieved “By this fals

contrevede engine” (333). On the contrary, the Christians fight frankly without any trick or beguile. When Roland and other duzzipiers go out of the castle to find some provisions, being ten duzzipiers kill three hundred to name but a few.

Thai slowen down that came to honde.

Mahounde availed hem noghte.

In shorte tyme the ende was made;

They ten slough thre hundred there.(2401-2404)

The presence of the giants is the part of the contrast as well as the magic girdle- which is a Saracen thing attaching them the power of magic-. Also morally, as we mentioned above the contrast goes on: Even though Floripas is at the top of the hierarchy that she can attain as an unmarried woman, that is being a princess, she wants to marry beneath her (Guy of Burgundy, who is only a bachelor warrior in the Frank army) at the expense of being a traitor or dead. She runs the risk of flogging a dead horse in her own country surrounded by her father’s men, who are willing to kill her as soon as they hunt them down. Nevertheless, she wants to marry Guy of Burgundy showing her exaggerated sensual feelings as well as her recklessness towards her culture and family. On the contrary, Guy of Burgundy is not willing to marry her even in such a miserable situation where he has but one choice (because of the fact that he has promised to Charlemagne that he would have Guy married), thus showing the great difference between a Chrisitan (Frank) knight and a Saracen: That is, the feeling of fidelity and faithfulness towards his own people and culture which seems not present at Florip and Ferumbras:

Tho wente Duke Neymes to Sir Gye

And saide, `This ladye loveth the;

For thy love she maketh us alle merye

And baptizede wole she be.
 Ye shalle hir take to your wedded wife,
 For alle us she may save.'
 `By God,' quod Gye, `that gafe me life,
 Her wole I never have;
 Wyle I never take hire ner no woman
 But Charles the Kinge hir me gife.
 I hight him, as I was trewe man,
 To holden it while I lyve.'(1903-14)

Guy does not have a religious concern here as the princess “baptizede wole she be.”(1906) Although she’ll be baptized so as to marry him, he is hesitant to take action on the grounds that the religious zeal and serving for Christianity does not play so great a part in the poem except for the general patterns treated in Charlemagne Romances and Song of Roland. Those patterns are repeated in many parts of the poem without having the real importance they bear in Song of Roland. Actually it is a general speciality in Charlemagne romances. However, in Sowdone, the pace is faster, thus making the importance more superficial. For example, Ganelon’s treason is put in the poem without having any relation with Song’s. Why he is a traitor is not clear and the only thing he does is dissuade the army from saving the twelve duzzipiers. There is no punishment for him and his role is no more than a few lines in the poem (2819-46). Thinking of Roland’s character in Sowdone, a knight refusing to fight because of jealousy, Ganelon is free from being the dangerous villain, Judas-like traitor, only by whom the great fraternity among the Christian knights is penetrated and the Valiant French knights could be harmed.

Consequently, these oppositions mentioned above serve as a base for the Saracen-Frank struggle. Religion plays a part in this opposition yet it does not have so prominent a role as in either Song of Roland or in Otuel and Roland, that we will deal with in the next section. Religion appears to be a backcloth, one of many oppositions that constitutes the antagonism between two rival nations. According to Barron “the real interest of the Sowdone is neither religion, love, nor even war, but adventure, a mass of incident, exotic in setting and varied in kind to be enjoyed for its own sake.” (102)

4.5. The Theme of Conversion

Both the role of religion and the theme of conversion are mirrors of each other so that the function of them can be understood by comparing their roles in the poem. Conversion, as we have seen, has a very crucial role in the Song and is of utmost importance in Otuel and Roland also. In Sowdone, the theme of conversion gains its importance not from the Christian zeal and the desire to gather the peoples of the world (especially the Saracens) under the same roof of religion but from the prominent role of the converts have in the poem. The theme of conversion though prominent, is somewhat undermined by the poet, who inserts it as a means for political gain and contact with the fantastical Saracen characters. When we focus on the conversion of the two prominent characters, Ferumbras and Floripas, their conversion does not have any relation with Christianity itself:

Ferumbras, upon his fathers wish to seize Roland and Oliver, goes to Charlemagne offering a duel between himself and the duzzippiers:

To Kinge Charles he gan ride
And said, `Sire Kinge, that arte so kene,
Upon trwes I come to speke with the.
If thou be curteis, as I wene,

Thou wolte graunte a bone to me,
That I mighte fight uppon this grene,
With Rouland, Olyvere and Gye,
Duke Neymes and Ogere i-mene,
Ye and Duke Richarde of Normandye -
With al sex attones to fight.
My body I profre here to the
And requyre the, Kinge, thou do me right,
As thou art gentille lord and fre,
And if I may conquere hem in fere,
To lede them home to my faderis halle;
And if thai me, I graunte the here
To be thy man, body and alle.'(1058-1074)

The obvious change is that the theme of conversion is first uttered by the Saracens and takes place with the wish of the enemy rather than the Christian side, proving its secondary role in the poem. The fact that Roland refuses to fight with the Saracen because Charles praises not him but the old knights is also a supporting instance to show the lack of Christian zeal.

Here the language of Ferumbras is very kind towards Charles showing his qualities and making him more sympathetic. This can be understood as the preparation of the knight for conversion. There is one more scene where the preparation of the Saracen is obvious in the poem as Ferumbras does not kill the Pope when he can on the battlefield:

`Fye, preest, God gyfe the sorowe!
What doist thou armede in the feelde,

That sholdest saie thi matyns on morwe?
What doist thou with spere and shelde?
I hoped thou hadiste ben an emperoure,
Or a cheftayne of this ooste here,
Or some worthy conqueroure.
Go home and kepe thy qwere!
Shame it were to me certayne
To sle the in this bataile;
Therefore turne the home agayn!'(559-569)

He just rebukes him that he should not fight on the battlefield and thus demonstrates his good qualities, which are nothing different than his preparation for his imminent conversion. During the fight we see that the proposal(s) for conversion are done not by the Christians, but by Ferumbras who even proposes to arrange a marriage between Oliver and his sister:

Nowe yelde the to me -
Thou maiste not longe endure -
And leve on Mahounde, that is so dere,
And thy life I shalle the ensure.
Thou shalt be a duke in my contré,
And men have at thyn owen wille.
To my sustir shaltowe wedded be -
It were pité the for to spille!'(1219-1226)

Furthermore, the priest-king of the Song, Charlemagne, who is very sensitive about the conversion of the “infidels” in this poem does not care whether Ferumbras becomes a Christian or not:

With bloody woundes fyve.
`What arte thou?' quod Charlemayne,
`Who hath the hurte so sore?'
`I am Ferumbras,' he saide certayn,
`That am of hethen lore.'
`O fals Saresyn,' quod the Kinge,
`Thou shalte have sorowe astyte;
By the I have lost my two cosynes,
Thyn hede shalle I of-smyte.'
`O gentil Kinge,' quod Ferumbrase,
`Olyvere my maister me hightpromised
To be baptised by Goddis grace,
And to dyen a Cristen knighte.
Honure were it noon to the
A discourfite man to slo,
That is converted and baptized wolde be
And thy man bycomen also.'
The Kinge hade pité of him than;
He toke him to his grace
And assyned anoon a man
To lede him to his place.
He sende to him his surgyne

To hele his woundes wyde.
He ordeyned to him such medycyn,
That sone myght he go and ryde.(1451-1469)

It is Ferumbras who wishes to be a convert and his conversion seems to be a compulsory one rather than via miracles, as in Otuel and Roland, or via reasoning. This type of conversion, as mentioned in the first chapter, does not have any significance in the Song, however it is one of the two most important conversion cases in Sowdone.

In almost all Charlemagne romances, the converts adapt to the new religion and societies very easily and their transformation takes place immediately after they accept the “word of God.” Here we see that while Charlemagne is thinking of loosing his two cousins, Ferumbras stresses his conversion with a good rhetoric.

Ferumbras’ acceptance of Christianity occurs as a result of a political/ military contest. Sowdone’s wish for the conversion of Roland and Oliver- the most famous of the duzzippiers- is nothing more than his will to obtain their military force. It is probable that if it were for the sake of religious zest, then Sowdone would wish for the conversion of all the Christians.

It is this political side of the conversion that appeals to Sowdone, who renounces his gods many times in the poem whenever something goes wrong. In this context Laban’s renouncing his gods equalizes the function of religion with the political success and thus the conversion obtaining of that political force.

Also in Firumbras, Firumbras though being a good Christian serving to the Christian cause, his conversion is not narrated in the poem. However, he is famous and the name of the poem is “Firumbras” showing the importance of the converts in the Charlemagne Romances. Floripas who helps the Christians and submits the relics to Charlemagne as in Sowdone

converts in the end; nevertheless her politically strong and effective and voluptuous image is more important than her conversion which is a “must” of the poem.

