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A STUDY OF
BLANCANDIN ET L'ORGUEILLEUSE D'AMOUR,
A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY
ROMAN D' AVENTURE.

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ABSTRACT

The present study of Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour, an anonymous verse romance of the early thirteenth century, considers the two principal themes of love and chivalry the work has in common with many earlier romances. A close examination of Blancandin's first adventure illustrates the preparation of the hero for his career as a knight through his introduction to the world of chivalry and to love. The character and role of the hero, Blancandin, are examined in the light of three assessments which present him as a wholly conventional hero, undistinguished from those of contemporary romances. The heroine, Orgueilleuse d'amour, is studied through a detailed analysis of the portrait of her provided by the knight at the ford. The theme of love throughout the romance is considered with particular reference to the love of Blancandin and Orgueilleuse. Several forms of armed combat, the essential feature of the world of chivalry, are examined and the importance of combat in the formation of Blancandin's character and to the romance as a whole is evaluated. The detailed description of places and objects forms an integral part of the romance as well as serving to illustrate aspects of the principal themes. The story of Blancandin's adventures is a coherent and unified one, and examination of some aspects of the romance's structure and the poet's narrative technique helps to show how coherence and unity have been achieved. Reference is made in the course of this study to the works of Chretien de Troyes, and in particular the romance Yvain (le chevalier au lion), in order to illustrate the ways in which the poet of Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour follows the conventions of twelfth-century romance as they were exhibited in Chretien's romances. An attempt is made to measure the extent to which Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour conforms to the conventions of medieval romance, and to define and situate it more precisely within the romance genre.

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INTRODUCTION

Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour is an anonymous verse romance of the early thirteenth century. The romance exists also in two prose versions which seem to derive from a common original. The edition of the text used throughout this study is the critical edition of Franklin P. Sweetser, based on the five manuscripts in verse.¹ Details of the five verse manuscripts are contained in the Introduction to Sweetser's edition, pp. 6-9, where they are identified as follows:

- Manuscript A, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 19152, 4830 lines
- Manuscript B, Turin, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Turin, L.V. 44, 6200 lines
- Manuscript C, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 375, 6136 lines
- Manuscript F, Paris, Archives nationales A B XIX 1734, dossier Nièvre, a fragment of 264 lines
- Manuscript P, Philadelphie, Bibliothèque de l'Université de Pensylvanie, French Ms. 22, 5548 lines.

Manuscript C was edited by Henri Michelant in 1867, and the fragment, Manuscript F, was published by Paul Meyer in 1889.

The text of Sweetser's critical edition is established as follows: up to l. 4816 the text of MS. A is given with variants from MSS. C and P, with passages supplied from MS. P where gaps or ambiguities occur in MS. A. From l. 4817, the texts of both MSS. C and P are given to the end of the romance. The end of MS. A which differs from that of MSS. C and P in that it omits the episodes of Sadoine's capture by Alimodés, and subsequent rescue by Blancandin, and the treachery of Subien, comprises one hundred and seven lines and is contained in Appendix I. As MS. P is incomplete, from l. 4817 the text of MS. C only will be considered for the purposes of the present study.

Questions of the date of composition of the romance,

its author, and the works which may have influenced aspects of the romance such as its beginning in the style of a 'roman éducatif' and the creation of characters, are examined in Chapter IV of Sweetser's Introduction. It is concluded that Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour is an anonymous work, composed during the first third of the thirteenth century.

In Chapter V of his Introduction, Sweetser gives a résumé of the romance by episodes. This résumé, which takes into account the variations of all five verse manuscripts, divides the romance into twenty-one episodes. The numbers and titles of these divisions have been adopted in the present study and have been referred to as 'sections' for the sake of clarity, e.g. Section 3, "Blancandin's first adventure".

