

A Study of the *Siege of Jerusalem*
in its Physical, Literary and
Historical Contexts

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Thesis submitted to the School of English Studies, University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy June 2000



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Friends and colleagues have given generously of their advice and knowledge while I was writing this thesis. I am especially grateful to Thorlac Turville-Petre for his patient supervision, and to Mike Evans for his corrections and suggestions for improvement. The completion of this project would not have been possible without the constant encouragement of Desmond Millar and Ian Heggie, to whom I am eternally indebted. This project is dedicated to the memory of Susan Millar, who inspired me to undertake it and sadly did not live to see its completion.

THESIS ABSTRACT
**A STUDY OF THE *SIEGE OF JERUSALEM* IN ITS PHYSICAL,
LITERARY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS**

The general perception of the *Siege of Jerusalem* is best summed up in Ralph Hanna's phrase that it is "the chocolate-covered tarantula of the alliterative movement". Only one critic has moved away from this consensus of opinion, Elisa Narin van Court, who argues "that in addition to the graphically violent anti-Judaism of the poem, there is a competing sympathetic narrative strand that complicates what has been considered a straightforward and brutal poetic." I follow Narin van Court in rejecting the standard opinion of the poem as a univocal narrative of unsavoury anti-Semitism and proceed to examine the poet's conception of his work, and how this poem differs from other accounts of the destruction of Jerusalem and the legend of Veronica. Pertinently, he uses different sources in an effort to bring out the contradictions latent in the story of the destruction of Jerusalem. He juxtaposes historical elements from the *Polychronicon*, such as the allusion to the tribute, with religious material in an attempt to query the necessity of war, even if the cause is ostensibly noble. Most notably, he raises the question of the motivation behind the campaign in Judaea. He avoids expressing value judgements, unlike texts such as the *Vindicta Salvatoris* and *Titus and Vespasian* which interpret the destruction of Jerusalem as the justifiable punishment of the Jews for the death of Christ. Not only is the poet's approach very different from that of literary and religious works, it also differs from that of historians. He is interested in people's

motivation and how they react to the situations in which they find themselves.

Hence he does not try to find overarching patterns in the siege of Jerusalem.

The poem's literary context is of vital importance, for although the text bears certain similarities to works of crusading interest, such as the Charlemagne romances, it is nonetheless very different from them in terms of its attitude to non-Christians. The poet is anti-Judaic in that he believes that the Jewish religion is based on error and that the Jews were manifestly wrong in crucifying Christ, but he is still capable of making a distinction among them, seeing only their leaders as evil tyrants and expressing sympathy for the common citizens of Jerusalem. Thus he is not motivated by the anti-Semitism of the later Middle Ages, which led to accusations of host desecration, ritual murder and historiographic crucifixion being levelled against them. In this he differs from other redactions of the story of the destruction of Jerusalem, such as *Titus and Vespasian* and the accounts of medieval drama, which are virulently anti-Semitic as well as anti-Judaic in sentiment.

The intricacy of the narrative, which incorporates historical and religious elements raises a series of implications as to how we classify the poem. It has been variously designated as a romance, history, religious tale and a combination of two or all of these categories. It is my contention that the poet is stretching the limitations of genre, presenting religious and historical topics in the format of a romance, as it is his intention to explore the nature of Christian-Jewish relations, the personal experiences of the protagonists and the moral issues involved in warfare in his account of this traditional and popular story.

The engagement of others with the poem leads to the further transmission of the story. Indications as to how it was read and perceived are provided by the character of its manuscripts, that is whether they are elaborate or plain, the nature of the works with which it is to be found, and the alterations of scribes.

It can potentially be interpreted in several different ways.

In the course of this study I hope to dispel certain preconceptions regarding the *Siege of Jerusalem* and to raise the possibility of a fresh assessment of this beautifully written work which still remains on the margins of literary criticism.

INTRODUCTION

The *Siege of Jerusalem* has a perfectly deserved reputation as the chocolate-covered tarantula of the alliterative movement. Indeed, the poem is so offensive as to exist on the suppressed margins of critical attention, unaccompanied by commentary.¹

The *Siege of Jerusalem* is a poem which, as David Lawton remarks, “even its editors cannot love,”² and the poet’s “ghoulish relish for the horrible is so marked that one feels it may account for his having chosen the siege as his subject.”³ Similarly, A.C. Spearing concludes that it is “a brilliant and repellent work of art,” which expresses a “horrible delight in the suffering of the Jews,” “part of a morbid fascination with cruelty, pain and death that runs right through the poem.”⁴ It has, indeed, nearly always been heralded as a beautifully written poem, and at the same time denounced for its violent subject-matter, a viewpoint that has contributed to the marginalisation of this significant work and that still dominates what little critical attention it receives. The more I have examined the *Siege of Jerusalem* the more convinced I have become of the limitations and inadequacies in the standard manner of interpreting the poem and of the need to look at the work in its physical, literary and historical contexts in order to assess how the poet has handled his material in an innovative and perceptive manner.

The provenance of the poem is probably “extreme west Yorkshire” according to Ralph Hanna III, who has examined the manuscripts and dialect

¹ Hanna (1992 a) p.109.

² Lawton (1997) p.105.

³ Everett (1955) p.59.

⁴ Spearing (1987) pp.167, 172.

in detail.⁵ Hanna postulates Sawley, Whalley or Bolton as possible locations for the original composition, pointing out that the abbeys there contained copies of the sources and there were several members of the gentry and nobility in these areas who could have acted as patrons.⁶ This refines the earlier hypothesis of Allen Bond Kellogg, who in 1943 produced a study of the phonology, accident, and dialect of the poem in its various manuscripts, in which he concluded that the poem was probably of West-Midlands origin.⁷

Of the three locations proposed by Hanna, Bolton is the only one that possessed an Augustinian abbey rather than a Cistercian priory, and Elisa Narin van Court claims that this makes Bolton the most likely site of composition. She argues that the text shows an ambiguous attitude to the Jews, at times advocating violence towards them and on other occasions encouraging sympathy for their plight, and this displays evidence of the influence of Augustinian historical writing, such as the chronicle of William of Newburgh, which was on the whole tolerant of Jews, although it disapproved of their religious beliefs.⁸ Now it is true that there are similarities between the *Siege of Jerusalem* and such histories, but this does not necessarily imply that the poem had to be written by an Augustinian, as Augustine's doctrine concerning Jews originally dominated the medieval perspective on this group, a situation which

⁵ Hanna (1992 a) p.114.

⁶ Hanna (1992 a) pp.115-6.

⁷ Kellogg (1943) passim. This is a useful study of the language of the *Siege of Jerusalem* which concentrates on Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Misc. 656 (L), but also discusses the dialect differences between this manuscript and six others (U, D, V, C, E and A). He finds that six of them (not L.) usually have east-midland features and argues that the original language of the poem is best represented by L., the oldest manuscript which has some west-midlands traits.

⁸ Narin van Court (1995) pp.239-40.

did not change until the twelfth century. In fact one could also argue that it was written by a friar, as the friars were especially interested in the legend of St. Veronica, though their more tolerant attitude towards the Jews makes this unlikely.⁹

In 1906 Curt Reicke examined the style of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, *The Destruction of Troy*, *The Wars of Alexander*, the *Siege of Jerusalem*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and discredited the old theory that they were written by one man, Huchown,¹⁰ and we know no more regarding the poet. Fortunately, the *Siege of Jerusalem* can be dated reasonably precisely to the penultimate decade of the fourteenth century on the basis of manuscript and dialectical evidence.

The literary-historical interest of the poem has been widely acknowledged, occasioning brief remarks in catalogues and surveys of genre and the literature of the period. Gisela Guddat-Figge lists its manuscripts in her *Catalogue of the Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976), while Lillian Herlands Hornstein considers it in her section on “Miscellaneous Romances” in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English* (1967).¹¹ Derek Pearsall in his account of *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (1977) comments on its use of sources, finding it derivative, “decadent,” and unnecessarily violent, concurring with the earlier assessment by Dorothy Everett in 1955 and devoting a similarly small space to his

⁹ Rubin (1991) p.227.

¹⁰ Reicke (1906) *passim*.

¹¹ See Chapter Three.

remarks.¹² Generally, it is judged to be “ornate and precious” and George Kane in 1951, having examined the text in the light of the “incongruity between the classical subject-matter and the equally ancient but vastly remote Germanic prosody,” concludes that at times the effect is masterly, but otherwise it falls into excess and on the whole the poet’s “talent is misdirected and misspent” on this gruesome tale.¹³ The remarks of Geoffrey Shepherd are more positive, noting that the poem is skillfully constructed, earnest of tone and “probably intended and received as [a] morally authentic” history.¹⁴ A.C. Spearing deals at greater length with the poem than most general books do, devoting almost half a chapter in his 1987 monograph to an account of its stylistic features, which he finds quite impressive.¹⁵ Hoyt N. Duggan makes some perceptive remarks on the shape of its b-verse, its use of formulae, and its strophic patterns in his series of articles on these topics in alliterative poetry.¹⁶

Specific studies have focused on issues like the problematic allusion to the “rede wynde” in the *Siege of Jerusalem*,¹⁷ or on the sources of the work. Ferdinand Kopka’s 1887 dissertation investigates its relationship to the legend of St. Veronica, Josephus, and Hegesippus, and Phyllis Moe in 1977

¹² Pearsall (1977) pp.153, 169; Everett (1955) pp.58-9.

¹³ Kane (1951) pp.9, 57, 59.

¹⁴ Geoffrey Shepherd (1970) p.11.

¹⁵ Spearing (1987) pp.139-72.

¹⁶ Hoyt N. Duggan (1976) pp.265-88; (1986) pp.564-92; (1976-7) pp.223-47. See Hardman (1992) pp.68, 75 on fitt divisions; Oakden (1930) pp.70, 154, 156, 159, 161-2, 166-77, 189-90 and Oakden and Innes (1935) pp.44-7, 101-3 for a discussion of its metre, dialect and style; Matonis (1984) pp.339-60, and Cable (1991) esp. p.91, on its use of the alliterative long line.

¹⁷ Benson (1960) pp.363-4.

establishing Roger d'Argenteuil's *Bible en François* as the source of most of lines 201-724.¹⁸

Thorlac Turville-Petre looks at the work in the course of his investigation of *The Alliterative Revival* (1977), commenting briefly on its manuscripts and potential audience, line-groupings and descriptive passages.¹⁹ The manuscripts have also come in for close scrutiny, with Ferdinand Kopka and Ralph Hanna III both producing stemmas, of which the former is inadequate being based on only six of the manuscripts, and the latter more plausible.²⁰ J.R. Hulbert analyses all the manuscripts known to him and tries to establish an authoritative text close to the original, while Michael Swanton discusses the nature of the recently-discovered Exeter fragment.²¹ Meanwhile, Pamela R. Robinson turns her attention to the transmission of the *Siege of Jerusalem* in her 1972 Oxford B.Litt. thesis, arguing that the texts with which it is grouped suggest that it was intended as a crusading work.²²

Mary Hamel comes to similar conclusions on the basis of the poem's sources, and believes that the violence against the Jews is in fact displaced onto the Saracens, who were the chief contemporary enemies of God.²³ Hers is one of five articles which deal solely with the poem, and is an attempt to

¹⁸ Kopka (1887) pp.23-39; Moe (1977) pp.147-53.

¹⁹ Turville-Petre (1977) pp.32-4, 46, 61, 100.

²⁰ Kopka (1887) pp.5-23; Hanna (1996) pp.83-93, excerpted from the introduction of the forthcoming edition of the poem.

²¹ Hulbert (1931) pp.602-12; Swanton (1990) pp.103-4. See also Hardman (1994) pp.263-4 and Riddy (1996) pp.73-4 on manuscript contexts; Hanna (1989) pp.124-6 on the transmission of the manuscripts; Hanna (1992 b) on the manuscripts; Thompson (1987) esp. pp.48-9 on the *Siege of Jerusalem* in BL. Ms. Additional 31042; Turville-Petre (1997) pp.284-5 on the *Siege of Jerusalem*. Frampton and Cambridge, University Library Ms. Mm.V.14.

²² Pamela R. Robinson (1972) pp. 42, 47-9, 54 and see pp.113-9, 153-64, 179-82, 202-4, 229-30 for a description of manuscripts. See Murray J. Evans (1995) pp.70-1, 111 for similar views.

interpret the text rather than an exercise in literary-historicism, source analysis or manuscript studies. The other four articles are by Ralph Hanna, David Lawton, Christine Chism and Elisa Narin van Court.²⁴ The first is an attempt to contextualise the poem in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and to establish how it may have been read. Hanna proposes that Cambridge University Library Ms. Mm.v.14 may have had a Lancastrian audience as Frampton, the scribe, had worked for Lancastrian patrons on other occasions, and the hatred of the Jews may thus be displaced antagonism towards the Lollards. Lawton's 1997 article surveys descriptions of hunting in various texts in order to elucidate its function in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. Chism, in the most recent article on the poem, investigates the apparent contradiction in the *Siege of Jerusalem* between exterminating and exploiting the Jews. She argues that the work surmounts this difficulty by metaphorically transforming the Jews into gold, and that the ideology underlying the text is the need to expand and shore up the Christian empire through added resources, territory and so forth. Only one critic has moved away from the consensus of opinion that the *Siege of Jerusalem* is a straightforward anti-Semitic work, Elisa Narin van Court in 1995, who argues "that in addition to the graphically violent anti-Judaism of the poem, there is a competing strand that complicates what has been considered a straightforward and brutal poetic" and concludes that it is

²³ Hamel (1992) pp.177-94.

²⁴ Hanna (1992 a) pp.109-21; Lawton (1997) pp.105-17; Chism (1998) pp.309-40; Narin van Court (1995) pp.227-46.

“an ambiguous and, at times, profound confusion about Jews and Christians and violence.”²⁵

The present work follows Narin van Court in rejecting the standard view and its goal is to contextualise the *Siege of Jerusalem*, in order to show how it engages with some of the important social and religious issues of the day. I will follow the world of the *Siege of Jerusalem* as designed and constructed by the poet from traditional subject-matter available in widely disseminated texts and embellished with conventional tropes and elaborate descriptions.

Usually, narratives dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem relate the story from two specific perspectives - the need to avenge Christ and the importance of going on crusade. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet is aware of this but chooses to approach the subject in a different way. I put forward the argument that he wishes to raise the validity of warfare, as he is not convinced that the extreme suffering of ordinary Jewish citizens can be extolled even if the motif for the war itself is just. To do this he brings out the contradictions inherent in the material; he emphasises the Roman demand for tribute as well as the desire to avenge Jesus. He highlights the failings of Romans as well as of Jews. Furthermore, he investigates human motivation and people's reactions to extreme circumstances. The poem does not suggest war is wrong, but it does direct its readers to re-evaluate it. That its readers did accept the invitation to judge the poet's message in a variety of ways comes across clearly when one looks at it in its physical, literary and historical contexts.

²⁵ Narin van Court (1995) pp. 229, 244.

Chapter One (“The Poet’s Treatment of his Sources”) considers the major sources of the poem, together with other texts that may have influenced its development. The poet chooses two historical and two religious texts upon which to base his narrative. He carefully selects and re-organises the subject-matter which he finds in order to create a series of oppositions between just figures of authority, whose power is derived from God, and false figures of authority, whose power is groundless and tyrannical. He also focuses on the value of resolute faith and the despair of its absence. Significantly, he incorporates historical details from the *Polychronicon* which he juxtaposes to the religious material in an attempt to evaluate the legitimacy of using violence, even if the cause is ostensibly noble.

Chapter Two (“The Trouble with Genre”) investigates the awkward question of the genre of the poem and attempts to prove that it is indeed a romance, albeit an unorthodox one. The *Siege of Jerusalem* is narrated from an impartial point of view as the poet wishes his audience to consider for themselves the validity of the principles presented (war, chivalry). The reason he decided to write a romance, as opposed to an historical or religious account, is that he was interested in motivation, human behaviour and responses to difficult situations.

In Chapter Three (“The Representation of the Jews”) I endeavour to show that the *Siege of Jerusalem* is not anti-Semitic, although it is anti-Judaic, by which I mean that it disapproves of the religion of the Jews but not the people themselves. I therefore address the argument about whether it is a crusading romance, and my reading suggests that it has little in common with such romances. There are some resemblances between the content of the *Siege*

of *Jerusalem* and that of crusading literature, but this matter is presented in a very different manner. The poem is not concerned with the threat to Christendom, nor does it view all non-Christians negatively and advocate their destruction.

Chapter Four (“The Relationship of the *Siege of Jerusalem* to *Titus and Vespasian*”) compares the *Siege of Jerusalem* to the contemporary work, *Titus and Vespasian*, to illustrate the profound differences in the presentation of similar material and to elucidate the perspective of the poem. The *Titus and Vespasian* poet is convinced that the military campaign against the Jews is justified. He takes great pains to detail all the punishments the Jews endure and to indicate that this is the appropriate way to treat them. The situation in the *Siege of Jerusalem* is virtually the reverse of this, with sympathy being expressed for the Jews when they suffer torments due to warfare.

Chapter Five (“The Tribulations of War”) looks at the transmission of material from Josephus through Hegesippus, the *Legenda Aurea*, the *Polychronicon*, and the *Siege of Jerusalem* to *Titus and Vespasian*, focusing on the motif of mother-child cannibalism and the questions this raises about the poet’s attitudes to the Jews and violence. He depicts the Jews, not so much as evil, but as misguided, blind and tyrannised by wicked leaders. The episode is a critique of the tribulation caused by war and the desperate acts to which people can be driven.

Chapter Six (“The Manuscript Contexts of the *Siege of Jerusalem*”) describes the manuscripts of the work and what these tell us about its reception. The poem appears in a variety of settings, although it is grouped mainly with religious and historical narratives, which suggests that the

compilers perceived it in several different ways. Each manuscript is an individual witness to how the poem was read, and when we look at some of the scribal variations we can see that the poet's concern with the justness of violence has had an impact on those who transcribed his work.

My aim in all that follows is to read the *Siege of Jerusalem* in its physical, literary and historical contexts, to move away from the standard interpretations of it, and to judge it on its own merits. The task I have set myself is to see why a work which has been marginalised by modern scholars should have had widespread appeal until the late fifteenth century. It is my contention that the secret of the poem's fascination lies in the way it presents the tale of Jerusalem's destruction, highlighting the latent contradictions in the story and encouraging its audience to re-consider the legitimacy of warfare.

CHAPTER ONE

THE POET'S TREATMENT OF HIS SOURCES

The *Siege of Jerusalem* is an account of events in first-century Jerusalem, based on three main sources: the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, Roger D'Argenteuil's *Bible en François* and Higden's *Polychronicon*. The poet thoughtfully chooses and organises his material in order to create a series of oppositions between just figures of authority, whose power is derived from God, and false figures of authority, whose power is groundless and tyrannical. He distinguishes between the Roman and Jewish leaders and their followers. Pertinently, he uses different sources in an effort to bring out the contradictions latent in the story of the destruction of Jerusalem. He juxtaposes historical elements from the *Polychronicon*, such as the allusion to the tribute, with religious material from the *Vindicta Salvatoris* and the *Bible en François* in an attempt to query the necessity of war, even if the cause is ostensibly noble. Most notably, he problematises the question of the motivation behind the campaign in Judaea. It may be observed that the issue of the tribute is downplayed in most French texts in order to emphasise the importance of the theme of vengeance.¹ Indeed, the French romances do not allude to it as a rule, even though one of the poet's Latin sources, the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, states that the Jews were willing to pledge tribute to their Roman overlords. The *Siege of Jerusalem* refers to the

¹ See *La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Versions: The Cura Sanitatis Tiberii...* (1993) pp.8-27. Chism (1998) pp.310-1 suggests that the theme of vengeance is the focus of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, but the arguments she puts forward as evidence for this claim can be discounted if one compares the poem to these French texts.

withholding of tribute on three occasions. most strikingly when Vespasian addresses his troops in these terms:

Here nys King noþer kny3t comen to þis place.
þat þe cause of his come nys Crist forto venge
Vpon þe faibles folke þat hym fayntly slowen.
Byholdeþ þe heþyng and þe harde woundes,
þe betyng and þe byndyng þat þe body hadde:
Lat neuer þis lawles ledis lau3 at his harmys.
þat bou3t vs fram bale with blod of his herte.
[I] quycke clayme þe querels of alle quyk burnes,
And clayme of euereche kyng, saue of Crist one,
þat þis peple to pyne no pite ne hadde:
þat preueþ his passioun, who so þe paas redeþ.
Hit nedip no3t at þis note of Nero to mynde,
Ne to trete of no trewe for tribute þat he askeþ;
þat querel y quik cleyme, [qweþer] he ne wilneþ
Of his rebel to rome, bot resoun to haue.
Bot more þing in our mynde myneþ [vs] to-day,
þat by resoun to Rome þe regnance fallyþ,
Boþe þe my3t and þe mayn, [and] maist[rie] o[n] e[rþe],
And lord[chipe] of eche londe, þat liþe vnder heuen. (lines 489-508)

If the poet believed wholeheartedly in the justness of the Jewish war and wished to convey this, would he have raised the issue of tribute, unlike so many other religious and literary texts on this topic? This speech is based on a version of Roger D'Argenteuil's *Bible en François*. Significantly, there is a discrepancy at this point among the different versions of this work. The five abridged versions, and the four manuscripts containing the "Vengeance of Our Lord" section as a separate document, contain the speech but do not allude to the issue of Roman sovereignty. The 4 manuscripts of the *Bible en François* that comprise group y, among which is the only extant English manuscript of the

work and upon which the Middle English translation is based, similarly omit this allusion. The five manuscripts which comprise the x group are the only versions of the French text to contain the allusion to Roman supremacy over Judaea. Thus it is important that the poet chooses to include it as it adds another dimension to the motivation of the Romans. Vespasian starts by saying that their only purpose is to avenge Christ and that they need not pay any attention to what Nero wishes. Nero is not mentioned in any of the redactions of the *Bible en François* at this point and Vespasian is in fact acting under his own authority having assembled his army and invaded Judaea on his own initiative and because he was ordered to do so. In the *Siege of Jerusalem* Vespasian, having rejected the notion of tribute owed by the Jews to their Roman overlords, goes on to say that the might and strength, the mastery and governance of all lands belongs to Rome. He has essentially contradicted himself. The poet, in accordance with his practice throughout the poem, does not comment; he lets Vespasian's words with all their implications stand by themselves and leaves it to his readers to evaluate what are explicit and implicit objectives underlying the Romans' actions.

I have commented at length on this speech as it illustrates how the *Siege of Jerusalem's* perspective and attitude towards war is very different to other accounts of these happenings. The poet is determined that the events should speak for themselves. He avoids expressing value judgements, unlike texts such as the *Vindicta Salvatoris* and *Titus and Vespasian* which interpret

the destruction of Jerusalem as the justifiable punishment of the Jews for the death of Christ. Not only is the poet's approach very different from that of literary and religious works, it also differs from that of historians. He is interested in people's motivation and how they react to the situations in which they find themselves. Hence he does not try to find overarching patterns in the military campaign in Judaea. Instead, he looks at various moral issues. Why do the Romans attack the Jews and why do the Jews resort to any means possible to thwart them? The poet examines how some of the Jewish leaders adhere to the Old Law, and how men like Sabyn try to live in accordance with the heroic ethos. The events he describes highlight the limitations of these codes of behaviour. The terrible happenings force innocent and otherwise noble people to perpetrate horrendous acts and can ultimately destroy them. At the same time he observes the problems entailed in the failure to believe in any value system, how this can lead to despair and self-destruction. Yet, he does not suggest that lack of faith in God will inevitably result in personal calamity; the point is made by depicting Josephus as an enlightened human being, although we do not learn of him observing Jewish rites nor does he convert to Christianity as he does in other texts. Indeed, the poet highlights a range of possible interpretations for each episode. For instance, the Roman campaign is inspired either by issues of power and tribute, or to avenge Christ's death, or to fulfill both objectives; Vitellius is a noble man, but also a murderer. Through emphasising a range of ways one can approach warfare, the various situations

that can arise, the poet illustrates how it is difficult to establish who or what is right or wrong. He stresses the horror and brutality of war in order to get his audience to realise the suffering it causes and to re-consider its necessity. He never suggests that war is wrong, but he does call this whole arena of human activity into question. One consequence of this way of narrating events is that the poem is not anti-Semitic. In order to be anti-Semitic the poet would have to categorically say that the Jews are wrong, evil, and deserve to be destroyed by the Christians who are noble because they believe in the Trinity.² However, he is capable of distinguishing between Jews: not all Jews are bad, nor are all Romans and Christians good.

The relationship of the *Siege of Jerusalem* to each of its main sources will be considered in turn, followed by an assessment of the possible influence of two other texts, the *Legenda Aurea* and the *Destruction of Troy*. It is important to establish the texts used by the poet as well as the traditions behind them, as the *Siege of Jerusalem* is like a multi-coloured tapestry woven from many different strands. Furthermore, alternative versions of some of these traditions constitute sources for other English redactions of the story of the destruction of Jerusalem. The poet's method is to take a text and follow it closely, before turning to another work - few scenes or characters are original to the poem. He bases lines 1-200 and 1293-1334 on the *Vindicta Salvatoris*; lines 201-724 on the *Bible en François*; and lines 725-1292 on the *Polychronicon*. In

² The poet notes different attitudes towards the Jews and their leaders through the speeches and words of Titus, Vespasian and other characters. These views should not be confused with the poet's own.

general the poem remains remarkably close to these texts, changing mainly the sequence of events. The differences between the poem and its sources arise from the effect of placing incidents in a different context and occasionally the poet finds it necessary to make some small alterations in the interests of providing a consistent story.

Vindicta Salvatoris

One of the three major sources for the *Siege of Jerusalem* is the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, a text which was inspired by the legend of Veronica, which was an immensely popular story in the Middle Ages.³ The story of Veronica constitutes a rich tradition inspiring many works of art and literature throughout the Middle Ages, such as the painting *Saint Veronica with the Sudarium* (now in the National Art Gallery, London) by the Master of Saint Veronica, active in early fifteenth century Cologne and the references in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (lines 297, 309, 348, 386). Émile Mâle and Rosemary Woolf argue that the appearance of Saint Veronica in late medieval pictorial representations of the

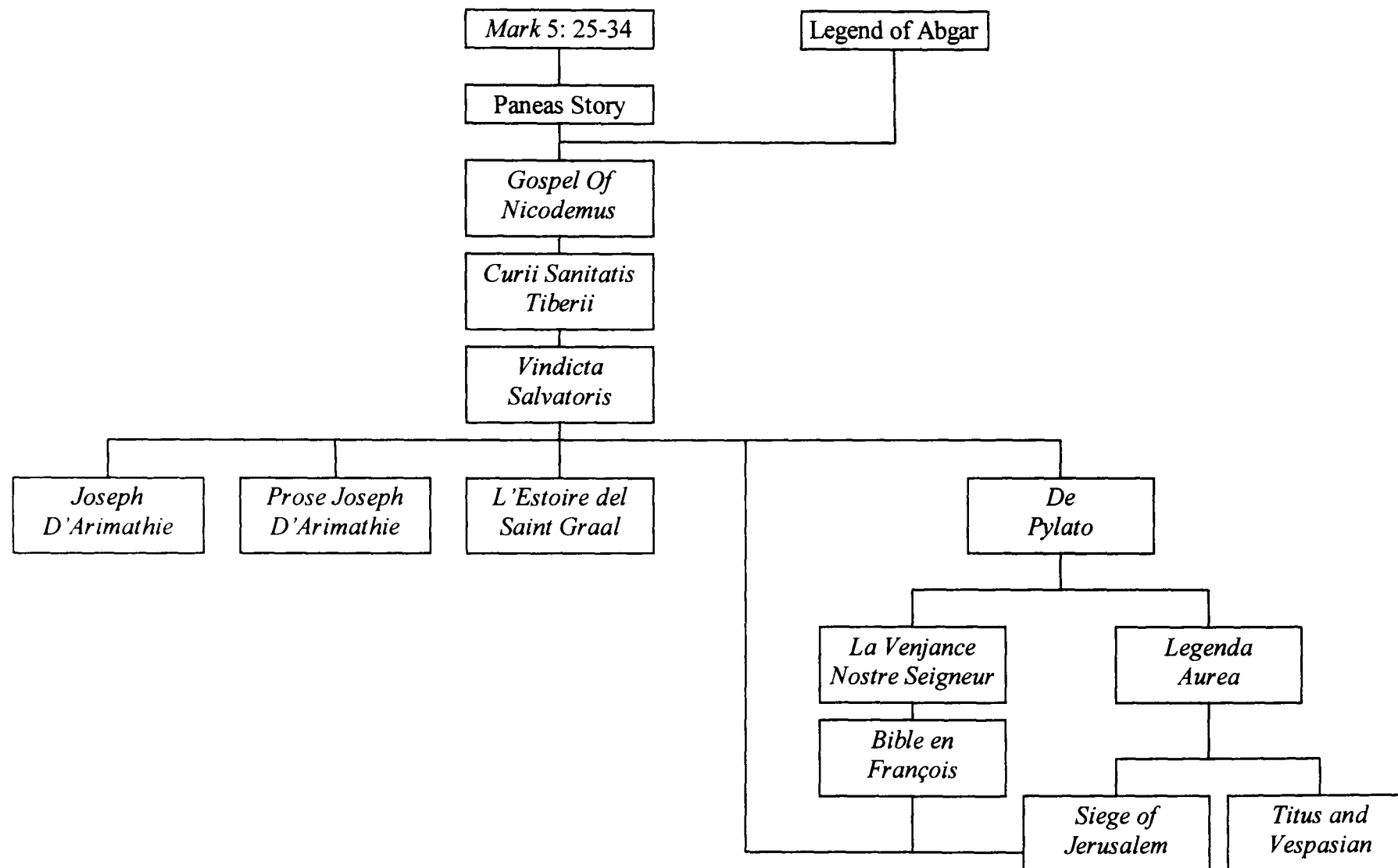
³ The tradition is inspired by the reference in Mark 5: 25-34 (Matthew 9: 20-2) to the woman suffering from a flux of blood, establishing a connection between virtue and miracle as the woman is healed due to her faith alone. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* alludes to this story as one of Christ's miracles. The best manuscripts do not name the woman suffering from a flow of blood, but the Coptic and other late versions name her Berwikh (in Greek Beronikē, in Armenian Veronis or Seroinik), and this is the origin of the name Veronica. Dobschütz discusses the development of the Veronica-legend which incorporated the legends of Abgar and Paneas, and notes that it had formed by the twelfth century. The Abgar legend concerns the mission of Nathan, of which there is an Anglo-Saxon version amongst others. The legend of Paneas stems from an incident in Eusebius' fourth-century history of the Church in which he describes how he saw a bronze sculpture before a house in Paneas, which was apparently erected by the woman cured of a flux of blood by touching Christ's clothes, mentioned in Mark 5: 25-34. Dobschütz (1899) pp.276*-333* gives a chronological list of the versions of the Veronica-legend from across Europe, ranging from c.600 to the end of the fifteenth century. See also pp.197-262, and *Two Old English Apocrypha and their Manuscript Source* (1996) pp.58-62, and *La Vengeance de Notre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Versions: The Cura Sanitatis Tiberii..* (1993) pp.1-34.

route to Calvary are linked to the accounts in drama.⁴ The legend of Veronica existed not merely in literary and artistic works, but formed the basis of a cult.⁵

⁴ Mâle (1949) p.64; Woolf (1972) p.403. References to Saint Veronica are to be found in *The N-Town Play* vol.I (1991) pp.325-6 and *The York Plays* (1982) pp.183-9 which mention an anonymous woman in "The Road to Calvary" who can be identified as her. Moe (1966) pp. 459-70 provides examples of Middle English prose stories based on the Bible, Veronica, and the siege of Jerusalem in the fifteenth-century manuscript Cleveland W.Q091.92-C468.

⁵ There are references to the veil of Veronica being preserved among the treasures of St. Peter's Basilica and being carried in processions, in papal documents dating from the eight, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Dobschütz (1899) p.219. Furthermore, there are numerous pictures in manuscripts based on it, such as the illustration in the *Chronica Majora* of Matthew Paris. Dobschütz (1899) p.229; *The Illustrated Chronicles of Matthew Paris: Observations of Thirteenth-Century Life* (1993) p114; *La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Prose Versions: The Version of Japheth* (1984) pp.11-2. Scott I (1996) provides two more examples of illustrations from manuscripts, St. Veronica with the Vernicle from Cambridge, Trinity College Ms. O.3.10 f.11v and Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibl. Mun. Ms. 93 f.6v. The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* also provides evidence of the cult of St. Veronica, alluding at line 297 to how Veronica is a symbol of pilgrimage. Later, at line 348 Arthur makes a vow to Christ and Veronica, a vow which is referred to again at line 386. She is a saint who appears in several Books of Hours and who is honoured by many hymns. For example, there is the *Hymn to the Vernicle and the Colecte* in Cambridge Magdalene College Ms. F.4.13. as well as Latin hymns in the following manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum Ms. 259 ff.32-3; Cambridge FitzWilliam Museum Ms. 50-1950 ff.47, 53, 56; Cambridge FitzWilliam Museum Ms.4-1950 ff.62-4; Cambridge FitzWilliam Museum Ms. 1058-1975 f.14; BL Ms. Sloane 2471. She came to have her own feast-day (4 February) and her home in Jerusalem was incorporated into the fourteen Stations of the Cross, while the Veil itself was the focus of pilgrimage in Rome.[*La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Prose Versions: The Version of Japheth* (1984) pp.13-14.]

Figure 1
Legend of Veronica



The earliest version of the Veronica story is the *Cura Sanitatis Tiberii* from the sixth century,⁶ which relates how the gravely ill emperor, Tiberius, learns of Christ's miracles and decides to send his chief priest Volosian to fetch Him. The *Vindicta Salvatoris* constitutes the next version of the legend from the seventh century. It is followed by a Latin prose version entitled *De Pylato* from the eleventh/twelfth century in which Vespasian is the person healed.⁷ From this comes the French *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*, many prose paraphrases in French, Spanish, Catalan, Provençal and Portuguese, and the *Legenda Aurea*.⁸ *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur* survives in ten manuscripts and focuses on Vespasian, the Roman emperor, who suffers from leprosy.⁹ This recension of the

⁶ Dobschütz (1899) pp.157*-203*; *Two Old English Apocrypha and their Manuscript Source* (1996) pp.62-74 and *La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Versions: The Cura Sanitatis Tiberii...* (1993) pp.1-34 and 35-73 for an edition of the three French versions of the text.

⁷ *Titus and Vespasian* (1905) p.xiv; *Poésies Populaires Latines du Moyen Âge* (1847) pp.340-68.

⁸ See the editions of *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur* in *Über das altfranzösische Gedicht von der Zerstörung Jerusalems* (1900-1); *The Oldest Version of the Twelfth-Century Poem "La Venjance Nostre Seigneur"* (1952); A. Graf I (1915), pp. 285-378. The *chanson de geste* varies in length from 1,200-3,400 lines. See *The ME Prose Translation of Roger D'Argenteuil's Bible en François* (1977) pp.22-3; *The Oldest Version of the Twelfth-Century Poem "La Venjance Nostre Seigneur"* (1952) pp.6-22; *Titus and Vespasian* (1905) pp. xvi-xviii for a summary of the poem. *La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Prose Versions: The Version of Japheth* (1984) is the most recent edition of the prose version. The French prose paraphrase survives in twenty-one manuscripts, which can be divided into two distinct groups. It forms part of an interrelated tradition with Old and Middle French redactions of the *Cura Sanitatis Tiberii* (three versions containing respectively four, five and one manuscripts), the *Bible en François* of Roger D'Argenteuil (eighteen French manuscripts, which can be divided into three groups), Roger de Boron's *Le Roman de L'Estoire dou Graal* (one manuscript), David Aubert's translation of the *Legenda Aurea* (two manuscripts) and *Nathanis Judaei Legatio* (one manuscript) (*La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Versions: The Cura Sanitatis Tiberii...* 1993, passim). See *Poésies Populaires Latines du Moyen Âge* (1847) pp.340-68.

⁹ Vespasian, the son of the Roman emperor who is called Caesar (Titus in the prose), suffers from leprosy. A pilgrim duly arrives in Rome, telling of a prophet who performed many miracles prior to His crucifixion. The emperor immediately sends messengers to Jerusalem to acquire a relic of this prophet so that Vespasian can be cured. They meet with Pilate in a closed room, and he confesses in secret to having been coerced into permitting the execution of Christ. After further inquiries the messengers learn of the Vernicle, and Pilate finds Veronica for them. She tells the story of how she met Christ carrying the cross, who begged her for a cloth to wipe His brow; she obliged, and found that His image remained on the cloth. The messengers return to Rome with her and the Vernicle, and she cures Vespasian. In gratitude for this, his sons vow to avenge Christ's death. Pilate aids them by offering to be imprisoned in order to entice the Jews into confessing who the real culprits are. The ruse succeeds and Vespasian executes all the offenders save one, whom he keeps in

legend is important as it constitutes the source of the *Bible en François*, and it also forms the basis of *Titus and Vespasian*, an English poem contemporary with the *Siege of Jerusalem*, but very different in character. The relationship between *Titus and Vespasian*, *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur* and the *Siege of Jerusalem* will be examined at some length later.

Another version of the story, which developed from the *Vindicta Salvatoris* in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, is to be found in Robert de Boron's *Joseph D'Arimathie*, the prose *Joseph D'Arimathie*, and three manuscripts of the *L'Estoire del Saint Graal* (BN. Ms. fr. 770, Le Mans Ms. 354, Leningrad Ms. Fr. F. v. XV. 5) where there is an interpolated section from the prose *Joseph D'Arimathie*.¹⁰ In de Boron's *Joseph D'Arimathie* and its derivatives the story is quite different from the prose redaction of the same name. All of these texts influenced the development of the *Bible en François* and thence indirectly the *Siege of Jerusalem*.

The *Vindicta Salvatoris* originated in the seventh century and tells the story of Veronica and the Vernicle, as well as Titus and Vespasian's conquest of Jerusalem. Titus is healed miraculously when he believes in God upon hearing Nathan's account of the life of Christ. This inspires him to avenge Christ's crucifixion, and he acquires Vespasian's assistance for this task and the conquest of Jerusalem. During the course of their activities in Judaea they find Veronica

order to learn the location of the incarcerated Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph is released and this Jew is set adrift in a boat.

and the Vernicle and bring them to Tiberius, who is healed upon seeing the relic and renounces his pagan beliefs. The Jews are punished for their crime, with the fate of Pilate graphically described. The details concerning his fate vary in the different recensions of the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, reflecting the rich traditions surrounding Pilate in the Middle Ages. Stories surrounding him proliferated, such as those in the Middle English poem called *The Life of Pilate*,¹¹ with that of his death becoming immensely popular.¹² It was only natural that such material would be incorporated into the later versions of the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, which is very much concerned with the punishment of the Jews and is treated as an extension of the *Acts of Pilate* or the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.¹³ This latter work is

¹⁰ *The ME Prose Translation of Roger D'Argenteuil's Bible en François* (1977) pp.23-4; Micha (1969) pp.1291-8; Moe (1974) pp.555-60; *La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Versions: The Cura Sanitatis Tiberii...* (1993) pp.139-49.