This is also apparent in another conversion scene in the poem when Charles converts two baby giants. Their father and mother, who kill many Franks in the fight, have been perilous with their fighting and their children of course will enable great military strength:

Charles is delighted and christens them Roland
and Oliver, anticipating the accrual of their fighting
strength to his cause” they are already a strapping four
feet tall at seven months. But they refuse all food,
wanting only their “dame’s” milk;[...] Finally, “Thay
deyden for defaute of here dam” (3036).(Mohja 48)

Therefore Charles’s conversion of these giants and giving them the names of his most powerful nephews is an open wish to regain their military power. The loss of their military potency makes everybody forget that they died as Christians, which should have had a cheerful effect among the Christians who are so keen as to convert even the babies of a monster who are firstly in need of their mother’s milk. However Charles becomes very dejected by their death: Kinge Charles made hevvy chere/ And a sory man was than. (3036-38)

The joining of Sowdone’s two children realizes the transition of the Saracen political power to the Christian side. Ferumbras is the one whom we see fighting in the first part of the poem and his conversion means the transfer of the future of the Saracen power as he is the next king. Also, as Mohja claims in Song of Roland, Bramimunde’s conversion means the transformation of the Saracen wealth to the Christian side, which is treated in the same manner in the case of Floripas’ conversion. When the Saracen attack on them is very severe and damaging in their besiegement in the castle, she shows that she possesses wealth as she

throws the gold out of the Castle to distract the attention of the soldiers. Also just as Bramimunde presents the keys of Saragossa, Floripas presents the relics to Charlemagne:

Welcome ye be into this toure.
Here I presente to you, as I can,
Relikes of grete honoure
That were at Rome iwonnen
And broght into this halle.
That game was evel bygonnen;
It sithen rewed us alle.'(3136-42)

Accordingly, Charles does not see the necessity of Sowdone's conversion as both the political and economical power has transferred onto the Christian side and the reason why the baptismal font is prepared for Sowdone is not because Charles wishes such a conversion but because of Ferumbras' beseeching:

King Charles met with Laban
And bare him down of his stede.
He lighted down and ceased him than;
He thought to qwite him his mede.
He brayde oute Mownjoye wyth gode wille
And wolde have smeten of his hede;
Ferumbras prayde him to abyde stille
To crysten him, er he were dede.(3107-14)

Like in almost all Charlemagne romances as well as in the Song, the other alternative to conversion is death. The acceptance of the other, even as a captive, is through their

conversion. Although the theme of conversion in the poem does not necessarily emerge as a matter of religion, the function of the converts show us the importance of conversion in Charlemagne romances. Floripas' conversion completely conforms to this context because of the fact that her conversion has nothing to do with either Christianity or Islam. She converts for her incomprehensible love for Guy of Burgundy, because she doesn't even know who he is:

On the morowe Florip, that mayde fre,
To Duke Neymes spake in game.
'Sir gentil knight,' tho saide she,
'Telle me, what is your name.'
'Whi axe ye, my lady dere,
My name here to knowe alle?'
'For he spake with so bolde chere
To my fadir yestirdaye in his halle.
Be not ye the Duke of Burgoyne, Sir Gy,
Neuwe unto the Kinge, Charles so fre?'
'Noe, certes, lady, it is not I;
It is yondir knight, that ye may see.'
'A, him have I loved many a day
And yet knowe I him noight
For his love I do alle that I maye
To chere you with dede and thought.
For his love wille I cristenede be
And lefe Mahoundes laye.

Spekith to him nowe for me,

As I you truste maye.(1879–97)

On the other hand, she is very active throughout the poem and many times helps the French knights, saving them from death and motivating them most of the time. Therefore, although her conversion does not have a proper reason, which attests the importance that the poem gives to religious zeal, which overtly turn out to be a backcloth here, the function of the converts is of the utmost importance. Of course, here we should consider the role of the converts in relation to the romanticized Saracen culture and the change of the conditions compared with the eleventh century. The Muslim threat, though still present, is far from the borders of Europe. Still, the converts constitute a prominent role in the poem as in most of other Charlemagne romances, sometimes inscribed as religious zeal and sometimes treated as a part of the fantasy about the other.

Even though there has been blind faith against the corruption of the Saracens (Muslims) in Medieval Europe reflected in Song of Roland and other Charlemagne romances, their conversion to Christianity constitutes an important place which, unlike in Otuel and Roland, does not emerge from Christian zeal. The conversion has more of a political significance apart from its exotic and symbolic connotations. Converts must be giving an exotic air to the stories symbolizing “the other’s” acceptance of the truthfulness and superiority of Christian faith and people in general. In Sowdone the prevailing attitude towards conversion is not religious but worldly and political. Because the poem doesn’t bear any Christian zeal for the conversion of the two Saracens, nor does the struggle in the poem have a religious origin. Its religious contrast constitutes one among the other ones (moral/ political/ cultural/ military).

The prominence of conversion in the poem can be said to stem from the inevitable attraction of “the other”- a different nation and culture having completely different moral and

cultural values some of which seem very appealing. Considering the voluptuousness of Princess Florip and military effectiveness of Prince Ferumbras it can be said that conversion in Sowdone of Babylone apart from its being continuation of the treatment of the theme of conversion in Song of Roland, has a function of attaining the improper but desirable otheras well as symbolising the continuation of the Christian cause in the poem.

CHAPTER V

OTUEL AND ROLAND

5.1. About the Poem

Otuel and Roland is actually an English version of the Otinel Romance (A Chanson de Geste). It is believed to have been written around 1330 and comprises three stories in itself. The romance is a production from Estorie de Charlemagne (1206) or The Historia Caroli Magni which was acknowledged as authentic in 1122 by Pope Calixtus II. It was later named the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle, because of the fact that Turpin is believed to have related the stories, and it recounts the stories of Charlemagne's alleged conquest of Spain. "There are three Otuel Romances in English; the oldest of them is Otuel preserved in Auchinleck MS., Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne and Otuel and Roland (Fillingham)." (Baugh 188) The Otuel version used here is the Fillingham text translated by Mary I. O'Sullivan in 1934.

The poem is made up of three sections. In the beginning the author relates the war against the Saracen King Ebrahim. The first part starts with the conversion of the Saracen Knight Otuel who comes as an ambassador to Charlemagne. After boasting and bragging and insulting Charlemagne, who in turn behaves to him kindly, he argues with Roland and they fight a duel. During the duel, which takes place in a fair atmosphere, Otuel, with the help of Divine Grace, converts to Christianity and is betrothed to the daughter of Charlemagne, Belisent. He becomes a knight and a weapon in the war against the Saracen king Garcy. After saving Roland and Oliver from the raid of a Saracen army, Otuel duels with a Saracen king, Clarel, in which he is the victor. The Franks defeat Garcy's army, Garcy converts and most of his men are forcibly made to convert.

In the second part, the Franks make war with King Ebrahim and in the first contest the army of Ebrahim, with masks and horns, scares the horses of the Frank army and thus make them disperse but cannot coast to the victory. In the second fight, Charles takes precaution by

ordering the “horses’ eyes be veiled and ears stopped” (Otuel and Roland, xivi) and kills Ebrahim. In the end, Charles wins all of Navarre and Spain and kills all the paynims. Here begins the third part: There is a plot against Charles and his army when he is in Pampeluna: two men, Mansour and Beligans, have been sent to betray the King. Charles sends Ganelon to tell them that they cannot dwell in the realm of a Christian kingdom unless they convert to Christianity. They seem to accept the offer but they secretly make an agreement with Ganelon by paying him. There is no other reason for Ganelon’s betrayal and unlike the episode in Song of Roland, Charles charges Roland as the commander of the rearguard which will be attacked and slain by the Saracen army. There are episodes similar to the Song of Roland’s such as the smashing of Durrendal, the blindness of Oliver, and the horn scene. Roland dies and with the help of God, such as stopping of sun, Charles avenges and at the end, following the victory, Ganelon is tried for treason and killed. Charles has a church built in Roncesvalles and the romance ends here with a prayer.

5.2. The Importance of Religion in the Poem

Religion (as I tried to put forward) is the most important essence of Otuel. Its importance is directly related to the theme of conversion along with the image of the Saracens, which shows the lineaments of the “other” that delineate the course of the Christians. Throughout the poem, the aim of the ongoing struggle is stressed on a number of occasions. The religious zeal and the spiritual connection between the author? and the audience is felt at the beginning of the poem

Herkenyth, lordynges, & ʒeuyth lyst

1

In the worchype of ihesu c yst Off a conquerour

that was y-hote syr Charlemayne! (1-3)

We are reminded that Charlemagne is in the worship of Jesus Christ; this is in a sense nothing more than the aim of recounting the story of ‘Priest King’ Charlemagne and his dussypiers. As it is clear from the descriptive expression used for the identification of the king, the hero of both Song of Roland and this romance, as well as Roland and Otuel, is “In the worchype of ihesu c yst”. From the beginning to the end we’re assured of the sincerity of Charlemagne and the Frank army whereas their Frankness (nationality) is never stressed throughout the romance. Being in the worship of Jesus is the quality that makes the Englishmen listen to a Frank (French) hero’s deeds. The Christian army is imbued with this feeling (worship of Jesus) which is their mainstay, sometimes causing them to take great risks.