The form of the romance follows the conventions of medieval romance developed during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The emergence of the romance genre from about 1150 reflected the tastes of an aristocratic public centred on courtly life. The contact with the luxury and civilisation of courts in the East, and with the more refined tastes of the nobility of southern France, occasioned by the Crusades, together with the increased feminine influence on courtly life, helped to develop new ideals of civilised behaviour, and of love. The courtly romance represented the combination of these new ideals and the established taste for feats of arms and heroic conduct which formed the basis of the earlier chansons de geste. The romance developed in line with the tastes of a particular section of society, the aristocratic class, a factor which profoundly influenced the conventions which became associated with the genre. The heroes and heroines of romance are drawn from the ranks of the nobility; the stories most frequently follow the fortunes of militant knights who seek opportunities to prove their worth and to gain honour and fame; the analysis of love is characterised by

exploration of subtle nuances of feelings; and above all, the combination of the knight's valour and the love of a noble lady expresses in the form of romance the refined notions of chivalry aspired to by the contemporary feudal nobility. The romance also reflected a change of perspective concerning man's place in society: whereas the heroes of the chansons de geste displayed their prowess in collective action for their king and country, the heroes of romance are individuals many of whom undertake a quest for some kind of personal fulfilment.

Writers of romance adopted a narrative style of composition similar to that of the chansons de geste, and the length of a romance became established at between five thousand and seven thousand lines providing scope for the medieval writer's love of amplification. However, the requirements of the more refined and idealistic content of the romance led to changes in the style of narration and the versification. Romance writers replaced the decasyllabic laisses of the chansons de geste with octosyllabic couplets, a form of versification which frequently gave rise to banal rhymes but which, nevertheless, was well suited to the measured refined tone of narration and the liveliness of dialogue in the romance. The presentation of characters in romance largely followed epic traditions based on early oral literary forms - thus detailed description of physical appearance, dress (particularly the knight's armour and weapons), and deeds of valour, play a large part in characterisation. The portrayal of inner feelings, particularly in connection with love or with conflict which may arise from the opposing claims of love and military reputation, often expressed in dialogue or monologue form, is perhaps the most significant innovative feature of the romance. Conventions, of description of characters and of places and objects, and of the analysis of emotions, developed during the twelfth century, some

to the point of being stylised, and the individual poet's ability to utilise and adapt such conventions to create works of originality and freshness became a measure of his skill.

The romance genre includes several types of romance, the principal three being the romans antiques which drew inspiration from Classical literature, the romans arthuriens such as the romances of Chrétien de Troyes which drew on the matière de Bretagne, and the romans d'aventure, a more loosely defined group which includes many romances, particularly of the early thirteenth century, which drew inspiration from neither Classical nor breton sources, but told stories of chivalrous adventure or series of adventures.

Our edition of Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour is subtitled 'Roman d'aventures du XIII^e siècle'. It has thus been assigned by its editor to the group of romances designated romans d'aventure. It is written in octosyllabic couplets, it is 6521 lines in length, and will be seen to follow to a large extent the conventions of romance developed during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

In the course of this study, reference will be made to the works of Chrétien de Troyes, particularly in order to illustrate the ways in which the poet of Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour follows the conventions of twelfth-century romance as they were exhibited in Chrétien's romances. In particular, Wendelin Foerster's critical edition of Yvain (le chevalier au lion) introduced by T.B. W. Reid² will be used for comparative purposes, where applicable, in order to clarify points.

Reference will also be made to some of the judgements on Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour contained in Marie-José Southworth's Étude comparée de quatre romans médiévaux³, a comparative study of the structure of four romances - Jaufre, Fergus, Durmart, Blancandin - all composed between 1190 and 1240.