¹¹ *Early English Poems and Lives of Saints* (1862, 1974) pp.111-9.

¹² In the Eastern Church Pilate was a saint, having confessed and expressed contrition for Christ's crucifixion. This failed to prevent his execution through beheading. An angel was therefore sent to receive his head. Müller (1888) pp.1-59 examines the early Pilate literature and finds many different stories surrounding Pilate; Brandon (1968) pp.523-30 considers the role of Pilate in history and legend; Creizenach (1874) pp.89-107 investigates the legends surrounding him. See further *La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Versions: The Cura Sanitatis Tiberii...* (1993) pp.27-34.

¹³ Tischendorf's edition is still the standard edition of the later Apocrypha, as no other collection of all the texts has been published, although some individual texts have been re-edited. I have used his edition of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the *Vindicta Salvatoris*. O'Ceallaigh (1966) p.23 comments thus on Tischendorf's handling of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*: "Tischendorf used three manuscripts, his ABC representing the original Latin *Gospel of Nicodemus*. Not recognising them as such, he arbitrarily split them in two (at the end of c. xvi), submerged the readings of their "Part I" either into his eclectic text or fine print of his ap. cr.; relegated their "Part II" to his *secondary* (Latin B) type of Descent text. Yet his generally good textual judgment forced him to construct his own text of "Part I" preponderantly on ABC! For his "Part II" he wrongly gave preference to his cullings from the Late Latin version (his "Latin B")." I quote O'Ceallaigh's comments in full because most subsequent scholars since have used Tischendorf's text and followed his lead. Despite its early popularity, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* has failed to attract much interest from modern scholars. For an introduction to the Apocrypha and the *Gospel of Nicodemus* in particular see Brockington (1961) pp.138-9, 149-53; Osterley (1935), passim; Quasten (1950) pp.115-7 and Charlesworth (1985) pp.29-36.

The gospel consists of two parts, the *Acta Pilati* and *Descensus Christi ad Infernos*. O'Ceallaigh (1966) pp.23-5 charts its development through five distinct stages: (1) the basic commentaries of Nicodemus written in Hebrew; (2) the original Latin work based on the commentaries and the story of Karinus and Leucius describing Christ's descent into Hades; (3) the Greek paraphrase of this; (4) the late Latin recension in which Pilate is the figure of authority responsible for the trial, crucifixion etc. of Christ. The text claims to

of importance to our examination of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, not only because the name Veronica originated in it, but because it elucidates the popularity and influence of traditions surrounding Pilate. It is one of the apocryphal gospels, texts which did not quite achieve canonical status, but yet had equal status to the Scriptures.¹⁴ The apocryphal gospels stem from a form of charismatic exegesis, where a scriptural story is taken and reinterpreted through narrative expansion, rather than commentary. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* was a particularly popular apocryphal gospel, circulating in Latin, Greek, Coptic, Armenian, Syriac, Georgian and Norse forms. There are also three Old English translations, three Middle English poems on the Harrowing of Hell, four manuscripts of Middle English verse translation, and seven prose translations, four of the whole text.¹⁵

be the document deposited by Pilate in the archives, together with his letter to Tiberius; (5) two late Latin manuscripts of the fourteenth century which incorporate the Letter of Pilate to Claudius. Some versions of this text were known as early as the second century. Justin Martyr refers to such a text in his first Apology, while Tertullian alludes to a report sent by Pilate to Tiberius (*New Testament Apocrypha* I 1959, pp.444-5). The Christian recession appears to have been composed to counteract earlier pagan texts of the same name. See further *Two Old English Apocrypha and their Manuscript Source* (1996) pp.36-47. Izydorczyk (1989, pp.169-91; 1997, pp.22-41, 43-101) surveys the various editions of the text and notes that Part I exists in three redactions and Part II in two. He glances briefly at fifty five manuscripts which represent these renditions of the Latin work and points out there are twenty seven manuscripts of pre-twelfth century date alone.

¹⁴ Izydorczyk (1985) p.83.

¹⁵ *The Index of Writings in Middle English* II (1970) pp.448-9. This has been superseded by Izydorczyk's work (1985) pp.88-96 which explains that three of the manuscripts represent Trevisa's translation, the earliest prose translation, while the other three full length redactions are each extant in single manuscripts. The three abbreviated versions survive respectively in three, four and one manuscripts. Apart from this, parts of the text were incorporated into the *Cursor Mundi*, *Eulogium Historiarum sive Temporis* and the *South English Legendary*. C.W. Marx (1997) pp.207-59 discusses the Old and Middle English versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and their influence on instructional literature and drama. Collett (1981) pp.125-35 notes how Middle Cornish and Medieval Welsh texts also draw on it. The story of the harrowing of hell appears in Anglo-Saxon homilies, prose writings, poetry and the liturgy (forming part of the daily office, matins, and the cycle of the Church year). Christ's arising from the death and leading the dead from hell was linked with the redemption of humankind (Collett 1981, pp.56-8). Izydorczyk (1985) pp.3-60, 107-10, 177 argues that the *Gospel of Nicodemus* popularized the doctrine of risen saints, of how Christ conquered the forces of evil and ransomed mankind as the devil had punished them too severely. The sacraments of penance and Eucharist were held to be as efficacious for sinners as Christ's historical descent into hell had been for Adam. The Harrowing of Hell was celebrated in dramatic actions twice during Easter week: during the vigil on Holy Saturday, and on Palm Sunday with a procession and a ceremonial banging on the Church door with a cross, accompanied by the singing of Psalm 23: 7-10.

Its widespread popularity and influence inspired numerous other Pilate narratives, such as *Anaphora Pilati*, *Paradosis Pilati*, *Mors Pilati* and the *Vindicta Salvatoris*. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the *Vindicta Salvatoris* frequently occur together in manuscripts.

The popularity of the Veronica legend, and the *Vindicta Salvatoris* in particular, can be related to the changes in medieval spirituality. During the early Middle Ages God was depicted in Old Testament terms as a stern exacting Judge, and people were rewarded or condemned depending on their works. This conception of God changed, particularly from the twelfth century onwards, with the recognition of a need for "affectivity in the exercise of power".¹⁶ Religious writers increasingly spoke of the imperfection of humans and how we could be saved only through the grace of God. This change in medieval views of God found expression through the use of maternal images for God. Anselm of Canterbury describes Jesus and Paul as mothers to the souls of sinners, reviving them at their breasts. Mothers love their children so much that they are willing to risk death in childbearing, and likewise Christ's devotion to human souls was so strong that He endured crucifixion to save them.¹⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux develops this maternal imagery, using it to describe prelates, abbots and himself, as well as Christ. He uses the image of a mother's breasts to convey how he and other religious figures display affectivity and provide instruction for others.¹⁸

¹⁶ Walker Bynum (1982) p. 166.

¹⁷ Walker Bynum (1982) p. 113.

¹⁸ Walker Bynum (1982) p. 115.

The maternal side of Christ and male religious figures complements their positions of authority. It is this affectivity which allows humans in their sin to bridge the gap with the Divine and be saved. The story of Veronica would have appealed to people who believed this, as Veronica was healed not through her works but as a result of her love for Christ. Christ bestows on her a veil which has His likeness imprinted on it as a reward for her great love (lines 161-4). The *Vindicta Salvatoris* is a text which contains the story of Veronica which expresses the affectivity of Christ, and also the older view of God as stern Judge who punishes the Jews for executing Christ. There can be no doubt but that the writer of the *Vindicta Salvatoris* and its various compilers and translators believed fervently in the justness of the military campaign in Judaea and that it was undertaken in order to avenge Christ's Passion. After all when Vespasian responds to Titus' request to join him and bring a large army Titus explains:

Quod Iesus venit in hunc mundum, et in Iudaea in loco qui dicitur Bethleem natus est, et traditus fuit a Iudais et flagellatus et crucifixus in claudio monte, et tertia die resurrexit a mortuis: et viderunt eum discipuli eius in eadem carne qua natus est: et manifestavit se discipulis eius, et crediderunt in eum. Et nos quidem volumus discipuli eius fieri. Nunc eamus at delemus inimicos eius de terra, ut nunc cognoscant quia non est similis domino deo nostro super faciem terrae.¹⁹ (*Evangelia Apocrypha* 1853 pp.452-3)

It is in this spirit and with constant allusions to Christ's Passion, the Vernicle and the power of Our Lord to heal and help his followers to overcome

¹⁹ Do you know that Jesus came into this world, and in a place in Judaea which is called Bethlehem was born, and that He was seized by the Jews and whipped and crucified on Mount Calvary, and on the third day again He rose from the dead: and his disciples saw Him in the same flesh that He was before: and He revealed himself to His disciples, and they believed in Him. And we two will become His disciples. Let us now go and destroy His earthly enemies, because they do not recognise now that there is none like our lord God over the face of the earth.

difficulties that the narrative progresses. The *Vindicta Salvatoris* is intended to highlight the justness of the war and Christians' duty to wipe out the enemies of God and in this respect stands in marked contrast to the *Siege of Jerusalem*.

One other feature of medieval spirituality that influenced the popularity of the *Vindicta Salvatoris* and of the Veronica legend was the enthusiasm for relics. This increased throughout the period and from the twelfth century onwards was a matter of great import. The bodies of saints and ecclesiastics were frequently divided into relics, while those of kings were divided so that their influence could be more widespread.²⁰ Miracles involving stigmata and uncorrupted cadavers were quite common in lives of Saints. By the early fourteenth century the graves of holy men and women were opened in order to search for signs of holiness. To a society interested in the hunt for relics, a story which focused on a cloth containing the image of God would have an obvious appeal. There are two important points to be gleaned from all this: firstly, the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet uses as a source the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, an extremely popular text, which exists in various forms. Secondly, this source text was part of two rich living traditions, the legends of Veronica and Pilate, which inspired many texts and works of art and appealed to medieval spirituality. By selecting material from a Latin religious text, rather than a French romance, the poet gives his composition an air of authenticity. Furthermore, his use of the *Vindicta Salvatoris* as a source placed the poem firmly in the milieu of two of the most

²⁰ Walker Bynum (1995) pp.203-6.

popular traditions both spiritually and artistically, which means that some readers/listeners would immediately recognise the story and characters. This would have given the poem added resonances, and also set up comparisons between the poet's interpretation and alternative interpretations of the same material, similar to any one version of the Arthur legend.

There is considerable variation between the versions of the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, which exists in many manuscripts (including six which survive in the British Library, three in the Bodleian Library and nine at Cambridge), and was translated into Anglo-Saxon, but it is possible to divide them into two versions of the text, an early recension such as that printed by Tischendorf, which dates from the ninth century onwards (Version A), and a later one contained in manuscripts of thirteenth and fourteenth century date (Version B).²¹ The main differences between the two versions concern the fate of Pilate and the mission of Velosian. In the early account Pilate is simply imprisoned in Damascus, while in the later recension he is brought to Rome and imprisoned at Vienne, where he later commits suicide. Version B omits Velosian, a character who featured prominently in Version A, and Tiberius' conversion narrated at the end of Version A is also excluded in the later recension. Version A is longer than Version B on account of the lengthy narratives of Velosian's mission and

²¹ Until the thirteenth century English manuscripts generally contain Latin Redaction A, then they switch to French versions and Redaction B (Collett 1981, p.42). Jackson J. Campbell (1982) p.158 notes that there is clear evidence of direct literary use of material from the *Gospel of Nicodemus* by the fourteenth century. This is due to the fact that it reached its peak of popularity in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when it was copied and translated frequently, and printed eight times before 1537 (Izydorczyk 1985, p.79). See Marx (1995) pp.389-98 on the earliest editions of the Middle English *Gospel of Nicodemus*.

Tiberius' conversion. Although the recension of Pilate's fate in Version B is substantial, it does not make up the shortfall.

It is not possible to identify any extant manuscript of the *Vindicta Salvatoris* as the redaction used by the poet. All that is certain is that he used a text of Version B. I have not tried to look at all the different texts; for my purposes it is enough to show that he used this version. I have compared the poem to four versions of the text, two of Version A (the Latin text printed by Tischendorf and the Anglo-Saxon text) and two of Version B (BL Ms. Roy 9 A XIV and BL Ms. Roy 8 E XVII) to establish which was the closest. I found that the *Siege of Jerusalem* includes the fate of Pilate, but does not mention Velosian or the conversion of Tiberius, making it clear that the poet was working from the text of Version B. Kölbing and Day note that the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet did not include Volusian's mission, but fail to link this to the redaction of the *Vindicta Salvatoris* which the poet is using.²² Essentially, they compare the *Siege of Jerusalem* to the hypothetical text of the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, which they have constructed on the basis of Tischendorf's text, the Anglo-Saxon text, and three British Library manuscripts, but not to any individual text or family of texts.²³ They thus fail to note the possibility that the poet was working from Version B,

²² *The Siege of Jerusalem* (1932) p.xix. All references are to this edition, the most easily available printed edition. Hanna and Lawton's new edition has not yet been published and Hoyt N. Duggan's edition on the internet is merely a partially revised version of Kölbing and Day's 1932 EETS text. Lines 521-724 have been re-edited by Turville-Petre in *Alliterative Poetry of the Later Middle Ages* (1989). I shall refer to the poem as the *Siege of Jerusalem* in order to distinguish it from the later prose version of the story which I shall allude to as *The Prose Siege of Jerusalem* (see Chapter Four).

²³ They do note that Pilate's suicide is present in the British Library manuscripts, but suggest that it possibly came from the *Polychronicon*. See section below on the *Polychronicon*. In the *Polychronicon* IV (1872) Chapter 4 pp. 364-6 the Jews accuse Pilate of executing the innocent and erecting false idols. This leads to his imprisonment. This version of Pilate's end is, therefore, dissimilar to that in the poem.

which was current in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As we have seen, there is considerable variation between the texts, which indicates that the *Vindicta Salvatoris* was constantly evolving. It is therefore unlikely that a lost archetype incorporating all the information that is available in different surviving texts once existed.

The alliterative poet has on the whole remained quite faithful to Version B of the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, where he has used it in lines 1-200 and 1293-1334, although he has made some omissions. The emphasis of these sections of the *Siege of Jerusalem* is very different, though, and this is because of the context in which the *Vindicta Salvatoris* material has been placed, and its positioning in the poem.

Apart from the obvious appeal of the miraculous, stories of conversion and of saints validated Christianity and the position of the Church. It made the following of dogma seem splendid and noble, rather than interminable and mundane. Fundamentally, it provided people with spiritual hero(ine)-figures, rather like modern sporting and musical hero(ine)s, whom countless teenagers try to emulate. We learn in the *Siege of Jerusalem* of Titus' (lines 169-90) and Vespasian's (lines 229-52) conversion and miraculous cure (in the *Vindicta Salvatoris* of Titus' miraculous cure and his and Vespasian's conversion). Both these figures are baptised once converted, and it is obvious that this is intended to promote the importance of the sacrament of baptism. The wasps in Vespasian's nose are an addition by the poet based on another source, which will

be discussed later. These two conversions incorporate the same features: the relation of Christ's biography (Nathan to Titus lines 90-168, Vespasian lines 205-8), the sudden healing of the scabs (lines 173-6, 249-52), and the vow to avenge Christ (lines 181-4, 972-8). The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet feels that the episode of Titus' cure and conversion in the *Vindicta Salvatoris* is so important that he duplicates it with regard to Vespasian, turning to another text for the second cure.²⁴ He obviously wished to emphasise the importance of being healed through faith. The influence of medieval spirituality is evident here in that the poet seems to be making the point that with God's help we can overcome human frailty. These incidents convey how the power of God's word is truly marvellous and can surmount anything. They suggest that God cares for His people, but also that the vengeance of Christ's death was justified. This raises questions over the poet's treatment of the Jews, which as we shall see later, is not harsh, in that he downplays anti-Semitism, providing us on the whole with a more historical account.²⁵ This comes across clearly in the incident of Mary and her son (lines 1065-96), which will be discussed at length in Chapter Five, where the poet modifies the episode to show her in a more understanding light. The poet appears to be suggesting that spiritual blindness and failure to stand up for the Christian faith is not to be tolerated. This is not the fault of the Jewish people, who merely follow their tyrannical leaders with misgivings, suffering greatly in

²⁴ The only other redaction to include the two conversions is David Aubert's translation of the *Legenda Aurea* which dates from the fifteenth century.

²⁵ See Chapter Three.

the process.²⁶ Although the poet is by no means in favour of Judaism, he can at least make a distinction among Jews, seeing some as victims and some as villains. Furthermore, the Jewish leaders are not the only evil characters in the poem; there are others such as Nero.

The role of Veronica in the *Siege of Jerusalem* is quite small, unlike in the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, as is noticed by Kölbing and Day in the EETS introduction.²⁷ The probable reason for this is that Veronica loves Christ and there are therefore no stories relating to how she is converted. The poet is interested in people's motivation and thus he examines in detail what caused Titus and Vespasian to believe in Christianity. Furthermore, by simply alluding to her the poet knew that he could evoke the legend due to its widespread popularity. Significantly, she is one of only two women named in the narrative, the other being Mary the starving mother. Women are depicted as saintly and/ or mothers in this work in accord with the archetype for women, the Virgin Mary (alluded to, though not named, in lines 100-4). During the course of the tale the poet conveys how these normal roles of women are subverted, just as he throws the concept of masculine heroism into disarray by focusing on its squalid and inglorious aspects. The poet is using this abnormal behaviour to highlight the

²⁶ Until the twelfth century most theologians believed that the Jews who executed Christ were ignorant of His true nature. At this time writers such as Anslem of Laon started to distinguish between the leaders of the Jews and the ordinary members of the population, arguing that the latter were completely ignorant and that the former knew that He was the Messiah, but failed to realise He was divine. Later in the thirteenth century Duns Scotus and Nicholas Lyre removed these distinctions. Their crime was therefore intentional and thus in the thirteenth century the traditional policy of toleration of the Jews was abandoned. (Cohen 1983, pp.1-27). This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

²⁷ *The Siege of Jerusalem* (1932) p.xix.

problems caused by violent conflict. In order to do this effectively he first establishes a standard by which to judge women, represented by Veronica and the Virgin Mary, and another standard for men, the heroic ideal and true figures of authority.

Human beings and institutions are frail and weak in comparison to God's power, which is emphasised at lines 39-40 where we learn that no doctor is able to help Titus or Vespasian:

Nas þer no leche vpon lyue, þis lordes couþ helpe,
Ne no grace growyng to gayne here grym sores.

They are healed by their faith, for once they believe in God they are restored to health like Veronica. It is interesting that although Veronica does not play a large role in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, she is mentioned by Nathan in response to Titus' plea for a cure, as in Version B. However, in the *Siege of Jerusalem* she is alluded to before Christ, and it would appear that we are meant to note how her love for Him cured her. Not only does Jesus heal her, but on account of her great affection for Him he leaves her the Vernicle which has healing properties.

Nathan nyckes hym with nay, sayde, he non coupe:
"Bot were þou, kyng, in þat kuppe þer þat Crist deyed,
þer is a worlich wif, a womman ful clene,
þat haþ softyng and salue for eche sore out." (89-92)

The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet uses the *Vindicta Salvatoris* material at the beginning and end of his poem with a few additions. In these two sections he emphasises one point above all else, the value of staunch faith and the despair of its absence. In lines 1325-30 we learn of Pilate's suicide, along with his

interrogation and the selling of the Jews, incidents which have been carefully selected by the poet from the last part of Version B of the *Vindicta Salvatoris*. The poem focuses on this opposition between resolute faith and the despair of its absence, and this leads the poet to omit the events surrounding Pilate's burial, as they merely depict Christians in a vulnerable position, fearful and suffering calamities due to the corpse of an evil person. Judas acts as a correlative to Pilate, and thus the poet chooses to add an allusion to his fate at lines 149-52, although it is not mentioned in the *Vindicta Salvatoris*:

þe laste man was vnlele and luper of his dedis,
 Judas, þat Jesu Crist to þe Jewes solde;
 Sub hymself he slowe for sorow of þat dede,
 His body on a balwe tree to-breste on þe myddel.

Suicide is the result of despair, and despair was believed in the Middle Ages to be a manifestation of sloth, one of the seven deadly sins. By taking one's own life one was consigned to eternal damnation. This was the basis of the poet's comment on Pilate's suicide and on that of Othis:

And so þe kaytif as his kynde corsedlich deied. (1330)
 þan he 3eldeþ Sathanas þe soule and hym-self quelled. (932)

One can infer from these remarks that the poet felt that suicide was the action of a guilty man with a lost soul. Indeed, all four men who take their own lives in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, Pilate, Judas, Nero and Othis, fit this description. Othis, for instance, murders the emperor, Galba, and accedes to the imperial throne, but after a mere three months in charge living with burden of this crime he can endure life no longer. Thus opposing Christ was not wise, something the Jewish

leaders and partisans learn to their cost. It is significant that the poet adds the allusion to Judas at the beginning of the poem, because Judas is the classic case of despair and this allusion establishes how we are to interpret the later suicides of Othis, Nero and Pilate.²⁸ There are obvious parallels between Judas and Pilate - Judas betrays Christ, surrendering Him to face execution, while Pilate condemns Him to death. The despair of Pilate and Judas is a measure of the absence of virtue. In contrast to Judas and Pilate, Titus and Vespasian believe in Christ, and with His help they conquer Judaea and destroy Jerusalem. The demise of Nero and Othis and the suicide of 700 Jews in the central section of the poem keeps the theme of suicide and despair to the fore.

It is the first two hundred lines of the *Siege of Jerusalem* which owe the greatest debt to the *Vindicta Salvatoris*. The scene is set during the reign of Tiberius, after Christ's crucifixion and torture, when Nathan is sent on a mission to Rome, and has the misfortune to be caught in a huge storm and driven to the harbour of Bordeaux. The ailing Titus spies the ship and demands of Nathan a cure. Nathan responds with stories of Christ's wonderful deeds, which quickly win the heart and mind of Titus, leading to his cure and his subsequent vow to avenge Christ. Yet even here there are differences: to begin with, although the events of Christ's life occurred during the reign of Tiberius, it is now forty years later and Nero is emperor, which is more historical and is derived from one of the poet's other major sources, the *Polychronicon*. Nero is not mentioned in the

²⁸ See below for a discussion of the mass suicide of 700 Jews.

Vindicta Salvatoris, nor in most versions of Roger D'Argenteuil's work. The poet also makes other changes in the interests of historicity: Nathan's mission is to tell Nero that the Jews have decided to withhold tribute, not to pledge their allegiance to their Roman overlords as in the *Vindicta Salvatoris*. Both these changes are important as the issue of the tribute, which is mentioned on three occasions provides the Romans with an added motive for attacking Jerusalem, a political and historical reason which is less noble. The second alteration introduces an unsavory character who is not Jewish but Roman, suggesting that neither side is completely blameless or blameworthy. Lines 6-18 relate Christ's execution in greater detail than the brief initial reference in the *Vindicta Salvatoris*.²⁹ From these changes the purpose of the *Siege of Jerusalem* is evident: the poet wishes to bring out the contradictions latent in the story of the destruction of Jerusalem. He juxtaposes the historical reality behind the Roman campaign in Judaea with the Christian interpretation of it in the *Vindicta Salvatoris*. The result of this is that the poem he composes raises questions about the motivations of those who engage in warfare and about war-making itself. He shows that there is more than one way of viewing any conflict, that both sides contain desirable and undesirable elements. He expands these ideas in the course of the narrative.

The poet expands the reference to the storm and north winds in the *Vindicta Salvatoris* into an elaborate description (lines 51-72). Allowing for the

²⁹ The *Vindicta Salvatoris* does not need to refer in detail to Christ's life at this point, because it alludes to His birth, Passion, and miracles constantly as it relates the story of the destruction of Jerusalem. The *Siege of Jerusalem*, on the other hand does not.

fact that such descriptions are common in poetry, especially alliterative poetry.³⁰ and that the poet delights in descriptive sequences, it does convey the power of God and explain how Nathan came to be in Bordeaux. The clouds clatter as if they would wrench apart and Nathan lies helpless beneath the hatches in fear, while the vessel hastens along towards unknown shores. Yet all the crew survive the journey, though they have no sail and the ship rolls at dangerous angles over the waves. "With mychel langour atte laste, as our lorde wolde" they reach the safety of Bordeaux harbour (line 71). The storm epitomises power in terms of wind, noise and destructive force. God's power is also evident in His ability to protect those whom He wishes in the face of such destruction, and to have them reach the precise destination He intends. Despite Kölbing and Day's comparison of the storm with that in *Patience* lines 137-64, and the *Destruction of Troy* lines 1983-96,³¹ the three descriptions bear only a generic resemblance to each other. Nicolas Jacobs,³² after careful consideration of the phraseology and thematic correspondences of the sea-storms in these and other alliterative poems, concludes that it is most likely that they simply share a common pool of literary formulae based on Latin models. Nevertheless, Kölbing and Day rightly note a parallel between Jonah and Nathan, in that each is overtaken on a sea-voyage by a storm sent by God. Jonah was already chosen as a messenger by God prior to

³⁰ Jacobs (1972) p.700.

³¹ *The Siege of Jerusalem* (1932) pp.xxix-xxx.

³² Jacobs (1972) pp.700-12.

this voyage, a task which he was trying to avoid by fleeing far over the sea. God's purpose with regard to Nathan only becomes clear after Nathan has reached the port of Bordeaux. The sea-storm is used to teach Jonah a lesson, that he cannot hide from God, while it transpires at the end of the storm in the *Siege of Jerusalem* that it is a means of conveying Nathan to the court of Vespasian. God is not depicted simply as a stern judge in the latter poem, but as caring in addition to being mighty. In the *Siege of Jerusalem* Nathan instructs Titus in the tenets of the Christian faith and this results in his cure, while in *Patience* Jonah's mission is to inform the immoral inhabitants to amend their behaviour or suffer the wrath of God. However, the poem presents us with a bifurcated impression of this episode, as although God transports Nathan to Bordeaux his mission is not solely divine. Nathan brings both news of Christianity and of the fact that the Jews have withheld the tribute due to their Roman overlords. Thus political, historical and religious elements are intertwined providing a context for later events that is not clear-cut and forcing readers/ listeners to evaluate the events which the poem narrates.

Roger D'Argenteuil's Bible en François

When he wishes to depart radically from the *Vindicta Salvatoris* he turns to another text, the *Bible en François*. Vespasian's illness and subsequent cure first appeared in *De Pylato*, as we have seen. Following in this tradition comes Roger

D'Argenteuil's *Bible en François*, a thirteenth-century text compiled from many religious sources, including the *Speculum Historiale*, *Tractatus de Planctu Beatae Mariae Virginis*, *Gospel of Nicodemus*, *Vie des Anciens Peres*, *C'est dou Pere qui son Filz enseigne*, the legend of Veronica (*La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*, Robert de Boron's *Joseph D'Arimathie* and derivatives), *Roman D'Alexandre* and the legend of the Cross (the thirteenth-century Latin *Legende* and *La Queste del Saint Graal* or *L'Estoire del Saint Graal*). Phyllis Moe suggests 1260-70 as the most likely date for the French text, since the oldest manuscript dates from 1270 and *C'est dou Pere qui son Filz enseigne*, one of its sources, is unlikely to have been written much before 1260.³³ There is a late fifteenth-century Middle English translation in the London dialect of the biblical and legendary sections of the *Bible en François*, and Hanna notes that Bodleian Library Ms. Fairfax 24 which contains a copy of the French text originated near Bolton Abbey, so it could have been available to the poet.³⁴ Besides, there is no question but that the poet followed the *Bible en François* quite closely.³⁵ There are thirteen manuscripts of the French text, nine unabridged and five abridged, as well as four manuscripts containing the excerpted narrative of the legend of Veronica from the unabridged version. Moe distinguishes two distinct groups x

³³ *The M.E. Prose Translation of Roger D'Argenteuil's Bible en François* (1977) p.31.

³⁴ Hanna (1992 a) p.115. See in addition Moe (1963) pp.142-61 on the Cleveland Public Library Ms.W qu 91.92-c468 (Aldenhams Ms.) of the *Bible en François*.

³⁵ Phyllis Moe first discovered that the *Bible en François* is a source of the *Siege of Jerusalem*. See Moe (1970) pp.147-54; (1974) pp.555-60; (1963) pp.161-8.

and y, neither of which, she says, represents the original text.³⁶ Even within these two families of manuscripts there is some variation, particularly with regard to chapter division. The extant manuscript of the Middle English translation is later than the manuscripts of the French text, and is based on a lost French manuscript from the y group. The *Bible en François* is a work of moral instruction, aimed at teaching the Christian faith. The fact that it was written in a vernacular language suggests that it was aimed at a wider audience than just the clergy. The *Bible en François* is not solely composed of didactic writing, but also includes a great deal of narrative based on personal histories: the story of Adam and Eve, the lives of some important Old Testament figures, the legend of the cross, the story of Veronica and the destruction of Jerusalem. The remainder of the text deals with the Trinity, the nature of the sun and the moon, the sacraments of baptism, communion and confession, the signs of the Last Judgement, confession and prayer, as well as a dialogue between father and son. The purpose of the work is to prepare the reader for salvation through expounding the Christian faith and detailing the necessary actions for each person.³⁷

Phyllis Moe has already demonstrated beyond doubt that the *Bible en François* is the source of lines 201-60 and lines 321-724.³⁸ What interests me is how the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet used this source and what this tells us, how the

³⁶ *The M.E. Prose Translation of Roger D'Argenteuil's Bible en François* (1977) pp.13-9. See *La vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Versions: The Cura Sanitatis Tiberii...* (1993) pp.74-138.

³⁷ *The M.E. Prose Translation of Roger D'Argenteuil's Bible en François* (1977) pp.8-9.

³⁸ Moe (1970) pp.147-54; (1963) pp.161-8.

poet has selected certain incidents and omitted others, and his purpose in doing so. He includes material in a different order, and although on the whole he adheres closely to his source, he is not averse to changing the story-line when it suits his purpose.

This is an interesting choice of source out of the many available to the poet, suggesting that he wished to instruct his readers, as he used material from an instructional text rather than a romance such as *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*. The *Bible en François* may not have had the same authority as the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, but it was certainly a respected and popular pedagogical work. His use of this text also suggests that he was interested in human motivation, value systems and moral issues such as just warfare. His contemporary, the author of *Titus and Vespasian*, bases his composition on this French romance and the orientation of his work is popular sensationalism and religious propaganda.

An important feature of the *Bible en François* is the absence of Titus and the function given to Vespasian, a role based on Robert de Boron's poem, where Vespasian is depicted as the son of Emperor Caesar and Titus is mentioned but once. Vespasian's desire for a relic which had been touched by Christ was inspired by the prose *Joseph D'Arimatee*.³⁹ The *Siege of Jerusalem* has two important Roman generals, Titus and Vespasian, with Vespasian taking over in importance once the poem starts to follow the *Bible en François* and then Titus

³⁹ The M.E. Prose Translation of Roger D'Argenteuil's *Bible en François* (1977) pp.24-5.

taking over entirely in the latter part of the *Siege of Jerusalem* which is based on passages from the *Polychronicon*.

The Roman generals in the *Siege of Jerusalem* are equitable figures of authority, deriving their power from God who healed them. Opposing them on the Jewish side are Caiaphas, Pilate, John and Simon, who are tyrants causing untold misery for their subjects. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet follows the lead of the *Bible en François* in his depiction of Caiaphas. Caiaphas was an important figure in the Middle Ages, although not so important as Pilate, and like the latter he was designated as both good and bad. Generally he is a villain, as in the *Bible en François*, but he is also deemed a prophet as in the Middle English poem *Cayphas*, and featured in the Christian liturgy at Salisbury Cathedral and elsewhere.⁴⁰ He acquired the role of prophet through the elaboration of the Palm-Sunday liturgy, where he prophesies what will happen to Christ. Through using the *Bible en François*, the poet manages to create an authority role for Caiaphas, a position of power derived from ostentatious wealth and the use of masters of law, clever, devious men. They read from the book of Moses, recite the Psalms of David, and relate the stories of Joshua and Judas. They will not humble themselves as Vespasian demands, but prefer to fight, using exotic animals such as elephants and camels. Fabulous beasts or followers are usually an indication that something is amiss, like Lucius' Saracens and Ethiopians in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*. The marvellous represents something on the fringes of society,

⁴⁰ Brown (1913) pp.114-6.

forces which are not fully understood or controlled.⁴¹ Oriental imagery and suggestions of brutality are frequently used in romances and histories to distinguish heroes from their enemies as otherwise it would be difficult to esteem one side over the other as both believed in the same warrior ethos.⁴² The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet also retains the despicable humiliation of Vespasian's messengers at the hands of Caiaphas, with a view to illustrating the depravity of the Jewish leader.⁴³ The Jews tie the arms of the twelve messengers behind their backs and then proceed to strip them of their clothes, shear off their hair and beards and blacken them with blackening (blood). Finally, they hang a cheese around each one's neck (lines 257-64). The picture this incident provides us with is almost comic in its portrayal of the ludicrous state the Romans are reduced to and the bathetic note on which it ends. The messengers are not injured in any way, except that their pride has been dealt a blow. Indeed their treatment resembles a prank which might be played on a stag night. Vespasian erupts in fury, though, deciding to attack the Jews on the morrow with great force, conveying how the dignity of a warrior is an important aspect of his life. The effect of this episode and the real reason why the poet choose to include it is that

⁴¹ The heroes of romances, such as King Arthur and his knights, are never described as fighting with camels and bizarre equipment. Furthermore in travel literature strange faraway locations about which little was known were described as filled with weird and wonderful inhabitants and animals. See Goodman (1998) pp.45-82 on the use of exotic elements and monsters in romance.

⁴² See Chapter Three.

⁴³ This episode displays the possible influence of *Ogier le Danois* on the French writer (*The M.E. Prose Translation of Roger D'Argenteuil's Bible en François* 1977, p.28).

it renders the war less glamorous, highlighting the sordid side of fighting and the difficulty of maintaining one's honour.

For the same reason Titus' and Vespasian's actions during the course of the siege are not seen as unquestionably glorious. This relates not to faults in them personally but to the nature of the armed conflict in which they are involved and what it forces them to do. The poem sympathises with their enemies, the Jews, on several occasions. For instance, it pities the ordinary Jewish citizens when they suffer despair or torment such as when they respond to the execution of Caiaphas and his clerics (lines 689-724).⁴⁴ At this point the poem clearly distinguishes between their wicked leaders who deserve to be punished and the ordinary folk who are made to suffer excessively for the crimes of their leaders. This incident in the *Siege of Jerusalem* follows the French text quite closely. Caiaphas' punishment was suggested to the French writer by an episode in the three *L'Estoire del Saint Graal* manuscripts, which add to the story in the Prose *Joseph D'Arimathie* the episode dealing with Caiaphas' capture and execution. The *Bible en François* writer elaborated on the punishment sequence through the addition of details possibly inspired by Gui de Cambrai's *Vengement Alixandre* and Jehan le Nevelon's *Venjanse Alixandre*.⁴⁵ The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet selected this episode, as not only are Caiaphas and his followers

⁴⁴ The suffering that the Jewish priests undergo is important as fragmentation represents evil and despair, while wholeness signifies Paradise, thus saints endure horrid torture at the hands of their persecutors - frequently dismemberment of some sort, which they will overcome with God's aid at the final Resurrection. These men will not of course be able to overcome their dismemberment as they are not Christians. See Chapter Five.

⁴⁵ *The M.E. Prose Translation of Roger D'Argenteuil's Bible en François* (1977) pp.28.

executed in a gruesome manner, but their execution is carried out in a way calculated to destroy the morale of those in the city, a form of psychological torture and a rather underhand, sordid and inglorious way of subduing the defenders of Jerusalem. The English poet adds in certain details which raise questions about the justness of the Romans' actions - the viciousness of the executions and the extreme sorrow they provoke in ordinary citizens (700 jump from the walls and kill themselves in despair). They gloat at the despair of the Jews:

“Þer is doust [to] 3our drynke!” a duke to hem criep
And bade hem bible of þat broþ for þe bischopes soule. (lines 719-20)

The fact that the jeering is linked to the mass suicide of a sizable number of ordinary Jews (highlighted in the Middle English text through the specific number given to those who do so) suggests that it was intended to illustrate a barbarous side to the Romans and raise sympathy for the Jews. There is a clear distinction to be made between the self-destruction of these people and the deaths of Judas, Pilate, Nero and Othis. All four men are explicitly stated as having committed great crimes: Judas betrayed Christ, Pilate ordered His execution, Nero killed a whole host of people and Othis murdered Galba. None of these 700 ordinary Jews have done anything of the kind. Of course suicide is a deadly sin in the eyes of medieval society no matter what the circumstances. The poet is using this episode of mass suicide to indicate the horrendous actions to which people are driven by warfare. Although the laws of war permit horrific punishments for those besieged and unwilling to

surrender, the emphasis upon the reactions of the people - the Jews' despair and the gloating of the Romans - suggest that the poet intends the nature of the executions to reflect negatively on the Romans. Furthermore, it is possible to find echoes of heroic vaunts in these lines. The poet wished to raise such ideas in the minds of his audience, while at the same time presenting them in a context where their legitimacy is called into question.

The poet continually problematises his narrative, for though he sympathises with ordinary Jews, he clearly does not favour their leaders. He omits Pilate's role in the *Bible en François*, where Pilate surrenders and disassociates himself from the crucifixion of Christ. The *Bible en François* Pilate claims that he was imprisoned for refusing to condemn Christ. The *Siege of Jerusalem* Pilate remains a villain, a false figure of authority, like Caiaphas. True authority is derived from God; that all other authority is false appears to be the theme of the power struggle between Titus and Vespasian on the one side and the Jewish leaders on the other.

The figure of St. Peter is retained, though, by the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet from the *Bible en François*. He preaches, converts and baptises the citizens of Rome. The French writer based St. Peter's role on those of St. Clement and Gai in *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*, and the pilgrim in Robert de Boron's *Joseph D'Arimathie*.⁴⁶ St. Peter's role is of the utmost importance, because it establishes the authority of the Church. Veronica humbly submits herself and the Vernicle to

⁴⁶ *The M.E. Prose Translation of Roger D'Argenteuil's Bible en François* (1977) p.26.

his care as he is an appropriate figure to have the responsibility of the relic. Furthermore, the Roman emperor and generals turn to him as a figure of authority for guidance and advice.

The other feature of the French text which particularly appealed to the English poet was the presence of wonderful descriptive sequences, such as the description of Vespasian's standard, Caiaphas' elephant, the elaborate tortures and the procession with the Vernicle in Rome. The alliterative poet is very fond of visual and auditory affects, as we have already seen with the storm sequence at the beginning. Lines 260-320 appear to be original, though they are possibly based on a lost (French or Latin) source. At lines 278-90 we find a wonderful description of the Romans readying themselves for the forthcoming campaign, and a brief mention of Vespasian's emblem, a dragon of gold. It is also likely that this section is an innovation of the poet's, inspired by the description of Vespasian's standard (a construction used for holding fighting men) in lines 381-440 and in the *Bible en François* (Chapter 20 p.78 line 21- p.79 line 27), which is developed using traditional formulae. The passages, although different, proceed in a similar manner and the significance of both is the same, to convey the power of Vespasian and how he will overcome the Jews. Lines 261-76 deal with Nero's annoyance at the loss of tribute, and lines 297-300 with the selection of Titus and Vespasian as generals for the Judaea campaign, and how no Jew shall ever be king in Judaea, indicating that the poet is interested in the historical motivation for the siege, and in the Christian mission of both Titus and

Vespasian. These innovations are presumably inspired by the poet's concern with the historicity of the story.