Roland Oliver and Ogier go out together to seek some adventure, so that they can come across some Saracen host on the way. After killing the three kings, they come upon with a Saracen army of sixty thousand soldiers; this seems at first glance reckless behaviour, but we’re immediately assured that they are truehearted:

Nowe here by-gynneth A batayle
off these thre knyȝtes samfayle,
that wondyr it ys to telle;
ffor cristendom they fouȝten ful sore,
with VI MI & VII sckore
Off sarisins, stronge & felle. (863-868)

When the newly converted Christian hero Otuel, the Saracen king we know from his valiant fight with Roland and Oliver, bickers with Clarel, the altercation between the Saracens (Otuel and Clarel) is because of their dissention on the religious subject. Clarel wants him to convert back, which is immediately rejected by Otuel, and on his insulting Jesus and the

Christian religion, Otuel challenges him to a duel. This is the sensitivity of the Christian army as Otuel convinces Charles to let him fight against the heathen Saracen after recounting his insults:

Otuel gan to *charlys* crye,
And sayde, "for the loue of sent marye,
So leteth me *with* hym fyzt!
.....
'y schall 3ow telle *euery* word,
how it be-gan, ende and ord,
The stryf be-twyn ous to.
he sayde that oure god vas nou3t worth a tord,
And that he wold proue *with* dynt of swerd,
To whom that it wolde do;
And sayde that we were thour3 hym y-lore,
That of a womman was y-bore,
and schent for *euer*-more;
ffor hys lesyng and for hys sawe
vppon a cros he was y-drawe :
Alle thus sayde he me to thare.
He insulted Christ,
'y answered, and sayde, "nay,"
That He Was Bore of a may,
To saue al men-Kynde,
And ros & to helle toke þe way,--
þat byfyl vppon þe prydde day,--

And satan brouȝt in bonde,
 And toke þer-out ous and Adam,
 And all with hym þo god nam,
 And syþe þe holy gost sende,
 and after hys rysyng, vp-sty s
 To hys fadyr vp an hy.
 þys we hauen in mynde.
 'Off my wordys he ne helde no pryse,
 And Cleped me, "schrew, vnwys!"
 And lew me to skorne & game.' Tho sayde *Charlys* of seynt denys,
 "Otuel, as tou sayst, it ys.
 Go fyȝt in godys name!" (1313-15, 1319-1348)

Here, we see the reason for the duel is nothing more than the theological contest between the two knights; it is similar to Song of Roland and to the medieval texts where the proper way for proving the righteousness of a cause is not generally performed by convincing the opponent with words. Words which are full of recriminations and insults only pave the way for an implacable duel because fighting is the mere instrument for the true judgment, the sides being sure of divine help. Therefore, considering the argument between the two knights, we can say that it is not a proper theological contest; rather, it is the assertion of their faith in their religions. Explanations provided are more claim-like arguments, void of supporting proof that may enable his opponent to consider, and the debaters are devoid of any endeavour to understand the arguments of his rival.

In Song of Roland, as we have seen, there is the implication of a deliberation about the character of another religion (Islam), which is a deception itself lasting throughout the Middle Ages. Song of Roland was very popular in Europe for many centuries. Since the day it was

composed, all the Charlemagne Romances in English have been indited under the shadow of the world created in the Song which, as mentioned above, is imbued with these false conceptions. Song was written in a period that saw one of the largest and haunting wars ventured with deep religious concern. The fact that 11/12th century Europe witnessed the diversion of the religious zeal against an enemy and the period created its own justifications and images. Creating an enemy, as well as a hero, it seems essential that one be as vicious as possible and the other admirable, respectively. Therefore, both the images of Saracens and the understanding of Islam are premised on these deliberations.

The intense emotionalism of medieval religious thought is most clearly seen in its fanaticism, rigid adherence to all the minutiae of dogma, and the intense hatred of alien doctrines, whether of other religions or within the Church itself. The medieval mind was incapable of understanding alien religions, and so grouped them all together as devil worship. Not only did romancers, in their ignorance, believe that the prophet Mahomet was a god worshipped by Saracens, but also accredited them with other and quite incongruous gods, such as Apollo and Jupiter. (Taylor 179)

In Charlemagne Romances, just as in the Song, conversion is a conventional offer in the battlefield showing the aim of the war, but it is never accepted by the opponents. In Otuel and Roland, we behold a further step, the discussion of Christianity. Otuel tries to defend the Christian cause in a theological contest before starting to fight and this signifies that the importance and role of religion in the war is greater, in a poem where most things are symbolic. The essence of religion is discussed and it is stressed that the actual reason for the fight is this conflict. Denunciatory as it may be, it also denotes that the “other” is human enough to have discussions, which means accepting the probability of their wishful

conversion. Accepting a plausible defense of a Saracen of his religion is still far off. The conversion of another Otuel-like Saracen seems not possible in the poem, which conversion has already occurred through a miracle rather than a discussion. We are only shown how a Saracen deserves his death by impertinently refusing the true essentials of religion which are told to him.

In every announcement for the new war, we are reminded that the Christian army is not fighting for a vain glory: everything is for the sake of Christ:

here bygynneth a batayle grym,
Off *charlys* and of Ebrayn,
That was wonderlyche strong.
At Cordys how thay fou3ten same,
All for the loue of cristendom,
herkeneth and thenketh nou3t long! (1691-97)

The source of superiority, as in Song of Roland, stems from faith, but this time the grandeur of the Frank chivalry is no longer stressed. Before the battles, the dissention and the difference between the two sides are shown via their worship or some symbols which countenance to underline of the differences presented at the beginning of the episodes. Otuel, before he fights with Roland, incurs the displeasure of the audience and reminds them of his false cause by crying the name of his god Mahound several times (204,212,464)

Also we see the war of symbols before the duel between Otuel and Clarel: Otuel crosses the water before he goes to the meadow and Clarel, as a reflection of the Christian iconography which is not present in Islam, wears a shield bearing the icon of Mahound on it.(1232) Also the paynims bring their gods and pray in front of them, pleading for victory because of the fact that it will reveal which side is in the right:

Tho thay fette here god Mahound,
 And alle the sarsins of renoun,
 And settyn hym a-myd the toun of Vtalye.
 Than vppon here knees thay seten adown,
 with alle the lordys of that toun,
 And also kyng Garcye.
 Thay sayden, "mahound, we the by-seche,
 To-day thou be oure alder leche,
 And on clarel haue *mercy!*
 As thou art god, ful o mucche myȝt,
 That he mowe sle otuel in fyȝt,
 That doȝth the so mucche vylonye!(1247-57)

Also Otuel is sure that this fight will show which side is on the right path and seems to be sure of the truth of his new religion. This is not a duel of two knights; it is the representational fight of the two rival religions and therefore, the intervention of Divine Grace is considered to be essential. He purports his thought to Charlemagne:

"ȝe," quod otwel, "thouȝ thou be strong,
 Alle it is in god long,
 That ys alle weldyng.
 ȝut to-day schulle we that se,
 That god ys bettyr in trinite
 Thanne Mahouȝ and all hys Ospryng.(1385-91)

Charlemagne prays for Otuel when he is knocked to the ground by a stroke of Clarel, stressing that he is fighting for the right cause:

kyng *Charlys* to Ihesu gan speke:

"lord," he sayd, "thou me a-wreke

vppon thys hethen hounde,

And schyld from schame thys crystyn knyȝt,

that he be nouȝt slayn in thys fyȝt,

In the worchyp of thy wownde!"(1446-50)

After Otuel wins the duel, he expresses his true cause reminding us of the motto of the Song of Roland "Paynims are wrong Christians are right" saying in an exuberant manner that he is the true knight "as y am a trewe knyȝt." an indication of his belief in the true God.(1513) Following his humble attitude against the insults of the heathen knight whose mouth symbolically is smashed as a result of his affront to the Christian God, Otuel teases him about his mouth. Here, the direct connection of victory with the Divine legitimacy and success is evident. Saracens smash their idols, as in Song of Roland, associating success and victory with God/ religion. According to this formula, there can not be a defeat for a Christian unless he is betrayed by his own people.