The present study will first consider (Chapter 1) the two principal themes of love and chivalry which Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour has in common with many earlier romances. In Chapter 2, a close examination of Blancandin's first adventure illustrates the preparation of the hero for his career as a knight through his introduction to the world of chivalry and to love. The character and role of the hero, Blancandin, are examined in Chapter 3 in the light of three assessments which present him as a wholly conventional hero, undistinguished from those of contemporary romances. The heroine, Orgueilleuse d'amour, is studied in Chapter 4 through a detailed analysis of the portrait of her provided by the knight at the ford. In Chapter 5, the theme of love throughout the romance is considered with particular reference to the love of Blancandin and Orgueilleuse. In Chapter 6, several forms of armed combat, the essential feature of the world of chivalry, are examined and the importance of combat in the formation of Blancandin's character and to the romance as a whole is evaluated. The detailed description of places and objects forms an integral part of the romance as well as serving to illustrate aspects of the principal themes and is considered in Chapter 7. The story of Blancandin's adventures is a coherent and unified one, and in Chapter 8 examination of some aspects of the romance's structure and the poet's narrative technique will help to show how coherence and unity have been achieved.

Through the study of these important aspects of the work, an attempt will be made to measure the extent to which Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour conforms to the conventions of medieval romance, and to define and situate it more precisely within the romance genre.

Notes:

1. Librairie Droz/Librairie Minard, Genève/Paris, 1964.
2. Manchester University Press, 1942.
3. Librairie A.G. Nizet, Paris, 1973.

Chapter 1

THEMES - LOVE AND CHIVALRY

Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour, in common with earlier courtly romances, has as its two principal themes love and chivalry. By the early thirteenth century the linking of these two themes had become an established literary practice:

A l'idéal célébré dans les chansons de geste, au combat pour la France, la chrétienté, le roi, le lignage, les principes féodaux, se substitue peu à peu une 'vita nuova' où la prouesse compose avec des mérites mondains, où le devoir épique et collectif cède la place à des mobiles individuels. L'étymologie de courtois et de courtoisie éclaire la formation et le sens de l'idéal nouveau. Ces termes dérivent en effet de cour, mot qui s'écrivait et se prononçait en ancien français avec un t final (latin populaire cortis, curtis, latin classique cohors, -ortis). De toute évidence la courtoisie se trouve donc en rapport avec une vie de cour. 'Civilité relevée d'élégance ou de générosité', selon la définition de Littré, elle implique un raffinement des moeurs, luxe, loisirs, politesse, belles manières, respect des bienséances, soins empressés auprès des dames qui dans les cours donnent le ton des relations sociales. Mais la courtoisie du moyen âge est beaucoup plus qu'un code de politesse et de galanterie. Elle englobe aussi un art d'aimer. Elle s'approfondit et se développe en une psychologie et une morale de l'amour. C'est par ce trait essentiel que la littérature courtoise - chanson lyrique et roman - s'oppose à la chanson de geste qui ne s'attarde pas aux souffrances et aux joies des amants.¹

Love is one of the principal themes of all courtly literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and combines with the themes of chivalry and adventure to create the special character of courtly romance.

The love theme is expressed by means of a set of commonly-used motifs. In the courtly romances of Chrétien de Troyes these conventional motifs appear in a fully developed form, and the poet's treatment of love in Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse

d'amour follows closely the traditions of preceding romances.

In courtly romance, love is the prerogative of the aristocratic class. Thus, Orgueilleuse's lady-companion quite properly urges her mistress to give her love to some knight or king of rank comparable with her own. Love is in itself ennobling - a knight gains in prestige and honour when he wears his lady's colours in battle and the service he owes her enhances his natural abilities and spurs him to ever greater achievement. Love between a knight and a lady in the romances involves a relationship of service, the knight's obligation of fidelity to his lady requiring loyalty in the nature of that owed by a vassal to his lord in feudal society. Orgueilleuse then is not only Blancandin's "amie", she is also his "dame", so that he is in a sense doubly bound to serve her interests.