Josephus, Hegesippus and Higden's Polychronicon

This is confirmed by his allusion to Josephus in line 308. Later, in lines 1321-2 the poet informs us that Josephus journeys to Rome with Titus and spends the rest of his days writing books based on what happened. These lines are based on the *Polychronicon* (on which see below), a text which continuously refers to Josephus as the authority on the war between the Jews and the Romans. Other alterations made by the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet concern the battle itself; he finds it necessary to move away from his French source at this point in order to create a role for Titus and Sabyn, in accordance with his depiction of true figures of authority and his concern with the validity of the heroic code.

Mary Hamel⁴⁷ argues that the story of the siege in the *Siege of Jerusalem* can be traced back to Josephus' account in *The Jewish War*.⁴⁸ This is undoubtedly true, although the direct source is clearly to be Higden's *Polychronicon*.⁴⁹ Josephus was himself an eye-witness of the events in Judaea;

⁴⁷ Hamel (1992) p.179.

⁴⁸ The original Greek version of *The Jewish War* was all but unknown in the Middle Ages. The work was available through a Latin translation, which has, unfortunately, not been printed in a modern edition. I have therefore had to rely on Thackeray's edition of the Greek text with his parallel English translation. Since I have used an English translation of the text, I shall refer to this work using the English title. All references are to *The Jewish War* (1927-8).

⁴⁹ All references to the *Polychronicon* IV (1872) except where it is indicated that they come from the *Polychronicon* I (1865).

we owe most of our knowledge of the proceedings to his account.⁵⁰ *The Jewish War*, however, is about not one war but two: the war with Rome, and the war between the Jewish Zealots and the rest of the population which escalates during the three and a half years covered by the work, ultimately degenerating into factional warfare. Josephus himself fell victim to these internal divisions and was removed from his position by those in Jerusalem. He perceived Roman victory as inevitable, with Vespasian the chosen agent of God, and Titus also a recipient of special divine grace. Once completed, the Roman-orientated history was presented to the Flavian emperors who were impressed with its accuracy and perspective and encouraged its circulation.

In the prologue we learn that *The Jewish War* is a translation of an earlier work which Josephus composed in Aramaic for the "Upper Barbarians". The new rendition in Greek was intended, he informs us, to dispel misconceptions of the events based on hearsay.⁵¹ Greek was the medium he chose, firmly aligning himself with the established tradition of historical writing, modelling his history on *The Punic War*. The implication of all this is that Josephus, a man of varied

⁵⁰ Josephus was of genteel lineage, numbering a Hasmonean princess among his ancestors on his father's side. He was educated in the Pharisaic tradition and at nineteen he joined that sect. Later he entered the Qumran community and Tessa Rajak suggests, having surveyed the evidence, that he perhaps spent but a few months in each sect before moving to the next, having learnt what it had to teach. Subject to visions, he described himself as a priest on account of this and his lineage. Thus he was a widely experienced man, interested in different religious systems, but not firmly attached to any.

His character was also conditioned by the political context in which he grew up, which was based on the co-operation between the Jewish ruling class and the Romans. This disintegrated as a result of the actions of the Roman procurator Gessius Florus in the years A.D. 64-6, and Josephus' history narrates the breakdown in relations between Rome and the Jewish élite. As a result of this fracas, Josephus was reluctantly drawn into a war against Rome in his capacity as governor of Galilee. Rajak (1983), *passim*, gives a detailed biography of Josephus. See Schürer (1973) III:1, pp.177-80, 186 and Brandon (1951), *passim*, on the historical background of the period.

⁵¹ Stutt (1961) pp.21-5.

religious experience and conditioned by a political climate which had ceased to exist, was writing for the mainstream of Roman society, for people far removed from Judaea. Hence he writes in an accepted mode and is commended by the emperors.

The Jewish War was an immensely popular piece, particularly in its Latin translation, which was completed in the fifth century on the orders of Cassiodorus who asserted that the works of Josephus belonged in the ideal monastic library. In *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter* Heinz Schreckenberg discusses many of the authors who used or incorporated some of Josephus' writings.⁵² Jerome regarded him as of the same stature as Livy, while during the abbacy of Odilo of Cluny he was numbered among those whose work was incorporated into Lenten reading. He was, indeed, widely read in monasteries and known to writers such as Bede, Alcuin, and Nicolas Trivet, enjoying great popularity in Northern Europe (Northern France, the Netherlands, and the Rhine region), where the largest concentration of illuminated twelfth-century manuscripts of the Latin translation of his works is to be found.⁵³ During the twelfth century, Northern Europe was fascinated by the Holy Land and it was in this region that the crusades were organised. *The Jewish War* and the *Antiquitates Judaicae* circulated together in large expensive manuscripts, frequently in two volumes. Although more manuscripts of the *Antiquitates*

⁵² Schreckenberg (1972) pp.68-171.

⁵³ Cahn (1966) pp.295-310. See Usener (1951-2) pp.247-9 on the provenance of the manuscript of Josephus in the John Rylands Library, and *The Latin Josephus* (1958) pp.15-6.

Judaicae than of *The Jewish War* have survived, Franz Blatt's *The Latin Josephus* still lists twenty-three surviving manuscripts of *The Jewish War* in England, one in Trinity College Dublin containing extracts, one fragment in Oxford, and one of English origin in Valencia, which I have verified by consulting the catalogues of manuscripts in the British Library, together with those for Cambridge, Oxford, the John Rylands, the Hunterian Library in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Worcester Cathedral, Salisbury Cathedral, Canterbury Cathedral, Trinity College Dublin and Lambeth Palace Libraries.⁵⁴ There is only one surviving fragment of a Greek Josephus in the United Kingdom, now in Trinity College Cambridge. *The Jewish War* was written in good Latin, and the translator obviously had a good knowledge of the Greek language and followed the history closely, maintaining the idiom of the original.⁵⁵

Unusually, *The Jewish War* contains few references to authorities, unlike Josephus' other major work, the *Antiquitates Judaicae*. Apparently, the fact that Josephus was an eye-witness and an active participant lent enough authority to his history.⁵⁶ Yet this does not fully explain the popularity of *The Jewish War* among the Romans. The answer lies in the fact that Josephus conceded that the

⁵⁴ Hanna (1992 a) p.113 alludes to fifteen. Manuscripts of the Latin translations of Josephus' works survive from Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and it was as Franz Blatt says the "chosen history book of the Middle Ages" (*The Latin Josephus* 1958, pp. 22, 25). See further Manitas (1935) pp.207-13 and Williamson (1964) p.311. Kisch (1938-9) pp.105-18 describes how his works inspired Talmudic legends and found their way into the *Sachsenspiegel*, a compilation of Jewry law, the most important German law-book of the Middle Ages. Sanford (1935) pp.127-45 records the uses to which Josephus' works were put by later transcribers and translators, both Christian and Jewish.

⁵⁵ *The Latin Josephus* (1958) pp.18-24.

⁵⁶ See Chapter Two for a discussion of the importance of eye-witness testimony, and Thackeray (1967) p.311.

Jews were partially responsible for the war, that they rebelled against the lawful lordship of Rome, and refused to pay the tribute they owed. The chronicle is a diffuse account of the events of this campaign, with long digressions on Simon and the Zealots, John and the Idumaeans. These groups did not find favour with Josephus, who depicts in graphic detail the internal conflicts among different factions in Judaea, especially in Jerusalem.

An older rendition in Latin of *The Jewish War* than that of the translation ordered by Cassiodorus exists,⁵⁷ composed in c.370 by Hegesippus, who was frequently acknowledged with Josephus as an authority on the war..⁵⁸ The *Hegesippi qui dicitur Historiae Libri V* is an abbreviated version of Josephus in five books, with insertions of biblical analogies and Christian doctrine together with material from other sources, such as Sallust and Tacitus.⁵⁹ The author adapts Josephus' history to convey how Christians are now the recipients of God's grace, and the history thus becomes an exemplary story of good triumphing over evil. He was writing in the fourth century, by which time the Romans had become christianised, and therefore follows the classical, rhetorical tradition, and is overtly Christian. Since he knew Greek and also had an

⁵⁷ See Lynch (1992) pp.85-9, 190 and *Cassiodorus: Variae* (1992) pp.xxiv, xxxvii-xxxviii, xlvii-liii on Cassiodorus, and Southern (1970) pp.22, 41, 44-5, 48, 76 on the Church in this period.

⁵⁸ Little is known about him, though speculation that he might be Ambrose is now known to be wrong. Doubts have been raised over his name, as the name Hegesippus first occurs in a manuscript dating from the ninth century, leading Albert A. Ball Jr. (1980) pp.60-4 and others to refer to the translator as Pseudo-Hegesippus.

⁵⁹ Elimar Klebs (1895) discusses the various sources used by Hegesippus, including on pages 212-6 how Hegesippus abbreviated Josephus, condensing *The Jewish War* Books V-VII into *Hegesippi qui dicitur Historiae Libri V* Book V; his derivations from classical authors, mainly Sallust and Tacitus on pages 216-

extensive knowledge of the classics and rhetoric, as well as an interest in expounding Christian doctrine, it is likely that he was a monk. There are ten manuscripts of English provenance as well as two of non-English origin in England, not all of which are complete.⁶⁰ This has led Richard H. Rouse, Mary A. Rouse and R.A.B. Mynors to describe Hegesippus as "reasonably well-known in Medieval England."⁶¹ His account focuses more on the destruction of Jerusalem than on the war, with the result that large sections dealing with civil strife and interesting digressions are omitted. The existence of metrical versions of the work, such as Cambridge, Emmanuel College Ms.I.3.3, also testifies to its popularity.⁶²

The works of Hegesippus and Josephus were used by Ranulf Higden⁶³ in the compilation of his *Polychronicon*. Higden designed his work to appeal to contemporary taste, with its new vogue for antiquity, and it achieved instant popularity. He compiled a very learned history, an encyclopaedia of information, absorbing material from a wide number of sources, concentrating on earlier centuries, with a broad focus not confined to English history. Other chronicles

30; and on pages 238-41 his love and use of rhetoric. See Sanford (1935) p.134. All references are to *Hegesippi qui dicitur Historiae Libri V* (1932, 1966).

⁶⁰ Manitas (1935) p.211 points out that there are nine references to manuscripts of Hegesippus in medieval library catalogues in Great Britain.

⁶¹ *Registrum Anglie De Libris Doctorum et Auctorum Veterum* (1991) p.218.

⁶² Morin (1914-9) pp.174-8.

⁶³ He was a Benedictine monk at the abbey of St. Werburgh in Chester, which he entered in 1299. By 1352 his histories had become so authoritative that Edward III summoned him to court with his chronicles. Apart from the *Polychronicon* he compiled the *Speculum Curatorum* and *Ars Componendi Sermones*, a corpus that elucidates where Higden's orientation lies: Christian doctrine. Like all medieval chroniclers, Higden interpreted history as a working out of God's providential plan. The *Polychronicon* was written mainly in the 1320s, though Higden was still working on it until his death in the 1360s.

like Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* dealt with the legendary founding of Britain or like William of Malmesbury's *De Gestis Regum* with contemporary events. Higden enjoys the distinction of being the first in England to deal with an extended view of world history, basing his account on a wide variety of sources mainly in Latin. He was untutored in the Greek language, and had to rely upon Latin versions of Josephus and Hegesippus for his knowledge of events in first-century Judaea.⁶⁴ Higden is notable in distinguishing and commenting on his sources; he differentiates between Josephus and Hegesippus when he shifts between them. The *Polychronicon* was both popular and widely available, with copies to be found in monasteries, cathedrals, and in the possession of rich clergy, with the number and provenance of surviving manuscripts bearing testimony to this. The fact that it was written in Latin rendered it less accessible to a lay audience (although it was quickly translated into Middle English), and this, combined with its dissemination among the clergy and ecclesiastical institutions, confirms that it was the accepted learned history. It remained highly regarded for two centuries, especially in the second half of the fourteenth century, so much so that it was translated into English at least twice: once by Trevisa in the 1380s, and again in the fifteenth century, specifically in order to make it accessible to the educated laity. John Taylor in *The Universal Chronicle of Ranulf Higden* lists the 118 Latin manuscripts of the chronicle dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and also a selected

⁶⁴ See Taylor (1966) p.73.

list of nine fragments, some from locations in the north of England, such as Whalley Abbey, where the author of the *Destruction of Troy* also originates,⁶⁵ which means that it would have been available in the area where the *Siege of Jerusalem* was written.

In order to see why the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet turned to Higden's work one must look at the nature of the *Polychronicon*. It is concise, with no long digressions on doctrine nor detailed accounts of internal Jewish politics. The *Polychronicon* excerpts parts of the story of the destruction of Jerusalem from both Josephus and Hegesippus, but omits the long account of the war and civil strife and is basically only concerned with the sieges of Jotapha and Jerusalem. The tricks and stratagems employed by Josephus occur during the siege of Jotapha in *The Jewish War* and Hegesippus' paraphrase, with Josephus joining the Romans before the siege of Jerusalem (*The Jewish War* III pp.631, 641-3; Hegesippus III 9, pp.201-2; III 11, pp.203-4; III 12, p.205). The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet clearly follows the *Polychronicon*, by excluding the details of the earlier part of the war, but goes even further than Higden by condensing it all into one siege. It is a little unclear in the *Polychronicon* where the siege of Jotapha ends and that of Jerusalem begins, as the name of the former city occurs on only two occasions. Higden summarises and includes all the stratagems of the Jews, with one change; the battering engines are incinerated with blazing oil, not wood. In *The Jewish War* it is at the siege of Jotapha that Josephus has burning

⁶⁵ Taylor (1966) Appendix I pp.152-9.

oil poured over the Roman soldiers, which penetrated behind their shields. Vespasian is wounded gravely in the heel while leading an assault on Jerusalem, causing much worry to the Romans. In Josephus' account this was a superficial wound, but the sight of the blood scared his men, so that they abandoned fighting; it certainly did not give added impetus to the attack as in Hegesippus (III 12, p.205), *Polychronicon* (IV Chap. 10, pp.428-30) and the *Siege of Jerusalem*. The result of these alterations in the *Siege of Jerusalem* is that the stratagems in the *Siege of Jerusalem* are rendered more prominent, highlighting the devious tricks of the Jews, and the potential tragedy if anything happened to Vespasian.

In the *Siege of Jerusalem* the short account of the succession to the Imperial crown occurs after the relation of the wonders which happened in Jerusalem, and Vespasian's injury (lines 893-960). This is a reversal of the sequence of events in the *Polychronicon* (IV Chap.9-10, pp.414-29). The change renders the siege more important, in that it is not simply a part of Vespasian's campaign as emperor to gain control of Judaea and Alexandria, but an important concern in its own right. Apart from the change in sequence, the *Siege of Jerusalem* is here quite close to the *Polychronicon* IV, much closer to it than to the other renditions of the imperial succession. Josephus' account is considerably longer, containing much material that is not dealt with in either the poem or Higden's chronicle. The narrative in *The Jewish War* (II pp.421-3; IV pp.147-51, 163, 173-85, 187-99) is followed quite closely by Hegesippus (IV 21, p.274; IV

24-5, pp.278-9; IV 26, pp.281-3; IV 28-33, pp.286-92). Josephus dismisses the issue of Nero's crimes quite quickly, obviously taking into account the attitudes of his intended audience who were proud of their Roman heritage. He states (IV pp.147-51) that he will not relate all Nero's crimes; suffice to say that he killed himself. He goes on to recount how Vespasian stopped his campaign in Judaea upon the outbreak of a rising in Gaul against Nero and dispatched Titus to pay homage to the victor, Galba, and to receive his instructions. Unfortunately after Galba had reigned a mere seven months he was assassinated in the middle of the forum as a consequence of his meanness towards his soldiers. Otho⁶⁶ succeeded him, remaining in power for three months before being overthrown by Vitellius. Vespasian awaited the outcome of the civil strife before resuming activity. Vespasian was, however, unable to obey Vitellius as the latter was a tyrant; besides, Vespasian's claim to the throne was stronger. The soldiers united behind him, and invited him to save the empire. He responded by capturing Alexandria, as this was the key port of Egypt, the most important part of the empire as it provided all the grain. After this initial success, events proceeded smoothly for Vespasian and he received good news from Rome upon capturing Alexandria. He was eager to return to Rome as soon as winter had passed, and wished to have Alexandria in order by then. He dispatched Titus to destroy Jerusalem with the best men in his army. In the *Siege of Jerusalem* the account is dissimilar from Josephus, with Alexandria not so much as mentioned, and Vespasian

⁶⁶ The *Polychronicon* and the *Siege of Jerusalem*, as Kölbing and Day (*The Siege of Jerusalem* 1932, p.xxi) point out, are the only texts which refer to Otho as Otho Lucius.

chosen as the new emperor because they need a bold man, and he is a *comelich* king who fights for Christ (line 950). Vitellius is a noble man, but he has perpetrated a loathsome crime in that he has slain Sabyn. This Sabyn is Vespasian's brother and he is naturally enraged that his brother's killer should acede to the imperial throne and he therefore dispatches knights to Rome in order to eliminate Vitellius. The account in the *Siege of Jerusalem* thus follows that in the *Polychronicon*, apart from discrepancies over the number of months that Galba was in power.

The poem's presentation of the death of the heroic Sir Sabyn, the knight who fights with the Roman army in Judaea not Vespasian's brother, (lines 1193-1204) is also based on the *Polychronicon*, rather than on Josephus' or Hegesippus' versions. Regrettably, Sir Sabyn is killed due to his impetuosity in the final attack on the city, and his death spurs the Romans to greater activity, with Titus mourning him as the *dou3test* (line 1204) who ever lived. This kind of act of impetuosity is conventional in the romances and is an heroic gesture; Gawain dies in similar circumstances in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (lines 3780-2) (see Chapter Two). In *The Jewish War* (VI pp.393-5) Sabinus is emaciated with blackened skin and does not even resemble an ordinary soldier. He volunteers to scale the wall and is followed by eleven others, successfully routing the Jews, before stumbling over a rock. The Jews attack the prostrate hero, but he fends them off for a considerable length of time before being overcome. The *Siege of Jerusalem* follows Higden's version, which is cleansed

of the more unsavoury details of Sabinus' unfortunate appearance, his blackened face, and clumsy fall which are present in *The Jewish War*, and makes his death fit into the mould of traditional heroic deaths. The *Siege of Jerusalem* describes how Sabyn climbs the wall with the aid of a ladder and manages to kill six Jews before woe befalls him. Sir Sabyn may be a heroic figure but the manner of his death suggests that these chivalrous values are limited. A seventh Jew levels *an vnhende dynte* (line 1198) at Sabyn's head with such force that his brain oozes out of his nostrils. His death forms an inglorious and rather squalid conclusion to his brave endeavour, contrasting the brutality and reality of warfare with the high-minded ideals of the heroic code.

Some incidents are presented in similar form in *The Jewish War*, Hegesippus, the *Polychronicon*, the *Legenda Aurea* and the *Siege of Jerusalem*. For instance, there are a series of wonders illustrating the power of the Roman siege-engines. The *Siege of Jerusalem* relates in lines 820-8 how an unborn baby was flung from its mother's womb over the city walls like a ball by a stone, and a man's head was spattered across a field a furlong away. Similar accounts can be found in *The Jewish War* (III, p.647); Hegesippus (III 12, p.205); and the *Polychronicon* (IV Chap. 10, p.428-30). The poet most likely used Higden as the source for this, as he is obviously working from a text of the *Polychronicon* during much of this part of the poem, and there is nothing added to suggest that he had consulted other texts. This reference to how a mother lost her unborn baby fits extremely well into the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet's project. The war

transforms this woman: she ceases to be a mother, to conform to the paradigm for women through no fault of her own. The Roman siege weapons rip her baby from her and she is powerless to protect and care for it. Destroying an unborn child and attacking a woman is hardly a triumph or an achievement which confers honour and lofty renown.

Another incident which occurs in all three histories and in the *Siege of Jerusalem* is that of the slaying of Jews for gold. In the poem, lines 1159-72, we read of how temptation proves too much for the Romans when they discover that the Jews, who have surrendered, have swallowed their gold. Without Titus' leave, the Romans disembowel them to obtain the gold.⁶⁷ The *Polychronicon* contains the most similar version of this story, recounting how the Romans were alerted by an Assyrian and ripped open the Jews' bellies (IV Chap.10, pp.438-9). Josephus (V, pp.369-73) and Hegesippus (V 24, pp.358-9) record that it was an Arab unit along with Syrians who cut open the refugees, killing two thousand in one night. The Roman army's reputation is tarnished by this innovation on the part of the poet, while sympathy is aroused for the Jews. Indeed, Titus is more sympathetic to the plight of the Jews than their own leaders who refused to allow them to surrender. He grants those Jews who surrender grace and makes them prisoners. It was standard procedure to take prisoners of war and this suggests that Titus does not want to have them slain. The juxtaposition of the behaviour

⁶⁷ This line is omitted in two of the manuscripts.

of the leaders is extremely informative, illustrating the enlightened actions of Titus and the wilfully blind defiance of the Jewish commanders.⁶⁸

Kölbing and Day are justified in their rejection of Kopka's claim, based on a few brief passages, that the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet used Hegesippus,⁶⁹ as these episodes are all retold in the *Polychronicon*. It is possible that the poet had access to Hegesippus and Josephus, both of which, as we have seen, were widely available in England, but he does not appear to have consulted them. Kopka examines Josephus and Hegesippus and decides that Hegesippus' account bears most resemblance to the poem.⁷⁰ Had he compared Hegesippus' work with that of Higden's, he would have seen that the narratives of Mary and her son and the marvels in the poem are closer to those in the *Polychronicon* than to those in Hegesippus.⁷¹

Hanna claims that a few scattered passages show evidence that the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet consulted Josephus as well as Higden, but does not specify which.⁷² There are certainly no direct verbal echoes though it might be argued

⁶⁸ Extracting gold from the bodies of enemies is a common topos in chronicles of the Middle Ages. Fulcher of Chartres (1969, p.122), for instance, describes how the Saracens swallowed their gold in order to hide it from the Christians. The Christians discovered the trick played on them, slew the Saracens and ripped open their bellies to retrieve the besants. The corpses of the dead Saracens are burnt to recover the rest of the gold. This is seen as a glorious triumph over the treachery of the Saracens. This motif occurs in the late fourteenth-century Middle English romance *Titus and Vespasian* and the French romances where we are informed that the Roman leaders sell the Jews in groups of thirty for a penny to the ordinary soldiery that they may rip them apart for their gold. In these texts mercy or grace is not granted to the Jews and making them prisoners is not contemplated.

⁶⁹ *The Siege of Jerusalem* (1932) p.xxi.

⁷⁰ Kopka (1887) pp.31-9.

⁷¹ These episodes will be analysed at length in Chapters Two and Three.

⁷² Hanna (1992 a) p.113.

that lines 853-92 of the poem, where Vespasian holds a council to discuss strategy were perhaps inspired by *The Jewish War* (IV, pp.107-11) where Vespasian consults his generals and they reply that Divine Providence has come to their aid and caution that the Jews may yet reunite and begin to fight back. In *The Jewish War* the council continues with Vespasian criticising their desire to fight as simply arrogant gallantry. He decides that waiting is the best policy, as the Jews will fight among themselves. This council session is not mentioned by Higden so it is possible that the poet referred to Josephus' work at this point, but the actual account of the meeting in the *Siege of Jerusalem* is quite different, occurring, as it does, immediately after admiration is expressed for how the Jews struggle valiantly to defend their city. The Roman soldiers are not downhearted, however, at the stout defence put up by the Jews or the injuries they themselves receive, and hold a feast in the evening. A council meeting is organised and each man is asked for his opinion on the progress of the offensive, and with one accord they all turn to Titus who proposes that they should conquer the city through starvation. This plan is followed and Vespasian appoints watches to ensure that no one escapes, while the remnant of the army goes hunting and hawking.⁷³ They do not despair, become frustrated or indulge in ignoble activities such as plunder; they pursue instead the sport of princes. Vespasian is no mere tyrant, but a just figure of authority who accepts the wise words of his nobles and formulates his plans in accord with them.

⁷³ Lawton (1997) p.107 notes that the "germ" of his speech is to be found in *The Jewish War*. He argues that the activities of hunting and hawking were often indulged in during actual medieval sieges and are a means of masking the heavy toll of assault on the Romans.

It might also be argued that *The Jewish War* could conceivably have inspired the development of Domitian's and Sabinus' roles. Domitian plays quite a large part in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, but features little in the *Polychronicon*. In *The Jewish War* (IV, p.195) Domitian is acting leader until Vespasian reaches Rome, and in Book VII we learn of his succession after Titus. Hegesippus alludes to him as Vespasian's kinsman and mentions his role during the siege of Jotapha, but he makes no speeches (Book IV 26, p.282; 31, p.290; 32; p.291). In *The Jewish War* Book II Sabinus, procurator of Syria, plays a prominent role and this possibly inspired the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet to make him one of Vespasian's generals during the siege. Josephus relates how Sabinus tries to take over Herod's estate immediately after Herod's death, but defers his endeavours out of reverence to Varus. Later he provokes a rebellion in Jerusalem, through the violence of his legions whom he has ordered to search for treasure, which results in his being besieged in a castle and having to beg for Varus' help. Sabinus does not perform these functions in Hegesippus or Higden, though. Hegesippus (III 15, p.209) does mention his name together with Titus' as generals during the siege of Jotapha. The Sabinus who dies appears to be a different figure to this general, unlike in the poem. It is just as probable, however, that the poet independently expanded the character of Sabinus because of his heroic death. The account of his death in the *Polychronicon* is much closer to that in the poem than the corresponding narrative in *The Jewish War*, as we have seen. The poet could also have misunderstood his source, and thought that

the two Sabinuses were one, but this is unlikely in the light of his competence in dealing with Latin texts. Domitian and Sabinus' new roles probably owe their origin to the poet's innovations with regard to Vespasian's strategies and method of dividing his troops during the war, and there is no good reason to think that the poet used *The Jewish War*.

The conversation between Vespasian and his men about how he can keep his vow to take Jerusalem and return to Rome to be emperor appears to be original (lines 961-1020). In response to Vespasian's request for advice, Sir Sabyn of Syria suggests that Titus and Domitian should be allowed to take over the besieging and Titus vows to take the town or die. Vespasian duly follows their counsel and makes a touching speech of farewell, telling them:

My wele and my worshup 3e weldeþ to kepe,
For þe tresour of my treuþ vpon þis toun hengyþ:
I nold, þis toun wer vn-take, ne þis toures heye,
For alle þe glowande golde vpon grounde riche,
[N]e no ston in þe stede stond[i]n[g] alofte,
Bot alle ouer-tourned and tilt, temple and oþer. (1010-16)

The poet adds this scene and speech to explain how Vespasian, a figure who derives his authority from God, is not ignoring his vow or being tempted by the power and wealth incumbent on the imperial throne and to emphasise his personal feelings of involvement in the military campaign. He is concerned about maintaining his honour and faithfully keeping his vow

Other Sources

Legenda Aurea

Some of the details in the poem cannot be traced back to the *Polychronicon*, the *Bible en François*, or the *Vindicta Salvatoris*. For these details the poet turned to another influential text, the *Legenda Aurea*, composed by Jacobus de Voragine.⁷⁴ By doing so he was able to orient his account toward the personal lives of the protagonists.

There are more than one thousand surviving manuscript copies, as well as one hundred and fifty early editions and translations of the *Legenda Aurea*.⁷⁵ It was highly regarded in England, and one can deduce that a large number of manuscripts of the *Legenda Aurea* circulated in England from the quantity that survive, including forty-nine Latin versions or extracts, two English translations, and seven French.⁷⁶ Jacobus compiled the work as a kind of encyclopaedia of saints' lives for a similar audience to that of the *Polychronicon*. The *Legenda Aurea* and the *Polychronicon* survive in comparable numbers of manuscripts in England, many originating in cathedrals and monasteries. Saints were considered

⁷⁴ Jacobus de Voragine was born c.1230 in a small town near Saronna on the Gulf of Genoa. In 1244 he entered the Order of Preachers, where he earned a reputation for learning and piety and devoted his life teaching in various houses of the order, until 1267 when he was appointed provincial of the Dominican province of Lombardy. In 1292 he was prevailed upon to become archbishop of Genoa, at a time when Genoa enjoyed great prosperity and power, and died in 1298. His fame continued after his death, and finally in the early nineteenth century he was beatified. During his life he produced a large output of writings, including a commentary on St. Augustine, a collection of sermons, and the Chronicle of Genoa, but it is for the *Legenda Aurea* that he is remembered, a work which was hugely popular. *The Golden Legend* 1 (1993) p.xiii gives a brief outline of Jacobus de Voragine's life.

⁷⁵ A list has been compiled by Seybolt (1946 b) pp.327-38 of the fifteenth-century editions, which lists some 97 printed versions in Latin, 3 in Bohemian, 11 in Dutch, 4 in English, 20 in French, 18 in High German, 7 in Low German and 13 in Italian. The "essential character" of the work is maintained in most editions and translations as in Caxton's *Golden Legend* (Jeremy 1946, pp.212-21). See Görlach (1972) passim on the relationship of the *South English Legendary*, *Gilte Legende* (11 manuscripts of the full text), Caxton's *Golden Legend*, *Légende Dorée* and the *Legenda Aurea*.

⁷⁶ There are two English translations, five French, one low Dutch, one Flemish and twenty-four Latin versions and extracts in compilations in the British Library; one French translation and fourteen Latin versions and extracts in the Libraries of Cambridge; one French translation and twelve Latin versions and extracts in the Libraries of Oxford; three Latin versions etc. in the Libraries of Edinburgh, two at Salisbury Cathedral, and one each at Worcester and Winchester Cathedrals and Trinity College Dublin.

the true or perfect heroes, those whom one should emulate, and Jacobus de Voragine therefore wished to make available a compilation of material which was to be found in lectionaries, apocrypha, histories and so forth, so that it could be consulted easily. Jacobus de Voragine's work is not aimed at edifying and reassuring the ordinary layfolk, but at providing preachers with weapons in their struggle against the enemies of the saints.⁷⁷ There are some one hundred and eighty-two chapters relating the lives of individual saints, each of which concentrates on the confrontations between the saints and those who oppose them, with the latter suffering for their presumption towards God's representatives. Although originally intended for clerics, it soon reached a wider audience through translations. William Granger Ryan points out how it was reckoned that "in the later Middle Ages the only book more widely read was the Bible."⁷⁸ By using this work as a source, just like using the *Bible en François* and the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet is providing his work with a seal of authority.

The wasps in Vespasian's nose are mentioned, in the *Legenda Aurea* (Chapter 67, *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola*, p.299),⁷⁹ as well as *De Pylato*. Interestingly, cures of the affliction of bees or wasps were symbolic of

⁷⁷ Reames (1985) p.99.

⁷⁸ *The Golden Legend* I (1993) p.xiii. Seybolt (1946 c) pp.341-2 notes that there are more early editions printed of the *Legenda Aurea* than of the Bible and its translations.

⁷⁹ All quotations are from *Legenda Aurea* (1846) and all translations from *The Golden Legend* I (1993).

conversion and illumination.⁸⁰ The Middle English poet is therefore suggesting that Vespasian is a noble man, who has been enlightened through a divine miracle and revelation. Jacobus de Voragine also states that Vespasian is the ruler of Galatia, and some manuscripts of the *Siege of Jerusalem* concur with this, while others render it Galicia. The account of the siege is quite similar in the *Legenda Aurea* and the *Polychronicon*; the most noteworthy differences concern Nero's suicide which is dealt with in the *Legenda Aurea*. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet follows the more detailed story of the suicide from Chapter 89 (*De Sancto Petro Apostola*) of Jacobus de Voragine's work, although the location, four miles from Rome, is from Higden's account. In both the *Siege of Jerusalem* and Jacobus de Voragine's work we read that the Romans could endure Nero's insanity no longer and drove him from the city. To avoid being slain by a low-class man he sharpened a stick with his teeth and killed himself. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet derives additional information of Nero's destruction of Rome with fire, which is not mentioned by Higden, from Chapters 67 and 82 of the *Legenda Aurea*. In addition the latter chapter is the source of the details surrounding Seneca's death and Nero's harassment of the Christians. Thus the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet highlights the villainy of Nero and how this led to the desperate circumstances in which he ended his life. He does not aim to glorify the Romans but to highlight just and false figures of authority.

⁸⁰ Ralph the Bald recounts an anti-miracle from the year 1000 relating to a peasant from Gaul. Leutard fell asleep in the fields after working steadily throughout the day. While asleep, he felt as though a swarm of bees had entered his body via his private parts and exited through his mouth. On their journey they stung him viciously and made a loud noise. He obeyed the commands of the bees upon waking,

One other incident which displays the influence of Jacobus de Voragine is the occasion when Titus falls ill for joy with "a cramp and a colde" in his limbs when Vespasian becomes emperor (lines 1021-62). No one is able to cure him except Josephus, who notices how he fell ill suddenly and realises that by bringing before him the man whom he hates bitterly he will be cured. The sight of this despised individual causes his blood to rise hastily, restoring his limbs. Titus is immensely grateful and expresses his thanks to God and attempts to reward Josephus. Josephus persuades Titus to be friends with his foe, as his foe cured him, but declines the offer of a reward for himself and returns to the city. Chapter 67 of the *Legenda Aurea* (p.301) is the source for this, except for Titus' offer of reward to Josephus, which appears to be original. This is a significant selection of incident on the part of the poet, as it highlights the value of forgiveness and the virtue of selflessly helping others. The implication is that the Jews could have received forgiveness had they repented of their hatred of Christ. However, the incident also raises questions about the nature of Titus' adherence to the warrior ethos. Despite being a valiant knight he is reduced to a vulnerable and weak position and requires the aid of one of those against whom he is waging war. Although warriors frequently require assistance for their wounds, rarely do we find them performing the role of healer. The most notable exception to this is Galahad in the Arthurian cycle of legends who heals the Fisher King. However, he is not a typical knight, being of a saintly caste and is eventually

preaching to the people and cloaking his heresy with the Scriptures. He believed he had been privy to a miraculous revelation from God (*Heresies of the Later Middle Ages* 1969, p.72).

taken up into heaven. Hence Josephus who initially is a clever and ingenious warrior and resourceful tactician assumes a more saintly purpose.⁸¹ This highlights the notion of the good Jew and, significantly, the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet does not suggest that Josephus is converted to Christianity unlike many other writers. There is a resemblance between this act of Josephus and Titus' extension of grace to the Jews who surrender. Both men attempt to help their enemies, responding to human suffering, something which is rarely to be seen in crusading texts or romances. This causes the reader to empathise with the Jews and highlights the suffering and hardship caused by war and its effects on people.

The Destruction of Troy

The final text which I shall examine as a possible source for the *Siege of Jerusalem* is *The Destruction of Troy*.⁸² The EETS editors of the *Siege of Jerusalem* (pp.xxvi-xxx) claim that this work is the source of the storm, the destruction of the idols in the temple, the description of nightfall and Vespasian's sleeplessness (*Siege of Jerusalem* lines 725-33), and the final two lines of Vespasian's speech to his council (lines 877-8). It has also been proposed that the *Siege of Jerusalem* is the source of *The Destruction of Troy*. Upon comparison of the two texts I find nothing conclusive to suggest that either is the source for the other. I feel that the similarities between the two works arise

⁸¹ We do not learn about Josephus' scholarly activities until the end of the *Siege of Jerusalem*.

⁸² All quotations are from *The Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy* (1869-74).

from the fact that the poets are working within the same tradition, dealing with similar material and using the same dialect.⁸³ There is only one extant copy of the *Destruction of Troy*, Hunterian Ms. v.2.8, which was transcribed c.1540 by Thomas Chetham of Nuthurst, South Lancashire, a minor landowner and the bailiff of the Earl of Derby.⁸⁴ The author reveals himself as J_hannes Clerk de Whalale in an anagram composed of the initial letters of the first words of the prologue and Books I-XXII.⁸⁵ Edward Wilson postulates that this John Clerk might be the John Clerk of Marshall's Chantry in the parish of Whalley and that the poem was written c. 1536-9.⁸⁶ This would mean that the poem was written considerably later than the *Siege of Jerusalem*. C. David Benson⁸⁷ and Mackay Sundwall⁸⁸ provide evidence that *Troilus and Criseyde* composed 1385-7, was known to the poet, while Luttrell⁸⁹ suggests that the poem was written quite late. The latter sees the surviving manuscript of the poem as part of the strong interest in alliterative poetry evident in the Mersey region in the late fifteenth to seventeenth centuries.

⁸³ See Turville-Petre (1988) p.267 for a similar viewpoint.

⁸⁴ Luttrell (1958) p.46.

⁸⁵ Turville-Petre (1988) p.264.

⁸⁶ Edward Wilson (1990) pp.391-6.

⁸⁷ C. David Benson (1974) pp.206-7.

⁸⁸ Mackay Sundwall (1975) p.315.

⁸⁹ Luttrell (1958) pp.38-50.

The *Destruction of Troy* is very different in motivation to the *Siege of Jerusalem*, being intended to transmit the “true” history of Troy's destruction. For this reason the poet uses just Guido de Colonne's text, which he believed contained the true and full account of this, and often translates the Latin history word for word. There is no religious input in his account and no attempt to instruct people in salvation history. In contrast to this the *Siege of Jerusalem* is a complex narrative, based on a selection of religious and historical sources, which endeavours to explore the human motivations involved in warfare. The *Destruction of Troy* poet occasionally produces passages of superb poetry, when he draws on the traditional set-pieces of alliterative verse such as battle scenes, also used by the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet. Naturally in such a case there are some parallel phrases, particularly when both are in the same tradition of alliterative verse. In such a case it is not enough to find vague reminiscences in order to prove indebtedness on the part of one poet to the other; one would need to find substantial borrowing. The *Destruction of Troy* contains twenty-one battle scenes, several storms (Book VIII lines 3688-714; Book XI lines 4625-65; Book XXIII lines 9636-61; Book XXXI lines 12463-76)⁹⁰, blazons (Book VII lines 3019-84), lists of troops (Book XIII lines 5420-558; Book XV lines 6065-309, 6310-389) and so forth. Significantly, the Trojans, like the Jews have withheld the tribute due to their overlords. There is one fundamental difference, though, between the two poems, for while the destruction of Jerusalem is a joyous

⁹⁰ See Jacobs (1972) pp.695-719 passim and C. David Benson (1980) pp.45-60.

occasion, the destruction of Troy is to be lamented. The Greeks who are besieging Troy are depicted as treacherous and ignoble. The tenor of the two poems is therefore different, with the *Destruction of Troy* in many ways the opposite of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, highlighting cowardice, treachery and lack of mercy. Achilles slyly slays Hector causing much consternation (Book XXI lines 8674-94), and later kills the valiant Troilus in anger (Book XXVI lines 10294-311). His killing of Memnon is depicted as an act of cowardice (Book XXVI lines 10426-9). Hector, the heroic knight lamented by his fellows, is a Trojan, one of the besieged, not one of the attackers like Sabin in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. Furthermore, Antenor and Calchas who change sides and help the Greeks are not seen as noble like Josephus, but as traitors whose crime will never be forgotten (Book XIX lines 8101-181; Book XXVIII). Briseis tells her father Calchas:

..... þi worship is went and wastid for euer,
Of shame and shenship shent bes þou neuer:
Euery lede will þe lacke and þi lose file,
And þe fame of þi filth so fer wilbe knowen. (8118-21)

Instead of offering mercy as Titus and the Romans do in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, the Greeks make a false peace treaty and leave a treacherous gift of a brazen horse. Armed men emerge from this *gift* and murder the Trojans in their beds, with upwards of 20,000 slain before daybreak and the city plundered for its riches (Book XXIX). The *Destruction of Troy*, therefore, laments the loss of heroic values which have fallen with Troy and their replacement with cowardice and treachery. The poet is not exploring the moral issues involved in warfare like

the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet, but condemning the failure of the Greek warriors to conduct themselves in accordance with the heroic code.