The association of religion with success has two facets; although both the Saracens and the Christians appear to be anticipating Divine help to be successful, their reactions to their divinity/ies are controversial thus reflecting their conception of belief and the characteristics of their religion. In Otuel, although the attitude towards Saracens are less biased than in the Song, (considering that there is no exaggerated Saracen images) and the convert(s) is brought to the fore, the notion of religion and the attitude of the two sides towards their sacred is identical; that is, they are utterly reverse in their attitudes. The

idoltrous worship of the Saracens already reflects their materialized understanding of the spiritual. Bringing the idols of their Gods and praying to them deliberately signifies the futility of the Saracen cause. The material connection between the worshipper and the worshipped automatically delimitates the relationship: material gain. On account that the Saracens naturally expect a material recompense for their worshipping and service to them, the absence of such a gain creates a frenzying effect which causes them to insult and smash their idols.(1532-44, 48-58, 68) The Christians on the other hand, reflect their magnanimity by showing great patience in the problems they encounter. Upon the defeat of Roncevaux, neither in Song of Roland nor in Otuel and Roland do we behold any denunciation of the Christian God. Reversely, Charlemagne prays for a just revenge upon which the response from above is positive. Therefore, religion though important in the Otuel, means not the same thing for the two sides.

The portrayal of Charlemagne as a spiritual leader as well as a worldly one is because of the stress to the spirituality of the Christians, as an opposition to the materialization of the Saracens. In the poem, similar to the Song of Roland, Charlemagne has a close relation with God. He prays to God repeatedly in the romance (504-8, 1780, 1868, 1884), which is generally granted. While a compact version of the Song is recounted in the poem, Charlemagne's dreams are absent. Those dreams signify both God's warnings of Charlemagne for the imminent calamities and his orders what to do next. Being void of such visions, which in a sense materialize the divine help or intervention, nevertheless, in Otuel and Roland all of Charlemagne's power comes from his obedience to God and the Christian cause. For instance, he wears a crown of thorns three times a year (1992).

However, in Otuel something opposite to this understanding happens, which is probably put in the poem for its message: Charlemagne prays to God to see which of his soldiers are going to die in the next battle. His wish is granted and he sees a red cross on the

soldiers who are going to be martyrs in the battle and does bid them to stay in the chapel and not attend the campaign lest they die in the war. After returning home, he finds them all dead meaning he should not interfere with God's work. "By the Ensampyl, whe mowe se,/ that no man schall hys deth fle for none skynnes nede."(1916-17) This also indicates that whatever comes, it is from Heavenly power, showing the limitations of human beings before God. It also stresses the notion of predestination; it is a powerful scene showing that everything is under the control of God.

Roland already presents the world in a dual perspective, projecting upon the age of Charlemagne a complex ideal of personal and social conduct whose appeal for contemporary audiences lay in its relevance to circumstances of their own age which demonstrated the need for such qualities. At many levels the personal prowess the loyalty of comrades in arms, mutual trust in the bonds of kinship, reciprocal fidelity within the feudal system to national solidarity in defence of faith and sovereign, it depicts values by which life might be lived.(Barron 25)

On the contrary, the theme of conversion gains a far more important meaning in a plot where national and other chivalric feelings hardly exist, the only criteria being on the right side or vice versa, an atmosphere where all the struggle is attached to the religious state of belonging- a place which not only determines your worldview but also your eternal rightness or wrongness as well. The gap between the arrogant Otuel and the Christian Charlemagne seems huge and the Saracen threat, though present, is not felt as in the Song. The mighty Emir Balignant poses a far higher danger than the two kinsmen playing tricks on Charlemagne, which is about religious adversity again, and escaping pusillanimously to Saragossa without a

proper resilience The Baligans of Otuel and Roland is a figurative character rather than being someone capable of arousing consternation to the Christian audience. Therefore, in the poem the act of fighting for Christianity is attached the utmost importance, conversion bearing the fruit of it.

5.3. The Theme of Conversion

The Song of Roland, if we start with the name of the poem, is the story of Roland; I mean it recounts the calamities and struggles from that focal point. Although Charlemagne is also at the centre of the poem, the prospective impact of the poem comes from the incident in which Roland is killed in Roncevoux. He is French, Christian, noble, brave, young, vibrant; so he represents the ideals of the Medieval Christian world. Therefore, we can say that, in a sense, the interest of the audience is focused on the consternation caused by the prospect of losing these values.

The valour and prowess of supreme heroes in the context of conflict on which the fate of nations hung, epic grandeur of theme and vastness of scale even a sense of historical involvement through their belief in France's imperial heritage and the supposed Trojan ancestry of the Franks.

(Barron 20)

The feeling of great loss, though compensated by the superhuman endeavour of Charlemagne is felt throughout the poem. Roland's sincerity, his disinterested service and valour must have been highly appreciated by the twelfth century audience. Those ideals with the strong religious feelings that are the root causes of the ongoing war created both excitement and reflected the tendencies of the people of that age.

In Otuel and Roland, the transformation is evident: it is no more only the Song of Roland; he has to share it with a Saracen, a convert who covers a wider place in the story. “The poet’s interests are indicated by the fact that, though he gives some 1700 lines to the adventures of Otuel, the whole Spanish campaign occupies him for only 1100.” (Barron 94) Before coming to the reading of Otuel’s role and function in the poem, it would not be wrong to make such a deduction that a convert’s covering so much space signifies the importance given to the theme of conversion in the poem.

It would be proper to first look at the image of the Saracens. The Saracens, unlike in Song of Roland and Sowdone of Babylon, are depicted as normal human beings, though being pagans. There is neither a thick skinned Saracen who needs not wear a shield nor a group living in a place where the sun never shines. Even though this story seems to be the continuation of the Sowdone of Babylon, as Otuel comes to the French camp in order to avenge his uncle Vernagu and his cask appears later in the hands of Roland, his attitude towards the image of Saracens is far more realistic.

This normalization creates an air of a genuine story and plays an important role by restricting the biases of the Western society against Muslims to the religious strife thus enabling conversion a more probable possibility. When Otuel goes to the French camp, that is the first time he is introduced to us: “Syr Otuell he hyght,/ A man of moche myght, to batayll he was boun.”(58- 60) Of course this is an introduction scene preliminary to the conversion. On account that he will be a convert, like Bramimunde in Song of Roland the Saracen is not represented as a mischievous person. His speaking is full of insults and bragging against Charles and Roland; however, when asking for Charlemagne and Roland at the beginning of the poem, he talks highly of them, which is a hint showing that there’s a good side in him:

To kyng Charlyoun,
And to Roulond, hys, nevewe,
That hath many a *vertu*,
And grete of renoun." (64-68)

Therefore, these specialties of the Saracen create a feeling of sympathy in us; he is presented as a frank personality. His later insults as we know stem from his false belief rather than his character. His complete change after conversion, his embracing Christianity with full heart and fighting for it like a born Christian, as well as his refusing to marry Belisent until defeating Garcy, is serve as character witnesses for him.

The reason for Otuel's visit to Charlemagne is to deliver his message sent by the Saracen King Garcy. He demands an unconditional conversion of Charlemagne and the French if they want to remain alive. Of course, this demand is immediately turned down by Charlemagne without consulting his dussipiers. Whether this be an outward demand for a tour de force or a trick to instigate the enemy to fight, which seems improbable and unsupported in the text, it is clear that conversion is the main reason for the contest and wars in the poem.

There are more preliminary elements present of the conversion of Otuel than some of those given above: Charles calls his daughter Belisent to arm the Saracen knight, an absurd and weird behaviour considering that the Saracen is the enemy who has the capability of doing harm to the girl and among so many soldiers who can perform the task, it seems improbable that the daughter of the king – a princess- is assigned to arm an outsider in no where else than her own room.

Dou3ter, tak to the messanger
Into thy chaumber ry3t now here

And arme hym wel and sure! (342-44)

It is obvious that there is courtly love image in the poem, which Song of Roland is void of, and moreover, eroticism is implied in the speech of the princess: her gladness from doing this work is of course not inserted here to arouse erotic thoughts, which is not probable in the context of the poem. Rather, it is more plausible that it serves as a precursor of Otuel's conversion and the marriage of Belisent and Otuel:

The mayde hym answered *with* hert lel,

"Y schal hym arme swythe wel,

As 3e han me bede."(345-47)

Another precursor to the conversion of Otuel is Charlemagne's kindness towards him; he accepts whatever Otuel says and does not give harsh responses to the insults of the imminent convert. However, when Clarel, the Saracen king insults him publicly as Otuel does he talks harshly towards him:

Charlys of sent denys,

To þe kyng clarel ful ry3t :

"þrytty kynges of prys,

y haue y-slaw or þys,

In hethynesse *with* fy3t.

þoru3 grace of almy3ty god in trinite,

Thys day þu schalt on of hem be,

fful longe ere it be ny3t.

Make þe redy þat þu were þare,

ffor myn Olde body schal be 3are,

þoru3 grace of god almy3t!" (1284-1293)

What's more, Charles prays for Otuel's conversion to Christianity, but makes no attempt for the other Saracen knight, Clarel. This, apart from being Charlemagne's spiritual wisdom, is of course an obvious sign of the improbability of Christening of every Saracen knight.