Love is beset with obstacles, frustrations and difficulties. Interest is often first created, as in this romance and also in Chretien's Yvain, by making the lovers an unlikely pair. In the case of Yvain, the hero is struck with love for Laudine, the distraught widow of the man he has just killed. Love between Blancandin and Orgueilleuse at first appears unlikely in view of her proud refusal of all suitors and her outrage and desire for revenge after the episode of the stolen kisses. Obstacles and difficulties both before and after the declaration of love between Blancandin and Orgueilleuse provide much of the interest of the love theme. During the greater part of the romance, frustration is brought about by the separation of the lovers during Blancandin's absence fighting Orgueilleuse's enemies. Tension is maintained for the audience or readers throughout the series of battle scenes by the expectation of the lovers' eventual reconciliation.

Chivalry is the broad subject of the romance. To treat this concept as a 'theme' separate from the theme

of love is in fact to make an artificial division between two parts of a single whole. Chivalry encompasses all facets of knighthood of which love can be shown to be an essential part:

Only two themes are considered worthy of a knight: feats of arms, and love. ... they are permanently connected with the person of the perfect knight, they are part of his definition, so that he cannot for one moment be without adventure in arms nor for one moment without amorous entanglement.²

For the purposes of this discussion, however, the term chivalry is used in the sense of Blancandin's development as a knight through his feats of arms and adventures. It is thus seen as a theme separate from, yet closely related to, that of love.

Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'amour is the story of the development and career of a single knight, from his youthful curiosity about chivalry until he has established himself as a knight of honour and reputation. The motifs of the theme of chivalry, like those of love, had become conventions of medieval romance, again developed by Chrétien, by the time this romance was written.

The knight, by the twelfth century, belonged to a distinct social class and was often, though not necessarily, of noble birth - Blancandin is, of course, the son of a king. The knight had to be properly trained - Blancandin's education might appear to have been hampered by his father's direction that chivalry be kept from him, but in fact as a child Blancandin was well trained in the practical skills of horsemanship and combat. He was thus well equipped to take up arms when he discovered what chivalry was all about. The knight must establish himself through experience:

... trial through adventure is the real meaning of the knight's ideal existence.³

Adventures are then necessary to the knight - they are the means by which he acquires honour and reputation. To be of the greatest value to the knight, adventures

should be more than daring exploits; they should have some sort of moral significance, they should benefit the social order in some way. For instance, Yvain's experience at the Château de Pesme Aventure not only gave him an opportunity to display his courage and ability, but his defeat of the demons with the help of his lion brought about the release of the captive maidens, thus establishing Yvain as the perfect knight of charity. Blancandin's adventures are linked together by an overall political purpose, that of defeating the enemies of Orgueilleuse and of establishing peace and security at Tormadai. Blancandin has a defined role to fulfil as Orgueilleuse's protector, and his adventures are all connected in a greater or lesser degree to fulfilment of that role. Success, honour and reputation result for Blancandin, and social order is restored and secured.

While the twin threads of love and chivalry are interwoven throughout the story of Blancandin, the emphasis of the narrative alternates between them - at first, the narrative is concerned with the education, trials and successes of the young knight; from his first encounter with Orgueilleuse the theme of love is predominant; from the time of Orgueilleuse's declaration of love for Blancandin and her engagement of him as her protector, the theme of chivalry becomes predominant for the remaining two-thirds of the romance. These divisions are however in no way rigid, nor do they imply the exclusion of one theme by the other, but represent rather an attempt to distinguish the sections of the romance where one theme appears predominant.

For the first third of the romance (ll. 1-1770), or up to the end of Section 6, "Orgueilleuse declares her love for Blancandin", according to Sweetser's divisions, the themes of love and chivalry complement each other, through the intermingling of Blancandin's

first adventures and the development and flowering of love between the hero and Orgueilleuse. The prologue recalls the good old days when

Chevalerie n'ert pas morte (l. 7)

thus providing the 'key' to the principal concern of the romance, the approval of chivalry. Section 2, "Blancandin's education and departure from his father's house" (ll. 23-206), is concerned with the education of the young prince and his introduction to chivalry, a subject his father has attempted to keep from him. Section 3, "Blancandin's first adventure" (ll. 207-396), tells of Blancandin's first adventure after leaving his father's house and this section relates an episode crucial to the content and to the structure of the whole romance. Within this episode the theme of love is introduced and that of chivalry is expanded as Blancandin meets a knight for the first time, is himself dubbed as a knight, and experiences his first knightly combat. Section 4, "The stolen kiss" (ll. 397-854), introduces the heroine Orgueilleuse and describes the first encounter between hero and heroine. It is important to note the circumstances of this encounter, and their significance in relation to the two principal themes.