What the *Destruction of Troy* and the *Siege of Jerusalem* have in common is a penchant for descriptive passages. Neither poem has borrowed from the other, but both have used the same tradition, as we saw when we looked at the storm sequence at the beginning of the *Siege of Jerusalem*. It is this delight in descriptive details which led the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet to provide us with a description of the Temple in Jerusalem towards the end of the poem. I have been unable to identify a source for this passage, but the motifs are traditional in nature and the poet could easily have constructed it himself from traditional formulae:

þat was rayled þe roof with rebies grete,
With perles and peritotes, alle þe place ferde
As glowande gledfure þat on gold st[r]ikeþ.
þe dores of dyemauntes dryuen were þicke
And made merueylous-lye with margeri-perles....(1250-4)

The description ennobles the Roman victory because of the splendour of what is captured, and it also serves to illustrate the extent of the destruction in Jerusalem that this treasure was removed and the rest levelled. The poet emphasises that not a trace remains by describing how the site was ploughed with salt.⁹¹

Conclusion

⁹¹ In *The Jewish War* VI p.447 Titus tries to save the Temple.

The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet uses learned sources to give authority to his work and endeavours to present a complex narrative in which the problems of warfare are expanded and explored. His use of several sources, unlike say the *Destruction of Troy* which depends upon a single source, demonstrates that he does not wish to produce a simple paraphrase, that he has a specific purpose and wishes to communicate certain ideas. He changes his sources in order to create a series of oppositions between just figures of authority, whose power is derived from God, and false figures of authority, whose power is groundless and tyrannical. He also focuses on the value of resolute faith in God and the despair of its absence. Despite this he still sympathises with the ordinary Jews and their plight. He alludes to the political and historical forces underlying this apparently just religious war and disputes the probity of the chivalric code through highlighting the brutality, suffering and squalidness of military campaigns. He focuses on the motivation of the Romans and Jews and investigates how the extreme situations which arise due to intense and prolonged fighting force ordinarily noble people to commit horrendous actions. The resulting poem forces its audience to reexamine the necessity and legitimacy of war, even if the cause is seemingly just.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TROUBLE WITH GENRE

The question as to whether the *Siege of Jerusalem* is a romance, history or religious narrative is the subject of much debate. Carleton Brown includes *Titus and Vespasian*, but not the *Siege of Jerusalem* in his *Register of Middle English Religious and Didactic Verse*, while Gisela Guddat-Figge, like most scholars, links the two works, dealing with both in her *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Romances in Middle English*. In her introduction she notes some problems with the classification:

Even closer to religious poetry than *Robert of Sicily* is the story of the destruction of Jerusalem. The couplet version in particular (*Titus and Vespasian*) appears almost exclusively in religious miscellanies, only twice in historical surroundings: in Cambridge, Magdalene College Ms. 2014, and Bodleian Library Ms. Digby 230, which describes the fall of three famous cities - Thebes, Troy and Jerusalem - but never in the neighbourhood of romances. Medieval audiences and compilers would seem to have associated *Titus and Vespasian* clearly with religious literature....The case of the alliterative *Siege of Jerusalem* is less unequivocal.... Whereas in the manuscripts *Titus and Vespasian* is clearly considered a religious poem, the *Siege of Jerusalem* remains in the border area between romance, legend and historiography.¹

Similarly, in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English* Lillian Herlands Hornstein places *Titus and Vespasian* and the *Siege of Jerusalem* under the general heading "Miscellaneous Romances" and more specifically in section III, "Romances on Historical Themes", not in section IV, "Legendary Romances of Didactic Intent". Having classified them in this section with *Richard Coeur de Lion* and *The Three Kings' Sons*, she goes on to comment:

These religious romances place in an atmosphere of chivalry the life, passion and miracles of Christ, woven into stories of the cure of

¹ *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) p.41.

Vespasian and the destruction of Jerusalem. Although it is difficult to say where legend ends and romance begins, these romances enjoyed wider popularity and diffusion than most pious tales or romances.²

In contrast to this, Derek Pearsall confidently categorises the *Siege of Jerusalem* along with the *Alexander*-poems, *The Destruction of Troy* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* as historical epics.³ He asserts that the *Siege of Jerusalem* cleverly weaves together stories from Latin chronicles and legendaries.⁴ Although it is derivative, showing the influence of poems as varied as *The Destruction of Troy*, *Wynnere and Wastoure*, *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, and the BL. Ms. Cotton Nero A.x poems, “the brilliance of its technique is undeniable, and the poet, through his style, gives an actuality to events which is far removed from the senseless fantasies and marvels of the rhymed *Titus and Vespasian*.”⁵ The latter he dismisses as the “third-rate fumbling in an enfeebled tradition when the new points of growth were elsewhere.”⁶

This is the crux of the problem: the *Siege of Jerusalem* is designated on occasion as an historical romance, a religious romance, a combination of legend and romance, and even as being in the “area between romance, legend and historiography”. It is both classified with *Titus and Vespasian* and distinguished from it. Yet the consensus seems to be that it is a romance of some kind or another. This is the thorny subject which I shall endeavour to

² *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English* (1967) p.160.

³ Pearsall (1977) p.153.

⁴ Pearsall (1977) pp.153, 169.

⁵ Pearsall (1977) p.169.

⁶ Pearsall (1965) p.104.

investigate in the following pages. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet is narrated from an impartial stance as the poet wishes his audience to consider for themselves the validity of the principles presented (war, chivalry). He has deliberately chosen to mould his narrative as a romance in order to draw upon the topoi and themes associated with this tradition. Romance concentrates on the individual protagonists and examines their experiences and emotions. It is this which interests the poet: people's motivation, their responses to extreme situations and the consequent effects. By focusing on personal experiences and motives he is able to explore the moral issues involved in warfare and the virtues of heroism. For this reason, he combines the genre of romance and all its associations with religious and historical subject-matter. This comes across clearly when the *Siege of Jerusalem* is compared to *Richard Coeur de Lion* (a romance), the *Polychronicon* (a strange history), and the *Legenda Aurea* (a collection of saints' lives).

Romance

W.R.J. Barron, aware of the confusion surrounding the characteristics of romances, notes that there are 110 romances in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English* and that some of the contributors display doubts about the nature of the works allocated to them. Finlayson proposes that at least half of the poems categorised as The Middle English Romances are not in fact examples of this genre. They are simply designated thus by literary historians and critics, most of whom conceive of "romance" as both a genre and a

specific means of presentation.⁷ Furthermore, he decides that it is not possible to define the term romance by looking at its usage in Middle English texts and he suggests that a large number of the twenty-four poems listed by Hoops⁸ as describing themselves as romances are not genuine examples. On the basis of this distinction the Middle English “Charlemagne romances”, *The Destruction of Troy*, the Alexander poems, the *Siege of Jerusalem*, and *The Sege of Troye* are not romances.⁹

Chronologically, studies of the romance genre began with attempts to define it in relation to earlier forms such as the epic, *chanson de geste*, and the folk tale, as in the case of the studies by Ker and Griffin.¹⁰ This trend was followed by the desire to categorise romances according to their medium (Billings, MacIntyre Trounce)¹¹, their subject-matter (Gist, Auerbach,

⁷ Finlayson (1995) pp.429.

⁸ Cited by Finlayson (1995) p.431-2.

⁹ Finlayson (1995) p.439.

¹⁰ Early critics often confused the terms “romance” and “romantic” and their approach exhibits the pervasive influence of late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century ideals. For instance, W.P. Ker argues that what distinguishes romance from epic is that the former combines courteous sentiment with a series of adventures. His preconceived ideas about the nature of romance lead him to say of *Aucassin and Nicolette*:

There is nothing else like it; and the qualities that make it what it is are the opposite of the rhetorical self-possession, the correct and deliberate narrative of Chrestien and his school. It contains the quintessence of romantic imagination, but it is quite unlike the most fashionable and successful romances. Ker (1908, 1957) p.327.

Nathaniel E. Griffin (1923) pp.55-7 concurs with these findings as he ascertains that the warlike theme of the epic was appropriate for a warrior audience, while the romance is a marvellous tale intended for amusement, a feminine genre. There is a gradual move from epic to romance as individual societies become more sophisticated and come in contact with different cultures. D.M. Hill (1963) pp.95-107 likewise compares epic and romance, tracing a continuity between epic and romance, the sharing of the same elements and symmetrical structure, with epic broadening into romance as society moves away from the stark reality of survival.

¹¹ In the face of the diverse nature of romances many have divided them up on the basis of medium, theme, and subject-matter. Allan McIntyre Trounce (1932-4) pp.87-108, 168-82, 34-57, 30-50 provides us with a classic example of categorisation according to metrical type, discussing in a series of four articles the English tail-rhyme romances. Another scholar who concentrates on the medium of the texts is Billings (1901, 1975) in her study of Middle English metrical romances.

Everett, Speirs)¹² and presentation (Kane)¹³. Other critics like Wittig and Frye moved away from this strategy and instead applied different methodologies such as structural analysis and psychoanalytic theory to these texts.¹⁴ At roughly the same time Derek Pearsall turned his attention to the audience of romances¹⁵ and this interest in what the texts can tell us about the intentions which lie behind the works inspired scholars including Strohm, Fewster, Evans and Finlayson to examine them in relation to their physical, social and historical contexts and to take into greater consideration the internal textual evidence.¹⁶ None of these studies gets us any closer to an understanding of

¹² John Speirs (1957) pp. 104-7, 109 favours this way of handling romances as he feels that it is the subject-matter which is the common ground between these texts and not their art-form. These stories originated as myths, which were then “rationalized, humanized and Christianized”. These sanitized tales reflect the different social and cultural levels they were intended for, and the fact that they were written in a transitional period from orality to literacy. Middle English romances are closer to the oral tradition than their French counterparts and the decline of minstrelsy in the later Middle Ages probably spurred a decline in the transmission of romances.

Barrow (1973) concentrates on medieval society romances which deal with courtly love and society, while D.H. Green (1979) focuses on the theme of irony in a selection of well-known French, German and English romances. Many critics concentrate on romances in England and contrast them with their French counterparts, with Dieter Mehl (1967), for instance, being solely concerned with thirteenth and fourteenth-century English romances, which he categorises according to length. Laura H. Loomis (1924), meanwhile, surveys a wide selection of Middle English romances which she classifies into several groupings on the basis of theme: romances of trial and faith, legendary English heroes, love and adventure. Gist (1947) argues in her study of the genre that the ethics of sex and marriage in the Middle English romances do not reflect the French pattern of courtly love, as well as dealing with the problems of peace and war.

¹³ Kane (1951), *passim*.

¹⁴ Northrop Frye (1957) pp.186-206, in his classic account of the subject using elements of psychoanalytic theory, focuses on the similarity of the romance to the “wish-fulfillment dream”, with its “childlike quality”, its “nostalgia” and the importance of adventure. A romance is a three-stage quest: *agon*- the conflict, *pathos*- the death-struggle, and *aganorisis*- the discovery and recognition of the hero. It is basically a dialectical account of the archetypal conflict between the hero and his enemy. If one uses the terminology of dreams the format can be summarised as the search for the libido which will relieve the subject of its anxieties concerning reality. Alternatively one can express its quintessence through an analogy with ritual as the victory of fertility over the waste land. See further Susan Wittig (1978) who conducts a structural analysis of Middle English romance, looking at narrative units- the motifeme, type-scene and type-episode, and Eugene Vance (1987) applies theories of logic and narrativity to the works.

¹⁵ Derek Pearsall (1965) p.91; (1988) p.12 proposes that the Middle English romances were aimed at a bourgeois, rather than aristocratic, audience which wanted to enjoy similar literature to their social betters and that this dictated the development of such romances, an argument not substantiated by the manuscript contexts. See in addition Bennett (1992) pp.3-20; Bennett (1979) pp.63-88; Turville-Petre (1981) pp.125-41; Turville-Petre (1974) pp.250-2.

¹⁶ Murray J. Evans (1995) encourages us to reread romances in the light of their physical context, namely their manuscript layout, decoration, and the types of compilation in which they occur.

what criteria distinguish a romance from other forms of narrative, as the scholars neatly avoid this issue by narrowing the scope of their studies on the grounds of medium, date, provenance, theme, subject-matter, physical context, reception, or by dealing simply with the structure of these texts which others have termed romances. There is no general consensus as to what elements specifically make a narrative a romance: though the genre appears to have certain recognisable features, these may or may not be present in texts deemed romances and can be present in other narrative forms. What distinguishes romances from heroic literature and other genres is not the “subject-matter or larger elements of their composition, but.. an attitude to that matter and these elements.”¹⁷ Rather than determining the nature of the form based on the subjective criteria of quality or “romantic” qualities,¹⁸ or a paradigm developed to suit my hypothesis, or indeed avoiding the issue entirely by looking at non-problematic texts, I shall take my lead from Strohm, Fewster, and Hume and turn to the texts themselves for guidance. The cause of the disparity between the texts is that the writers were not working in accord with a single paradigm, much as modern scholars would like them to have been doing so. They were in fact creating individual works from traditional materials, and the more talented and innovative among them, such as the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet, were stretching the limitations of the romance mode.

¹⁷ Finlayson (1995) p.445.

¹⁸ Everett (1955) pp.2-16 distinguishes between the “properties” of romances (the details of setting and the fabulous occurrences), and the manner in which these are presented. Romance thus refers to the genre and to its mode of presentation.

If we look at the term itself, we find that in twelfth century France and fourteenth century England, *romance* normally referred merely to the vernacular language such as French in which certain works were written. Later on its meaning widened to include certain types of narrative which related the martial and amatory adventures of a hero, together with marvellous occurrences. Eventually the term encompassed the form in which these adventures were recounted as well,¹⁹ primarily tales of battle, although it was extended to cover marvels and an amatory element. Medieval audiences did not consider love episodes essential to the romance mode unlike those modern critical studies, which focus on love episodes to a much greater extent.²⁰ These texts vary quite considerably and as Paul Strohm points out:

..... medieval narratives violated and reconstructed generic expectations. Such licensed transgressions may, in fact, be seen as crucial to the entire literary enterprise. Through such transgressions authors persistently modify received traditions in order that they may retain their challenge for new audiences in new social and historical situations.²¹

Romances themselves use the term “romance” in many different ways and its employment in prologues and tail-rhymes is indicative of intention, of a shared literary awareness and a certain self-consciousness in style.²² Conservative in nature, these texts follow their sources and the “traditional forms of direct transmission” closely, so that focus on the past becomes part of its literary

¹⁹ Strohm (1980) p.381. Strohm (1977) pp.7-8 notes that the term *romance* occurs first in early fourteenth-century Middle English manuscripts and refers to texts composed in Old French and became associated with a certain type of subject-matter.

²⁰ Strohm (1977) pp.9-11, 13.

²¹ Strohm (1980) p.387.

²² Fewster (1987) pp.2-4.

style.²³ The presence of topoi, formulae, conventional description, hero-lists, distinctive structures, render romances a distinct genre. The knight is a kind of “literary play-space”, which is not tied to a specific social reality and in which concepts are tested.²⁴ At the beginning of romances, such as *The Laud Troy Book*, one finds catalogues of the heroes in other such tales. Medieval people regarded classical tales, history-based stories, and fairy tales as romances, just as much as stories about love and courtly love and adventure. Kathryn Hume distinguishes three types of romance: (A) the hero-centered (*William of Palerne*, *Libeaus Desconus*), (B) those which have a particular background and protagonist (*Richard Coeur de Lion*, *The Sege off Melayne*, *Alliterative Morte Arthure*), and (C) histories (*Siege of Jerusalem*, *The Siege of Troy*).²⁵ Between 1300 and 1533 the number and quality of type A texts declined while those of the other two types increased, reflecting a strong interest in England for long moral and historical works.²⁶ Romances foreground heroes, who reflect “patterns of ennobling virtues” rather like the protagonists in saints’ lives and fairy tales.²⁷ This is clearly evident in the *Siege of Jerusalem* as the poet explores the motivation of the Roman and Jewish leaders and the actions they are forced to commit due to the circumstances of war. He presents their

²³ Fewster (1987) p.30.

²⁴ Fewster (1987) p.35. She concludes that “the homogeneity of romance style has two sets of basic implications: firstly, a self-conscious romance style works self-reflectively, with a taut set of allusions and analogues; and secondly, this generic homogeneity is established by reference to a generic past - romance style emphasises its own traditionality” (p.150).

²⁵ Hume (1974) pp.161-3.

²⁶ Hume (1974) p.167.

²⁷ Hume (1974) pp.168-72. Finlayson (1995) p.447 notes that this type of narrative came to encapsulate an “attitude to experience”, “a whole system of values”.

aims and activities in a manner which obliges the reader to consider whether they do in fact glorify the characters.

When one looks at the range of scholarly commentary on romances and the works themselves it is possible to identify a number of elements and characteristics most of which will be present in any individual representative of this genre. To begin with the romance has a much looser, more natural, narrative style and a more highly developed sense of characterisation than the epic and *chanson de geste*. Epics and *chansons de geste* tend to have an episodic structure and an invariably happy ending. Gillian Beer in her history of the idiom of romance suggests that the attraction of the genre lies in its remoteness, its engagement with the past.²⁸ It is larger than life, intensifying characters and their behaviour and providing us with an ideal that is both instructive and escapist.²⁹ Romances appeal to their audiences in the same way that myths and fairy-tales generate enthusiasm.

The intention behind the genre is to portray the ideals of knighthood with a sense of courtly realism,³⁰ though it is evidently influenced by fairy tale motifs. Courtly values are tested through a series of adventures. Auerbach finds as a result of this that only two themes were considered suitable for romance: love, and valour in battle.³¹ Similarly, Dorothy Everett notes that romances deal with love and chivalry as well as the fighting that figures so

²⁸ G. Beer (1970) pp.2, 5. Bloomfield (1970) p.116 makes a similar point about the aura of remoteness built up around the characters, even when they are historical. Jörg O. Fichte (1991), *passim*, compiles a list of distinguishing criteria for romances comparable to Beer's.

²⁹ G. Beer (1970) p.9. Dorothy Everett (1955), *passim*, describes how romances are stories of adventures in which ordinary life is idealised, as indeed are the characters and their actions, and that this is combined with exquisite descriptions and marvellous happenings.

³⁰ Barron (1980) pp. 8, 10, 18.

³¹ Auerbach (1953, 1995) pp. 411-27.

prominently in epics.³² John Finlayson argues that it is possible to trace a common pattern which distinguishes genuine examples of Middle English romances: a knight rides out in search of adventures and this basic plot may be elaborated upon with a love-story and a preoccupation with courtoisie.³³ The amatory element is of little importance in most English texts, which prefer to concentrate on battle scenes, blurring the distinction between the heroic and the chivalrous.³⁴ In a romance the hero acts in accord with *mesure* or *courtoisie* and undergoes a series of personal experiences in order to achieve a private ideal. Robert Hanning notes how in some romances love links inner and outer worlds, with the hero going through a kind of rite of passage. He begins in stasis and progresses through a series of adventures to stasis once more. Chivalry's relationship to self-awareness and the hero's connection to society are discussed. There is an "awareness of a tension between experienced private needs and imposed public or external values and obligations."³⁵ John Stevens concurs that the essential mode of romance is "idealistic", the expression of "a supreme claim" (fidelity, piety).³⁶ The seeds of perfection

³² Everett (1955) p.19.

³³ Finlayson (1995) pp.440-1. Strohm (1977) pp.9-10 defines a romance as a narrative which focuses on the actions of a renowned hero.

³⁴ Finlayson (1995) pp.435-6.

³⁵ Hanning (1972) p.3.. See in addition Hanning (1977) for an extensive study of "the social significance of twelfth-century chivalric romance", a form which developed in the 1130s and owes much to Geoffrey of Monmouth.

³⁶ Stevens (1973) p.28. See further Kane (1951) pp. 2-3. Bloomfield (1970) p.97 makes a similar point. As Barron (1980) p.4 puts it, "most romances are concerned with love and adventure and entail a "test of fidelity to chivalric ideals".

must be present at the outset in a hero and through the course of the romance he must realise this potential in himself.³⁷

Morton W. Bloomfield, concentrating on the episodes which are combined to create romances, finds that many episodes are motivated by external powers beyond the story.³⁸ These story units can contain a symbolic element as in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.³⁹ He argues that not only are there similarities between romances and saints' lives and fairy tales, but that the latter are two of the main sources of the structural paradigms for these works.⁴⁰ They were also influenced by late classical romances like *Apollonius of Tyre*, Boethius and the concept of Fortune, and the Biblical notion of vocation.⁴¹ There was equal enthusiasm for French, Anglo-Norman, English, oriental, or classical stories and the treatment and quality of the end product varied considerably.⁴²

The *Siege of Jerusalem* is condemned by Everett as an unsuccessful romance for three reasons. First, although the poet endeavours to shape his material, selecting carefully from a number of sources and dividing it into four sections, not all these divisions are natural. Secondly, she finds that he includes a great deal of unnecessary historical detail, and finally that he over-indulges in elaborate description (281ff., 385ff., 461ff.).⁴³ This is a little harsh,

³⁷ Stevens (1973) p.170.

³⁸ Bloomfield (1970) pp. 106-7.

³⁹ Bloomfield (1970) p.112.

⁴⁰ Bloomfield (1970) p.121.

⁴¹ Bloomfield (1970) pp.122-3.

⁴² Kane (1951) p.7.

⁴³ Everett (1955) pp.58-9.

as the divisions to which she refers are in Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Misc. 656 only, though some of the other manuscripts have similar divisions, and they were probably not part of the poet's design (see Chapter Six). The second two criticisms appear to be more to do with personal taste than anything else.

However, apart from the amatory element which was not favoured by Middle English romancers, most of the other characteristics of this genre are present in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. Its heroes embody certain virtues and follow a heroic and Christian code of behaviour which they enforce on their followers, leave their own society and embark on a campaign, which is related in heightened terms and culminates successfully. The central section of the work is devoted to the development of the topos of Vespasian as hero, familiar and formulaic in its idealising quality. Titus and Sabyn are depicted in similar terms. Thus men are defined by their ability to fight and to fight well. As the narrative progresses the poet investigates this paradigm for male behaviour, focusing on the emotional consequences for the men involved and thereby raising the problems of warfare.

John Finlayson argues that the *Siege of Jerusalem* and *Titus and Vespasian* are neither true romances nor religious narratives, but are in fact legendary histories. He finds that the development of the heroes and plot elements, as well as the perspectives of these texts differ from romances.⁴⁴ The plots of romances vary considerably as these works are based on a wide variety of material, including historical and religious stories. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet is, in fact, employing a genre which can deal with historical and religious

⁴⁴ Finlayson (1995) p.451.

subject-matter in order to explore the individual experiences of these historical and religious phenomena and raise his audience's awareness of the brutality and squalidness of warfare. To this end he uses the romance mode to present the story of an historical siege of Jerusalem that has great significance for Christianity.

Furthermore he chooses to write his work in the unrhymed Middle English alliterative long line, which traditionally deals with weighty subject matter, clearly signifying his intention.⁴⁵ Alliterative poems are for the most part concerned with *transitio regni*:

disaster, the moment when political power passes, slips from one deserving, yet faulted hand to another.⁴⁶

This is clearly evident in political poems such as *Richard the Redeles* and historical narratives detailing the destruction of Troy and the fate of Arthur. Piero Boitani notes how the alliterative tradition focused on historical and military themes, marginalising amatory material, as is apparent in the three versions of the Alexander story.⁴⁷ David Lawton makes a similar point and adds that alliterative poets felt that it was their duty to inspire people to repent and save themselves, as well as providing amusement.⁴⁸ Salter suggests that the earnest perspective of western alliterative romance mirrors the subject-matter that was to hand. Families, such as the Bohuns who can be connected

⁴⁵ Baugh (1950) pp.13-28 infers from textual evidence that many romances are written by clerics and are quite literary in orientation.

⁴⁶ Hanna (1995) p.55.

⁴⁷ Boitani (1982) pp.40-1.

⁴⁸ Lawton (1983) p.92. See further Geoffrey Shepherd (1970) p.10.

with *William of Palerne*,⁴⁹ possessed libraries dominated by works of a moral and historical cast.⁵⁰

Romance and Historiography

In order to examine the *Siege of Jerusalem* one needs to be aware of the relationship of romance to historiography since the poem contains a great deal of historical material. It is important to note that attitudes towards historical concerns vary from romance-writer to writer, with some claiming their tales to be historically accurate when they are fictitious, and some basing their narratives on histories.⁵¹ However, the medieval concept of historiography differs radically from that of modern historians. It did not prohibit the incorporation of fictional episodes and rhetorical amplification. Daniel Poirion notes that there is a two-way relationship between literature and history, in that each bestows meaning on the other.⁵² Hence each text has to be seen in terms of its location at the intersection of the realms of “the imaginary and ideological” if we are to grasp its full meaning.⁵³

Medieval historians did not have a sense of causality in the modern sense. They viewed the world either as a conglomeration of separate objects where change occurred when one event acted upon another to transform it, or

⁴⁹ Lawton (1989) p.143; Turville-Petre (1977) pp.40-3 and (1974) pp.250-2 on the literary interests of the Bohuns; Scattergood (1983) pp.29-43 on the libraries of Eleanor Bohun and Sir Simon Burley. Peter Lucas (1982) pp.219-48 points out that patrons often supervised the work of scribes and writers and that the end products reflect their tastes.

⁵⁰ Salter (1966) p.149. See further Moseley (1974-5) pp.182-4.

⁵¹ Strohm (1977) pp.19-21.

⁵² Poirion (1978-9) pp.402-3.

⁵³ Poirion (1978-9) p.406.

as resulting from the influence of the *primum mobile* with God ultimately behind everything. The former view was proposed by Isidore and the latter is the alternative theory of medieval Aristotelianism.⁵⁴ There are two distinct types of chronicler, the clerical writer who simply records events within a moralising framework, and the aristocratic historian who narrated stories, although in the later middle ages clerical authors did move away from listing and attempted to explain events. A typical clerical chronicle is “universalizing”, covering a wide range of topics with no single narrative thread.⁵⁵ Accurate dating was not a priority, nor was a tightly structured account. One finds a series of what William Brandt terms “fact-events”: an incident happens, then another incident happens.⁵⁶ An event consisted of the location of the action, the amplification of the action and the conclusion, which is then used as the starting point for the next episode.⁵⁷ For instance, the overall trends of war are not explicated, one battle simply leads to another, there is no overarching narrative connecting them. Extraordinary storms, comets, or other celestial events could be juxtaposed with some happenings in the human world.⁵⁸ This, combined with reference to God who was ultimately behind everything, serves as the only attempt to interpret occurrences.

Aristocratic histories, however, are narratives organised on the basis of a value system which are celebratory in perspective.⁵⁹ Episodes are threaded

⁵⁴ Brandt (1966) pp.11-23.

⁵⁵ Brandt (1966) p.45.

⁵⁶ Brandt (1966) p.66.

⁵⁷ Brandt (1966) p.72.

⁵⁸ Brandt (1966) pp.53-4.

⁵⁹ Brandt (1966) p.87.

together by the use of connectives “and” and “then”.⁶⁰ Another common pattern is the employment of alternating story-lines such as in the Chandos Herald’s *Life of the Black Prince*, where accounts of the Black Prince and King John are given in turn.⁶¹ The main difference between the two types of histories is that aristocratic works are concerned with the reputation, honour and stance of the figures involved, while clerical texts focus on human actions and pay little attention to motivation or characterisation.⁶² Sumner Ferris finds that chivalric biographies, and portraits of knights in some chronicles, bear certain similarities to those of warriors in romances.⁶³ Chivalric biography is comparable to a saint’s life in that the subject is ennobled and his fame lives on, serving as an example to be followed. Pertinently, chivalric histories start with the presupposition that the figures they are focusing on exemplify a specific pattern of qualities, whereas romances deal with protagonists as individuals. Thus the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet decided to write a romance as he wished to explore human motivation and the moral issues involved in warfare, rather than to reveal the underlying patterns of events or of human virtues.

Paul Strohm argues that Middle English writers had developed their own terminology which indicated differences in the generic nature of narratives, with *storie* referring to a historical or semi-historical account, *tale* and *spelle* an oral redaction.⁶⁴ But although medieval writers understood

⁶⁰ Brandt (1966) p.86.

⁶¹ Brandt (1966) pp.89-90.

⁶² Brandt (1966) pp.110-7, 148.

⁶³ Ferris (1980) pp.25-38.

⁶⁴ Strohm (1971) pp.348-59.

fiction and history to be different, they did not necessarily keep them distinct in practice as modern historians try to do.⁶⁵ Histories are an attempt to order real events in the form of stories so that they can be understood, but this format draws upon an image of life which is illusory. Narratives have a beginning, middle and end, and entail making choices about what information to include, exclude, and emphasise, rendering them quite unlike the myriad of things that happen at any given moment in life. Furthermore, the ideological subtext of historical narratives, which is seen as in accord with divine will, colours the presentation of facts. The actual events can be organised in a number of different ways resulting in different story-lines, hence the “specific plot structures” selected allow the happenings to be interpreted in a certain manner, and this is a “fiction-making operation.”⁶⁶ Many romance writers, unlike epic narrators who give the impression of simply singing a tale, clearly telegraphed their presence with moral interjections, statements of authenticity of the story and allusions to the future.⁶⁷ Narrative distance to material also fails as a criterion to distinguish between imaginative and “factual” accounts as some historians such as Alfonso el Sabio adopt a stance of “dispassionate” observer while others like Robert of Clari record their personal reactions as well as the events.⁶⁸ Poets, meanwhile, authenticate their texts by alluding to eye witness testimony and written or oral accounts. At the same time they were

⁶⁵ Fleischman (1983) p.280.

⁶⁶ Fleischman (1983) p.293.

⁶⁷ Fleischman (1983) pp.295-6.

⁶⁸ Fleischman (1983) p.297.

not above inventing personages, false genealogies or events to lend their accounts an added air of veracity, mixing history with legend or fiction.

“Truth,” as Jeannette M. Beer points out, was foregrounded at the expense of facts.⁶⁹ Taking the example of Guillaume de Poitiers’ *Gesta Guillelmi Ducis*, she highlights his intentions of providing an accurate biography of William, that is not embroidered with the lies of the heroic writers of antiquity, which is at once compromised by his desire to eulogise his subject.⁷⁰ To this end Guillaume employs pathos, hyperbole, epic periphrasis, emotive language and rhetoric. He uses the classical models which he denounces as the paradigms for his work. Affirmations of truth are often used to validate irrelevant digressions or to authenticate events which the author cannot personally vouch for, such as Villehardouin’s claims when his eye-witness experience fails him.⁷¹ “Invented probabilities” are used to fill gaps, and described battles are redacted in epic style adorned with excerpts from epic verse.⁷² Truth claims are also made in fiction, with Marie de France, for instance, using such statements to give authority to the more fabulous elements in her *lais*, with historical detail used to set the scene as she moves into the weightier matters of moral truth.⁷³ Frequently one finds that the author interrupts the narrative to appeal directly to the readership/ listenership.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ J. M. A. Beer (1981) p.11.

⁷⁰ J. M. A. Beer (1981) pp.13-7.

⁷¹ J. M. A. Beer (1981) p.30, 45-6.

⁷² J. M. A. Beer (1981) pp.48-55. See further Joseph J. Duggan (1981) pp.305-7 on the use of epics as sources for history.

⁷³ J. M. A. Beer (1981) pp.63-8. See further Joseph J. Duggan (1981) pp.304-5 on poet’s claims of veracity.

⁷⁴ Zumthor (1973) pp.31-2.

These interventions are used both to authenticate the sources of the text and to objectify it.

Frederic Jameson discusses how “all literature, no matter how weakly, must be informed by what we have called a political unconscious, that all literature must be read as a symbolic mediation on the destiny of community”, and that history is “the experience of Necessity (a form of events).”⁷⁵ What he means is that all ideas are constructed from the signals of communications of the various institutional and social elements present in a community, that interaction between these blurs distinctions between them: and it is this which is reflected in narratives in some way. Each text, both fictional and factual, consists of the form (the format and the meaning conveyed by the structure) and substance (the concepts and beliefs which inform the text, and the historical and social data upon which they are based), and these can be further divided into expression and content. It is the various combinations of these categories which dictate what the nature of a text will be. Hence medieval narratives cannot be considered in terms of narremes, “organically related core incidents.”⁷⁶ Texts can only be understood in terms of their social, literary and physical circumstances.⁷⁷

Hayden White notes that in order to write a history one must negotiate between the “historical field”, the raw data, earlier histories and an audience.⁷⁸ He identifies five levels of conceptualisation: the chronicle, story, plot,

⁷⁵ Jameson (1981) pp.70, 102.

⁷⁶ Hunt (1973) p.297.

⁷⁷ Hunt (1973) p.302.

⁷⁸ White (1973) p.7.

argument, ideology.⁷⁹ One starts off by listing the data in a chronicle out of which one creates a narrative. At this point it is necessary to decide if it is to be a romantic, tragic, comic, or satiric account, and settle on the mode of argument and mode of ideological implication.

Viewed in a purely formal way, a historical narrative is not only a *reproduction* of the events reported in it, but also a *complex of symbols* which gives us directions for finding an *icon* of the structure of those events in our literary tradition.⁸⁰

Thus the “facts”, events, have structures imposed upon them to make them meaningful. The historical discourse is the story in which they are organised and the genre chosen, the conceptual paradigm, is what makes it recognizable.⁸¹ History is an attempt to explain the world, while literature is an endeavour to illuminate it.⁸² It is this which distinguishes the *Siege of Jerusalem* from chronicles and histories, as the poet is exploring the motivation of men, their responses to extraordinary circumstances, thereby raising the moral issues incumbent on siege warfare. He highlights the contradictions in the heroic code and does not try to provide a pat explanation.

As Joseph J. Duggan says of the epic, so too with romance, historical matter is assimilated and adapted to fit the “synchronic system of relationships,” the standard character types, settings, traditional scenes and language.⁸³ Therefore, one needs to look at the construction of the plot, narrative stance, social function, style, appeals to authority, and

⁷⁹ White (1973) p.5.

⁸⁰ White (1978) p.88.

⁸¹ White (1978) p.110.

⁸² White (1978) p.99.

⁸³ Joseph J. Duggan (1981) p.288.

characterisation of a narrative together with its reception and the intention of an author in the context of literary and historiographical tradition in order to assess if it is a romance, history or chronicle. It is not possible to appeal to any hard and fast rules; each text has to be examined on its own merits. This is particularly important in relation to the *Siege of Jerusalem* as it relates an historical event, using a chronicle as one of its sources, and there are numerous alternative accounts of the event in histories, verse and prose romances, dramas, and religious narratives. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet uses the romance genre as the conceptual paradigm to organise the historical events he relates. Unlike chroniclers he does not try to explain these happenings, he does not solely eulogise or condemn his characters. Instead he presents his story in a manner designed to illuminate the differences between the ideals of chivalry and just warfare, and the reality.

Romance and Religious Narrative

The other problem with categorising the *Siege of Jerusalem*, as far as critics are concerned, is that it contains a large amount of religious and didactic material. Many scholars feel that such subject-matter is not suitable for romance and that poems which deal with it are more properly described as religious narratives.⁸⁴ It is possible, however, to see an intertextual relationship between romance and hagiography, with each influencing the style of the other, particularly in the way the protagonists are depicted. There is no conclusive evidence to suggest that a medieval audience would have regarded

⁸⁴ See Hopkins (1990) pp.vii, 13.

romances as “secular entertainment.”⁸⁵ In fact quite the contrary, many such works are included in compilations with overtly religious texts.

Saints’ lives constituted an international genre having in common a selection of elements that could be used in particular languages, times, and locations.⁸⁶ Charles F. Altman finds two basic types of structure in Latin saints’ lives; the “diametrical opposition” of the legends of martyrs, in which the protagonists are persecuted by the representatives of the dominant ideology who try to annihilate them, and the “gradational form” of the lives of confessor saints, in which the hero starts off as a member of secular society, then renounces the world to return later in a sanctified role.⁸⁷ Aston says that early Latin legends consisted of a short moral prologue, biographical information (especially the lineage and education of the saint), the call of God, a series of adventures connected with the saint’s religious service, the miracles, the martyrdom, and the “invocation prayer”.⁸⁸ These works could be used to supplement religious services or on Church festivals, for pedagogical purposes, for entertainment, or to celebrate special occasions, such as the finding of relics. The focus of these exemplary tales could be on the hero’s learning and moral virtues, or on his nobility and aristocratic characteristics, according to whether the intended audience was religious or lay, but frequently

⁸⁵ Pearsall (1975) p.121. See also Glending Olson (1995) *passim* who points out that medieval audiences enjoyed religious and moral works just as much as secular tales.

⁸⁶ Aston (1970) p.xxix. Charles W. Jones (1947, pp.52, 73) describes how the origins of saints’ legends lie in the passions of the martyrs, which were a kind of “Christian panegyric based on public records.” The classic form of such a life dealt with the childhood, adulthood and death of a saint, concentrating on the marvels witnessed at the birth, the renunciation of the world with its period of inner doubt portrayed as a series of confrontations with the powers of evil and ending with death, union with God. See Cotgrave (1958) p.37.

⁸⁷ Altman (1975) pp.1-9.

⁸⁸ Aston (1970) p.xxxi.

clerics imitated minstrels in their compositions and vice versa. Many were organised around the concept of a quest for love, *mesura* and true happiness.⁸⁹ In the thirteenth century there was a reversion to the more didactic saints' legends as opposed to the imaginative, and more liberal, products of the twelfth century.⁹⁰

In the earliest saints' lives composed in England the depiction of the saint owed a great deal to the portrayal of the protagonist in heroic poems, being a "*miles* or *athleta Christi* or *Dei*."⁹¹ In the late middle ages they bowed to the influence of romances in terms of style and metre, incorporating elements such as "the praise of minstrelsy, emphasis on physical prowess, and descriptions of armour or battles."⁹² Both hagiography and romance present an ideal using certain conventions that "involve an eschewing of historical truth with regard to geography and chronological sequence, a hyperbolic stress on the marvellous, the incorporation of floating folk motifs and legends, and an idealization of the hero into a personified abstraction or type."⁹³ The aim of these works of hagiography was to stimulate piety through presenting edifying matter in an entertaining manner, hence facts were often sacrificed to the necessities of literary style, and legend was fused with truth.