Otuel's request for armour from Charlemagne can be added to the list. Throughout the poem clothes have a symbolic meaning; they determine the identity, bearing a spiritual role and are, in a way, a part of the symbolic contest. The reason for Otuel's wearing the Christians' armour is that he is going to embrace their belief and his demand for it signifies his readiness for the coming conversion. Additionally, there is a biblical allusion which gives its real meaning to the armour scene:

And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: For now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*. (Rom 13:11-14)

Otuel, finds his salvation in an atmosphere similar to the one depicted in the Bible: He wakes up early in the morning and puts the armour of Christians' (put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,) as an allusion to the armour of light, which has a spiritual meaning and

he casts off the works of darkness, which symbolizes his conversion and leaving the Saracen belief aside.

There are more biblical allusions in the poem about the conversion of Otuel: in the meadow where the duel takes place, the poet mentions about a brook “And in-to the medewe he gan ryde./ There ran a water by that syde, /That was a wel dep brok.”(327-329) It is an allusion to John 7:37-38:

In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood
and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto
me, and drink./ He that believeth on me, as the
scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of
living water.”

Otuel who thirsts for the faith wakes up in the morning (in the story, the duel takes place in the morning after they wake up and go to the duel place) and converts on the battle field.

There is a common conviction among the Christians that Otuel should/will be a Christian: Charlemagne and the Christians pray for Otuel’s conversion; Roland also proposes conversion to him during the course of the duel. Apart from the Biblical allusions and prayers, additionally, there are worldly promises. Somewhat awkwardly, Roland guarantees that he is going to marry Belisent, the daughter of Charlemagne, which was not mentioned in the text before. As mentioned above, Charlemagne’s assigning her the task of armouring Otuel may be a sign for it but it is far from being plausible. Is Belisent an award waiting for the next convert? This is of course because of the fact that the audience is prepared for Otuel’s conversion.

In addition, similar to Roland's death in Song of Roland, neither Otuel's nor Roland's receiving a wound in the fight signifies their sincerity and faithfulness to the holy cause, namely Otuel's impending sincere conversion. The equal fight is also a sign of Otuel's equality to the French knight to whom he is going to be an alternative. It also serves as a clear distinction from the conversion by force, bringing divine grace and Otuel's will to the fore by which Otuel preserves his dignity and honour. Roland promises Otuel his and other french knights' friendship, which is a sign of his (their) full acceptance and cherishing him. The offer appears as an encouraging rather than a coercive one and it signifies that converting into "the other's" religion eliminates all kinds of differences, cultural, political, racial which have not been stressed at all in the poem.

Sarisin, do by my Rede,
and leue on god almyȝt!
And to the kyng y woll the lede,
And he woll ȝeue the to mede, hys douȝtyr so bryȝt:
And thou, and I, & Oliuer
Mowen wende to-gedyr in fere
In-to batayle and in-to fyȝt. ne schulle we fynde in no londe
None that schall vs *withstonde*,--
neythyr kyng ne knyȝt. (511-19)

However important conversion in the poem is, there is not a standard attitude against the heathens, most of all according to the conviction whether they'll be Christians or not. In one episode Charlemagne forces some 200 000 Saracens to convert and in another one he kills all the remaining soldiers without any proposal.

5.4. The Types of Conversion

Otuel's conversion is at the core of the poem: more than half of the poem is allotted to his conversion and deeds after it. How does Otuel convert and what is the significance of his conversion that makes it more important than those of thousands of soldiers passed over in only a few lines? We can say that the resemblance between Otuel and Roland and Song of Roland is great here: both of the poems eulogise the type of conversion present in the New Testament, namely the conversion either by divine grace or preaching. During the duel, the atmosphere created there is very apostolic: that is, everybody prays for Otuel to become a Christian and tries to convince him, either by talking or granting him something to win his heart on behalf of Christianity. The deep religious feeling and dedication results in the conversion of the heathen in a Biblical way (New Testament):

The incidence is an allusion to the New Testament, the appearance of the Holy Ghost, Acts 8:18, 9:17, 11:12...

For example, in the Act 11 there is a similar case of conversion which is realised via Peter but completely with the help of the Holy Sprit, similar to that of Otuel's:

And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting.
Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.
(Acts 11:12-15)

Conversion with the help of celestial powers has biblical reference and accordingly it's been considered as a proper conversion, which is proven by the leading role of Otuel throughout the poem. A miracle-like supernatural intervention is a sign that Otuel will be a good Christian. Accordingly, like in other Charlemagne romances (in Sir Ferumbras, Sowdone of Babylon) Otuel immediately transforms from a pagan warrior to a good Christian knight.

ther-of the sarisin hadde a syȝt
and that strok he flye a-plyȝt that hyt fel by-syde hym.
.....
the frenche seyen that all
And to Ihesu cryst they gonne calle,
and alle to god, helpe they cryede. *with* that ther come a coluyr bryȝt,
that fro heuene tho lyȝy
In that ilke tyde.
French pray. Dove fromheaven,
the holy gost thoruȝ here alder prayer
a-lyȝt apon that sarisin there
thoruȝ goddys holy myȝt. (536-537, 565-572)

We can say that there is a certain consciousness to preach Christianity which is overt in the case of Otuel; this is also present as a holy cause in the war scenes as stated above and like in the case of Otuel, the convert is supposed to come to the fore as fruit of the spiritual and physical endeavour shown by the Christians, as well as, evidence for the sincerity and rightness of the cause. However, when Garcy who is presented as a threat to Christendom converts to Christianity naturally it can be expected to deserve more interest. Nevertheless, he

is not mentioned anymore except that he is sent to Paris immediately. The main reason for such a lack of interest is no more than Garcy's way of conversion: he "takes the Lord's name" not in vain but in a dire situation, when he is under danger of death. Thus, it is far from a celebration as is Otuel's. It is apparent that the poem only eulogizes the type of conversion close to the examples in the New Testament. Full of the conversion zeal, the poem does not deal with the instances of conversion that are not similar to those in The New Testament, a similar approach to that of the Song of Roland.

There seems a direct connection between the changing attitudes toward the converts in relation to their way conversion. While the converts such as Bramimunde and Otuel who (are supposed to) accept willingly the word of the Christian God – including the celestial intervention- are developed before or after their conversion to some extent, others converted via force of arms are not mentioned anymore. Considering this fact, I think it is proper to call the converts using their freewill without any force as true (genuine) converts and the rest as mandatory converts.

However; if (the true) converts are taken into account, there appears a great difference anyway: (It is true that although Bramimunde was christened via sermon, it was not her own wish to be the subject of such an exposure. It is rather presented as the magnanimity of Charlemagne in the poem and presented similar to that of Otuel's conversion;) The poet of the Song deliberately treats her conversion as an act of her. There is the depiction of the queen's baptism ceremony and a stress on her acceptance of the Christian religion via sermon. However, Bramimunde, who has been developed till her conversion as a character is not developed as of. On the contrary, Otuel becomes the main character of the poem and serves as an alternative to Roland.

5.5. Functions of the converts in their new societies and

Rivlary between Roland and Otuel

Throughout the poem there is a hidden rivalry between Roland and Otuel, not openly stated, but the attitudes of Roland toward his newly converted comrade are never more than verbal; that is, a sincere friendship is not present; on the contrary, words speak louder than actions. This is because of the rivalry arising from the fact that Otuel is the alternative to Roland in the poem.

During the duel before Otuel's conversion takes place, Roland promises him a warm welcome and embraces him as a close, friend like Oliver.

And thou, and I, & Oliuer
Mowen wende to-gedyr in fere
In-to batayle and in-to fyȝt. ne schulle we fynde in no londe
None that schall vs *withstonde*,--
neythyr kyng ne knyȝt. (516-519)

However, before the war with Garcy, Roland takes his friends Oliver and Ogier, a probable symbol for the Holy Trinity, and goes out seeking extra adventure. After the fight with the four Saracen kings, who probably symbolize polytheism, the ineptness of the multitude against the rightful trinity, falls into trouble and Otuel, with an army, extricates Roland and the other dussapiers from a situation close to death. He reminds Roland of his promise and rebukes him for such an irresponsible act:

Roulond, for thy pryde,
Thy lyfe þu wylt for-lete!
What! wenes tou and Olyuere alone
To sle þe sarysyns euerchone,

and thus to grounde hem bete? (1056-60)

This is actually aping the rebuke of Oliver before the war of Roncevaux, accusing Roland of arrogance. And thus, he seems to have both supposed sapience of Oliver and fortitude of Roland, which is literally uttered by the poet of the Song. Now, he reminds him of his promise and bids him to turn back, behaving as though he had authority over Roland, which shows the power struggle between them:

Nay, þou□ þou and y & Olyuer,
hadde ben þere al in fer
A□eyns □e hethyn lawe,--
And ek charlys, the conquerour,
a Thou□ he Brou□t alle hys power,--
□yt schuld they be nou□t alle slawe.
Ac turne a-□eyn with me a-none,
And venge we ous of godys sone,
And gynne we a new plawe! Ther schulle a þousand for þys thyng
Thys day of hem haue here endyng
with-Inne a lytel þrawe." (1061- 70)

Throughout the poem it is impossible to see any intimacy between the two knights, although at first glance there seems nothing problematic between them. However, considering the armour scene mentioned above, it is clear that a similar war of symbols takes place before Otuel's duel with Clarel, the valiant and insolent Saracen knight, reminiscent of Otuel's non-Christian format:

Duk roulond, an helm fette,
And on hys heued he hyt sette,

þat was *with*-owten blame.
þe helm was worþ mucche þyng;
hit au3t sumtyme an heþen kyng

Off Babylone, þe sawdan.