On being asked his destination and purpose by the knight guarding the ford, Blancandin replies:

... "Sire, volentiers.
Ge quier serjanz et chevaliers
A qui ge puisse demorer
Por mon vasselaige esprover,
Quar ge ne quier fors los et pris." (ll. 509-513)

This is a clear statement of Blancandin's chivalrous aims: his desire to display his prowess, "mon vasselaige", and to seek honour and reputation, "los et pris". The knight reacts immediately to this declaration by proposing that Blancandin should daringly steal a kiss from his noble, beautiful and proud mistress, Orgueilleuse. The exploit is proposed as a possible means to the lady's favour with its attendant wealth and position:

Nel laissez ja por coardise,
 Que s'ele estoit de vos surprise,
 Trop vos dorroit or et argent;
 S'esteriez rois de sa gent. (ll. 547-550)

Blancandin's reply is especially illuminating - the idea is for him a challenge:

Dist Blanchandins: "Molt par fait bien.
 Ainz mais ne vi si saige rien;
 Bien se set de toz delivrer.
 Mais que qu'il me doie coster,
 Ge me metrai en aventure
 De baisier ceste criature ..." (ll. 559-564)

The above passages clearly demonstrate that the exploit of stealing a kiss from Orgueilleuse is both proposed and accepted as an adventure, a feat of audacity with the prospect of gaining an advantageous position which would fulfil Blancandin's stated aims. Love, thus far, has no part in Blancandin's view of his encounter with Orgueilleuse. The knight at the ford, on the other hand, has explained Orgueilleuse's proud refusal of any suitor, despite her lady-companion's urging, and suggests the possibility of Orgueilleuse granting Blancandin the favour of her love.

Then follows the portrait of the heroine, and it is significant that the lady is not described by a languishing lover in the manner of Yvain's impassioned description of Laudine in her grief (Yvain, ll.1462-1506), but in a rather matter-of-fact and informative way by her knight. He concludes his description with a repetition of his view of Blancandin's expectations, should Orgueilleuse grant him the favour of her love:

Or vueille Dieu le gloriox
 Qu'el face son ami de vos,
 Quar bien deffendriez la terre
 Quant vos alez los et pris querre." (ll. 605-608)

Blancandin's own expectations of the result of the exploit are simply those of an eager and impetuous young knight, and his enthusiasm, especially in the first line of his response, is far removed from thoughts of the prospect of the lady's love:

"Diex, fist l'anfes, quel aventure!
 Ainz mais ne vi tel criature.

Se g'en puis avoir un baisier
 De la pucele a l'acointier,
 Bien cuit qu'apres vivrai petit,
 Mais moi, que chaut se l'en m'ocit?
 A morir en sui, ou au vivre;
 Jamais n'en quier estre delivre." (ll. 609-616)

Blancandin thus views the proposed exploit wholly in terms of a chivalrous adventure, and the prospect of love at this stage of the hero's development is seen only as a means to an end, as a passport to his longed-for life of chivalry.

The theme of love, though subordinated to the claims of chivalry in the statements of the hero, is however very much present in this episode: the descriptions of Orgueilleuse's attitude to love by the knight at the ford, and the aftermath of the stolen kisses, particularly Orgueilleuse's reactions and the conversation with her lady-companion which follows, provide an intriguing and challenging situation. To Orgueilleuse's position of proud refusal has now been added the outrage of the stolen kisses, and much later another obstacle to the smooth course of love, Blancandin's absences from Tormadai, will add to the frustration and difficulties faced by the lovers.