⁸⁹ Aston (1970) p.xxxix.

⁹⁰ Aston (1970) p.xl.

⁹¹ Cotgrave (1958) p.36.

⁹² Braswell (1965) pp.129, 135.

⁹³ Lagorio (1970) p.31. See Cotgrave (1958) pp.40, 51, 55. Bieler (1975, pp.13-24) examines the mixture of hagiographic, classical and saga themes, while Heist (1975, pp.25-40) goes on to deal with the *immra* (voyage) and *echtra* (adventure-journey) topoi that can be found in Irish romances and saints' legends. Heffernan (1975, pp.63-89) notes that the life of St. Eustace is the story of a fictional saint located in an historical situation which incorporates elements from the international popular tale, eastern legend, Greek romance and biblical narrative, and how the various redactions raise the possibilities for different interpretations by writers. Klausner (1975, pp.103-19) Lagorio (1975, pp.99-101) and Pearsall (1975, pp.121-35) discuss the relationship of specific Middle English romances and hagiography.

Let us turn our attention briefly to *Amis and Amiloun*, a problematic text on which many discussions of the similarities of religious narrative and romance have been centered. The story concerns two boys who are born and grow up together, serving the same duke. They swear friendship to each other and this endures through Amis' love affair with the duke's daughter. Amiloun replaces him in the trial of combat so that Amis can marry her, and later, when Amiloun is struck with leprosy and driven from his home, Amis returns the favour by curing him according to the instructions of a dream which he receives.⁹⁴ Ojars Kratins examines the work in the light of this controversy to see whether it should be deemed a romance or "secular hagiography." Like a saint's life, it extols one ideal after another, and contains motifs such as angelic voices, the reduction of the protagonist to poverty, revitalization, and child sacrifice.⁹⁵ There are two key incidents that both involve the making of a sacrifice, which are linked by Amiloun's disease. This illness has been sent by God and is envisaged as a punishment for sin, a blessing, in the best tradition of hagiography, and it is cured by a miracle at the end of the tale.⁹⁶ The story also contains elements which are not derived from this tradition: the trial by combat, the theme of *trewþe*, Amiloun's resumption of control of his lands, and the punishment of his wife and followers for their breach of faith.⁹⁷ Kratins concluded on the basis of this mixing of modes that the work is a secular legend.

⁹⁴ Kratins (1966) p.349.

⁹⁵ Kratins (1966) p.348.

⁹⁶ Kratins (1966) pp.352-3.

⁹⁷ Kratins (1966) p.354.

Kathryn Hume disagrees, and having compared the Middle English *Amis and Amiloun* with the saint's life *Vita Amici et Ameli* she finds that the former is indeed a romance.⁹⁸ A romance typically comprises three stages: the setting of the scene, the "series of adventures to restore the gap between *what is* and *what should be*" and the climax where order is re-established.⁹⁹ A saint's life relates the entire life of the subject from birth to death, with the main body of the text recording a sequence of temptations and noble acts, before concluding with the saint's death and miracles.¹⁰⁰ Romances never mention the early years of a hero unless the story-line dictates it. Furthermore, romances are concerned with a happy life in this world, while hagiography extends the promise of it in the next. Hence *Amis and Amiloun* finishes with the two friends living happily ever after and noting that they die on the same day, while in the *Vita Amici et Ameli* they die in a holy war and miracles are performed at their tombs.¹⁰¹ The theme of the romance is, as we have seen, fidelity, with the saint's life focusing on Amis and Amiloun's saintliness. Thus the difference between the two redactions lies in the attitude towards the subject-matter, with each writer concentrating on what seemed most pertinent to him. Susan Crane compares the Middle English and Anglo-Norman versions and argues that the story turns on the value of friendship and brotherhood. Divine power aids the development of human friendship; the motifs of hagiography are employed to serve the purposes of romance, it is

⁹⁸ Hume (1970) pp.89-107.

⁹⁹ Hume (1970) pp.90-1.

¹⁰⁰ Hume (1970) p.92.

¹⁰¹ Hume (1970) p.93.

“romance’s answer to hagiography’s challenge.”¹⁰² The focus on human emotions and motivation distinguishes the romance versions of the story of Amis and Amiloun from the hagiographical recension, just as it does the *Siege of Jerusalem* from the *Legenda Aurea*.

Saints’ lives preceded romances and were an immensely popular form of narrative, and it is therefore hardly surprising that writers of this later form should have borrowed from this more established form of narrative.¹⁰³ Both genres record significant events that will teach audiences valuable lessons, which are, in the case of romances, generally to do with social conduct.¹⁰⁴ These narratives are concerned with power-structures, temporal/ secular authority in the one, and passivity of saints and their prominence in the next world in the other.¹⁰⁵ The plot of the romance bears certain similarities to the confessor’s legend which is “a combination of quest and battle,” where the protagonist first has to find his purpose and then defend himself against temptations.¹⁰⁶ The mission of the hero, though, is closer to that of a martyr who endures a series of public conflicts against non-believers and persecutors. The adventures parallel “the saint’s willed confrontation with the powers of evil and his eagerness to undergo any torment for the glory and honour of God.”¹⁰⁷ The final reward of the warrior is fame and honour in his society.

¹⁰² Crane (1986) p.128.

¹⁰³ Hurley (1975) p.60.

¹⁰⁴ Hurley (1975) pp.62-3.

¹⁰⁵ Hurley (1975) p.64.

¹⁰⁶ Hurley (1975) pp.65-7.

¹⁰⁷ Hurley (1975) p.68.

Thus the motifs and structures of hagiography are present in romances in a transmuted form.

Diana Childress surveys various attempts to categorise works that display a mixture of the romance and hagiographic modes and finds that it is the role of the hero which distinguishes the saint's life from the "secular legend," following Kratins' term, as only religious didactic romances resemble hagiography in their presentation of protagonists.¹⁰⁸ In these forms the subject achieves his ends through marvellous means, aided by God. Furthermore, he displays passivity, and is humbled by the events which overtake him. Interestingly, she says, in the romance the hero is never overcome by such misfortune save in childhood, and he controls his own destiny, relying on his sword.¹⁰⁹ This is not entirely accurate: for instance, Ywain, the hero of an unquestionably chivalric tale *Ywain and Gawain*, loses his wits as the result of his failure to keep his promise to Alundyne and spends the rest of the story in an endeavour to redeem himself. This new category of "secular legend" really raises more problems than it solves, as it merely provides another ambiguous classification for medieval narrative. Yet Childress' point concerning the depiction of the protagonist is worthy of note, as it provides us with another perspective through which to examine the narratives with which we are concerned.

Therefore there is nothing incongruous in selecting religious material for a romance, as in the case of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, as some modern scholars have argued. The differences between this genre and religious

¹⁰⁸ Childress (1978) pp.311-3.

¹⁰⁹ Childress (1978) pp.314-20.

narratives lie in the presentation not in the subject-matter. Hence it is necessary to examine how hagiographical motifs are used, the attitude of the poet and the depiction of the hero. This is especially pertinent for the *Siege of Jerusalem* as it relates how Titus and Vespasian are the beneficiaries of God's grace and are fighting ostensibly to avenge His death. They undertake a mission on His behalf, vow to serve Him and endure a series of conflicts on His behalf. Upon a more detailed examination of the text of the *Siege of Jerusalem* it becomes clear that the poet is concerned by the horrific consequences of war, even if the cause is ostensibly just. He is interested in the differences between the historical reality of the events which occurred, the religious interpretations of them and the heroic tradition which esteemed such actions. He explores the effects of extreme situations on individuals in terms of the emotional cost, changing objectives and the actions they will be driven to commit.

Comparison of Texts

A reader interprets a work in the context of knowledge of the genre, style and form.¹¹⁰ Texts can raise certain expectations through these means only to subvert them, with literature of value causing a change in the reader's "horizon of literary expectations," by its disjuncture to familiar traditional forms.¹¹¹ This is the case with the *Siege of Jerusalem*: it combines a traditional form, the romance, with subject-matter usually dealt with in other forms of narrative in a

¹¹⁰ Jauss (1974) p.17.

¹¹¹ Jauss (1974) p.18.

type of verse often used for weighty themes, challenging the reader/ listener's assumptions about both.

This is manifest when the *Siege of Jerusalem* is compared to the romance *Richard Coeur de Lion*, the *Polychronicon*, and *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola* in the *Legenda Aurea*. These three texts out of the many available provide one example of historical narrative and one religious narrative, together with one romance that deals with historical matter, and by comparing them to the *Siege of Jerusalem* I hope that it will be possible to illustrate the mixing of modes in the poem and determine to which mode it owes greatest allegiance. The comparison will also highlight the differences between the *Siege of Jerusalem* and each of these genres, and convey the uniqueness of the work. Most of these texts have already been discussed in Chapter One so it is only necessary to introduce *Richard Coeur de Lion* at this juncture before turning to the comparison itself.

Richard Coeur de Lion is a thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century historical romance which survives in two versions, a long redaction (BL. Additional Ms. 31042, Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College Ms. 175, two early printed versions by Wynkyn de Worde) and a shorter rendition which does not contain the marvellous birth of Richard (National Library of Scotland Ms. Advocates 19.2.1,¹¹² BL. Ms. Egerton 2862, BL. Ms. Harley 4690, College of Arms Ms. Arundel 58, Bodleian Library Ms. Douce 228), as well as a fragment (Badminton House Ms. 704.1.16).¹¹³ It recounts Richard I's exploits on the Third Crusade and is renowned for its violent subject-matter and for how its

¹¹² Weiss (1969) pp.444-6; Smyser (1946) pp.275-88 and Haugen (1945) pp.22-6.

¹¹³ Finlayson (1990) pp.159-60; and Stokoe (1946) pp.78-9.

“current of vengeful prejudice sorely blurs the Christian-pagan dichotomy and contaminates the Crusade’s ideal of Christian unity and superiority”.¹¹⁴

It is essential to analyse the *Siege of Jerusalem* in relation to such a range of texts in order to perceive the unique problems which it presents to the reader in its synthesis of historical, fictional, and religious subject-matter, and in its handling of narratives. The comparison will focus on certain key elements: I, construction of the plot; II, narrative stance and appeals to authority; III, style and presentation; IV, characterisation; and V, the marvellous.

I: Construction of the Plot

The *Siege of Jerusalem* is carefully structured, focusing on the siege itself and commencing with two miracle-conversion sequences. On one level Titus and Vespasian resemble the confessor saints discussed by Altman in that they start off as members of society, leave it briefly and rejoin in a kind of sanctified role. Their illnesses, which bear striking resemblances to leprosy, could be taken to suggest past sinfulness as the leper was believed to be morally depraved and immersed in the secular with his bodily corruption mirroring his spiritual state.¹¹⁵ It does not fully conform to the test-reward structure, as Titus and Vespasian are converted and then carry out good deeds, with no explicit reference to any misdemeanours on their part except absence of faith, though they are ennobled by their experiences. The poem does present an opposition

¹¹⁴ Crane (1986) p.107.

¹¹⁵ Brody (1974) pp.146-96.

between true and false figures of authority but it is certainly not a series of confrontations as a saint's life is, being a reasonably accurate depiction of an historical siege. Furthermore, although the two generals are restored through the grace of God to full health, they do not triumph over their enemies through supernatural means. Pertinently the *Siege of Jerusalem* is the only text in which both Titus and Vespasian are ill and healed through divine miracles. It is only through divine aid that human frailty can be overcome. In addition the story of Mary and her son can be read as an inversion of the Eucharist, but this only serves to emphasise the squalid side of war (see Chapter Five). The poet unlike chivalric biographers and chroniclers attempts neither to trace patterns of ennobling virtues in his main characters, nor to reveal the universal trends which underly the happenings he relates and provide them with significance. He presents us with blameless and blameworthy characters on both sides and is interested in the motivation and responses of Jews and Romans alike. Historiography and hagiography focus exclusively on their chief protagonists.

The *Legenda Aurea* and its life of St James the Less emphasise the miraculous actions of saints rather than their human abilities, the way they triumph over the enemies of the Church. Fundamentally, events are seen in the light of the confrontation between the righteous and the unrighteous, with almost two thirds of the saints mentioned falling into the category of martyrs and the whole plot of the subsequent individual lives comprising an account of their persecution, resistance, death and burial.¹¹⁶ The compilation is intended as a source of material for preachers to use in converting non-believers.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Reames (1985) p.98.

¹¹⁷ Reames (1985) p.99.

Unlike Jacobus de Voragine's model sermons which are carefully structured and based on profound abstract concepts, the *Legenda Aurea* both as a whole and in its individual parts is a collection of anecdotes and stories to be used by clerics to instruct the unsophisticated and uneducated.¹¹⁸ The whole compilation consists of roughly 182 saints' lives, organised in accord with the liturgical year, many commencing with an etymology of the saint's name.¹¹⁹

Sherry Reames finds that certain patterns:

the separation of the saint from the community, the willingness to identify him with a rather harsh kind of justice, the insistence on his privileges and powers but not on his ability to teach or reform or heal the human beings, the prominence of confrontations - are to be found in nearly every chapter.....¹²⁰

There are two different versions of *Richard Coeur de Lion*, a long redaction (A) and a short rendition (B) which omits the unusual circumstances of his early life and commences with the preparations for the Third Crusade (see below). *Richard Coeur de Lion* is constructed as a romance; the focus remains at all times on the king, detailing his life from his birth (in the long version) to his death. However, certain parts of his life are concentrated on, namely his activities on crusade, while his capture and ransom and death are scarcely mentioned. In fact Richard's life after the last period he spent in the Holy Land, almost half his reign, is dismissed in four lines. Much of the material purports to be historical, while some episodes are obviously fictitious but this does not really serve to distinguish *Richard Coeur de Lion* from

¹¹⁸ Reames (1985) p.103.

¹¹⁹ Extra lives were added by compilers, scribes and translators. See Reames (1985) passim and Jeremy (1946) pp.212-21.

¹²⁰ Reames (1985) p.97.

chivalric biographies such as the Chandos Herald's *Life of the Black Prince* or brief lives of Richard in larger chronicles. In the long version in particular the wondrous actions and adventures ascribed to him are derived from the *chanson de geste* tradition. As Stokoe says, Richard is characterised as a "supernaturally successful romance hero."¹²¹ He is aided by two loyal men, Thomas Moulton and Fulk D'Oyly, and opposed by Philip, Modred and Saladin. The story is presented chronologically with historical accuracy subordinated to the requirements of the plot, such as the change in date of Philip's departure from the Holy Land. Ignoring the chronology of events, as S.R. Hauer notes, the romancer deliberately downplays Richard's capture and ransom, placing them before the Crusade rather than afterwards in order that the account of his life might end on a truly heroic note and foregrounding "the compelling character of the king which dominates the tone of the work."¹²² Thus it is closest to the *Siege of Jerusalem* in terms of structure being loosely based on fact, focusing on a hero and contrasting him to his enemies. A large percentage of *Richard Coeur de Lion* relates the king's victorious campaign in the Holy Land, while the main body of the *Siege of Jerusalem* covers the successful siege of the Jewish city. Both deal with battles, tactics, and combat strategy. The figure of Richard dominates *Richard Coeur de Lion*, while Titus and Vespasian are foregrounded in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. However, the structure of the *Siege of Jerusalem* is much tighter, concentrating, as it does, on one section of the Roman campaign to Judaea, the destruction of Jerusalem. In addition although Titus and Vespasian are undoubtedly the chief movers in

¹²¹ Stokoe (1946) p.103.

¹²² Hauer (1980) p.91.

the poem, the poet explores the experiences of other individuals, such as Josephus and Mary.

II: Narrative Stance and Appeals to Authority

The author of the *Siege of Jerusalem* does not appear to comment explicitly on events, nor does he refer to his sources or authorities. The poem begins and ends without religious prayers; invocations, and romance tags such “as I have heard tell,” “truth to tell” and so forth are difficult to find. Helen Cooper in her study of poetic authority found that stories which wish to cite their veracity and seriousness of intention defer to *auctoritas*.¹²³ Perhaps the poet felt that the medium he chose, alliterative verse, lent it enough weight, or possibly he believed that his intended audience would be aware of the implications of his material. Like the *Legenda Aurea*, the poem appears to have been aimed at a sophisticated readership with access to books who would be aware of the full purport of the work. Although he adopts the stance of a neutral narrator appearing not to intervene in the narrative by not speaking in the first person, the poet does at the same time incorporate serious matter. The writer is interested in raising important issues without drowning them in commentary, and hence he presents his historical and religious matter in a manner that allows readers to assess the significance of the material for themselves. He juxtaposes the events with the reactions of the participants, thereby providing us with more than one perspective. For instance, Titus decides to starve the city into submission after John and Simon, the Jewish leaders, have refused to

¹²³ Cooper (1991) pp.83-4.

surrender. Eventually conditions deteriorate so much that a woman is driven to consume her own son. The poet adds the reactions of the citizens who break down her door in the hunt for food, and the feelings of Titus. The Jews are so shocked that they tremble and depart weeping. Titus begs God's forgiveness and states that this was not his intention. By including these responses and not commenting on them, the poet allows the reader to assess for himself the moral validity both of the Jewish leaders' refusal to surrender and of Titus' decision to besiege the city.

In contrast to this, a key feature of Jacobus de Voragine's work is the combativeness of tone as he presents the righteous saints in their conflicts with adversaries. He is certain that he is right as he is speaking of those who are in receipt of God's grace and is following eminent authorities:

Unde et de ejus sanctitate sic scripsit Hegesippus apostolorum vicinus,
sicut in ecclesiasticis hystoriis legitur..... (p.296)¹²⁴

On the whole, though, Jacobus de Voragine's narrative stance is much closer to the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet's than that of Higden, or of romance writers, in that he rarely comments in the first person and intends his tales to be suitable exempla for a variety of pedagogical occasions.

In terms of attitude to his material, Higden acted as a compiler, taking extracts from various sources and treating each similarly and placing them in a chronological sequence. Original passages are included under his own name as a rule, but he had no qualms in claiming items to be of his own devising even

¹²⁴ Hegesippus, who lived close to the time of the apostles, wrote as follows about James' sanctity, as we read in the *Ecclesiastical History*.... (p.271)

when he is clearly using the work of others.¹²⁵ Generally, though, he cites the name of his authority before incorporating material from it:

Quamobrem in hac assertione historica periculum veri statuendi per omnia mihi non facio, sed quæ apud diversos auctores legi sine invidia communico. (I, p.18)¹²⁶

He envisages himself as a humble compiler, a dwarf sitting on the shoulders of a giant, who will hopefully be able to enlighten men through gathering together information from his classical and highly respected predecessors (I p.14). Thus in some respects his stance resembles that of the author of the *Siege of Jerusalem* as he assembles his work from different sources and does not comment in the first person. There the similarities end, though, as his aim is to educate, to bring a mass of material to the attention of a new audience, relying on previous authors and not to raise debate. Higden had no doubts concerning the ethics of warfare and noble men as they formed part of God's divine plan.

Not only does the *Siege of Jerusalem* differ markedly from religious and historical narratives in its narrative stance and failure to appeal to authority; it also diverges radically from romances on these issues. The narrative stance of *Richard Coeur de Lion* is that author and audience are unquestionably in awe of the wondrous example set by Richard. The king is depicted as a legendary hero who is destined from birth for greatness. The poem gives added authority to its narrative through allusions to the heroes of other romances like Roland, Oliver, Arthur, Charlemagne and Gawain, and

¹²⁵ John Taylor (1966) p.48.

¹²⁶ Wherefore in þe writynge of þis storie I take nouȝt vpon me to aferme for soþ all þat I write, but such as I haue seie and i-rad in dyuerse bookes. I gadere and write wiþ oute envie, and comoun to opere men. (I, p.19)

numerous references to God and to sources of the story. The point is that the author of *Richard Coeur de Lion* openly extols the ethics and code of behaviour embodied by his hero and urges his audience to embrace it:

Lord Iesu, kyng off glorie,
Whyche grace and uytorye
þou sente to Kyng Rychard,
þat neuer was founde coward!
It is ful good to here in ieste
Off his prowesse and hys conqueste.....
Neuerþeles, wiþ glad chere,
Ffele off hem þat wolde here
Noble iestes, j vndyrstonde,
Off dou3ty ky3tes off Yngelonde.
þerfore now j wole 3ow rede
Off a kyng, dou3ty in dede:
Kyng Rychard, þe werryour beste
þat men fynde in ony ieste.
Now alle þat here þis talkyng,
God geue hem alle good endyng! (lines 1-34)

Thus the poet glorifies his hero as a warrior and king who is a shining example of chivalry and beyond compare. This is completely antithetical to the narrative stance of the *Siege of Jerusalem* which investigates the motivation and behaviour of all its protagonists rather than eulogising or vilifying them.

III: Style and Presentation

The *Siege of Jerusalem* is beautifully written, an integrated whole, and has generally found favour among scholars for its poetic style and its elaborate descriptions of splendid armour, storms and so forth, which are typical of romances and alliterative verse, as one can see in the following lines:

Waspasian bounys of bedde, busked hym fayre
Fram þe fote to þe fourche in fyne gold cloþes.
Sup putteþ þe prince ouer his pal[l]e[n] wedes
A brynye, browded þicke, with a brest-plate,

[þe] gra[te was] of gray steel and of gold riche;
 þer-ouer he casteþ a cote, colour[ede] of his armys;
 A grete girdel of gold with-out gere opere
 Layþ vmbe his lendis, with lacchetes ynow.
 A bry3t burnesched swerd he belteþ alofte,
 Of pure purged gold þe pomel and þe hulte;
 A brod schynande scheld on scholdire he hongip,
 Bocklyd myd bri3t gold, abou[te] at þe necke.....(lines 741-52)

Furthermore, interesting use is made of dialogue and direct speech to reveal emotions, reactions and motivation. This comes across clearly when Titus prays to God expressing his horror and dismay after learning of the incident of mother-child cannibalism, when the mother herself speaks to her neighbours and child revealing her intentions, during the council scenes among the Romans when courses of action are discussed, and when Vespasian takes his leave to return to Rome:

Fayn as þe foul of day was þe freke þanne,
 Kysseþ kny3tes a-non with careful wordes:
 “My wele and my worschup 3e weleþ to kepe,
 For þe tresour of my treuþ vpon þis toun hengyþ:
 I nold, þis toun wer vn-take, ne þis toures heye,
 For alle þe glowande golde vpon grounde riche,
 [Ne] no ston in þe stede stond[i]n[g] alofte,
 Bot alle ouer-tourned and tilt, temple and oper.”
 þus laccheþ he his leeu at his ledes alle,
 Wende wepande a-way and on þe walles lokeþ,
 Praieþ [god], as he gooþ, hem grace to sende.....(lines 1009-1019)

There are several interesting features to note here: first Vespasian refers to important chivalric concepts, *worschup* and *treuþ*, emphasising what is most important to him. He thinks of his men as a good lord should, and prays to God to aid them in the conflict. The speech contains an allusion to the prophecy in Luke 19: 41-4 predicting the destruction of Jerusalem, thus mingling religious and knightly concerns. Finally, his words are accompanied by significant gestures: he kisses his knights indicating fidelity, looks at the

walls of the city for the last time highlighting the importance of the outcome of the siege to him, and weeps showing his emotion on this occasion and the momentousness of what is happening. These features differentiate the writing from the format of the chronicles and the terse, didactic, heavy-handed style of saints' lives, and signal its affinity to romances. The poet intends his audiences to examine for themselves the validity of the principles put forward, namely the heroic code and warfare. In order to achieve this he foregrounds chivalric ideals and clearly incorporates the topoi of romances, presenting, for instance, Vespasian as the typical hero of such a work. Having done so, he can then contrast this system of values with the squalidness and brutality of the military campaign in first-century Judaea, provoking a re-evaluation of the armed conflict and the religious interpretations of it.

Richard the Lionheart was brave, decisive, a born leader, charismatic, pious, zealous, and a man who more than lived up to the legacy of his ancestors and, moreover, the historical circumstances of his life lent themselves to legendary interpretations.¹²⁷ *Richard Coeur de Lion* takes the bare facts of history and elaborates them into a legend of the ultimate hero, an account which proved popular with medieval audiences. The National Library of Scotland, Advocates Ms. 19.2.1 (Auchinleck) contains the earliest version of it, as the penultimate item of the miscellany as it survives, where it is

¹²⁷ Broughton (1966, pp.11-2, 38-42) notes that Giraldus Cambrensis was the first to start the process of mythologising Richard I and that in his *De Principis Instructione* (c.1188) he alludes to Richard's devilish origins and says that Richard himself had referred to his ancestor Fulk at the court of Poitiers in 1174. Richard was greatly admired for his bravery and fortitude, so much so, that even French and Saracen chroniclers lauded him. This general opinion of Richard led historians and poets to attribute ancient legends to him, to recount his actions in heroic terms and to generate parallels between him and Arthur during his own lifetime. Within half a century of his death he became the subject of romance and motifs were adapted from other tales to embroider his life story. Ambroise, in his *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte* extolled his virtues on almost every page, as did Richard of Devizes, Ralph of Coggeshall, Ralph of Diceto and Roger of Howden. See in addition Gillingham (1994) pp.95, 151.

introduced by thirty four lines that set the life of Richard in the context of figures such as Roland, Oliver, Alexander, Charlemagne, Arthur, Gawain, Turpin and so forth who are the subjects of epic and *chansons de geste*.¹²⁸ Thus the work is envisaged to be an historical, heroic account of the king and fittingly it commences with Richard's embarkation on Crusade. Finlayson argues that the work here is intended to be read as an "historical epic", as it is to be found with *Horn Child*, *A Short Metrical Chronicle*, and a political and social satire entitled *The Simonie*.¹²⁹ This chronicle is adapted for this particular manuscript collection and includes an account of the exploits of Richard based on *Richard Coeur de Lion* and relates the deeds of English kings from the time of Brutus to Edward II, concluding with a prayer for Edward III. This provides the historical backdrop for *Horn Childe* and *Richard Coeur de Lion*, accounts of exemplary English heroes. *The Simonie* is a satire on the vices prevalent during the unfortunate reign of Edward II, and Finlayson writes that "it seems not unlikely that an indirect comparison is intended between a glorious past and .. recent miserable decline." The manuscripts of the A redaction provide more varied contexts, reflecting the highly romantic nature of this expanded rendition. On the whole they suggest that *Richard Coeur de Lion* was perceived to enshrine an historical account of the heroic deeds of a model king and Christian knight, which stand in sharp contrast to

¹²⁸ Finlayson (1990) p.161.

¹²⁹ Finlayson (1990) pp.162-4.

present corruption.¹³⁰ Every aspect of *Richard Coeur de Lion* is tailored to fit the aim of the work:

the important encounters are developed as dramatic scenes with the speeches of principal personages in direct discourse.¹³¹

Urs Dürmüller highlights the purposes of direct speech in romances, how it helps to characterise figures, indicates changes, reveals contrasts between attitudes and actions, and facilitates the making of personal statements.¹³² Thus the French are revealed to be cowards despite their fine words, and Richard's many speeches highlight his piety, bravery and lordship qualities. A number of features distinguish *Richard Coeur de Lion* from chronicles, such as the concept of the triumph over the forces of darkness and evil.¹³³ Richard bears a crest of a white dove on a cross (lines 5713-9) which signifies the Holy Spirit, and invokes God, Christ and the Holy Virgin's help frequently, while Saladin worships a pantheon of pagan gods (lines 5501-2, 2713-4, 5362). William C. Stokoe, having examined the work, finds that Richard's parentage and birth, youth and pilgrimage, and the initial account of him as crusader, are all fictitious.¹³⁴ Lines 1437-2040 which relate Richard's capture by the Duke of Austria and his problems with Tancred and the French in Sicily, are closer to history, but are augmented with romantic motifs, such as the story of the

¹³⁰ Finlayson (1990) pp.164-5. He admits, though, on pp.168, 177 that it is not possible to describe the B version as definitively historical and the A version as romantic. Even in the more restrained redaction a number of episodes are designed to show Richard as an errant knight. *Richard Coeur de Lion* bares striking resemblances to Ambroise's *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*, a rhetorically embellished history which alone of all the chronicles focuses consistently on Richard. Likewise both writers use direct speech to dramatise events, and to convey significance and emotions.

¹³¹ Stokoe (1946) p.104.

¹³² Dürmüller (1975) p.141.

¹³³ Finlayson (1990) p.178.

¹³⁴ Stokoe (1946) pp.80-2.

lion's death. The next section (lines 2041-464) recounting Richard's activities in Cyprus commences with fact, before returning to romantic detail, like the horses Favel and Lyard.¹³⁵ All the battles are "recounted in the manner of romance and not as history",¹³⁶ consisting of a series of individual encounters, tremendous feats by the Christians and Richard, and the exotic accoutrements of the Saracens. The pilgrimage (lines 615-1242) serves as a table of contents for the later military campaigns, as each city visited is besieged by Richard's army.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the passages common to both versions A and B prove that the long rendition is the earlier recension. Version B is more factual, less descriptive than the A narrative and Stokoe concludes that it is an attempt to make *Richard Coeur de Lion* more historical.¹³⁸ Thus *Richard Coeur de Lion* parallels the *Siege of Jerusalem* in some respects such as its use of historical matter and the way it appeals to crusading fervour, but it differs significantly in the way it mythologises its protagonist and demonises his enemies.

A key feature of Higden's chronicle is its literary quality, drawing as it does on a wide range of material. In terms of presentation the work is above all a record, a preservation of items that would have been forgotten and the gathering together of such information from a variety of sources to aid the learning of men:

Historia igitur, cum sit testis temporum, memoria vitæ, nuncia vetustatis, dotes possidet præminentes, suosque quam plurimum

¹³⁵ Stokoe (1946) p.83.

¹³⁶ Stokoe (1946) p.87.

¹³⁷ Stokoe (1946, p.106) argues that "the completely fictional parts of the long version, then, are not wild tales haphazardly inserted; they are true elements of romance, exaggerated feats of strength and guile, fairy-tales, and horrors, used precisely in the manner of romance as the sounding board for the sustained tone of the romance hero's unvarying character."

¹³⁸ Stokoe (1946) p.112.

prærogat professores. Historia namque quadam famae immortalitate peritura renovat, fugitiva revocat, mortalia quodammodo perpetuat et conservat.....ac sic tractatum aliquem, ex variis auctorum decerptum laboribus, de statu insulæ Britannicæ ad notitiam cudere futurorum. (I p.6)¹³⁹

Higden sees himself as the humble servant of mankind and God and thus he simply records what he finds, as he trusts that the hand of God will be evident as Divine will is ultimately behind all that happens. The end product is a collection of anecdotes and exempla which are both entertaining and edifying, stories derived from classical and medieval historians, books of exempla such as the *Gesta Romanorum*, the Vulgate and its commentaries, *De Civitate Dei*, Horace and so forth.¹⁴⁰ Higden is solely interested in recounting the material he finds and makes no attempt to emphasise issues or to rouse his readers to interpret things for themselves, as we can see in the following quotation:

Itaque cum ad regni sui administrationem accessisset, Scythas antea inimicos ingenii calliditate perdomuit, Pontum et Macedoniam occupavit; Asiam quoque, cum quibusdam amicis suis tacite a regno suo profectus, pervagatus est, situs regionum explorans. Post hoc in regnum suum rediens reperit parvulum filium quem uxor sua simul et soror, Laodice nomine, concubinarie in ejus absentia genuerat. Igitur venenum per uxorem redeunti Mithridati paratur; sed re per ancillam uxoris detecta, scelus in auctores vindicatur. Deinde hieme adveniente non in convivio sed campo equo viribus aut cursu contendebat, exercitum suum in consimili labore exercens invictum reddebat. Deinde Galatiam invadit, minas Romanorum parvipendens... (IV pp.166-70)¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ For storie is wytnesse of tyme, mynde of lyf, messenger of eldnesse; story weldeþ passyng doynge, storie putteþ forþ hire professoures. Dedes þat wolde be lost storie ruleþ; dedes þat wolde flee out of mynde, storye clepeþ aʒen; dedes þat wolde deie, storye kepeþ hem euermore.....I haue y-kast and y-ordeyned, as I may, to make and to write a tretes, i-gadered of dyuerse bookes, of þe staat of þe ylond of Britayne, to knowleche of men þat comeþ after vs. (I p.7)

¹⁴⁰ John Taylor (1966) pp.77-88.

¹⁴¹ Also whan he come to rulyng of þe kyndom he chastede þe Schytes, þat my3te nou3t be overcome toforehonde by sleyþe of witte. He occupiede Pontus and Macedonia. Also he wente privelyche out of his kyngdom, and took wiþ hym som of his frendes, and passed into Asia, and wente aboute in Asia, and aspyed þe places and contrayes of þat lond, and come aʒen þanne in to his owne kyngdom, and fonde a litel sone þat Laodice, þat was boþe his wife and his owne suster, hadde y-brou3t forþ by a copener while he was absent in oþer londes. Þefore þe wife ordeyneþ venym for Metridas whanne he come home. But he was i-warned by a wenche þat served his wyf, and took wreche of þe doeres of þat false dede. Þanne whan wynter was i-come he wolde nou3t be in festes, but in þe feeld, stryvyng on his hors

This passage relates concisely the career of Mithradates. It consists of a series of brief pieces of information strung together with the connectives “deinde”, “et” and “quo”. The contrast between the factual style of Higden and the richly descriptive style of the *Siege of Jerusalem* is stark, and re-inforces the point that the English writer focuses on the interpretation of human behaviour.

IV: Characterisation

Titus and Vespasian are truly noble figures in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, virtuous, valiant, model Christian leaders who support the emperor and the Church, displaying chivalric qualities, providing a complete contrast to the wicked Jewish leaders and certain degenerate Roman emperors. These chivalric ideals are encapsulated in Sabyn, a hero in the romance mould. He is a *siker man of armes* (434) who leads many men into battle. In the height of battle, when the Romans are in the midst of a gruelling attack on the city, he scales the walls, killing six Jews before a seventh succeeds in slaying him with *an vnhende dynte* (1198). This is an act of bravery like Gawain’s in Arthur’s battle against Mordred at the end of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, and both are eulogised after their sudden demise:

Ffor now is a duke ded þe dou3tiest y trowe,
þat euer stede bystrode or any steel wered. (lines 1203-4)

Thus Titus praises him for his ability to fight, to ride a horse, and for his bravery. In fact the poem, for all its religious implications, never loses sight of

in rennyngē, oþer in grete dedes of strengþe, and made his oost use suche travayle and dedes forto make hem konnyngē by use, stalworþe, and stedefast eftē sones whan þey schulde fiȝte. þanne he werred in Galacia, and despisede þe manas of þe Romainys.
(IV pp.167-71)

chivalric ideals and foregrounds them, extolling the flower of Christian knighthood rather than the values of Christianity. Sabyn's fame lives on, and as we saw, Vespasian is concerned that his own good fame continues and that he does not fall into disrepute, like Frederick in Matthew Paris's *Chronica Majora* (V p.60), by not fulfilling his vow to capture Jerusalem. David Lawton notes that Vespasian is depicted in the heroic mould: unable to sleep at night, arising at first light, arming himself carefully and boasting in front of the city (lines 729-84).¹⁴² Furthermore, knights are rewarded with worldly prizes: Vespasian becomes emperor and the Roman army enjoy the spoils of Jerusalem. There is no mention of spiritual prizes to be gained in the next world. These heroic ideals, however, are not meant to be taken at face value. Sir Sabyn may be a heroic figure but the manner of his death suggests that these chivalrous values are limited. The blow to his head causes his brain to ooze out of his nostrils, illustrating the inglorious, rather squalid side of heroic endeavour. In fact the Roman leaders are ennobled not through their actions in war but through the miracles which cure them. These miracles raise an interesting parallel with the depiction of saints in hagiography, as it is through God's aid expressed via miracles that they overcome their persecutors. Despite this, Titus' and Vespasian's actions during the course of the siege are not seen as unquestionably glorious, as the armed conflict causes them to act harshly and cruelly. The poem sympathises with the suffering of their Jewish opponents who are reduced to desperate straits due to the starvation and deprivation rampant in the city of Jerusalem. Initially, Titus refuses to grant

¹⁴² Lawton (1997) p.106.

the Jews mercy or to parley with their leaders as he fears treachery. He orders his men to mine under the walls, while he and a number of spearmen and knights assault the city and engage in combat with five hundred Jews. With the help of Domitian and his men the Jews are soundly defeated and Titus:

.... toward his tentis tourneþ hym sone,
Makeþ mynour[s] and men , þe myne to stoppe;
After profreþ pes for pyte þat hr hadde,
Whan he wist of here wo þat were withyn stoken. (lines 1129-32)

Titus subordinates himself to outer pressures, adapting his plans to conquer Jerusalem in order to try to preserve the lives of its citizens. He submerges strength in weakness, identifying himself with the starving people in the city. Pity is based on a recognition of changeability as fundamental to human existence, and meets that mutability with its own. It works to channel changeability in positive directions, to provide a release from the static deadlock of misery. However, Titus' pity is prevented from achieving any positive outcome as a result of the intransigence of the tyrannical John and Simon. Pity is not solely the preserve of the Romans, as Josephus aids Titus, curing him by forcing him to overcome his anger and hatred of a certain individual. Titus is not a perfect knight, although he is the recipient of God's grace, and on this occasion he is guilty of lack of compassion. On the whole, though, Titus is merciful and he encourages the suffering citizens in Jerusalem to leave rather than endure further tribulation. Pity is fundamental to chivalry and it is emphasised in many romances such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Knight's Tale*. However, it is unusual to find warriors expressing compassion for their enemies while they are still engaged in battle against them. Thus the poet is suggesting that pity is supremely important even

in times of war and that it may on occasion come into conflict with the other virtues of chivalry.

Richard Coeur de Lion is a conscious attempt to turn the king into a hero of romance, a figure comparable to Arthur and Charlemagne:

Ffele romaunes men maken newe,
Off goode kny3tes, stronge and trewe;
Off here dedys men rede romaunce,
Boþe in Engeland and in Ffraunce:
Off Rowelond, and off Olyuer,
And off euery Doseper;
Off Alisaundre, and Charlemayn;
....þerfore now j wole 3ow rede
Off a kyng, dou3ty in dede:
Kyng Rychard, þe werryour beste
þat men fynde in ony ieste. (lines 7-13, 29-32)

Richard is aided by two Lincolnshire knights, Thomas Moulton and Fulk D'Oilly, who each command a third of the crusader army. These knights are not mentioned in any chronicle account of the Crusade, although they did exist. Furthermore, in the long redaction they fight against Richard in the three-day tourney and their inclusion is in accord with the writer's aim of presenting Richard as a hero of *ieste*.¹⁴³ They are Christian warleaders who trounce the wicked Saracens with military might and alacrity and the grace of God. Richard has his foil, Philip Augustus his ally on the Crusade, just as Charlemagne has Ganelon and Arthur, Mordred.¹⁴⁴ Philip Augustus is not just weak and fickle, he is also devious and tries to engineer events so as to advantage himself:

A tresoun þou3te þe Kyng of Fraunce,
To doo Kyng Richard a destaunce.