And syre Olyuer, on hying,(1352-58)

The helmet Roland brings him belongs to the late Sultan of Babylon beaten by the French, a reminder to Otuel of his old days, in a way a criticism of his quick and “dangerous!” adaptation to the Christians, and given probably to have him keep his real identity in mind. Otuel accepts the helmet and starts fighting with Clarel who with his character and attitudes, is a symbol for Otuel’s pagan version, as he treats his enemies and Charles in the same manner as Otuel, namely, recklessly and boldly. Their duel also points out the same reality, their rough and tumble fight with identical strokes and phases such as unhorsing at the same time, are an overt symbol for Otuel’s settling his accounts with his own identity. They are of equal strength as stressed in the text:

“sythe, he sayd, that he was bore,/ ne sey y neuer her by-fore /suche two men of my3tys.”
(1415-17)The scene intensifies when Otuel receives a stroke on the head and drops down unconscious:

he hytte hym on the helme an heye,
that golde & stonys a-down flye,
al of hys helme so Rownde.
thou3 Otuel were of werre sly,
he nas neuer hys deth so ny:

he fylle in swowe on the grownd.
kyng *Charlys* to Ihesu gan speke:
"lord," he sayd, "thou me a-wreke
vppon thys hethen hounde,
And schyld from schame thys crystyn knyȝt,
that he be nouȝt slayn in thys fyȝt,
In the worchyp of thy wownde!"(1440–50)

Regardless of this heavy stroke, he comes to himself with the help of Charlemagne's prayer, of course showing that Divine Grace is on his side. Roland watches the tournament in a sportive and joyful spirit and makes comments to Belisent that it is "a fayre fyȝt" who on the contrary is anxious in the mean time:

thanne sayde Roulond to belysent.
that was the kynges douȝtur gent,
"here ys a fayre fyȝt y-fownde!"
.....
tho sayd belysent that may,
"God saue Otuell to-day,
ffor hys moche myȝtys!"(1412- 1414, 1425- 1427)

Later in the last episode of the poem, during the re-telling of the Song, Roland is prominent, in a narration void of the same sprit of the Song. Meanwhile, Otuel is absent and re-appears after the death of Roland. According to Barron,

Little is left for Roland to do but die; there is no personal conflict with Ganelon, no struggle over the command of the

rearguard, no issue concerning the struggle of sounding horn... Roland himself escapes from a tight corner by hiding in a ditch! (94)

Rearguard symbolizes the defence of Europe from Saracen threat, the necessity of the presence of an army is the symbol denoting the significance of remaining alert and unified. This sense of vigilance is not essential in Otuel and Roland, an alarm condition entailing military as well as political solidarity. Instead, the spiritual power of the Christian religion is exalted, creating saints like selfless heroes, carving out a more exotic and unearthly atmosphere that brings about earthly glory accordingly. Otuel, the convert Saracen knight, is the new ideal type of the Middle Ages: he bears the hope of extension of Christianity to the world although using martial codes not mentioned in the Bible, yet, carrying the same spirit of giving the right message expressed in Matthew 28:18,19,20 :

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Consequently, we can say that the world of Otuel and Roland, whose borders are drawn according to religious beliefs, is bound to change, and there is a need for piety and restless effort for such a far-sighted dream embodied within the image of Otuel, a true convert, and a promising character unlike other Saracens converted by force. It is also

important to note here that, unlike Bramimunde, who is not permitted to become as animated as her pagan self (even to her transformation into a Christian character has “backfired”), Otuel on the other hand, comes up against a less thick wall: conversion and the adaptation of the characters into their new societies becomes more settled and amicable, and can be said to be at its peak. In Otuel the acceptance of a male Saracen and his being betrothed to the daughter of the King are strong enough to indicate the importance of conversion in the poem.

Otuel and Roland, with a well-developed, effective Saracen convert expresses the probability of a better world achieved by converting the enemy. The fact that religion is the only difference between the Franks and the Saracens, which is the real cause of all the strife, leaves no other options other than conversion for complete success. The retelling of the Song, which includes the death of Roland and Ganelon’s treachery, with a cursory narration (in the second half of the poem) unlike the lively and detailed narration of the conversion of Otuel and his deeds in the first part, is also a clear example of the conversion in the poem.

The fact that a Muslim threat is not existent, as in the Song and Sowdone, plus the normality of the Saracen images, which shows the Saracens as the “pagan other” bearing the same social and cultural characteristics as the Christian side, makes the conversion the only real triumph by showing Saracens as normal people who are capable of changing and becoming “good Christians/people” like themselves. Even though the way for “preaching the Gospel” is possible only by fighting, and Otuel’s conversion is realised in a miraculous way rather than his understanding of the superiority or rightness of the Christian religion, the Saracens are not exaggerated in an exotic manner, as in Sowdone of Babylon. The theme of conversion and the deeds of the convert are the focus of the poem, giving positive impression by giving an active role to a convert. Yet it inherits the biases against Islam and shows it in a similar way as Sowdone and the Song. Conversion is still thought of as one-sided (from Islam to Christianity) and it is not realised via dialogue or theological discussion.

As mentioned above, by bringing a convert to the fore, the poem puts forward that the Christian cause is right and fruitful and it is possible to see a world totally Christianized. Fighting and strife are necessary for fulfillment of such an ideal. Otuel and Roland depicts an unreal world.

Understanding of the English of the “other”: people having different religion but same lifestyles and a great number of enemies open to conversion and ready to give support to his new co-religionists proving the rightness of Christianity. It also clarifies the essence that defines the borders of the nations: religion and conversion being magical keys that open the door to the righteous transformation of the other and serves the true embodiment of the sincerity and righteousness of the Christian cause and its fruits in this world.

CHAPTER VI

THE TALE OF RALPH THE COLLIER

6.1. About The The Text

The Tale of Rauf the Collier is a Middle English text which has no manuscript and “has come down to us in an edition printed in 1572”. (Lupack114) This copy is in the Advocates’ library, Edinburgh and it is written in the Scottish dialect. The poem consists of 972 lines and Alan Lupack’s edition (Medieval Institute Publications) is used as a reference in the essay. The tale, as mentioned before, belongs neither to the Otuel group nor the Ferumbras group. It is a later version of the Charlemagne romances and according to Taylor it “is a frank burlesque, and reflects the attitude of shrewd and intelligent working men towards the fantasies of knight errantry.”(35) Lupack notes that “the first part of the poem is a king –in–disguise motif common in folklore” (Lupack115) and as its second “episode parodies the Christian – Muslim combats of Otuel and Ferumbras in the mocking spirit of the folk tale opening”(Barron 181). The poem is a late fifteenth century work but its author is so far unknown.

6.2. Synopsis

Charlemagne, during a hunting session, loses his way due to a storm and bumps into a countryman, Rauf ‘a collier’ and eventually is invited to his house. When entering the house, Rauf waits to let the King enter before him but the king does the same thing to let the collier first and upon which he is rebuked and hit by Collier:

Quhen thay come to the dure, the King begouth to stand,
 To put the Coilyear in befoir maid him to mene.
 He said, `Thow art uncourtes; that sall I warrand!
 He tyt the King be the nek, twa part in tene,
 `Gif thow at bidding suld be boun or obeysand,
 And gif thow of courtasie couth, thow hes forget it clene!(120-5)
 And the King is immediately warned that Collier is lord of his own house:
 Now is anis,' said the Coilyear, `kynd aucht to creip,
 Sen ellis thow art unknowin,
 To mak me lord of my awin;
 Sa mot I thrive, I am thrawin;
 Begin we to threip.'(126-130)

Later Collier asks the King to take his wife to supper and when Charlemagne gives him the precedence he is hit again for not knowing courteous behaviour. Rauf asks Charles's name in accordance with the courtesy after the king has his supper and learns that his guest is an officer from court called Wymond of Wardrobe. King spends the night in Rauf's house very comfortably and offers to pay, which is immediately rejected by the host. The King ensures Rauf that he will have his coals sold to the court and invites him to the court the next day. Rauf, though unwilling to go somewhere nobody knows him, accepts the King's invitation and sets out for the court, of which he does not know the location. King bids Roland to meet the person coming and Roland comes across with the Collier, bidding him to leave his coals and come to the court, but the Collier, determined to keep his promise, refuses Roland and intends to start a duel. Roland returns and tells Charlemagne that he was unable to bring him. When the Collier arrives at the court, he is let in and left to find the Wymond by himself whom obviously nobody has heard of. He recognizes the king despite the fact that he is in

different clothes and realizes his own discourtesy. He's made knight by Charlemagne and now is to "win his shoes". King also entrusts Roland with the task of teaching chivalry to Rauf. The very next day Rauf starts fighting with someone on a camel, Magog, a Saracen ambassador and in the course of their fighting Roland comes and intervenes in the fight, suggesting converting the Saracen rather than killing him. The Saracen refuses first but at the end of their argument he agrees to convert." Than Schir Rauf gat rewaird to keip his knichtheid (960)" and he is given the Marshall of France.