In Section 5, "Blancandin's heroic conduct" (ll. 855-1352), the two themes are nicely balanced. The descriptions of Blancandin's entry into Tormadai, his successful meeting of the provost's challenge, the tournament between the people of Tormadai and Alimodés's men, are interspersed with scenes of Orgueilleuse's distress, self-examination and conversations with her lady-companion.

In Section 6, "Orgueilleuse declares her love for Blancandin" (ll. 1353-1770), the theme of love receives its fullest expression in the romance. The scenes between Orgueilleuse and her lady-companion, between Orgueilleuse and the provost, and between Orgueilleuse and Blancandin are depicted skilfully with delicacy and refinement. The complexities of the heroine's

feelings are presented with subtlety, psychological interest and intrigue. Orgueilleuse declares her love for Blancandin and his response is in line with his knightly ambition:

"Dame, ce ne refus ge mie;
 Por vostre amor, pris a conquerre
 Vos aiderai de ceste guerre." (ll. 1712-1714)

Orgueilleuse then offers him all he may ask of her, and in five brief lines before the provost informs him of the knights waiting to do battle with Alimodés, Love strikes Blancandin at last, and the force of the emotion is expressed by the poet in the conventional imagery of fire and arrow:

Cil esgarde la damoisele;
 El cors li repoint l'estancele
 Qui les autres esprant et art.
 Amors le ra feru du dart,
 Sovent li fait coulor müer. (ll. 1717-1721)

Now that his position as Orgueilleuse's protector is established, Blancandin turns immediately to the practical service of his lady and the furtherance of his knightly career.

The remaining two-thirds of the romance (ll. 1771-6521) are very much more concerned with the knight's adventures, with the 'practice and proving'⁴ of his knighthood, than with further development of the theme of love. Love between Orgueilleuse and Blancandin has served a more important purpose than love in itself: it has provided Orgueilleuse with a much-needed protector and defender of her lands, people and possessions; it has provided Blancandin with a cause. Love, with its obligation of the lover's service to his lady, is thus the motive underlying Blancandin's consequent series of adventures. However, love and service of his lady are not always the direct motivation for all his adventures. In the tradition of medieval story-telling, one episode often leads on to another less closely related to the central love theme, so that the hero's adventures sometimes lead him off at a tangent from his primary purpose of defeating and driving off Orgueilleuse's

enemies. In episodes telling of such 'secondary' adventures, the links between the central love theme and that of Blancandin's development as a knight become tenuous, and the concerns of knightly prowess and honour then outweigh his obligations as a lover.

For the greater part of the romance then the theme of chivalry is predominant. By the time of Orgueilleuse's declaration of love for Blancandin, he has already established himself as a knight worthy of respect, though still relatively inexperienced. The adventures which span the latter two-thirds of the romance provide Blancandin with a variety of opportunities to gain the experience which is essential to the knight's proving of his worth. As pointed out above, the theme of love is not always intermingled with the more important theme of chivalry in the same proportion. It provides, rather, a broad framework within which Blancandin's development as a knight takes place, in that it provides him with the cause which enables him to establish his knightly prowess and honour.

Between the time of Blancandin's departure from his father's house and his meeting Orgueilleuse's knight at the ford, an episode occurs which provides the young prince in search of adventure with his first experiences in the world of chivalry. It is an episode which teaches Blancandin valuable lessons, both about the nature of chivalrous adventure and about the nature of love, thus preparing him for the career which awaits him in the service of Orgueilleuse. It is in this episode that the theme of love is introduced, and the theme of chivalry is expanded and given the emphasis it will retain throughout the remainder of Blancandin's story.

Notes:

1. Jean Frappier, "Vues sur les conceptions courtoises dans les littératures d'oc et d'oïl au XII^e siècle" in Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale, 2, 1959, p. 135
2. Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, Trans. Willard R. Trask, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1953, p. 140
3. Ibid., p. 135
4. Ibid., p. 134