¹⁴³ Finlayson (1990) p.166.

¹⁴⁴ Finlayson (1990) p.170.

To Kyng Tanker he sente a wryt,
þat turnyd hym siþene to lytyl wyt,
þat Kyng Richard wiþ strenþe of hand
Wolde dryue out of his land. (lines 1677-82)

Tancred was ruler of Sicily and had good reason historically to dread the intentions of the King of England, and this fear of Tancred was manipulated by the French sovereign who wished to marry his sister to Richard.¹⁴⁵ In the poem Richard tries to smooth over the tensions caused by the French, but he fails and ends up having to seize Messina where he builds a wooden castle (1709-1892). Thus the historical events are given a heightened literary presentation, fitting them to traditional romance patterns. Hence the poet creates a romance hero, an English knight to match those French and classical heroes, in a way not paralleled in the *Siege of Jerusalem* where these values are presented in a manner designed to raise discussion. The author of the *Siege of Jerusalem* wishes to re-examine the horrors of warfare rather than describe heroes the equal of the twelve peers. To this end he does not allude to other great warriors, but concentrates on other elements, as we have seen.

In the *Polychronicon* we find descriptions of heroes like Julius Caesar and Marcus Cato who display the same qualities as are admired in the romances:

Fuerunt duo viri præclari, Marcus Cato et Caius Julius, quibus genus, ætas, et eloquentia prope æqualia fuere. Magnitudo animi par, sed gloria diversa, Cato vitæ integritate, magnus Julius magnificentia et magnitudine. Illi severitas, isti liberalitas gloriam addidit, Cæsar dando Cato nihil largiendo laudatur, in Cæsare miserorum refugium, in Catone malorum supplicium. In Cæsare laborare, vigilare, sua negligere, nihil negare quod posset, bellum novum parare, triumphum optare, dulce fuit. Catoni, quoque studium modestiæ, constantiæ, severitatis, non divitiis cum divite, non factione cum factioso, sed

¹⁴⁵ Finlayson (1990) p.170-1.

virtute cum strenuo, pudore cum modesto, certabat magis esse bonus quam videri bonus. Itaque quo minus petebat gloriam, ipsam magis assequebatur. (*Polychronicon* IV p.220)¹⁴⁶

Both are worthy men, noble of speech, great of heart, honourable and so forth, the conventional qualities of great men. We are constantly told of such individuals, their actions, births and deaths. Their qualities are those extolled by medieval society and this feature of the chronicle is emphasised in the vernacular translations:

In quorum ultimo ita Cæsar pæne devictus fuerat, ut fugientibus suis ipse seipsum occidere vellet, ne post tantam rei militaris gloriam ipse jam senex in manus juvenum caderet, annos ætatis lvi tunc habens. (IV p.204)

Trevisa translates this as follows:

In þe laste batayle þereof Cesar was so nyh overcome þat his men fligh, and he was in poynt to sle hym self leste in his elde he schulde falle into children hond, afterward *grete worschip and ioye and grete dedes of chivalrie*. Cesar was þoo sixe and fifty 3ere olde. (italicised words are not in the Latin) (IV p.205)

Jacobus de Voragine in his sermon on Benedict focuses on the special demands and rewards of the religious life and not on the condition of the average Christian, and this is true of his characterisation in the *Legenda Aurea*, where saints appear as isolated, heroic figures.¹⁴⁷ He values studying and preaching highly, as did the Dominican order in general, and thus we see St.

¹⁴⁶ Þere were tweie noble men, Marcus Cato and Gaius Iulius, wel nyh of [one] worpynesse of blood, of age, and of nobel and real speche, and i-liche greet of herte, but þey were of dyvers ioye and worschippe. Cato was greet in clenness of lyf, and Iulius in largenesse of 3iftes and in mildenesse. þat oon hadde worschippe by cruelnesse, and þe oper by fredom of 3iftes. Cesar by 3iftes, Cato by 3evynge of none 3iftes is i-preysed. In Cesar socour and refute of wrecches and of nedy men. In Catoun, punschynge of evel doers. In Cesar, wakyng and travayle for gendryng of his owne, no þing werne þat he my3te do arraye newe batailles, desire triumphis and worschippe as a victor of Rome, al þis likynge to Cesar. Catoun loved besynesse of sobernesse, of stedfastnesse, of sturnesse; he stroof nou3t wiþ richesse a3enst þe riche, nou3t with tresoun a3enst þe traytour; but wiþ strenge a3enst þe stronge, wiþ honeste a3enst þe sobre man; he desirede more to be good þanne [to] seme good; so þat þe lasse he desirede more to be good þanne [to] seme good; so þat þe lasse he desired good worschippe þe more worschippe he hadde. (IV p.221)

¹⁴⁷ Reames (1985) p.104, 148.

James preaching on several occasions and discussing matters of doctrine with the other disciples. From an early age St. James is concerned with the total conquest of carnal desires, the renunciation of all that is worldly:

Hic ex utero matris suae sanctus fuit, vinum et siceram non bibit, carnes nunquam manducavit, ferrum in caput ejus non adscendit, oleo non est unctus, balneis non est usus, sindone, id est veste linea, semper indutus. Totiens in oratione genua flexerat, ut callos in genibus sicut in calcaneis videretur habere. Pro hac incessabili et summa justitia appellatus est justus et abba, quod est interpretatum munimentum populi et justitia. Hic solus inter apostolos propter nimiam sanctitatem mittebatur intrare in sancta sanctorum. (p.296)¹⁴⁸

Jacobus de Voragine normally expresses relationships between figures in terms of superiors and inferiors, emphasising the dignity and power of saints rather than their humility and so forth.¹⁴⁹ This sense of hierarchy permeates all levels, with some saints exhibiting superior qualities to others, as in the case of St. James:

Dicitur etiam, quod primus inter apostolos missam celebravit; nam propter excellentiam suae sanctitatis hunc sibi honorem apostoli fecerunt, ut post adscensionem domini primus inter eos missam Hierosolymis celebraret... (p.296)¹⁵⁰

The enemies of saints suffer dreadful punishments, torture, and even death, with no fate too bad for those who will not submit to the authority of God and His representatives. The Jews find this to their cost in *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola* where Jerusalem is destroyed and many of their number are killed or

¹⁴⁸ From his mother's womb he was holy. He drank no wine or strong drink, never ate meat, no razor ever came near his head, no oil annointed him, he never bathed. His clothing consisted of a linen garment. He knelt so often in prayer that his knees were calloused like the soles of his feet. For this ceaseless and surpassing righteousness he was called the Just and Abba, which is interpreted to mean the stronghold of the people and righteousness. Because of his eminent sanctity he alone of the apostles was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. (p.271)

¹⁴⁹ Reames (1985) pp.106-7.

¹⁵⁰ It is also said that he was first among the apostles to celebrate the mass. In recognition of his superior holiness the apostles awarded him the honor of being the first among them to offer mass in Jerusalem after the Lord's ascension. (p.271)

sold into slavery. Each step in the Christian's life arises not through any act of his own but through the receipt of grace; hence one does not develop as a person but is merely a receptacle for divine succor.¹⁵¹ What mattered for Jacobus de Voragine was the autonomy of saints, the strange otherness of God who remains distant from the human realm, shrouded in mystery.¹⁵² He presents God as a stern judge who aids those worthy, not as the more benevolent figure of the *Siege of Jerusalem*. Titus and Vespasian are indeed recipients of grace, but they remain very human figures who can empathise with human suffering and are capable of showing compassion to the plight of ordinary Jews. The Jews themselves are more than blackened wretches who suffer dire punishments for their intransigence to God's will as is the case in the *Legenda Aurea*. In particular the *Siege of Jerusalem* presents Josephus as a noble, scholarly man, although he does not convert to Christianity and at the end of the tale he is brought to Rome where spends his days writing books:

Josophus, þe gentile clerke, a-jorneyed was to Rome:
Per of þis mater and mo he made fayre bokes. (lines 1321-2)

He is referred to as "gentile" or noble on two occasions in the poem, but we are never informed in the course of the narrative that he has any leanings towards the Christian faith.

V: The Marvellous

The *Siege of Jerusalem* contains a few miracles, most notably the two at the beginning where Titus and Vespasian are cured of their illnesses (lines 169-84,

¹⁵¹ Reames (1970) p.46.

¹⁵² Reames (1985) pp.139, 143.

241-52), and omens which predict the destruction of Jerusalem (lines 1217-36).¹⁵³ Most of the extraordinary elements of the poem, however, focus on the Jews who use camels, elephants and dromedaries when attacking the Roman forces. The paucity of such material contributes to the greater realism of the work and focuses attention upon its concern with the horrors of war, which it endeavours to re-evaluate. In this greater realism and minimal employment of fabulous stories, incidents and features, it is wholly unlike most romances and saints' lives, being closer instead to clerical histories.

Thus there is little in the way of marvels as such in the work of Higden, although it does contain numerous visions and phenomena such as portents, comets, and meteorological anomalies. For instance, in the *Polychronicon* IV pp.208-12 we learn that when Julius Caesar is stabbed to death no wound is visible on his dead body. One hundred days prior to his death lightning struck in the middle of Rome before an image of him and removed the first letter of his name "Caesar". Furthermore, on the night prior to his demise he was roused by a great noise and during the day before his unfortunate end three suns appeared in the sky to east and united in the form of one sun. This signified that the lordships of the three parts of the earth would be united in one monarchy. All the world would know of the Trinity, three persons and one God. Around this time an ox spoke to a ploughman claiming that he was enslaved in vain, for in a short time men, not oxen or wheat, would fail in the city. These marvels all clearly indicate the hand of God which is behind all that happens. In the *Siege of Jerusalem* the omens are described but not

¹⁵³ See Chapter One and Millar (1999).

explained and two possible interpretations are put forward; that they signify that the destruction of Jerusalem is due to the Jews' execution of Saint James, or their crucifixion of Jesus (lines 1218-36).

There is need only to refer to one representative marvel from *Richard Coeur de Lion*, the three magical horses. Richard is blessed with the aid of two magical horses, Favel and Lyard, whom he has captured (lines 2334-402).¹⁵⁴ He rides to battle on them (lines 4835, 5016, 5077, 5235 and 6478). When Favel and Lyard are not available, the Sultan offers to give Richard a horse to speed him into battle. Richard gratefully sends his thanks to his opponent and graciously accepts his offer (lines 5511-5526). However, a magician is employed by Saladin who uses the “ffeendes craft off helle” (line 5534) to turn two fiends into horses, a mare and a colt. The idea is that the colt will run to the mare in battle and this will result in Richard’s downfall. Fortunately an angel warns Richard about the plots that are afoot, and counsels that he find a forty-foot pole and tie it across the steed’s neck and secure the horse with a strong bridle. Furthermore, Richard should arm himself with a steel spear which will easily penetrate the Sultan’s light armour. The king follows this advice, remembering to plug the horse’s ears with wax. After these preparations he is able to:

..... brak asundry þe scheltrome;
Ffor al þat euere beffore hym stode,
Hors and man to grounde 3ode,

¹⁵⁴ Broughton (1966) pp.100-2. Roger Sherman Loomis (1915, pp.512-3) points out that the story of the demon steed is also to be found in Peter de Langtoft’s and Walter de Heminburgh’s chronicles which show no sign of having been influenced by *Richard Coeur de Lion* or its source. Tancred Borenius (1943, passim) describes numerous depictions of this episode in art which testify to the popularity of this story, more so than of other incidents in Richard’s life. It was so influential that it became conventional to depict combats between Christian and Saracen warriors in this format. Roger Sherman Loomis (1915, pp.514-8) suggests that these illustrations could well have influenced the fourteenth-century Middle English romancer when he was composing his version of the incident.

Twenty ffoote on euery syde.
Whom þat he ouertoke þat tyde,
Off lyff ne was there waraunt non.
Þorw3out he made hys hors to gon. (lines 5786-92)

The Sultan's confidence wanes and he tries to flee from the fray, but is chased by the Christian king. This incident establishes Richard as a great and valiant hero:

At morwen, whenne Kyng Richard aros-
Hys dedes were noble and his los-
Sarezynes beffore hym come,
And askyd of hym Crystyndome. (lines 5879-82)

He is aided by God's grace and angels, a true Christian knight. Finlayson argues that marvels such as that of the demon colt or the angelic visitations are more appropriate to the *chanson de geste* and saint's legend modes than that of romance.¹⁵⁵ They are also to be found in *Sir Gowther* and *The Sege off Melayne*, but significantly they are not to be discovered in the *Siege of Jerusalem*.

Marvels feature prominently in the *Legenda Aurea* where they are retained from its sources, but their explications are not included, with the result that they seem even more incredible. The saints thus seem less like real people, and not genuine models for emulation. This "reductive fashion" emphasises the power of saints over evil, how they should be revered and not scorned, and an impatience with human weakness.¹⁵⁶ Ordinary folk, even the followers of saints, simply provide occasions for them to illustrate their miraculous power, bestowed on them by divine grace and in direct correlation to their moral and theological virtues. For instance, in *De Sancto Petro*

¹⁵⁵ Finlayson (1990) pp.166-7.

¹⁵⁶ Reames (1985) pp.89, 93.

Apostola Peter restores one of his disciples to life who had been dead for forty days, and no commentary is provided; it is just an example of the saint's power (p.370).

Conclusion

As is clear from the above discussion, the poem is most certainly not a straightforward history or a religious narrative, and conforms more to the romance mode than to any other. This is evident in the construction of the plot and its presentation, as it is a beautifully written, carefully constructed poem which utilises direct speech and description imaginatively. Its use of characterisation affirms this impression, focusing as it does on the motivation of the protagonists and their reactions to the circumstances in which they find themselves. The mixture of fictional and factual elements is common to all three types of narrative, but it is significant that the *Siege of Jerusalem* focuses less on the marvellous than most romances. Pertinently, the work never refers to its sources, and the narrating voice never makes assertions of truth or comments directly. This suggests that the poet wished to write a romance that allows readers to interpret things for themselves within certain parameters. He does not seem to want to teach a specific message or reveal overarching patterns in the events he narrates, as is the case with works of historiography or hagiography. Basically, he wishes his audience to examine for themselves the moral issues involved in warfare and how individuals respond to extreme situations. It is his attitude towards his subject-matter which is responsible for these differences, and this perhaps explains the marginalisation of the poem in modern criticism.

CHAPTER THREE

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE JEWS

The *Siege of Jerusalem* has often been heralded by critics as a crusading text, though no convincing argument for this has ever been made. Murray J. Evans notes that it combines "the edifying and the heroic", recounting Titus and Vespasian's sack of Jerusalem in order to avenge Christ's death.¹ He points out that in BL. Ms. Caligula A.ii it is followed by the *Cheualere Assigne* which is a romance that deals with an ancestor of Godfrey of Bouillon, Enyas, who rescues a queen (his mother) and her children from an evil mother-in-law. He suggests that the likely reason for the juxtaposition of these two romances is their connection with the Nine Worthies, though this relationship with the Nine Worthies is far from obvious. The *Cheualere Assigne* is about an ancestor of one of them, while the *Siege of Jerusalem* recounts events in the Holy Land. This distant connection between the siege of Jerusalem and the Nine Worthies is discussed in some detail by Pamela R. Robinson in her study of the transmission of Middle English verse-texts. Her study of manuscripts leads her to distinguish three groups of texts, which regularly occur together, one of which focuses on stories of Alexander, Arthur, Charlemagne, and the stories of the sieges of Jerusalem, Thebes and Troy.² She maintains that the narratives of the siege of Jerusalem, although not involving any of the Worthies, came to be grouped

¹ Evans (1995) p.51.

² Robinson (1972) p.42.

together with the stories about the Worthies in preference to tales of Joshua, David and Judas Maccabeus "in an anti-Semitic age".³ She argues that the account of the siege of Thebes was incorporated into the group due to its connection with the siege of Troy in the minds of medieval people, and that a sense of English identity ensured that there were fewer manuscripts containing redactions of tales about Charlemagne than of the other stories in the group.⁴ However, she does not distinguish between the two renditions of the destruction of Jerusalem story, the *Siege of Jerusalem* and *Titus and Vespasian*. Assuming both to be anti-Semitic, she and Murray J. Evans, nonetheless, raise a very interesting issue: is there a connection between stories of the sack of Jerusalem and the Charlemagne romances which are deemed of crusading interest? Some of the manuscript contexts of the *Siege of Jerusalem* suggest such a reading for the romance, especially as it occurs in miscellanies with the Charlemagne romances (see Chapter Six). Indeed, modern scholars such as Mary Hamel tend to view the work as a piece of crusading literature, a reflection of the crusading enthusiasm of the late fourteenth century, and suppose that the object of the bigotry in the poem is not the Jews *per se* but the Saracens onto whom it has been displaced.⁵ In other words they are arguing that the Jews in the poem represent the Saracens in the popular imagination. The Muslim world was causing increasing threats to Christendom at this time, while the Jews had been expelled from many European countries including England. Ralph Hanna

³ Robinson (1972) p.49.

⁴ Robinson (1972) pp.53-4.

⁵ Hamel (1992 a) pp.177-94.

concurs with Mary Hamel that the depiction of the Jews displays some features of orientalism, particularly in the description of their army and battle tactics. and points out that the poem could have been inspired by similar thinking to that behind the York pogrom of 1190 which was carried out by individuals on their way to the Third Crusade. He goes on to make a case for the poem reflecting the stance against Lollards in the fifteenth century on the strength of the possible Lancastrian patronage of the Cambridge manuscript.⁶ Although the Jews had been expelled from England for a century by the time the *Siege of Jerusalem* was written, they remained important ideologically, especially as they still existed elsewhere.

Yet in my view the *Siege of Jerusalem* was not intended as a work of crusading interest, nor does its attitude towards the Jews resemble the position of other texts on the adversaries of Christendom. It may indeed be the case that the poet chose a story to appeal to those swept up in crusading fervour, with the intent of illuminating the horrors of warfare which are present in even ideologically appealing military campaigns. It is a story that provides the poet with the ideal opportunity to examine individual responses to extreme situations and personal motivation. In order to appreciate what the poet is endeavouring to do, it is necessary to consider the impact of crusading ideology and how this affected other texts including accounts of the destruction of Jerusalem. As the poet is interested in the moral issues entailed in warfare and personal motivation he does not present all the Jews as rotten to the core. It is therefore useful to use the terminology devised by Gavin Langmuir to distinguish between the different

⁶ Hanna (1992 a) pp.109-21.

attitudes displayed towards the Jews in the Middle Ages - anti-Semitism, doctrinal anti-Judaism, legal anti-Judaism and popular anti-Judaism. Fundamentally, the poet presents neither side in the destruction of Jerusalem as entirely virtuous or evil; he tries to depict the responses of both the Jewish and Roman protagonists to the circumstances in which they find themselves. In this he differs markedly from the approach of other literary texts which favour one side heavily, especially if it is Christian, and are scathing to their opponents.

Although the poem is not anti-Semitic, there is an element of anti-Judaism, which may be depicted as an opposition to the religious beliefs of Jews. Anti-Judaism is fundamentally an antipathy which was expounded in doctrinal terms by the Church fathers, such as Augustine, and which later became the basis of legal restrictions on the Jews and was developed into a popular, more virulently antagonistic form. This more extreme manifestation developed into the anti-Semitism of the later Middle Ages as a result of social, political, and economic pressures and is evident in the wild accusations levelled at the Jews from the end of the twelfth century, such as that they perpetrated blood ritual murders, and that they were inherently evil. There were differences in the extent to which any individual subscribed to either anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet is by no means in favour of the Judaic religion, but he is, nevertheless, unable to justify the extermination of a people merely on the grounds of their faith. His investigation of the moral issues involved in warfare is manifest in the different orientation of his poem compared to other works on the same topic. The attitude to the Jews in this work is indebted to the older view of the Hebrew race encapsulated in the writings of Augustine. The more extreme

attitudes towards the Jews in the Middle Ages and the prevalence of crusading ideology led to connections between accounts of the destruction of Jerusalem and the crusades. A comparison between the *Siege of Jerusalem* and Charlemagne romances such as the *Sowdone of Babylone* and *The Sege off Melayne*, and crusade romances like *Capystranus* and *Richard Coeur de Lion*, clearly illustrates the differences in outlook between it and other literary texts.

Crusading Literature

Crusading ideology and literature found a ready audience in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when the *Siege of Jerusalem* and other texts such as the Charlemagne romances were composed and copied. In the fourteenth century Philip the Fair initiated a pamphlet campaign to popularise the crusades, aided from Avignon by Pope Clement V. Philip VI took the cross in 1332, followed in 1336 by John the Good.⁷ In fact, as late as 1390 Philippe de Mézières was exhorting Richard II of England to follow Charles VI's example and go on crusade. Pilgrimages to the Holy Land increased during the fourteenth century providing the Republic of Venice with a profitable ferry service.⁸ Giacomo di Verona, one of many pilgrims to the Palestine, wrote an account of his trip, the *Liber Peregrinationis*, with a view to encouraging another attempt to recover the sacred places.⁹ The fourteenth century marked the peak in crusading propaganda, "of enormous bulk, it was generally characterised by a marked sense of devotion

⁷ Cook (1992) p.160.

⁸ Atiya (1938) p.155.

⁹ Atiya (1938) p.175-6.

and genuine enthusiasm for the salvation of the Holy Land.”¹⁰ Burgundy proved to be the centre of crusading fervour in the fifteenth century and it remained the primary interest of the duchy until conflict broke out between the duke and Louis XI.¹¹ Added to this was the creation of secular orders of chivalry with the membership restricted to nobles.¹²

In c.1291 a new type of crusading literature was born, namely the *de recuperatione Terrae Sanctae* memoranda, which consisted of detailed military plans to be followed in the taking of Holy Land and an exhortatory element - to come and fight the crusade.¹³ This type of text was immensely popular, judging by the number produced. Many like Fidenzio of Padua were concerned about the wealth and economic prosperity of the Saracens. He amongst others (Marino Sanudo Torsello, Charles II of Anjou, Pierre Dubois, Henry II of Lusignan) advocated the conquest of the kingdoms of Egypt, Carthage, and Tunis, all territories which were once governed by the Roman Empire and were "rightfully Christian property".¹⁴ Ramon Lull, the man believed to be the "greatest missionary who worked among the Moslems in the Middle Ages", wrote treatises and letters in which he declared himself to be in favour of a military campaign to the Holy Land.¹⁵ This would pave the way for the

¹⁰ Atiya (1938) p.187.

¹¹ Atiya (1938) pp.189-90.

¹² Housley (1992) pp.394-5.

¹³ Schein (1991) pp.91-3.

¹⁴ Schein (1991) p.93-101.

¹⁵ Schein (1991) p.102.

conversion of the infidels.¹⁶ Furthermore, the treatises written in the wake of 1291 to provide counsel as to how to recover the Holy Land were equalled in the fifteenth century by treatises providing guidance on a crusade against the Ottoman Turks.¹⁷ Another popular vein of writing was that of the *exhortatio* - appeals to go on crusade which could take the form of letters, speeches or sermons.¹⁸ The impact of prophetic texts on crusading ideology is also interesting, as people were expecting some crisis which would see the fulfilment of all the prophecies circulating at the time, such as that of the coming of the second Charlemagne.¹⁹ Crusade ideology eventually succumbed to the incongruity between Catholic modes of thought and the rise of new attitudes and ways of thinking consequent on Protestantism in the sixteenth century, rather than on lack of finance for the crusades and conflict among the nations of Western Europe.²⁰

The loss of the Holy Land in the thirteenth century had a profound effect on medieval society and provoked numerous responses in writing - analysis of what went wrong, increased support for a new crusade, and an advocacy of peaceful means of recovery.²¹ In fact the fall of Acre inspired the most pronounced period of pro-crusade fervour, with Acre being compared to

¹⁶ Schein (1991) p.106.

¹⁷ Housley (1992) pp. 383-4.

¹⁸ Housley (1992) p.384.

¹⁹ Housley (1992) p.390.

²⁰ Housley (1992) p.428-9.

²¹ Schein (1991) p.113.

Jerusalem itself.²² At the council of Vienne in 1312 all the chief nations of western Europe declared themselves in favour of a crusade.²³ The papacy and the secular rulers of Europe used the ideology of crusades to their own ends, such as the exaction of tithes in peacetime and territorial expansion by war. At the same time most of the projects discussed failed to come to fruition.²⁴ Fundamentally, as Sylvia Schein concludes:

The crusade continued to be genuinely desired among large sections of the population in the different regions of Europe; although it was no longer a mass movement, neither aristocratic nor popular enthusiasm for the crusade had faded.²⁵

Throughout the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries the crusades retained their appeal, although attitudes to infidels changed. There was an increase in contacts between Europeans and the Ottoman Empire, with several Europeans travelling there and writing accounts of what they saw. Paradoxically, this led to the creation of new stereotypes of the enemy as cruel and lascivious, rather than an increased understanding of the Saracens.²⁶ The rise of the Ottomans caused a re-evaluation of strategy and goals, but did not alter emotions regarding crusades.²⁷

²² Schein (1991) p.128-9.

²³ Schein (1991) p.252-3.

²⁴ Schein (1991) p.261.

²⁵ Schein (1991) p.266.

²⁶ Housley (1992) pp.382-3. In the early centuries there was little attempt to convert the Muslims, although theologians in the Orient, Spain and Byzantium wrote polemical works against them. They seemed very distant to those in Catholic western and northern Europe. The situation changed by the twelfth century with papal bulls advocating conversion and anti-Muslim pogroms (e.g. Palermo in 1160). The leaders of the French army on the Second Crusade wanted to convert or kill all those in Constantinople. The friars tried to convert the Muslims in the same manner as they tried to convert the Jews. By 1240 crusades and conversion were frequently linked (Kedar 1984). See Daniel (1975) *passim* and (1960) *passim* on images of the Muslims in the Middle Ages.

²⁷ Tyerman (1988) p.229.

Christopher Tyerman has shown that the crusades continued to be popular in England until after the fall of Nicopolis, despite the advent of new ideas. Lollard knights and others were capable of reconciling their beliefs with a desire to partake in the crusades.²⁸ There were many English pilgrims to Palestine, though few recorded their travels, with the occasional exception such as Thomas Brigg's terse *Itinerarium in Terram Sanctam Domini Thomae de Swynburne*. Indeed, the ideal of crusading underpinned policies surrounding truces and played a vital role in diplomacy. During the Anglo-French truce of 1389, Richard II and Charles VI discussed organising a campaign to quell the Ottomans and liberate the Holy Land.²⁹ Attention switched to Prussia where a number of Englishmen frequently went on *reysas* up until the 1390s.³⁰ Added to this is the evidence from accounts that survive from those collecting money for a new *passagium*, which record a number of Holy Land legacies and a few vow redemptions in England during the years 1317-78.³¹ This widespread crusading fervour can be seen in many artistic products, with the First Crusade remaining by far the most popular in literature and art.³²

Such interest in the Holy Land and its history is reflected in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, and it may be that its account of ancient times was meant to have relevance for the contemporary conflict. The *Siege of Jerusalem* is not concerned

²⁸ Tyerman (1988) *passim*.

²⁹ Tyerman (1988) p.294.

³⁰ Tyerman (1988) p.268.

³¹ Tyerman (1988) p.260.

³² Housley (1992) pp.392-3 notes Richard II's crusading ambitions, which he believes are reflected in the Wilton Diptych.

with forcible conversions, and although the poet notes that the campaign waged against Jerusalem by the Romans is justified, he remains unconvinced that it is necessary to kill and starve all the Jews even in this most just of wars. In the context of this prevalence of crusading ideology, the *Siege of Jerusalem* cannot fail but to raise questions about the validity of warfare.

Accounts of the Siege of Jerusalem

The connection between stories of the destruction of Jerusalem and crusading fervour is most clearly to be seen in the late medieval dramatic tradition of elaborate mystery plays on this theme. There is evidence that such plays were once extant in England, and this, combined with what we know about the patronage and performance of similar plays on the Continent, can tell us a lot about the reception history of the story of Jerusalem's terrible fate.

A Vengeance of Our Lord play was performed after a Passion play in Nevers in 1396 and 1432, financed by the city with 140 actors. Amiens, Metz, Bourg, Abbeville and Aire-sur-la-Lys, Lille and Malines also orchestrated performances of Vengeance of Our Lord plays.³³ King Charles VIII himself attended a performance of Eustache Marcadé's play on this theme in Paris in 1490, and there is evidence that it was revived at Lutry in 1523, Reims 1531, Troyes 1540 and Plessis-Piquér 1541. Marcadé's play dates from the early fifteenth century, and it was the inspiration for all the subsequent plays on this theme in France.³⁴ The text of the play was printed in an expanded form by

³³ Most of these cities either lie in Burgundian territories or in nearby areas.

³⁴ Wright (1989) pp. 110-1.

Anthoine V  rard, prefaced by a lengthy dedication to King Charles VIII who often adopted the pose of a crusader-king in an effort to court public opinion.³⁵ The prologue, indeed, presents the king as the new Vespasian. We can deduce from this that it appealed to a wide audience including the king and townspeople. Bishop Conrad de Bayer de Boppard financed the performances of Marcad  's plays (*Mistere de la Passion* and *La Vengeance Jhesucrist*) in Metz on a lavish scale, the two performances lasting eight days with elaborate sets, possibly in honour of Duke Ren   d'Anjou, King of Naples and Jerusalem, just after his release.³⁶ It is likely that Philip the Good, third Valois Duke of Burgundy, also patronised performances of Marcad  's play. He was a cultured man who possessed numerous manuscripts and commissioned other plays. For instance, the Chatsworth Ms. of *La Vengeance Jhesucrist* with its twenty beautiful miniatures was commissioned by the Duke.³⁷ Stephen Wright cites a letter from Duke Philip dated Brussels 1 May 1459 in which he speaks of plays which deal with "La Passion, R  surrection et Vengeance de Nostre Seigneur Jhesucrist". The letter goes on to state the Duke's commitment to funding the staging of "jeu de mistere de la Passion, R  surrection et Vengeance de Nostre Seigneur Jhesucrist" in Aire-sur-la-Lys. Although intended for the townsfolk, it was to be a splendid occasion.³⁸ The glorification of knighthood in the play

³⁵ Wright (1989) pp.125-6.

³⁶ Wright (1989) p.118.

³⁷ Wright (1989) pp.120-2.

³⁸ Wright (1989) pp.117.

would naturally have appealed to Philip the Good, as indeed would the subject-matter, as Philip desired above all to lead a crusade to liberate Jerusalem.

Day one of *La Vengeance Jhesucrist* details the history of Judaea and Rome from the time of Christ until forty-two years after His execution.³⁹ It covers Vespasian's illness and cure, and the activities of Caiaphas, Annas and Pilate. Day two is given over to learned exposition, the search for the relic and Veronica, while the final day is characterised by violence. The poor man who prophesies the end of Jerusalem is killed by a rock, Nero commits suicide, the civil disruption and violent ends of Otho, Galba and Vitellius are re-enacted. During the famine in Jerusalem women are depicted eating cats, dogs, and their own children. Finally, the city is completely destroyed with much carnage, with the Jews killed for their gold and foiled in their attempts to rebuild their city. *La Vengeance Jhesucrist* has six substantial sermons, each delivered by a preacher, which provide moral and doctrinal instruction as well as explaining the actions that occur in the play, rather like the Thuringian *Ludas de assumptione beatae Mariae Virginis* and its series of sermons preached by the apostles.⁴⁰ Preaching was the chief means through which men were encouraged to go on *reysas*, pilgrimages and campaigns. There are two expositors in *La Vengeance Jhesucrist*, one of whom is a preacher who exhorts the audience to learn from the fate of Jews and apply what they discover to their own lives. Stephen Wright comments that "Marcadé pictures the Jews as radical nominalists who are trapped by their

³⁹ See the microfiche of the text included in Wright (1989).

⁴⁰ See the microfiche of the play included in Wright (1989).

own futile pursuit of pure rationality”.⁴¹ They are thus incapable of perceiving truth and accepting Christianity:

Comment osés vous soustenir
Par mauvaise inclinacïon?
C'est grant orgueil, abhominacïon,
De vous si longuement tenir
En cest orgueil et maintenir
Que Jhesu, nostre doulz Sauveur,
N'estoit point vostre createur.
Bien vous en devroit souvenir,
Car vous verrés sur vous venir
Pour ceste cause grant douleur. (5627-38)⁴²

In the cannibalism episode we find that not merely does one woman kill her son and eat him, but the other women witnessing her action decide to follow her lead in a scene that echoes the massacre of the Innocents (lines 12695-12831). Jean-Pierre Bordier argues that the play not only presents an opposition between Rome and Jerusalem, but parallels the ferocious crimes of the Jews with the pagans in Rome, and that the play is basically advocating a universal crusade to convert the entire world to the way of God.⁴³ Each day begins and ends with a preacher delivering a moralising sermon, and concludes with a homily on how Titus and Vespasian were not completely Christian, despite their flawless chivalry, as the preaching available was inadequate:

Et combien que ces deux seigneurs
Furent tous deux de bonnes meurs,
Comme il est assez averé,
Point ne furent regeneré
Ou saint sacrement de baptesme

⁴¹ Wright (1989) p.169.

⁴² “How dare you maintain such wicked ways? It is great arrogance on your part, an abomination, to persist so long in this pride and to claim that Jesus, our dear saviour, is not your creator. Indeed, you will be forced to remember it, for someday you will see great sorrow come upon you for this very reason.” (Wright, 1989. p.167)

⁴³ Bordier (1986) pp.93-124 passim. See also Batany (1986) pp. 83-92 on depictions of the men of Rome.

N'oncques ne receuprent le cresse
 Que les bons crestiens reçoivent.
 Ceulx qui le dient se deçoivent.....
 Bien est vray que Vaspasien
 Et Titus amerent tresbien
 Jhesus et eurent bien creance
 Qu'il estoit de haulte puissance,
 Mais pour ce que les bons prescheurs
 Estoient encore en cremeurs
 Par la tyrannie Neron
 Dedans Romme et la environ,
 Et après la mort des apostres,
 Heures, sermons et patenostres
 Disoient comme adevinchons,
 Pout tant assés sçavoir povons
 Que Vaspasien et Titus
 Ne furent point des fais de Jhesus
 Informés ne de sa puissance,
 De la foy ne de la creance,
 Comme on les eust peu informer
 Qui eust oser sermonner. (lines 14509-14516, 14519-14536)⁴⁴

Wright comments that "the implicit suggestion to a Christian audience is that the perfect spiritual conversion of the western empire is a mission which is yet to be accomplished".⁴⁵ This is possibly directed at the playwright's patrons, who were men of political ambition, with dreams of crusading glory, which they had to reconcile with their Christian beliefs. The earliest Vengeance of Our Lord play is the *Ludas de assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis* from Thuringia in the second quarter of the fourteenth century. There is a link between the knights of the Teutonic order and the *Ludas de assumptione beatae Mariae Virginis* and it was

⁴⁴ Quoted by Wright (1989) pp.184-5: And although (as has often been established) these two kings were both men of excellent character, they were never born again through the holy sacrament of baptism, nor did they ever receive the chrism that good Christians receive. Those who say that they did are mistaken. Indeed, it is true that Vespasian and Titus loved Jesus very much, and they certainly believed that he was a man of extraordinary power, but because the good preachers were still afraid on account of the tyranny of Nero in Rome and the surrounding region, we can easily imagine how they said their canonical hours, sermons and paternosters after the death of the apostles, and that is how we know quite well that Vespasian and Titus were never informed about what Jesus did, nor about his power, nor about faith or belief, as they could have been if only someone had dared to preach.

⁴⁵ Wright (1989) p.185.

performed on a scale comparable to the French dramatisations. In the *Ludas de assumptione beatae Mariae Virginis* the king commands his knights to continue their attacks on the Jews until they convert to Christianity (2641-4), and the warriors do so with great violence. The play concentrates on individual spiritual development and public ceremonies (baptism of royal couple 2578-606, the retinue of knights become an order of Christian knights 2723-3604), rather than on heroic deeds or battle scenes. Thus the stories of Titus and Vespasian's deeds could be and had been redacted in ways that promoted crusading feelings, revealing a stance close to popular anti-Judaism in the desire to destroy or convert all adherents of Judaism. This genre of plays proved quite popular with a short play entitled *Aucto de la Destruicion de Jerusalem*⁴⁶ surviving in Castile, dating from the mid sixteenth century, while the earliest extant example from England is a Latin Senecan tragedy composed by Thomas Legge in the late sixteenth century, performed possibly at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he was chancellor. At the same time in Coventry, city municipal and trade records reveal that vernacular plays on the subject of the Vengeance of Our Lord were staged and written for the townsfolk, with John Smith commissioned to write a play along continental lines for the city.⁴⁷

Anti-Semitism and Anti-Judaism

Christian anti-Judaism developed as a consequence of the fact that Christian identity was heavily dependant on Judaic beliefs. Jews maintained a strong sense

⁴⁶ See the microfiche of the text included in Wright (1989). Wright also reproduces the texts of *Amorbacher Marienhimmelfahrtsspiel* and *Gothaer Botenrolle*.

⁴⁷ Wright (1989) pp.195-204.

of identity and this seemed to pose a threat to Christianity, a challenge to its integrity. From the very beginning Christian thinkers expended a great deal of energy in rationalising the Jewish position as wrong. Pagan anti-Judaism had simply seen Jews as completely different, an alien group.⁴⁸ Christians tried to prove that they themselves were the true followers of God and that most followers of Judaism before Jesus and all of those subsequently were inferior and the adversaries of Christendom.⁴⁹ There were three forms of this argument: doctrinal, legal, and popular. Initially Jews were tolerated and even protected by the church as external witnesses to God, though they were blinded towards Christ. Augustine had argued that the existence of the Jews proved the truth of the Old Testament, and their dispersal and humbled position emphasised their error in rejecting Christ.⁵⁰ The perspective of the *Siege of Jerusalem* resembles Augustine's view of the Jews, as although the poet believes the Jews are wrong he is sympathetic to the plight of the starving ordinary folk and does not advocate their destruction. By the end of the fourteenth century this more tolerant attitude towards the subscribers of the Judaic faith had been generally superseded. The shift of power from the local level of the Catholic church to the

⁴⁸ Langmuir (1990 b) p.7.

⁴⁹ Langmuir (1990 b) p.58.