6.3. The Style of the Poem

First, to start with the name of the romance, it is obvious that it does not signify the high ideals we are used to seeing through the tradition of romance or epic. It is a story of a collier, someone from the lower classes of the society, a person dealing with something black, dirty and beneath the earth: a sharp contrast with the celestial priest king figure who has a white beard like snow in both Song of Roland and other romances. Moreover, Rauf is a crude person who is not able to recognize either his king or the place of the court. He is ignorant to such an extent that he is not able to recognize a Saracen who is traveling on a camel (!). The humorous side of the poem reveals itself from the beginning where Rauf hits the king for not being courteous. Rauf, while trying to be a courteous host does a greater impertinence by hitting him and trying to teach him how to behave. It is obvious that the poet is trying to make fun of the courtly romances in which the courtly way of living is elevated. It is very normal to see gracious, well-educated knights fighting in chivalric and courtly manners in these romances none of whose topic is to teach an ignorant man how to become courteous or knight. "[It is rather] a popular fantasy of highlife set against the reality of peasant Scotland."(Barron 181)

The knighting of Collier is an overt example of the comparison of the difference between this late romance and the earlier romances of Matter of France. He is knighted only because he entertained Charlemagne for one night; the king wants him to learn the code of chivalry thus, courteous life, which is no more than a joyous play in itself. It is obvious how the ideals of the Middle Ages are experiencing a decline into decadence.

6.4. The Theme of Conversion

The second episode of the poem where Rauf meets with Charlemagne in the court and his becoming knight is more of our concern here. It is noticeable that in such a short version of a romance, dealing with the adventures of an ignorant coal seller, the story is somehow attached to the theme of conversion. The reason of such an attitude is one hundred percent related with the Matter of France: the poet is aware that his short romance will be tasteless and incomplete unless he adds the Saracen and conversion scenes. There are allusions to the former stories, Otuel and Roland being the most prominent one.

The humour in the court starts with Rauf's entrance when he is left to find Wymond by himself. When Charlemagne recounts for his exclusive guests Rauf's entertaining him the former night and his courtesy lessons, the people present want him to be hanged:

Thir Lordis leuch upon loft, and lystinit to the King,
How he was ludgeit and led, and set at sa licht;
Than the curagious knichtis bad have him to hing,
'For he hes servit that,' thay said, 'be our sicht.'(739-42)

The consternation of an ignorant countryman who is dreadfully embarrassed by his rude behaviour to the king in his first presence in the court, the poet climaxes the sense of humour in the poem. What's more, Charlemagne shows his magnanimity by dubbing him

knight because of the fact that he served him well one night before, which bears humour in its aping the great deeds of the knights told in the epics and romances.

Charlemagne dubs him knight and in the meantime tells his intentions for him:

Tak keip to this ordour, ane knicht I the call.
To mak the manly man, I mak the of micht
.....
It war my will, worthy, thy schone that thow wan
And went with thir weryouris wythest in weir;
Heir ar curagious knichtis, suppois thay the nocht ken,
For thy simpill degre that thow art in heir.(755-756, 765-768)

The scene continues with a prayer of Charlemagne similar to that in Otuel and in the Song: “I beseik God of his grace to mak the ane gude man,/And I sall gif the to begin glitterand geir.”(769-770) From here we understand that Rauf will inevitably achieve something to deserve the kings grace because of the fact that Charlemagne’s prayers either in the Song or Otuel are never turned down and this wishful prayer in the tale is of course a replication of them.

The next morning Rauf goes through the hill where they have arranged with Roland to meet when he comes across a Saracen who is “The maist man of all tha/ That ever he had sene(802-3) This is of course the replication of the Saracen image seen in Song of Roland and Sowdone of Babylon, to increase the tension and excitement of the war scenes.

The man is imbued with the oriental image, which is widely encountered in Chanson de geste and other French epics. He is riding a camel in the heart of Europe! With a fierce countenance of course on his face:

Ane knicht on ane cameill come cantly at hand,
With ane curagious countenance, and cruell to se;
He semit baldly to abyde with birny and with brand,
His blonk was unburely, braid and ovir hie.(801-804)

Therefore, Rauf in accordance with the Matter of France romances finds a convenient enemy to fight in order to 'win his shoes'. He starts to fight with him without either a warning or a proper reason:

Schir Rauf reddyit him sone and come rydand,
And in the rowme of ane renk in fewtir kest he;
He semit fer fellonar than first quhen he him fand,
He foundis throw his forcenes gif he micht him se.
He straik the steid with the spurris, he sprent on the bent;
Sa hard ane cours maid thay,
That baith thair hors deid lay,
Their speiris in splenders away
Abufe thair heid sprent.(808-16)

Naturally, the audience thinks that he fights with the Saracen because of his national and religious identity as it is common in the romances throughout the Middle Ages, but soon we learn that Rauf, who was unable to become aware that Charlemagne was his king, realizes the identity of the Saracen only when he utters the names of his gods: (a fallacy common throughout the M.A. as we have mentioned above continues to be present here too).

(Saracen:) Befoir the same day I saw the never with sicht;
Now sall thow think it richt sone thow hes met with me,
Gif Mahoun or Termagant may mantene my micht.'

(Rauf:) Schir Rauf was blyth of that word, and blenkit with his face;

Thow sayis thow art ane Sarasine?

Now thankit be Drichtine

That ane of us sall never hine,

Undeid in this place.'(848-855)

We behold here that upon learning that his opponent is a Saracen “Rauf is overjoyed” (Lupack 115) He has the unique chance to prove to himself that the best enemy of all middle ages is before him although he does not know the reason for his presence there, but this is not very important for Rauf. The Saracen also is equally stubborn and he intends not to depart on friendly terms this day. This is actually the imitation of the war scenes in the epics: the stubbornness of Marsile and Emir in the Song (in spite of the probability of their coasting to victory), is apparent here, as well as the fierceness of both Otuel and Clarel:

Than said the Sarasine to Schir Rauf succudrously,

‘I have na lyking to lyfe to lat the with lufe.’

He gave ane braid with his brand to the beirne by,

Till the blude of his browis brest out abufe.

The kene knight in that steid stakkerit sturely,

The lenth of ane Rude braid he gart him remufe.(856-60)

Roland, being the tutor of Rauf, intervenes in the fight and rushes onto the Saracen, threatening that he will have to contend with the people of this country. Roland later reminds him that they are two and he is one and either he or Rauf is strong enough to capture him. This reminds us of the war scenes where the sides threaten each other first to get the other to surrender. Following that threat Roland tells him to convert, which is an alternative option before every fight: “In Christ and thow will trow, thow takis nane outray.”(877) Of course,

the Saracen is stout enough, it has been before in all Matter of France Epics, not to accept the offer:

`Forsuith,' the Sarasine said,
`Thyself maid me never sa affraid
That I for soverance wald have praid,
Na not sall to day. (878-81)

Roland's intervention seems convenient and, in accordance with the Matter of France, on account that the theme of conversion is always one-step ahead of the war. Roland thereby teaches Rauf that the conversion of the enemy is the real aim rather than destroying the enemy. To achieve his goal, he withstands the provocative interference of the Saracen, telling him that fighting will do no good:

Saracen: `Breif me not with your boist, but mak you baith boun,
Batteris on baldly the best, I yow pray.'

Roland: `Na,' said Schir Rolland, `that war na resoun,
I trow in the mekle God, that maist of michtis may.