⁵⁰ Cohen (1982) p.20. See Grayzel (1966) for a survey of papal attitudes to Jews and a collection of papal letters and conciliar decrees on this topic. Cohen (1983) pp.1-27 describes how until the twelfth century the Jews were held to have executed Christ as they were ignorant of His true nature. This was the view of Augustine and biblical passages were cited in proof of this (Luke 23:34, Acts of the Apostles 3:17, 1 Corinthians 2:7-8). There were only occasional exceptions to this view, such as Bede. A change occurred in the twelfth century with Anselm of Laon, for instance, distinguishing between the leaders of the Jews and the general populace, arguing that only the latter were completely ignorant and that the former knew He was the Messiah, but failed to realise that He was divine. Robert of Melun concurred and stated that this blindness stemmed from envy, and this is why they killed Him. It was not until the advent of the friars and their domination of theological writing that doctrinal views of the Jews were completely revised. Duns Scotus and Nicholas of Lyre removed the distinction between the Jews' awareness that Jesus was the Messiah and their failure to perceive His divinity. Their crime was therefore intentional and thus in the thirteenth century the traditional policy of toleration of the Jews was abandoned.

papacy, and the Investiture Contest between the Emperor and the papacy over the appointment of bishops and the beginning of the Papal Reform movement initiated this process. Legislation was used to structure society according to ecclesiastical doctrine, restricting contact between Jews and Christians, and reducing the status of the former in order to prevent Christians being influenced by wrong thinking. These attempts to legislate against the Jews did not gain full momentum until the eleventh century when popular non-officially instigated anti-Judaism appeared, which was particularly pronounced in northern Europe and associated with the First Crusade.⁵¹

Ecclesiastical authorities, as opposed to civic authorities, only turned against the Jews when they were no longer useful for validating Christianity. This coincided with the threat of heretical beliefs within Christianity. Thus in the thirteenth century attempts to convert the Jews or expel them began in earnest. Most of the impetus came from friars, who from their foundation in the early part of this century oversaw virtually all the confrontations with the Jews, in their varied roles as inquisitors, missionaries, disputants, polemicists, scholars and itinerant preachers.⁵² Many of the members of these orders came from the middle classes and the involvement of individuals who came from families involved in trade and so forth legitimised the profit economy. Their attitude towards the Jews was violently antagonistic. The Franciscan Henry of Wadstone was responsible for the decree in 1271 which banned Jews from holding freeholds in England, and it was owing to his efforts that the Jews were

⁵¹ Langmuir (1990 b) pp.58-9.

⁵² Cohen (1982) p.13.

ultimately expelled from England in 1290.⁵³ Innocent III condemned heresy as the worst sin and inaugurated special legatine missions to crush it. Gregory IX gave the Dominicans special judicial powers to carry the work further.⁵⁴ This had direct implications for the Jews, who were believed to assist heretics. Nicholas Donin, a convert from Judaism to Christianity, was the first to direct the attention of the Pope and the mendicants to the Talmud, attacking the very foundation of the Jewries in Europe.⁵⁵ He was followed by Raymond de Peñaforte who established Dominican *studia* to teach Arabic and Hebrew to equip missionaries to dispute matters of the faith and convert infidels.⁵⁶ The thirteenth century brought the foundation of universities, scholasticism, unease at the legacy of Greek philosophy, and a new-found awareness of the extent of Muslim power.⁵⁷ Jews were seen as one element in the range of forces that were threatening Christendom from within and without. Missionizing was envisaged as a new alternative tactic to combat Muslims, Jews and heretics. Focus on one group inevitably led to interest in the others. In many areas of Christendom Jews were the only dissenting group. From 1242 onwards the Church and secular

⁵³ Cohen (1982) p.43.

⁵⁴ Cohen (1982) pp.44-5.

⁵⁵ Cohen (1982) pp.60-76.

⁵⁶ Cohen (1982) p.107. This kind of activity was carried further in the lines of argumentation expounded in the works and actions of Paul Christian, Raymond Martin, Nicholas of Lyra and Raymond Lull (Cohen 1982, pp.108-225). Although these activities affected ecclesiastical views of Jews, they had little effect on the general public. Thus Matfre Ermengand in his poetry, Berthold von Regensburg and Giordano da Rivalto through sermons, endeavoured to carry this ideology to the people. Jeremy Cohen (1982) pp.244-5 on the basis of his studies holds that the friars undoubtedly played a role in the stereotyping and hatred of the Jews due to their greater contact with the laity as itinerant preachers. Peter IV of Aragon had to reproach the Dominicans and Franciscans for preaching sermons that were so filled with animosity that they led to Jews being murdered and their property destroyed (Cohen 1982, p.84). See Chazan (1989) pp.30-9, 50-180.

⁵⁷ Robert Chazan (1989, pp.26-7) concurs that until the thirteenth century conversion of the Jews was not that important and that it was believed that they would all convert at the Day of Judgement.

authorities combined to force Jews and Muslims to attend sermons aimed at conversion.⁵⁸

All this resulted in a change in the way most people thought and gave rise to personal doubts concerning religious matters.⁵⁹ In the eleventh and twelfth centuries new religious movements appeared, which placed emphasis on the Holy Spirit and encouraged people to think for themselves.⁶⁰ This led to debates over the Eucharist and Incarnation. It is in this context that popular anti-Judaism developed, which was to find its fullest expression in the activities of the popular crusaders in the area between the Seine and the Rhine in 1096. These people lived in an area of accelerated social change which caused many problems including a loss of a sense of identity, and roused by Peter the Hermit they were inspired to commit massacres of the Jews, contrary to the normal behaviour of the burghers and the secular and ecclesiastical authorities. By banding together against enemies they discovered a sense of community. These attacks consisted of mainly random violence, financial exploitation for provisions, attempted forced conversions and a few military assaults. The forces of Count Emicho in particular were inspired by Peter the Hermit and these bands consisted of fewer soldiers than the other groups, which conveys how it wasn't instigated by the state or church. Count Emicho of Leiningen believed that he was summoned by divine revelation, a latter-day Saul. He and his followers developed a "dissident reading of crusading doctrine", in which they saw the call

⁵⁸ Chazan (1989) p.38.

⁵⁹ Langmuir (1990 b) p.87.

⁶⁰ Langmuir (1990 b) p.119.

to go on crusade as an opportunity to establish their identity in the face of all the forces disrupting Christendom.⁶¹ They interpreted the crusading slogans in an extreme way and sought to avenge the crucified Christ on the Jews, and not just to capture the Holy Land. Secular and ecclesiastical authorities tried to curb their actions with only limited success. During later crusades there was more church control and similar outbreaks of violence were more or less contained, except for a few cases at York and Stamford during the Third Crusade, in the Rhineland during the Second Crusade and in France during the Shepherds' Crusades of 1251 and 1320.

Popular anti-Judaism, combined with the Jews' legal and economic demarcations, the rise of missionizing in response to Christian doubts and the threats to Christian identity, facilitated the emergence of anti-Semitism. This took the form of wild accusations, such as those that Jews were responsible for the Black Death and host desecration. In 1136 and 1150 the first irrational accusations against the Jews appeared when they were charged with crucifying Christian children to gain revenge on Christ.⁶² The allegation of host desecration grew up in the thirteenth century as a response to the many doubts surrounding the Eucharist felt by both theologians and the laity. These were often explicated through tales relating miraculous proofs of its veracity. This was confounded by the alienated position of Jews and their disbelief in the Eucharist. The "Eucharist's vulnerability" was combined with the sense of "Jewish otherness". Muri Rubin explains that "to the phobic psyche, and to the poor

⁶¹ Chazan (1987) p.65.

⁶² Langmuir (1990 b) p.232.

parish priest, and to the poor townsfolk, and to indebted knights, participation in the narrative could be constructed as an act equally pious and advantageous."⁶³ The result was that by the end of the thirteenth century irrational and fantastic fears about Jews were commonplace and anti-Semitism had become part of the culture.

The history of the Jews in England is dominated by financial exploitation. In 1179 pope Alexander III demanded that the king intervene to protect the monks of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, during business transactions with the Jews.⁶⁴ The Jews in England were intrinsically linked to the Crown, and they endeavoured to remain on good terms with the monarch, although with decreasing success as time passed. When Richard I was crowned in London a small group of representatives brought gifts, and all went well until some tried to see the ceremony, an action which provoked violence and an attack on the London Jewry.⁶⁵ The Crusades sparked further violence, and the Jewries in King's Lynn, Stamford, Lincoln, York, Dunstable and possibly Colchester, Thetford and Ospringe came under assault. The culprits were later disciplined as the attacks resulted in a decrease in the King's income from the Jewries.⁶⁶ All Jewish property was registered, and six or seven centuries of Jewish business established, and this was regularly tapped by the King.⁶⁷ From John's reign

⁶³ Rubin (1992 b) p.175. Giordano da Rivalto amongst others helped propagate this claim. See also Langmuir (1990 b) pp.209-98 where he traces the history of many other wild allegations hurled at the Jews.

⁶⁴ Roth (1964) p.18.

⁶⁵ Roth (1964) p.19.

⁶⁶ Roth (1964) pp.20-6.

⁶⁷ Roth (1964) p.28.

onwards they were increasingly taxed and controlled.⁶⁸ Other factors aggravated their problems: the civil war and the loss of Normandy which cut them off from the continent.⁶⁹ England was the first country to enforce the anti-Jewish code of the Third Lateran Council of 1178-9, and in 1218 they were required to wear the Jewish badge.⁷⁰ In the entry for the year 1137 in *The Peterborough Chronicle* we are told of a little boy called William who was tortured and crucified by the Jews in Norwich on Good Friday,⁷¹ and in the following years many similar tales were circulated. The Jews continued to figure prominently in royal financial policy and this led to them featuring in the struggle between Henry III and his barons. By the time Henry III died they were financially destitute as all their wealth had gone in taxes, and due to new laws large financial undertakings were not possible.⁷² By 1276 they were barred from moneylending and in 1290 they were expelled.⁷³

Hence when the *Siege of Jerusalem* was written the Jews had long since ceased to be a social threat in England and were important only for their ideological significance. Thus by choosing to write about them the poet is attempting to raise certain issues, and the issues he decides to concentrate on are whether warfare is justified even against a people who are perceived to be God's enemies. He is troubled by violence and the horrors of warfare and hence he

⁶⁸ Roth (1964) p.32.

⁶⁹ Roth (1964) pp.34-6.

⁷⁰ Roth (1964) p.40.

⁷¹ *A Book of Middle English* (1996) pp.79-80.

⁷² Roth (1964) pp.59-68.

⁷³ Roth (1964) pp. 70-85.

rejects popular anti-Judaism, which decreed that the Jews should be annihilated or converted, and anti-Semitism, which demonised the Jews as inherently evil and argued that they should be eradicated, and bases his approach on doctrinal anti-Judaism. As he was particularly interested in the topics of heroism and war-making he does not deal with legal anti-Judaism, the laws which regulated the daily life of Jewish people in European countries. The result of this is that he presents his story in a manner which runs counter to the dominant literary trends of the time. The effect of this contrast between the poem and other literary works highlights his project of raising awareness of the problems consequent on military campaigns.

Literary Representations of the Enemies of Christendom

Many Middle English romances contain a similar ideological stance to the dramatic representations of the destruction of Jerusalem. The *Siege of Jerusalem* bears certain similarities to these romances, but differs greatly from them on other points, due to its concern with the moral issues involved in warfare and its consequent attitude to the foes of Christendom. If the *Siege of Jerusalem* were anti-Semitic in orientation it should display the violent animosity towards infidels that, for instance, *Richard Coeur de Lion* does. There are no other romances in English which specifically deal with the Jews as the chief adversaries, but Saracens were usually envisaged as the enemies on the edge of Christendom, while the Jews were usually seen as the foes within, and consequently attitudes to both were often similar. The *Siege of Jerusalem*, unlike the dramatic texts, is not the product of popular anti-Judaism which proposed the

forced conversion and/ or extermination of the Hebrew race. It advocates doctrinal anti-Judaism, an opposition to Judaic beliefs but toleration of its adherents, as the poet re-examines the reality of violent conflict. This is evident in the way the *Siege of Jerusalem* deals with: (i) the representation of Christians and non-Christians, (ii) violence, (iii) exotic elements and money, (iv) religion, (v) Church representatives, (vi) conversion, and (vii) exhortations to go on crusades, in the light of comparison with Middle English crusading and Charlemagne romances such as *Richard Coeur de Lion*, *Capystranus*, *The Sege off Melayne* and the *Sowdone of Babylone*.

Richard Coeur de Lion was analysed earlier in Chapter Two, so it is necessary only to introduce the other three texts now. The *Sowdone of Babylone* is one of a group of Charlemagne romances which relate the deeds of Ferumbras, the Sultan's son. It survives in a single manuscript, Princeton University Library Ms. Garrett 140, dating from the fifteenth century and is of east-Midlands provenance.⁷⁴ Like most English Charlemagne romances it is probably based on a French romance, though the original has not survived. It is an abridgement of the action in the *Destruction of Rome* and *Fierabras*. Smyser concludes on the basis of his study of the *Sowdone of Babylone* that it could have been written by a bilingual Englishman who was working from memory, rather than directly from a manuscript source. He finds that the poet had little sympathy with France and was either unaware of or uninterested in Charlemagne legends, judging

⁷⁴ See Paris (1879) p.479; Gröber (1880) pp.163-70; Hausknecht (1884) pp.160-4. Brandin (1899) pp.489-507 and Gröber (1873) pp.1-48 discuss manuscripts of the *Destruction of Rome*. Bédier (1888) pp. 22-51 looks at sources of the Ferumbras story, Ritter (1881) p.634 considers its popularity and Ailes (1989) passim considers the development of the English and French romances of the tale, providing a critique of theories proposed by earlier scholars (pp.270-350 focus on *Sowdone of Babylone*).

from the freedom he displayed in his handling of the story, adding and omitting much as he pleased.⁷⁵ Narrated at a lively pace, it displays what W.R.J. Barron describes as “unabashed violence, crusading indignation” as well as “mutual loyalty between comrades in arms”.⁷⁶ Unfortunately, there is a certain looseness in structure and there are a number of inconsistencies. A vague correlation to historic events is present in the poem, in that there was an expedition against the Lombards who were threatening the Papacy in 773. At a later date the Lombards were replaced by Saracens in the surviving verse texts of the *Ferumbras* legend as a result of the prevailing fascination with the crusades.⁷⁷ Apart from the spirited way in which it is narrated, the rendition is notable for its use of exotic detail.⁷⁸ The English redactor adds facts about Saracen customs and more Saracen names than appear in any version of *Fierabras* or the *Destruction of Rome*. In the *Sowdone of Babyllone* Laban celebrates the fall of Rome by burning frankincense to appease the gods, while his men blow brazen horns with cries of “Antrarian”. The celebration is crowned by a feast of milk, honey, the blood of wild animals and snakes fried in oil (676-90). On three occasions Laban loses his temper with his gods, repents of his anger and performs a religious ceremony to regain their favour.

The Sege off Melayne was written in the second half of the fourteenth century in northern dialect and survives in a sole manuscript, BL. Ms. Additional

⁷⁵ Smyser (1931 a) pp.217-8, (1931 b) p.67.

⁷⁶ Barron (1987) p.102.

⁷⁷ Billings (1901, 1927) p.49. See Smyser (1931 a) pp.185-218, (1931 b) pp.51-114; Roques (1901) pp.161-81; Cowen (1996) pp.161-2; and Metlitzki (1977) pp.117-36 and Ailes (1989) pp.17-29 for the historical background of Middle English romances about Arab subject-matter.

⁷⁸ Smyser (1931 a) p.209.

31042. Though composed of stock elements from Charlemagne romances,⁷⁹ it does not appear to have been part of the original cycle, but is possibly based on a lost French original,⁸⁰ though Dieter Mehl hypothesises that it may have “originated in England” on account of its focus.⁸¹ It narrates the story of the savage attack on Milan by the Saracens, and how this was avenged. The threats to Milan, the replacing of Christian icons and crucifixes with idols, and the flight of Alantyne are similar to incidents which one can find in the *Destruction of Rome*,⁸² while the burning of Saracen advisers is comparable to the burning of Lucafer in *Fierabras*. *The Sege off Melayne* shows signs of having been influenced by the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*.⁸³ The gifts given by the king of Macedones to Garsie are similar to those Ganelon receives in the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, and the visions of angels which Richard and Charlemagne have are more than likely inspired by that in chapter twenty-five of the chronicle.⁸⁴ The work focuses firmly on the necessity of bolstering the Christian faith with several divinely instigated miraculous occurrences.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ See Stones (1996) pp.169-203 for a detailed account of Charlemagne iconography.

⁸⁰ Smyser (1931 b) p.210.

⁸¹ Mehl (1968) p.153.

⁸² Smyser (1931 b) p.211.

⁸³ See S.H.A. Shepherd (1996) pp.19-34 on the Middle English *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* and its connection with *The Sege off Melayne*. The *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* was extremely popular and survives in several hundred Latin and vernacular manuscripts. It was reputedly written by the archbishop when he, according to popular legend, survived the battle at Roncevaux. It is basically the fruit of “pious propagandists eager to turn to the Church’s advantage the broad appeal of popular poetic legend, and unscrupulous enough to impose their fabrication on an unsuspecting public as an authentic chronicle with an ecclesiastical *imprimatur*” (*The Anglo-Norman “Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle” of William de Briane* (1973) p.1). See further Short (1970) pp.525-32; Smyser (1937) pp.433-8; Smyser (1936) pp.277-93; Short (1969) pp.1-22.

⁸⁴ Smyser (1931 b) pp.211, 214.

⁸⁵ See Barron (1987) p.97.

Finally we come to *Capystranus*, a late Middle English metrical romance, on the 1456 siege of Belgrade, first printed by Wynkyn de Worde c.1515⁸⁶ which amply illustrates this long-term popularity of the crusades in England and its influence on literature. It follows in the tradition of the Charlemagne romances, containing conventional formulae and tags, and is intended to raise enthusiasm for a new crusade against the Ottomans through its panegyric of the fighting monk, Capistrano. The publication and the two reprints highlight the importance of the subject matter, the Turkish threat to Christendom.

i Representation of Christians and Non-Christians

In the *Sowdone of Babylone* Charlemagne and Laban are presented throughout as polar opposites, with their personal power and religious beliefs contrasted.⁸⁷ Laban on no occasion during his life displays any pity or mercy, killing Charlemagne's messengers (1682-3), and deriding the names of his own children when he learns that they have become Christians.⁸⁸ Charlemagne, on the other hand, is merciful to both Ferumbras and Floripas when he learns they wish to be Christians and thanks them for their help. He even tries to spare Laban's life, and have him baptised, but is foiled by Laban's spiteful temper (3165-70). The

⁸⁶ Petrovics and Szönyi (1986) p.141. Eva Rona (1971) p.345, 350-1 holds that it was probably written directly for the press, most likely based on eye-witness accounts, although several contemporary English writers referred to the siege of Belgrade in their chronicles.

⁸⁷ See Bancourt II (1982) pp.829-906 on literary depictions of the political relationship between Saracens and Christians and pp.600-20 on the Saracens' supposed dabbling in magic.

⁸⁸ All quotations from *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances* (1990). See also *The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras His Sone Who Conquered Rome* (1881) and Paris (1882) pp.149-53.

Christian monarch is not an all powerful figure, for his rescue of the twelve peers is delayed due to the treacherous tongue of Ganelon, who informs him that they are dead (2819-30). Ganelon is later hanged for his trouble when Charlemagne discovers the truth. The result of this clear distinction between the Christians and their enemies is that it is impossible to sympathise with the Saracens and their eventual destruction is to be rejoiced at.

Charlemagne is described in *The Sege off Melayne* as being superior to all other kings (94-5).⁸⁹ Fundamentally, the basic opposition between Christians and non-Christians is presented in a similar manner to the previous text. Contrasted to Charlemagne and his men are the Saracens who have wrongfully attacked Lombardy, robbing the Christians of their wealth, destroying cities and the power of the Pope. They are “cursed” wretches (310), and as the Duke of Burgundy says when comforting the noble Christian knights, those who fight the heathen shall escape the pains of hell (352-60). We are encouraged to celebrate the violent crushing of the terrible enemies of Christianity.

In *Richard Coeur de Lion* the Sultan is depicted as devious, trying to poison the water of the Christians with corpses (2747-56). A magician is employed by him to use the devil’s craft to try to kill Richard, an act “wip schame” (5548), but fortunately Richard’s attention is alerted by an angel. Nothing is too bad for these infidels, and this comes across clearly when the Sultan sends messengers to Richard (3376ff.). Richard orders his Saracen captives to be killed and decapitated. Their severed heads are roasted and placed

⁸⁹ All quotations are from *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances* (1990). See also *Six Middle English Romances* (1973) and *The Sege off Melayne* (1880)

on platters with their names in front, and in this guise they are then served to the Saracens who think that Richard is mad, and eat their countrymen's heads in fear:

And slee þe Sarezynes dounry3t,
Wassche þe fflesch, and roste þe hede;
Wiþ oo Sarezyn j may wel ffede
Wel a nyne, or a ten
Off my goode Crystene-men. (3542-6)

A head is placed between each of two guests and one is served to Richard:

Beffore Kyng Rycharde a kny3ht in haste
Karff off þe hed, and he eet ffaste
Wiþ teep he grond þe flesch ful harde,
As a wood lyoun he ffarde,
Wiþ hys eyen stepe and grym. (3607-11)

Richard's aim is in fact "to slee þe houndes non ne sparde" (4054), though he allows those who converted and were baptised in Acre to remain alive. Here we see that the heathen are despised by the poet and depicted as genuinely evil, underhand and shameful, and no fate is too horrible for such monsters to endure.

Similarly in *Capysstranus* the Turks are said to be "kene" (87), "hethen houndes" (46) and dogs (105). Machymte, the Turkish Sultan, is treacherous, "untrue" (58), and like the king Pharaoh, guilty of arson and the massacre of men, women and children, desecrating churches and causing the streets to run with blood in his conquest of Constantinople (lines 58-81). He tortures to death the "doughty" Emperor of the city:

He bad them bete hym with scourges kene,
And, after, bore out his eyen
With wymbles hote and reed;
They plucked his here, by and by;
And bothe his eeres on hy
They cut of his heed;

With pynsors his tethe they brake.. (184-90)⁹⁰

Capistrano is aided in his endeavours by the good Earl Obedyanus, an English knight Richard Morpath, a host of friars, and many others. The theme of heaven versus hell runs throughout the narrative building upon the allusion to the harrowing of hell in the opening section. We are told that when the Christians die at the hands of the Turks:

Aungelles theyr soules bare above
To blysse and moche solace. (lines 91-2)

The Turks worship Mahounde who is equated with Satan (line 394). They are continually called fiends and are destined for hell when they are killed (line 113).

If we compare this kind of characterisation to that in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, we find that although there are certain similarities there are a great many more differences. In the *Siege of Jerusalem* Titus and Vespasian are depicted as noble men as opposed to the wicked Jewish leaders, similar to the contrast posed between Charlemagne and Laban or between Richard and Saladin. However, the focus is purely on Titus and Vespasian, with a brief mention of Sabyn and Domitian, and there is no parallel to the twelve peers. The Roman leaders are powerful and not victims of any treachery like that perpetrated by Ganelon or by the French in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, and they undertake the orchestration of the campaign themselves, not taking the back seat to combats by other individuals as in the *Sowdone of Babylone*. The main difference in attitude between the *Siege of Jerusalem* and the other romances is their respective attitudes towards, and perceptions of, the adversaries. There is a

⁹⁰ All quotations from *Middle English Romances* (1995).

certain amount of sympathy in the *Siege of Jerusalem* for the citizens of the city, who are not depicted as dogs or fiends. They are simply tyrannised and forced into an untenable position by their wicked leaders. Many wish to desert, something which is encouraged by Titus who instructs his men:

To for[g]yue hem þe gult, þat þey to God wro3t;
And he grantep hem grace and gaylers bytau3t. (1159-60)

In passages such as this, the poet expresses doctrinal anti-Judaism, that is to say a hostility towards the tenets of the Jewish faith, but a willingness to forgive upon conversion. This differs from popular anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism, “hostility that had primarily economic and social causes”, which aims at nothing less than the destruction of the Jews.⁹¹ Titus displays compassion for the plight of ordinary folk:

þan Titus toward his tentis tourneþ hym sone,
Makeþ mynour[s] and men, þe myne to stoppe;
After profreþ pes for pyte þat he hadde,
Whan he wist of here wo þat were withyn stoken.
Bot Jon þe jenfulle þat þe Jewes ladde,
An oþer Symond of his assent forsoke þe profre. (1129-34)

On the other hand he shows little mercy to the wicked leaders of the Jews, devising grievous punishments for Caiaphas and his men of law (693-724). They are the ones who condemned Christ so they are tortured to death, but the ordinary Jews, though in the wrong, had little choice as they were forced to do what their leaders demanded.

ii Violence

⁹¹ A distinction made by Langmuir (1990 a) and (1990 b) *passim*. Langmuir (1992) pp.77-92; Moore (1992) pp.33-57 and Rubin (1992 b) pp.169-185 provide descriptions of the Jewish stereotypes that were created and augmented by anti-Semitism and which fueled hatred of the Jews.

One of the features of these texts which undoubtedly appealed to their intended audiences is the focus on violence.⁹² The narrative of the *Sowdone of Babylone* includes many accounts of single combats, such as that between Oliver and Roland (see below), battles, as well as the siege of the tower in which Floripas and the twelve peers are contained. The tower is attacked by 20,000 men hurling stones and wielding mattocks and pickaxes. However, the virtuous Christians are ultimately successful and the violence is seen as justified as the villains are overcome.

Likewise *The Sege off Melayne* provides us with several prolonged and detailed battle-scenes and combats between knights, such as Charlemagne's fight with a Saracen:

And Charles voydede his broken brande;
Owte he hent a knyfe in hande.
And samen thay wente full tytte.
Thay daschede full darfely with thaire dynt.
Mighte no steryn stele tham stynt.
So styffely bothe thaty smyte.
In sondre braste thay many a mayle;
Thaire hawberghes thurgh force gan fayle. (1066-73)

The killing of infidels is a pleasant and desirable activity and the poet takes great delight in describing the violence.

In terms of violent subject-matter, few texts can match *Richard Coeur de Lion*. It relates acts of extreme cruelty, gruesome fighting, torture, and acts of vengeance. For instance, when Jakes de Nys is captured by the Saracens, Richard and his men are provoked to fight ferociously with the intention of rescuing him:

⁹² See Bancourt II (1982), passim, on literary depictions of the Saracens in combat.

Many a Saresyn loste þere his broþir,
And manye off þe heþene houndes
Wiþ here teef gnow3 þe groundes.
By þe blood vpon þe gras
Men my3te see where Richard was!
Brayn and blood he schadde jnow3,
Many an hors hys guttes drow3. (5114-20)

In *Capystranus* we read of the atrocities of the vicious heathens and the ferocious battles to quell them. The poet enthusiastically relates how the true knights of Christendom decapitated the Turks and:

Ychone hewe on other with ire
That all the felde semed fyre
Also lyght as leme of thonder.
Every man hurte other in hast
And layde on basynettes to braynes brast;
And ever the false fell under.
The blode ranne all the felde
Of doughty men under schelde;
To se it was grete wonder. (537-45)

In contrast to this the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet narrates Titus and Vespasian's mission as a just campaign, the ultimate aim of which is the avenging of the death of Christ (491), but at the same time the poet queries the necessity of so much violence. The siege is more realistically described, with no challenges to single combat. The Romans have a belfry full of arms (386), which is constructed with a tower (409-10). We read how Vespasian divides his forces into three sections, one led by himself, a second by Titus, and the third by Sabyn, and how he ensures that some men are left to guard the camp (425-38). Meanwhile the Jews put up a stout defence, pouring lead and brimstone on the assailants (670-2), to which the Romans respond by retreating and enclosing the

city with an earthwork, filling the ditches with corpses to create a stench and cutting off the water supply (677-88).⁹³

From the 1260s onwards there is some evidence of opposition to crusades, with the Franciscan Roger Bacon advocating peaceful means of conversion, on the grounds that violence merely alienates gentiles and those who are killed will go straight to hell. Similar sentiments were expressed by the Joachites and Fra Salimbene, though the thinking of the majority remained in favour of crusades, and felt as Humbert of Romans did that it was charity to send unbelievers to hell.⁹⁴ These are the kinds of issues present in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, which as Elisa Narin van Court notes, has a “sympathetic narrative strand that complicates what has been considered to be a straightforward and brutal poetic.”⁹⁵ It raises questions about what it presents, considering why there are such horrific events when it is apparently a just war, and querying the actions that result from popular anti-Judaism. When Titus learns that such a large number of Jews have died in the city through starvation that there is no room to bury them, necessitating the disposal of the corpses over the city walls, he beseeches Josephus to exhort the citizens to surrender and preserve themselves. He instructs the Roman soldiers to be merciful to those who leave the city (lines 1147-54).

⁹³ See Hebron (1997) pp.123-7; McGeer (1995) pp.124-9; Chevedden (1995) pp.131-65.

⁹⁴Siberry (1983) pp.107-10. Haines (1981) pp.369-88 notes how there were some mass demonstrations for peace in the Middle Ages, such as the “Alleluia” movement which took place in Italy in 1233, and the flagellant movement in 1260. Furthermore, there were peaceful religious communities like the Penitents and Humiliati. On the whole, though, pacifism or anti-war sentiment was a matter for the individual and was not sanctioned by the Church or state. Theological and philosophical writings on the subject of peace were ambivalent.

⁹⁵ Narin van Court (1995) p.229.

iii Exotic elements and money

Laban in the *Sowdone of Babylone*, as has already been noted, on several occasions berates his gods when the tide of battle goes against him:

“O ye goddes, ye faile at nede,
That I have honoured so longe.
I shalle you bren, so mote I spede,
In a fayre fyre ful stronge.
Shalle I never more on you bileve
But renaye you playnly alle.” (2431-6)

His advisers persuade him against this course of action as it is liable to rebound against them all. Chastened, Laban decides to make an offering to his gods so that they will not exact vengeance. On other occasions he vows by Mahounde to take the city (where the twelve peers and his daughter are), or else appeals to Jupiter (2059-60, 2252-4). It is all to no avail, as his gods are incapable of helping him.⁹⁶ Finally, when he sees his treasure plundered he rejects them completely (2487-92). When pitted against Charlemagne he sends for exotic reinforcements from India Major, Asia, Ascolon, Venice, Phrygia, Ethiopia, Nubia, Turkey, Barbary, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Europe:

All these people was gadred to Agremore,
Thre hundred thousand of Sarsyns felle,
Some bloo, some yolowe, some blake as More,
Some horrible and stronge as devel of helle.
He made hem drinke wilde beestes bloode,
Of tigre, antilope and of camalyon,
As is her use to egre her mode,
When thai in were battayle goon. (1003-10)⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Metlitzki (1977) p.209 notes that Islam was often linked with belief in pagan gods and mythical figures

⁹⁷ Ailes (1989) p.672 points out that the *Sowdone of Babylone* poet focuses more than his sources on the barbarity and ferocity of the Saracens.

This was a traditional way of characterising the enemies of Christian knights. These oriental elements and the prodigious quantities of wealth rendered them mysterious, on the periphery of society and as such to be feared, conquered and civilised.

The Sege off Melayne informs us that when Sir Garcy is crowned Sultan he receives many splendid gifts: jewels, maidens, mounted knights with falcons and cups of gold, greyhounds, and hunting dogs. The king of Macedonia comes in person:

And broghte in his awenn hande
That was worthe thiese three:
Invisibill, a full riche stone,
A safre, the best that myghte be one
To seke alle Crystiantee. (854-8)

Richard's enemies in *Richard Coeur de Lion* are also described as rich, and the king seizes a great deal of treasure from them on one occasion (5157-64). In fact, Richard's men are perturbed that the Saracens have great riches (2783-6) and this store of wealth is used to bribe the French into relenting. Saladin is aided by forces from exotic lands such as India, Persia, Araby and Africa (4969-74). The fabulous also features in *Capystranus*, where the Turkish troops are said to ride into battle on dromedaries (432).⁹⁸

Money and exotic elements highlight the decadence of the enemies of Christendom. They emphasise how these foes do not live their lives in accord with the valid standards of Christianity. Their manner of living is misguided, their value-systems erroneous. However, although the Jewish religion is seen as

⁹⁸ See Bancourt II (1982) pp.571-85 on descriptions of the physical appearance of the Saracens and pp.999-1001 on their association with fabulous animals.

false in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, there is little emphasis placed on this as the Jewish leaders are seen as disrespectful to their god, burning the Temple to aid defence, nor do we learn of any strange religious ceremonies in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. When Caiaphas and his masters of the Law of Moses lead the Jews out to battle they read from the Psalms of David and relate stories of Joshua and Judas (lines 473-6). Both Judas Maccabeus and David are numbered among the Nine Worthies. Thus Caiaphas and his followers are inspired by the heroic stories of the Jews and are endeavouring to follow in the footsteps of these men. They are therefore trying to live by a heroic code similar to that of the Roman soldiers, which valued bravery and the glory that could be won in battle. The Jews eat their gold to try and preserve it from falling into the hands of the Romans, weakening their health in the process (1161-4). Both the Jews and the Saracens are depicted as fond of money, as they are in the *de recuperatione Terrae Sanctae*, and as having exotic reinforcements, an indication, as we have discussed in an earlier chapter, that something is amiss (see Chapter One). Jews were associated with moneylending in European economies and frequently endured violent attacks as a result of this, particularly in conjunction with crusades, when pogroms generally took place.⁹⁹ Lester Little writes in his examination of the profit economy in medieval Europe that:

The principal mechanism at work in the complicated web of Christian-Jewish relations was projection.....Christians hated Jews because they saw in Jews the same calculating for profit in which they themselves were deeply and, in their own view, unjustifiably involved. It was above all the guilt for this involvement that they projected onto the Jews. The

⁹⁹ Little (1978) pp.47-50, and above.

Jews functioned as a scapegoat for Christian failure to adapt successfully to the profit economy.¹⁰⁰

Hence the vices of Christian Europe were frequently transferred onto the other, the Jews or even the Saracens, and the evils of wealth were favourite faults to be laid against them.

Christine Chism notes how the desire to obtain riches is one of the three goals of the Roman army. She also finds that the exoticism of the Jewish army owes much to the stereotypical descriptions of Saracens in crusading texts, romances, and *chansons de geste*, and posits that this is due to the exigencies of medieval trade. The markets of India, Persia and Ceylon which supplied spices, expensive fabrics and other goods lay on trade routes dominated by the Venetians and the Egyptians. Furthermore, European states were conscious of the need to increase their stores of bullion and limit expenditure. She concludes that the Jews and Jerusalem are metaphorically transformed into hoards of lucre.

¹⁰¹ It is true that the Roman soldiers rip open the bellies of the Jews who desert the city to obtain the gold which they have swallowed, but this is “[wipou]ten leue” of Titus; it is a wrongful act. Upon capturing the city he himself, though, strips it of its riches, fulfilling the criteria of the rules of war. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet is aware of the economic issues of the late fourteenth century, but is uncertain whether it is just to exploit even the enemies of Christendom for plunder, particularly through violent means.

¹⁰⁰ Little (1978) pp.54-5.

¹⁰¹ Chism (1998) pp.310, 320-2. See in addition Hanna (1992 a) p.112 on the orientalism of the Jews in the *Siege of Jerusalem*.

iv Religion

The *Sowdone of Babylone* contrasts Labart's paganism with Charlemagne's strong belief in God, to whom he appeals in times of crisis, such as during Oliver's combat with Ferumbras:

“O Lord God in Trinite,
That of myghtis Thou arte moost,
By vertue of thy majesté
That alle knoweste and woste,
Lete not this hethen man
Thy servaunte overcome in fyght,
That on The bileve ne kan,
Jhesu Lorde, for Thy myghte!..” (1311-8)

He is rewarded by a visit from an angel, sent by God to tell him that God had heard his prayer and would grant his request. In fact the peers and Charlemagne's advisors are depicted as more aware of the religious significance of their cause in the *Sowdone of Babylone* than in any of the other versions of the legend, with the king himself being portrayed as more pious.¹⁰² In fact, faith in Christianity ultimately brings them success in battle.

Similarly, *The Sege off Melayne* opens with the lord of Milan besieged by Saracens and calling on Christ and the Virgin Mary for succour and advice. His entreaties are heard, and an angel is sent to inform him that Charlemagne will come to his aid (61-108). That same night Charlemagne has a vision in which he thinks he sees a bright angel who gives him a sword with which to avenge the injury done to God, and to attack Milan:

The walles abowte Melayne townne
Hym thoghte the angele dange tham downn
That closed in that cité,
Sythen alle the laundis of Lumbardy

¹⁰² Ailes (1989) pp.733-40.

Townnes, borows and bayli.

This was selcouthe to see. (127-32).

Upon waking he finds the sword beside his bed, and shortly afterwards he learns the sad tidings from Lombardy, which the Saracens have conquered.¹⁰³ Later when Roland is captured by the Sultan he is told that he should renounce his belief and turn to Mahowenn. Roland responds by explaining the mystery of the Holy Trinity (385-414) at which the Sultan laughs and, referring to crucifixes, comments:

“Ane hundrethe of youre goddis alle hale
Have I garte byrne in firre with bale
Sen firste I wanne this wone.
I sawe at none no more powstee
Than att another rotyn tree
One erthe, so mote I gone.” (416-20).

He decides to prove this by burning a crucifix. Roland and the other knights recite the creed and beg God to provide them with a miracle to foil this sacrilegious act. Their request is fulfilled and the Saracens are unable to burn it, try as they might. At this the sultan becomes incensed and swears that it will be incinerated before he ceases, ordering brimstone, pitch, tar, and hot torches to be thrown into the fire to speed this process, but the fire extinguishes itself several times. Then all of a sudden there is a crash, and flames shoot up and blind the eyes of the Saracens, procuring the escape of Roland and his fellows (421-504). Turpin is most distressed when he learns that Roland has been defeated by the heathen, and immediately performs the consecration of the mass (560-1). When the combined forces of the monarch and the bishop march to the outskirts of Milan, Turpin has an altar prepared and administers the Eucharist, thanking God

¹⁰³ See Trotter (1985) pp. 127-31 on analogues of the sword.

and the Virgin Mary and beseeching them to give the army strength (874-909). Having performed this religious office he removes his habit and dresses for battle (910-21).

Although there are no actual religious ceremonies in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, Richard prays constantly to God for strength:

On knees prayden þe Cristene hoost
To Ffadyr, and Sone, and Holy Goost,
Be nyȝt and day wiþ good entent:
“Geue Kyng Richard amendement!” (3061-4)

His men express gratitude to Jesus and Mary for curing him of his illness at Acre:

Glad was boþe leryd and lewyd,
And þanked Ihesu and Marye. (3122-3)

Indeed, the motivation for his campaign is “to venge God off hys enemyes” (3346).

Capystranus relates how its hero departs barefoot for Hungary preaching as he goes, and duly fells the false Turks who serve Satan. In the heat of battle he raises a crucifix to inspire his men, and frequently calls upon God and the Virgin Mary. He gives absolution to each man before they go to battle (382-3) and conducts a beautiful mass with all the priests singing the *Te Deum* (420).

In like manner the *Siege of Jerusalem* commences with an account of Christ’s life and the story of Veronica and the Vernicle, setting the context for the poem (see Chapter One). No religious services are related as such in this work, but Titus and Vespasian do invoke God’s help on several occasions. For instance, Titus thanks God when Josephus cures him of his mysterious illness upon learning that Vespasian is to become emperor. Thus it, like all the other

romances, conveys the power of God and the value of believing in Christianity. It is clearly influenced here by the other romances and the traditions underlying them. Significantly, this is one of the few clear similarities between the *Siege of Jerusalem* and the other texts, and one which the poem does not seek to invert, alter or query; it is a point on which it concurs with the sentiment of the period. Unlike other texts, however, despite this staunch belief in Christianity the poet remains unsure whether fighting for the Christian cause justifies slaughter.

v Church Representatives

The role of Church representatives in these texts is quite significant and in some cases very prominent. In the *Sowdone of Babylone* we read how the Pope, upon learning that Duke Savaryz was slain, sends a message to Charlemagne ordering him:

That he come with his dosyperys
To reskue Cristianté fro this hethen. (373-4)

The Pope himself is in great danger, besieged as he is by the infidels. He leads the way in battle, though with little success (547-74). When Charlemagne secures the victory he calls Bishop Turpin to baptise those of the Saracens who wish to become Christians. Secular and ecclesiastical authority complement each other.