The tane is in power to mak that presoun,
For that war na wassalage, sum men wald say;
I rid that thow hartfully forsaik thy Mahoun;
Fy on that foull feind, for fals is thy fay!
Becum Cristen, Schir Knicht, and on Christ call;

It is my will thow convert --
This wickit world is bot ane start --

And have Him halely in hart

That Maker is of all.'(882-894)

Magog explains that he is the ambassador of the Saracens- just like Otuel, and indicates that Roland has harmed many of his relatives. He asserts that next year they are going to take revenge for his people. Therefore, as we see, the dialogue becomes harsher thus the Saracen's possibility for an imminent conversion decreases. However, Roland goes on with his missionary argument all the same, proving that the conversion of the infidel via using force is of no value. While Roland is trying to convince Magog mentioning the magnanimity of the Christian God, he warns him that it is vain to accept to going hell:

‘In faith,’ said Schir Rolland,
‘That is full evill wyn: land
To have quhill thow ar levand,
Sine at thine end hell. (917-20)

To invigorate his offer and to enchant the Saracen he in a way bribes him by saying that if he becomes a convert he would arrange for him one of the rich beautiful Damsels as a wife:

Wald thow convert the in hy and cover the of sin,
Thow suld have mair profite and mekle pardoun;
Riche douchereis seir to be sesit in,
During quhill day dawis, that never will gang down;
Wed ane worthie to wyfe, and weild hir with win,
Ane of the riche of our realme, be that ressoun;
The gentill Duches, Dame Jane, that clamis be hir kin
Angeos and uther landis, with mony riche toun.
Thus may thow, and thow will, wirk the best wise.
I do the out of dispair,

In all France is nane so fair;
Als scho is appeirand air
To twa douchereis.'(921-933)

The story is going its course as far as the audience expects it. However, some unexpected maneuver happens here: on account that both in the Song and the other two Middle English Charlemagne Romances, Saracens are directly associated with materialization and worldliness, for which we can look back to the Emir/ Charlemagne opposition and their promises to their soldiers (mentioned in the first chapter) and the idolatrous worshipping of the Saracens in all of the three poems mentioned above; as well as their despising and insulting their gods upon a failure or defeat. Moreover, the sexual connotations of the Saracen women in Sowdone of Bayblone which is not so much different in Sir Ferumbras, against the otherworldly behaviours of the French women and warriors, Magog is expected to have reacted differently to the offer of Roland, who offers worldly things in his theological discussion with the Saracen. However, Roland's diplomacy backfires: while he is giving a lesson to Rauf about the importance of conversion and the essence of knighthood, which is now directly associated with being the soldier of Christ and teaching the ways of God to men in the context of Charlemagne Romances, he is given a lesson by the heathen himself which is one of the exceptional lines- may be the most exceptional lines- in Charlemagne romances:

I rek nocht of thy riches, Schir Rolland the Knicht,'
Said the rude Sarasine in ryall array.
`Thy god nor thy grassum set I bot licht;
Bot gif thy God be sa gude as I heir the say,
I will forsaiik Mahoun and tak me to His micht,
Ever mair perpetuallie, as He that mair may.

Heir with hart and gude will my treuth I the plicht,
That I sall lelely leif on thy Lord ay,
And I beseik Him of grace and askis Him mercy,
And Christ His Sone full schene.
For I have Cristen men sene,
That in mony angeris hes bene,
Full oft on Him cry.'(934-946)

He openly asserts that he does not care for the riches Roland offers in a dialogue about religion. Of course, the Saracen ambassador's conversion is somewhat sudden and not a well settled one but the message it tries to give is a criticism of the Matter of France. The objective of converting "the infidel", though being very prominent in Charlemagne romances, is achieved either by threat or by miraculous events; plausible speech and dialogues do not exist, most probably, because of the fact that all the bargains and diplomacies take place under the atmosphere of an impending war. However, in the poems, the total conversion of the infidels is far from reality. It is generally represented with some prominent converts, present in all examples dealt here, Magog being the only convert criticizing a Christian for being materialistic and for not focusing on his God's benevolence rather stressing the material gain the convert is going to take. Thus in this poem, the author criticizes the way conversion is treated in these romances, showing that the Saracens are also open to dialogue and bound to accept the superiority of Christianity which is openly advantageous to an idolatrous religion. In the romances where the religious strife is along the same lines with the political/ military strife, conversion means also politically changing your side. However, in the Tale of Rauf Collier as we see, the military and political side is left aside which is especially symbolized

with the Saracen's giving up to his righteous enmity against Roland who has harmed many of his kin and people, and his converting to Christianity upon hearing the epithets of his God.

This example more than being an exception, in the sense that it is the only true example of willing conversion, indicates that Saracens are also normal people and are able to be convinced, if attempted. Therefore, the poem paves the way for the normalization of the Saracen image as well as the method of serving the religion. Generally speaking, Saracens who prove to be valiant, bold and stubborn characters before they convert, are for the first time represented as logical people open to dialogue.

Later, they are entertained joyously in the court by Charlemagne and the others, and Rauf, who is treated as if he has done something for the conversion of the Saracen, is consequently rewarded with the Marshall of France, which bears humour in it.

The eminence of the theme of conversion in the Matter of France is both shown and treated as a cornerstone, though the method is criticized. Being a more important combining element than of all those other topics found in these Romances, such as defence of the country or Christendom, peerage, knighthood and courtesy, the theme of conversion is not presented as an alternative in the war scenes but as a real target that can be attained through dialogue and tolerance. The miraculous experience of Otuel is transformed into rational debate, its materialistic side is criticized, and true conversion is, in a way, presented by the poet. Therefore as we see, Roland has also gone through a significant change: in Song of Roland, Roland does not believe that the Saracens can be true converts and offers to fight for it. However in this romance, he undertakes the mission of a benevolent preacher who tolerates the provocations of his enemy. Although we do not know how Roland treats the newly converted, it is certain that Magog's conversion is regarded as a true one, as we understand from Roland's and the court's overjoyed reaction. Because of the fact that when the

“unbeliever” feels constrained to convert, there is generally a “matter of fact reaction” just like in the case of Garcy.

Roland of Otuel and Roland is criticized for behaving materialistically for an otherworldly endeavour and shows the desensitization of the society towards warfare by openly bringing out the main motives of the war scenes in Charlemagne romances. The theme of conversion, being a motive and an objective of the ongoing warfare in the poems we have dealt with so far, becomes the action itself.

In Rauf Collier, sense of humour plays a critical part, showing the possibility of a better and an ideal conversion without political strife and fear in it. In a humorous narration, the role of mutual dialogue, which is ignored and mostly proven ineffective in the former romances we have dealt with, the author of the Collier shows an other possibility of “preaching the Gospel”. It is very ironic that such a conversion can only take place in a text written to make fun of the romances dealing with the theme of conversion.

CONCLUSION

The dual world Song of Roland presents at the time of the First crusade (1095) creates a two polarized world in which the Saracens (Muslims in general) constitute the “polar extreme” of the Christian Europe symbolized by the Frank army. As we have seen, this opposition in the Song is based on the difference of the two religions: Christianity and Islam. However, the fact that the representation of Islam is far from the reality and it is more like the representation of the pagan religions of the pre-Christian Europe directly affects the theme of conversion in the poem making it inevitable and a though possibility to realise. Conversion (to Christianity) becomes the most crucial success and the aim of the ongoing war in the Song. Conversion represents the total subjugation of the enemy, and the hope of the Middle Age mind that one-day the entire World would be Christian. The conversion ideal is achieved in two ways: by force and by preaching. As we see in the poem, though not really achieved “conversion by love” is regarded superior to the conversion by force. However, the function of the convert(s) represented by Saracen queen Bramimunde, (if we do not take into account of hundred thousands of converts by force, which are not mentioned in more than two lines) in the society seems obscure and insignificant.

In Middle English Charlemagne Romances that are highly affected from the Song of Roland, which is well known by the English audience and whose chief characters are the same as the Song, we see that, the theme of conversion gains more importance. In these romances three of which are taken into account in this work we see that, the biases against the Saracens still continue however, their putative threat to Christianity and the national zeal felt in the Song are no more present. Hence, the religious zeal and the condition of the converts are more important in these poems. In both Otuel and Roland and Sowdone of Babylon the converts have prominent roles and they’re the chief characters as well as the Charlemagne

who is again a priest- king figure symbolizing the Christian zeal and the close relationship of the Christian side with God(as in the Song). As we have seen, in these poems including the Rauf Collier, Roland, “the hero” of the Song of Roland who dies during the defence of the Christendom loses his significance symbolising the decrease of the importance of the Muslim threat to Europe. Instead, converts come to the fore adding an extra importance to the theme of conversion which does not always stem from the Christian zeal (as in Sowdone) which is generally very effective in both Song of Roland and other Charlemagne romances.

Conversion in these poems is achieved by force and love (including miraculous events). Converts also symbolises the door to exotic world of the Saracens. Similar that of the Song conversion by love is developed and those converts are treated as true converts. This signifies a New Testament model in which there is no conversion by force but by dialogue and miraculous happenings. Although fighting against “the unbelievers” is exalted in the poem similar to the Old Testament and conversion by force is achieved, those converts are never developed nor mentioned.

However, in none of the Charlemagne Romances nor in the Song, conversion by dialogue is never really achieved. It is either superficial in Sowdone or miraculous or by force in Otuel and Roland. The Tale of Rauf Collier, which is somewhat a parody of these romances, does not ignore the importance of the theme of conversion of these poems but makes fun of it by criticizing Roland who promises the Saracen worldly things instead of a proper theological discussion.

Conversion in Song of Roland and Middle English Charlemagne Romances, which is highly affected by the Christian zeal in the poems and the images of the Saracens, is very prominent symbolizing the real success of the Christian armies and the only possible way of salvation for the enemy in a world divided into two polar the only criterion of which is religion.

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