The characterisation of Turpin is the most striking feature of *The Sege off Melayne*, and Margaret Gist amongst others comments on how unusual it is to find the clergy depicted in a prominent martial role in romances, such as Turpin

plays in *The Sege off Melayne*.¹⁰⁴ Mehl sees strong parallels between the romance and Saints' legends¹⁰⁵ and Alan Lupack adds that it "borders on being a character study".¹⁰⁶ During the battle for Milan he fights valiantly and acquits himself well, receiving grievous injuries in the process, which he refuses to have treated until they have won the battle against the heathen and instead spends three days fasting. Charlemagne weeps and extols him thus:

"And thou dy, than dare I saye
The floure of presthode es awaye,
That ever hade schaven crownn.
For there ne is kynge ne cardynere
In Cristyndome may be thi pere
Ne man of religiownn." (1582-7)

The relationship between Turpin and God and the Virgin Mary is presented in feudal terms, and earlier, during the initial assault on Milan, when the direction of the combat is not what he desires, the bishop vents his fury at the Virgin and flings his mitre and staff to one side (541ff.). Ultimately, this contract between the Christians and God is honoured through triumph in battle, whereas the arrangement between the Saracens and their gods is a complete failure.¹⁰⁷

Capistrano earns his reputation through being an inquisitor, preacher, performer of miracles, missionary and persecutor of Jews.¹⁰⁸ *Capystranus* recounts how he "Goddess knight" (lines 230), a holy man, is granted permission

¹⁰⁴ Gist (1947) p.151.

¹⁰⁵ Mehl (1968) p.156.

¹⁰⁶ *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances* (1990) p.106.

¹⁰⁷ See Cowen (1996) pp.157-9.

¹⁰⁸ Petrovics and Szönyi (1986) p.144.

by the Pope to defend Belgrade and Hungary. He requests one important item to speed the victory:

A baner of Crystes Pyssyon,
That mannes soule dyde redempcyon
And brought them from payne to lyght;
Holowe it with thy hande.
The people may the better stande
That under it dooth fyght. (lines 283-8)

Thus *Capystranus* depicts the Pope rather than a secular lord as the supreme figure of authority and the instigator of the military campaign.

With the *Siege of Jerusalem* the case is rather different, though St. Peter is held up as a noble figure and Veronica puts herself and the Vernicle in his care with great reverence:

And whan þe womman was ware, þat þe wede owede,
[Of] Seint Peter þe pope 30 platte to þe grounde,
Vmbe-felde his fete and to þe freke saide:
“Of þis kerchef and my cors þe kepyng y þe take.” (217-20)

It is also fitting that Vespasian consults him over the truth about Veronica and the veil. Interestingly, ecclesiastical authority is presented as of secondary importance to secular power in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, which is the reverse of the situation in *The Sege off Melayne* and *Capystranus* and is also dissimilar to the complementary nature of power roles in the *Sowdone of Babylone*. The power rests firmly with the Roman generals and the Emperor whose permission the generals acquire for the campaign to the Holy Land. Essentially St. Peter does the bidding of Vespasian, coming when summoned and responding as he is told. The war in Judaea is depicted as the result of a secular power struggle, although it can be deemed a just war to avenge Christ. By bringing out the

subordinate nature of ecclesiastical authority at the time of war the poet is again highlighting the moral issues involved in warfare and the question of motivation.

vi Conversion

Much of the action in the *Sowdone of Babylone* is orchestrated by several vibrant characters such as Floripas, the Sultan's daughter, with greater attention to the emotions and motivation of the characters than in other versions.¹⁰⁹ As the enamoured Muslim princess she is one of the four stock characters which Dorothee Metlitzki finds are featured in Middle English Charlemagne romances, with the other three being the converted Saracen, the defeated Sultan, and the Saracen giant who is overcome.¹¹⁰ Floripas is motivated by her long-enduring love for Sir Guy, Duke of Burgundy, whom she has never met. Because of her passionate feelings for this individual, she aids the knights who are captured by the Sultan, and is inspired by Sir Guy's example to become a Christian:

“A, him have I loved many a day
And yet knowe I him noght
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.” (1891-6)

When Oliver and Roland are captured she persuades her father to imprison them rather than execute them, so that they can use them as hostages to trade for her brother Ferumbras, who is in Charlemagne's camp. They are imprisoned without food or drink and with little attention to their injuries (1491-1550). Floripas

¹⁰⁹ Ailes (1989) pp.466-739.

¹¹⁰ Metlitzki (1977) p.161. Bancourt II (1982) pp.691-727 provides a detailed account of the conventional liberation of a captive Christian knight by a Muslim princess. Meredith Jones (1942) pp.201-25 lists the attributes of the conventional Saracen in the *chansons de geste*.

devises a stratagem whereby she can rectify this situation. First she tricks her governess into looking out of the window:

Maragounde lokede oute; Floripe come nere
And shofed hire oute into the flode.
“Go there,” she said; “the devel the spede!
My consail shaltowe never biwry
Whoso wole not helpe a man at nede.
On evel deth mote he dye.” (1577-82)

Having silenced her governess, she proceeds to treat the jailer of the knights in the same manner. She informs her father that he was behaving treacherously and secures the post of jailer for herself (1585-1662). All the subsequent knights captured are delivered to her care and she is able to succour them. Later when Laban, the Sultan, besieges her and them in the tower, she is able to alleviate their hunger with her magic girdle that nourishes whoever wears it (2275-2318). An accepted means of rehabilitating high-ranking infidels was to marry them to Christians, as love of a Christian was likely to lead the Saracen to emulate the example of his/her partner, as in the case of Floripas.¹¹¹

Ferumbras, her brother, also rejects the heathen faith, but the manner of his conversion is rather different.¹¹² He rides to Charlemagne and beseeches that he may be granted the opportunity to fight six of Charlemagne’s best knights, Roland, Oliver, Guy, Neymes, Ogere and Richard. The king calls upon Richard to take up the challenge, but he refuses. There follows an unsavoury incident in

¹¹¹ See Warren (1914) pp.341-58 and Metlitzki (1977) pp.136-60 for analogues of this marriage theme and Metlitzki (1977) pp.169-74 for a discussion of the episode in the *Sowdon of Babylone*. Pierre Dubois advocated in his 1306 treatise *On the Recovery of the Holy Land* that a number of Catholic girls should be selected and trained and then given in marriage to Saracen chiefs so that they could convert them (Kedar 1984, p.201).

¹¹² Metlitzki (1977) pp.177-85. Ailes (1989) pp.693-4 notes that Ferumbras’s role in the rescue of Charlemagne is expanded and his murder of a monk in order to steal relics is omitted, making him a more sympathetic character.

which the monarch hits Richard, giving him a bloody nose, and Richard is restrained by barons before he can retaliate. At this juncture Oliver leaves his sick bed and begs leave to respond to the challenge, a favour he is granted. Oliver pretends to be a young newly-dubbed knight called Generyse. Ferumbras fights him, although he believes that combat against such a knight is beneath him. He makes repeated appeals for him to renounce his Christian beliefs and promises Oliver a dukedom, his sister's hand in marriage and his kingdom:

..... "Olyvere, yelde the to me
And leve thy Cristen laye,
Thou shalte have alle my kingdome free
And alle aftir my daye." (1339-42)

Eventually Oliver overcomes him and he concedes defeat, denouncing his gods:

"Hoo, Olyvere, I yelde me to the,
And here I become thy man.
I am so hurte I may not stonde;
I put me ale in thy grace.
My goddis ben false by water and londe;
I reneye hem alle here in this place.
Baptised nowe wole I be." (1353-9)

Bishop Turpin baptises him, and from that day forth he is a Christian knight and fights for the French. Alan Lupack describes Ferumbras as "the *fortitudo* that complements Floripas's *sapientia*."¹¹³ Even before his conversion he refuses to kill the Pope when he has him at his mercy in battle as he is a cleric, and later he rescues Charlemagne who has been stranded among his foes due to Ganelon's treacherous activities. Ferumbras is converted through defeat in battle, and this was the aim of the crusades, according to Philippe de Mézières, to convert the heathen by force (see above). The actions of both Floripas and her brother would

¹¹³ *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances* (1990) p.3.

be reprehensible if they were not performed in the cause of Christianity; Floripas displays a ferocious determination to overcome obstacles that leads her to commit murder and perjury, to reject her father, and blackmail the French knights to achieve her goal, while Ferumbras betrays his father and people. Marianne J. Ailes notes that there is no “delicacy” in her actions, that she displays “an obvious pleasure at witnessing death”, and she possesses superhuman strength when forcing Maragounde from the window.¹¹⁴

Sometimes all attempts end in failure as with Laban, when the only option left is to kill the unrepentant heathen. The final victory is Charlemagne’s, and he himself captures Laban. Having accomplished this, he orders Bishop Turpin to come and bring a large vat to baptise the sultan, and he will act as godfather. Laban, unarmed, is led to the vat by Turpin:

He smote the bisshope with a bronde
And gaf him an evel bronte.
He spitted in the water clere
And cryed oute on hem alle
And defied alle that Cristen were.
That foule mote him byfalle! (3165-70)

For this act he is executed and his soul is seized by devils and brought to hell. The *Sowdone of Babylone* thus suggests that violence, warfare and any means available are appropriate in order to convert non-Christians, and that if all attempts fail then execution of the intransigent heathens is the only alternative.

As noted earlier, the troubled Duke of Milan in *The Sege off Melayne* is pressurised by the Sultan to convert to the Saracen faith. The powerful infidel also tries to prove to Roland and the other captured knights the inefficacy of

¹¹⁴ Ailes (1989) pp.701-5.

Christianity. This reveals the concerns about contacts between Christians and heathens, which might lead to Christians being corrupted. There is no mention of converting Saracens; they simply should be killed.

In *Richard Coeur de Lion* Richard, upon capturing Acre, allows those who convert and are baptised to live. It is one of the few occasions in which he displays mercy:

A bysschop he leet come anon,
And dede hym crystene euerylkon.
Lytyl, mekyl, lasse, and more,
In þat tyme crystenyd wore. (5375-8)

The poet is concerned about the possibility of Christians being corrupted as in the case of Feraunt, who is referred to as “wurs þan an hound” as he had converted from Christianity to heathenism.

Capystranus, like the *Sowdone of Babylone* and *Richard Coeur de Lion*, highlights that Saracens can become noble figures if they convert. Sir John Black, once he converted from the ways of Islam, automatically becomes:

.....a curteys knyght,
I lete you wete, and a wyght,
And stedfast in our lore. (352-4)

Once again we find this fear of corruption by the heathen, with the Turks trying to force the Christians in Constantinople to convert to heathenism under threat of torture (202).

Anxieties about the possibility of Jews enticing people to follow Judaism are not to be found in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, nor are there any attempts to convert any of its adherents. On the other hand both the chief protagonists are converted to the Christian faith after being healed miraculously through the

grace of God. This leads to them and all their men being baptised, and their authority is seen as stemming from their belief in God (see Chapter One). Thus the stance towards Christian belief is similar to that in the other romances, but the attitude to the enemies of Christendom is more tolerant, which accords with doctrinal anti-Judaism. Ecclesiastical figures tried to protect the Jews during the preparations for crusades, as we have seen above. The Jews were fundamentally “a truly desirable enemy”, a foe who reinforced Christian identity by differing from it.¹¹⁵ Unlike most romances, the poet depicts non-Christians in a relatively tolerant manner, knowing that this would set up a contrast between the *Siege of Jerusalem* and other texts. Through setting up such a comparison he intended his readers to re-evaluate whether this “kill or cure” policy regarding the foes of Christianity is really acceptable.

vii Exhortations to go on Crusade

In the *Sowdone of Babylone* there are no explicit statements encouraging crusading fervour, but as we already saw, there is a great deal of emphasis on the need to convert Muslims, and if they cannot be saved then they must be killed. This, combined with the need to defend Christian lands from the attacks of these enemies, is in itself an injunction to go on crusade.

Richard Coeur de Lion displays an uncompromising attitude extolling crusading goals, as one would expect from this account of the Third Crusade. Even the French are derided in this romance, as they are only capable of fine words, belying their true nature as cowards:

¹¹⁵ Chism (1998) p.331.

But whene þey comen to þe mystere,
And see men begynne strokes dele,
Anon þey gynne to turne here hele,
And gynne to drawe in here hornes
As a snayl among þe þornes;
Slake a bore of their bost! (3860-6)

Richard will not be bribed by the heathen gold, but the French sell out “for a porcyoun of golde” (5455), preventing the taking of Babylon. Richard denounces the French monarch as a:

“Traytour! Ffalse man!
Ffor couaytyse off tresour
He dos hymselff gret dyshonour.” (5472-4)

This attitude is shared by *Capystranus* which is about the defence of Belgrade on the occasion when it was besieged in 1456. Capistrano succeeded in raising the siege with the aid of John Hunyadi and poor peasants, and it was to be 65 years before the Turks subdued cities in Hungary again. The poem starts by invoking the Holy Trinity (lines 1-33) and asking that Jesus will reward those who listen to the work just as he inspired knights of old against the heathens (lines 34-57). The sense of urgency in the poem acts as an exhortation to go on crusade:

The Turke his purpose is,
I lete you wete withouten mys,
To wynne al Hungree.
Therefore, fader, put thy holy hande
And helpe to warre Goddes lande,
His true vycar yf thou be.
He brenneth chirches in every place;
Crysten men gothe to deth apace.... (241-8)

If Christendom is not defended immediately the consequences will be devastating.

One significant scene in *The Sege off Melayne* provides us with the key to its outlook. Ganelon treacherously counsels Charlemagne to remain where he is and defend the lands that he holds, rather than avenge Roland's defeat at the hands of the infidels. The king accepts this advice to be berated by the bishop, who feels that it is heresy not to fight against God's own enemy:

..... "By Goddes Tree,
Or that Charls doo so with mee
Full ill it sall hym lyke!
I shall hym curse in myddis his face.
What! sall he nowe with sory grace
Become ane errtyke?" (667-72)

He claims that the king is a coward and worse than any Saracen to consider such a course, and promises to assemble all the clergy to come and join the struggle:

The Bischoppe sendis ferre and nere
To monke, chanoun, preste and frere
And badd tham graythe thaire gere
And keste thaire [care] clene tham froo,
Come helpe to feghte one Goddis foo,
All that a swerde may bere. (619-24)

Turpin rides out with his force to attack the city in which Charlemagne and his men are assembled. In the light of this, Neymes counsels the king to repent and beg the bishop's forgiveness and absolution, to which the monarch agrees and:

.... undid his hede alle bare-
The Bischopp wele hym knewe-
And appon his knees he knelid down
And tuke his absolucyoun.
Theire joye bygone to newe. (785-89)

As one can see from this, the theme of the romance is the defence of Christianity, not the narration of the great deeds performed by Christians as in the case of the *Siege of Jerusalem*. *The Sege off Melayne* concentrates on the role of militant Christianity, the importance of the Church and its representatives on

earth. S.H.A. Shepherd finds similarities between it and the *excitatoire* or *exhortatia* to go on crusade which we discussed earlier.¹¹⁶ Certainly, Charlemagne's vision concerning the significance of the sword he is presented with, and his scolding by Turpin on account of his reluctance to fight the Saracens, convey this message. Each individual is required to serve God, not simply delegate his responsibility as Charlemagne initially tries to do with Roland. S.H.A. Shepherd claims that there is only one analogue close to *The Sege off Melayne*, the *Descriptio* (an account of Turpin's career linked to the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*), in which Constantine, responding to the Patriarch of Jerusalem's plea for assistance to quell the Saracens, is advised by an angel to procure Charlemagne's help.¹¹⁷

The mighty weaponry of the Saracen hoards is contrasted to the less sophisticated and potent arms of the Christian troops, the point being that, despite the weakness of their position they are able to overcome their foes with divine assistance. Malcolm Hebron highlights this in his study of sieges in Middle English romances and emphasises how:

in order to emphasise the moral and feudal codes shown at work in a siege the mechanical aspects are given less attention: as in *Capystranus*, the Christians in *The Sege of Melayne* are shown as being less equipped technically than their adversaries, armed only with simple weapons and "bowes of devyse" against the springalds and other engines of the Saracens (1283-90). Crusading siege warfare in these poems shows the strength of the spirit overwhelming the machinations and material advantages of the heathen.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ S.H.A. Shepherd (1991) p.117.

¹¹⁷ S.H.A. Shepherd (1991) p.120. See S.H.A. Shepherd (1991) pp.113-9 for a survey of other critics views. Mehl (1967) pp.152-6, and *Six Middle English Romances* (1992) pp.ix-xv.

¹¹⁸ Hebron (1997) p.90.

Jean Subrenat and Marie-Geneviève Grossel provide evidence from French texts that crusading romances and histories very often reflect a sense of pilgrimage. Subrenat argues that the expedition against Jerusalem in *La conquête de Jerusalem* is a pilgrimage as well as a war. The sufferings, famine, thirst and watches are part of a penance they undergo to gain forgiveness and their eternal reward.¹¹⁹ To this end numerous religious services and prayers are detailed in the work, as they are in *The Sege off Melayne* and *Capystranus*,¹²⁰ but there is nothing of the sort in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. Nor do the threats of excommunication and damnation that Turpin hurls at Charlemagne when the king is intransigent have any parallel in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. Titus and Vespasian are of course God's champions like Charlemagne, but the focus is on the glorious deeds they perform and not so much on the need to kill God's enemies at all costs. Jonathan Riley-Smith in his study of the links between pogroms of Jews and the First Crusade notes that "crusaders in the well-equipped army of French, English, Flemings and Lorrainers, which met with Emich at Mainz, claimed that the pogrom was the start of their service against the enemies of the Christian faith" and that "German crusaders announced their intention of clearing a path to Jerusalem which began with the Rhineland Jews."¹²¹ The need to avenge Christ comes out clearly in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, but it is tempered by a criticism of the senselessness of extreme violence. Chism argues that the objectives underlying the Roman campaign include a desire to

¹¹⁹ Subrenat (1995) p.23.

¹²⁰ Subrenat (1995) pp.21-36 and Grossel (1995) pp.37-58.

¹²¹ Riley-Smith (1984) p.66.

define and destroy the Jews in order to reclaim the Holy Land and Judaeo-Christian texts, and the need for a war to unite all the various regions in the Christian Roman Empire.¹²² Initially, she argues, Christianity is a private faith practised by individuals (Nathan and Veronica), and through the conversion of Titus and Vespasian it becomes a public religion.¹²³ There is not only an opposition between the Jews and the Romans, but between the pagan Romans and the Christian Romans, with the heathen Roman emperors destroying themselves and being succeeded by the Christians Vespasian and Titus. However, there is nothing in the *Siege of Jerusalem* to suggest that all these disparate regions have been united, nor are the Jews wiped out. It would be true to say that the *Siege of Jerusalem* is on one level about leadership. Josephus, although a Jew, is a clever, good man and leader; Titus and Vespasian also display the qualities necessary to lead people competently and beneficially. On the other hand, Galba, Nero, Othis, John and Simon represent tyranny. The ordinary people follow those who rule them, as we have seen, hence wise governorship is essential in order for society to fulfill its potential and live in a moral and constructive manner. The Roman empire embraces this by electing Vespasian as emperor, but the Jews could also do this if they so wished. Fundamentally, the outlook of *The Sege off Melayne* toward the crusades and the enemies of Christianity resembles that of *Capystranus* and *Richard Coeur de Lion*, and differs sharply from the perspective of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, with the *Sowdone of Babylone* taking a stance between the two.

¹²² Chism (1998) pp.309-11.

¹²³ Chism (1998) pp.314-5.

It may be concluded from all this that the subject-matter of the *Siege of Jerusalem* with the exotic elements, particularly the description of the Jewish force and its fabulous accoutrements, and the extreme violence of scenes such as Caiaphas's execution, parallel what is to be found in crusading works. It displays anxieties about the money possessed by non-Christians, but is not perturbed by the possibility of corruption of Christians by these forces ranged against them. The presentation of the story, and the attitudes expressed concerning enemies of Christendom and the realities of war, constitute the main differences between it and crusading romances, as represented by these four very different tales, the *Sowdone of Babylone*, *The Sege off Melayne*, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, and *Capystranus*. Hence it is difficult to see how the campaign against the Jews reflects the contemporary outlook on Saracens or the fifteenth century view of Lollards as Hamel and Hanna argue. Likewise, although it is firmly Christian in orientation, secular authority dominates over the power of the Church. Furthermore, none of the ideology surrounding the crusades, conversion through force, particularly military campaigns, or conversion through marriage, is present in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. We are not encouraged to go on a campaign with the exhortation that Christianity is under threat, and informed that it is our duty to go and heresy not to. On the other hand, the dramatic representations of Titus and Vespasian's campaign, which we looked at earlier, were designed as a medium for crusading ideology. The dramas are not as vindictive towards the adversaries of Christendom as *Richard Coeur de Lion*, but are similar to *The Sege off Melayne* in that they hold that enemies should either be converted or rooted out. They contain the religious emphasis of these crusading romances, with their

sermons and concentration on spiritual matters. The *Siege of Jerusalem* looks at the same incidents from a different perspective. These findings undermine the observations of Robinson and Evans about the grouping of *Titus and Vespasian* and the *Siege of Jerusalem* with the Nine Worthies. For, although some manuscript contexts may suggest a thematic link with romances about these figures, others do not, and there is nothing inherent in the *Siege of Jerusalem* itself to promote such a link (see Chapter Six). Hence, in contrast to other retellings of the destruction of the city, the *Siege of Jerusalem* was not written as a crusading romance, or a vehicle of popular anti-Judaism, nor is it anti-Semitic; it is a measured account of the glorious conquest of Jerusalem that displays the influence of doctrinal anti-Judaism and raises the moral issues involved in war-making and the heroic ethos.

CHAPTER FOUR

TITUS AND VESPASIAN AND THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM

The *Siege of Jerusalem* and *Titus and Vespasian* are contemporary treatments of the story of the destruction of Jerusalem, which differ radically in outlook. The *Titus and Vespasian* poet believes that the conquest of Jerusalem is justified and that the irradiation of the enemies of Christendom is necessary and desirable, while the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet highlights the latent contradictions in the material, encouraging his audience to re-consider the legitimacy of warfare. Both writers are writing in English, but interestingly, they choose different styles, that of the four-stress couplet and alliterative poetry. This choice has implications that relate to the different associations of these forms as well as the intrinsic nature of these verse-forms. A.B. Taylor tellingly comments that the popular "short-lined couplet was not sufficiently weighty or impressive for most themes, but could be used with good effect in a fairy type of romance like *Sir Orfeo*."¹ Metrical romances are more popular in orientation dealing with a variety of subject-matter. They survive in relatively high numbers of manuscripts, many of which are poor in quality rather than luxurious and were intended to be read rather than displayed. In the main they consist of rather poor, abridged translations of French romances, which display little appreciation of intellectual concerns and artistry. Alliterative poetry tends to engage with historical,

¹ A.B. Taylor (1930) p.158.

political, moral and religious concerns and displays on the whole a certain gravity. Geoffrey Shepherd finds a unity of theme and outlook among alliterative poems, which is primarily serious, didactic and historical:

Alliterative poems in theme and treatment of theme stand in a continuum: the terms in this continuum are moral insight and historical truth.²

The high status of the verse-form gives the *Siege of Jerusalem* the space to raise awareness of the horrors of warfare and the limitations of the heroic code. *Titus and Vespasian* avoids such issues and presents the story from the perspective of the anti-Semitism which was widespread at this time.

Titus and Vespasian was evidently widely read, since it survives in twelve manuscripts in two different versions, a long narrative and an abbreviated version.³ It is more popular in tone, giving a more sensational, less learned account in which are dotted a series of admirable characters. Moralistic comments are provided at every turn in *Titus and Vespasian*, following the lead of its chief source *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*. Similarly there are constant references to how the destruction of the city was foretold. The disparate purposes of *Titus and Vespasian* and the *Siege of Jerusalem* are evident in their choice and use of sources. There are several features which serve to distinguish the two poems: the verse-form, use of source, and the quality of the texts, as well as the

² Geoffrey Shepherd (1970) p.72. He is cited by Derek Pearsall (1982) p.46, who also notes how several alliterative writers, including the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet had an expert knowledge of Latin historical texts, perhaps indicating access to a monastic library (p.44).

³ Moe (1963) pp.22-5 records references to *Titus and Vespasian* in fifteenth-century book lists. Although popular in the Middle Ages the work has not found favour with modern scholars. See Moe (1963) pp.26-47 for a summary of previous criticism.

differences in the genre. *Titus and Vespasian* is a metrical romance and as such is associated with a different body of works from the *Siege of Jerusalem*. All these differences stem from the fact that the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet is endeavouring to raise the subject of violent conflict, while the *Titus and Vespasian* poet subscribes to late fourteenth-century views of non-Christians. It is therefore probable that the *Siege of Jerusalem* was intended to be received by a highly educated audience who would be interested in the issues it raises, while *Titus and Vespasian* was to be a straightforward account aimed at a readership who desired an accessible popularist narrative.

Titus and Vespasian and the *Siege of Jerusalem* fit into a long line of narratives about the destruction of Jerusalem in England. The sheer number of narratives about or alluding to this story provides us with further indications as to the reception of these poems and the intentions of their creators. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* in both the Latin original and Old English translation occurred on occasion in manuscript compilations with the *Vindicta Salvatoris* (Bodleian Library Ms. Selden Supra 74, Bodleian Library Ms. Bodley 90, Cambridge, University Library, Ms. I.i.2.11, BL. Ms. Cotton Vespasian D.xiv). The numerous texts of the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, *Gospel of Nicodemus* as well as the *Legenda Aurea*, both in Latin and in translation into Middle English and Old English which survive in manuscripts in the United Kingdom testify to the popularity of this material in England throughout the Middle Ages. This is augmented by the large number of manuscripts of the Latin translation of

Josephus' *The Jewish War*, and Hegesippus that circulated in Medieval England. Accounts of post-Passion Christian history, the plight of the Jews and the life of St. Veronica were of immense interest to a wide number of people in this period.

This led to their transmission in other texts of English origin. These works are quite varied, including chronicles such as the *Polychronicon*, where the destruction of Jerusalem is related in full, though briefly, in addition to didactic religious texts where the story is alluded to. The historical works in Latin follow Josephus and Hegesippus and appealed to a primarily clerical audience,⁴ while religious writers base their allusions on the material in the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, *Gospel of Nicodemus* and *Legenda Aurea*. *The South English Ministry and Passion* refers to Titus and Vespasian and their destruction of Jerusalem four times (lines 1423-8, 1591-2, 1985-6, 2424-6), while the *Southern Passion* alludes to it on a similar number of occasions (lines 315-20, 103-4, 1448-550, 385-90).⁵ *The Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ* is the source for *The Southern Passion* and Marx contends that *The Harrowing of Hell and the Destruction of Jerusalem*⁶ is the basis for the allusions in *The*

⁴ See Chapter One.

⁵ See *The South English Ministry and Passion* (1984) and *The Southern Passion* (1927).

⁶ As C.W. Marx points out (*The Devil's Parliament, The Harrowing of Hell and the Destruction of Jerusalem* (1993) pp.116, 121, 126), the importance of this poem is not the text itself, which exists in one manuscript from the second quarter of the fifteenth century, but that the position it occupies in relation to *The South English Legendary* and other *temporale* texts. The manuscript, Cambridge, St. John's College Ms.B.6, is well-produced in clear Anglicana with red initials by a professional scribe who refers to himself as Rose, from South-East Norfolk. The compilation also contains *Old Testament History*, *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ*, *The South English Ministry and Passion* and saints' lives and movable feasts from *The South English Legendary*. *The Harrowing of Hell and the Destruction of Jerusalem* is preceded by the lives of Longinus (item 4) and Pilate (item 5). In fact items 2-6 give an account of Christian history from the nativity to the vengeance for Christ's Passion. There are twenty-two other major manuscripts containing the associated text, *The South English Legendary*, and many more of small extracts or fragments, which

Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ. Furthermore, this text mentions Veronica wiping Christ's face (lines 1775-1778) and *The South English Legendary* relates the story of Veronica and the curing of Vespasian in the life of Pilate (vol.2, lines 111-154).⁷ The related *temporale* text, *A Stanzaic Life of Christ* also recounts the story of Vespasian being healed, as well as the lives of Pilate and Judas in lines 6428-7052.⁸ Leaving aside this network of texts from the south, there is an account in *The Northern Passion*, a work based on a French poem, of the story of Veronica (lines 1-31) and of the Sydonie (Vernicle).⁹ These texts all date from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. We can infer from all this that stories of the vengeance of Our Lord and the destruction of Jerusalem, and of Veronica appealed to a wide audience and were received in

testify to its popularity. Görlach (1974) pp.20, 85 discusses the question of the audience of *The South English Legendary* and related texts and finds that some manuscripts can be linked with monasteries and friars. Its prologue informs us that it is intended to provide those who enjoy listening to romances with more wholesome, but still entertaining tales. As the editorial title of the poem indicates, it consists of two parts, the first based on the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the second based on Chap. 67, *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola*, from the *Legenda Aurea*, with some touches from the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent de Beauvais. The poet provides a faithful rendering of his sources in verse with the intention of providing the facts in a popular form. The second half, lines 335-542 relates the warnings to the Jews, martyrdom of St. James, Pilate's letter, Vespasian's illness, Albon's voyage, Vespasian and Titus' campaign, Vespasian becoming emperor and the Jews' attempts to rebuild their city. In this section the poet employs some devices used in preaching, such as intervening to connect the incidents related to contemporary times and to comment on what happened. He comments thus on the Jews who escaped punishment by fleeing to other lands:

At a priuy posterne þo schrewis in a schip ful away stele
 Into oþer londis, 3if þei my3t, with myldere men to dele
 And of hem comyn alle þo schrewis þat among vs wonyn here.
 Litil harm it had be þow3 slayn alle hadde ben þere,
 But napeles God it wolde nou3t for he seyde þat þei schulde
 Domys day abyden and cristen be; ellis men hem quelle wolde.

(lines 475-480)

⁷ *The South English Legendary* (1956).

⁸ See *A Stanzaic Life of Christ* (1926). The emperor is told of Christ's healing powers and duly sends Velusian to find Him. Velusian encounters Veronica and discovers that she had His Image painted. The two return to Rome and the Emperor is cured of his malady.

⁹ See *The Northern Passion* (1913) p.180. Christ asks for a cloth to wipe His face while carrying the cross and this cloth then retains His likeness. It is brought to Rome, where it is the subject of pilgrimage.

various ways, with most interpretations accepting the historicity of the events and the religious interpretation of them which was promulgated in spiritual works.

The story was continually adapted for new audiences and to conform to new literary tastes. *Titus and Vespasian* itself was the source for a fifteenth-century prose account of Midlands provenance entitled *The Siege of Jerusalem*. It survives in Ms. Porkington 10, which is a modest manuscript written partly on paper and partly on vellum in nineteen different hands.¹⁰ The manuscript dates from c.1500, and the work most likely dates from the second half of the fifteenth century. Interestingly, *The Siege of Jerusalem* is divided into thirteen sections,¹¹ indicated by large capitals rather like the eighteen chapters into which *Titus and Vespasian* is divided in Pierpont Morgan Library Ms. 898 (M), perhaps in response to fifteenth century taste. *The Siege of Jerusalem* is based on the abbreviated version of *Titus and Vespasian* (BL Ms. Additional 10036 (F), Cambridge Magdalene College Ms. Pepys 2014 (R) and M), which excludes the account of the Passion and details from the Gospel of Nicodemus found in the long version of *Titus and Vespasian* lines 1-814 and the life of Judas lines 4487-4884. Auvo Kurvinen in the introduction to his edition of *The Siege of Jerusalem* discusses the relationship between the prose text and *Titus and Vespasian*, and concludes that the former is based directly on the latter and lists

¹⁰ *The Siege of Jerusalem* (1969) p.10.

¹¹ *The Siege of Jerusalem* (1969) p.9.

passages where there are verbal agreements between the two.¹² However, *The Siege of Jerusalem* is considerably shorter than the metrical romance, and this brevity is achieved through omission and summary.¹³ This is interesting as it indicates that the shorter version of *Titus and Vespasian* could be later than the longer redaction. Phyllis Moe has argued that the short version must be earlier on the grounds that the excluded passages are “tenuously related to the rest of the romance”, and merely retard its development while adding nothing to its thematic content.¹⁴ However, similar criticisms could be levelled at many other passages in the romance and this weakens Moe’s hypothesis. Manuscript evidence in support of her theory is also lacking, for, as John Holmes Wilson points out, “no special authority can be given to either group of manuscripts” and the oldest manuscript contains the longer text.¹⁵ Thus the desire to abbreviate the long romance into a shorter version, to divide it into chapters as in Pierpont Morgan Ms. 898 (M) indicates fifteenth-century literary taste which culminated in the short prose text of *The Siege of Jerusalem*. None of the three manuscripts of the short version is complete and, in fact, M is the only one which approaches a complete text. Furthermore, Moe bases her argument on an examination of M and the editions of Herbert and Fischer. She did not see the manuscripts of the long text and was unaware of the existence of Coventry City Record Office Ms. 325/1 (T). The three short redactions are all independent

¹² *The Siege of Jerusalem* (1969) pp.19-27.

¹³ *The Siege of Jerusalem* (1969) pp.27-32.

¹⁴ Cited by John Holmes Wilson (1967) p.xxviii.

recensions, but on the whole F and M are closer in their readings than either of them is to R. R is frequently closer in its readings to the longer redaction. Furthermore, the manuscripts of the longer recension are not uniform in their readings. Moe's comparison of the two versions simply highlights the inappropriateness of Herbert's choosing BL Ms. Additional 36523 (G) as his base text, as it is neither the oldest manuscript, nor does it offer the best reading. Manuscripts of both redactions are of similar date, with the oldest being a text of the long recension. If we turn to the other evidence Moe puts forward in support of her hypothesis it amounts to little more than literary taste, which is at best subjective. She feels that the shorter text is of higher poetic merit than the longer version. She suggests that the opening section of *Titus and Vespasian* is likely to be an addition as it uses material from more than one chapter of the *Legenda Aurea*. However, *Titus and Vespasian* uses information from a number of sources so why should not the poet draw upon more than one chapter of the same work. She then goes on to argue that although the life of Pilate interrupts the narrative it is appropriate to the subject-matter of the romance, while the following tale of Judas is not sanctioned as it interrupts the flow of the text. There are several problems with this argument. First, tales of Pilate and Judas were very popular and often narrated in the same work or compilation. Moreover, although Moe tries very hard to argue for the priority of the shorter text on the grounds of higher poetic quality she has to concede that both versions are written in very loose octosyllabic couplets. Thus it is impossible to say which

¹⁵ John Holmes Wilson (1967) p.xxx.

redaction is later and has transposed and altered the lines of the other. She concludes that:

the shorter text does offer a rendition of the poem which is, in several respects more aesthetically pleasing than the text printed by Herbert... The diction is less awkward, the phrasing less clumsy. Finally the shorter text offers satisfactory readings for lines which are garbled in Herbert's edition.¹⁶

These comments are an accurate criticism of Herbert's edition of G which is not a very clear text. If a modern scholarly edition of all nine manuscripts were completed or if all nine manuscripts were compared with the three manuscripts of the shorter version it might easily prove that the longer recension is the poetic equal of the short. The answer to this question must however await further research. In the present discussion I shall be referring to the longer redaction as it survives in a larger number of manuscripts, many of which are of better quality, more complete and earlier than those of the shorter rendering, and because the longer version is likely to be the earliest.

Clearly then readers had ample choice of religious and historical accounts of the story, so the *Titus and Vespasian* poet choose to compose a romance, which related the story in an entertaining manner drawing upon the tropes associated with this genre. These he uses in the conventional manner following the accepted view of the matter. His uninspired and entirely conventional treatment of the story serves to highlight the innovativeness of the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet, how the alliterative poet troubles the notion of genre

¹⁶ Moe (1963) p.122. See further Moe (1963) pp.104-6.

and raises the validity of warfare through juxtaposing the historical reality of the military conflict with its Christian reading.

Romances were essentially part of well-established traditions, both those compositions of metrical variety and those of alliterative long-line. The more standard romances rely heavily on these traditional materials, while the more innovative and/ or more serious-minded romances tend to breathe new life into these forms. These traditions were vast repositories of stock phrases, set pieces and type-scenes which authors, performers and scribes could draw upon at will. Common features include the repetition of stock phrases (especially descriptive phrases), words, situations and ideas, direct address to the audience, clear signalling of change of topic, assertions of truth, and religious beginnings and endings, all of which is very much true of *Titus and Vespasian*.¹⁷ William E. Holland points out in his study of the manuscripts of *Arthour and Merlin* that the material most commonplace in the romances is that which is most likely to be altered, omitted or displaced in the process of being copied.¹⁸ This material is the standard fare of romance tradition and therefore is easily changed through improvisation and it, in fact, triggers such activity. Albert C. Baugh lists innumerable examples of the use of formulae, themes and predictable complements in his study of a group of Middle English metrical romances in "Improvisation in the Middle English Romance".¹⁹ He finds that this does not

¹⁷ See Crosby (1936) pp.99, 102-4, 107-8; Baugh (1967) pp.1-31 passim.

¹⁸ Holland (1973) p.105.

¹⁹ Baugh (1959) pp.418-54 passim.

necessarily mean that the poems were improvised as in many cases the romances are faithful reworkings of a French original.²⁰ It is virtually impossible to produce a critical text of many of the metrical romances and he attributes this to the fact that once a romance was composed it could fall prey to alterations at the hands of reciters and that the manuscripts represent records of these performances. Quinn and Hall in their study of the transmission of Middle English romances suggest that jongleurs were the main channels for the circulation of narrative romances.²¹ A manuscript could represent both oral and written transmission.²²

There was a continuous development from late Old English verse in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* through *The Worcester Fragments* to *La3amon* and

²⁰ Baugh (1959) p.431.

²¹ Quinn and Hall (1982) pp.1, 68. Taking *King Horn* as their example, they investigate the possibilities that it was a record of an oral performance or that it was rewritten by a scribe. From an analysis of its *systematic* end-rhymes they find that eighty percent of *King Horn* is improvised. "We may hypothesize that the *repetitive* rhyme-words which a *jongleur* would actually employ to improvise his couplets should be a relatively small *subgroup* of *each* cluster's total rhyming vocabularythis results in recallability of a *system* of end-rhymes" (p.43). Rosamund Allen in her edition of *King Horn* concedes that it is possible that the ancestor of the three existing manuscripts was an oral performance and certainly sees a role for jongleurs/ performers in the transmission of the text (*King Horn: An Edition based on Cambridge University Library Ms. Gg.4.27 (2)*, 1984 pp.33-5).

²² Quinn and Hall's [(1982) pp.7-8, 123-6] theory is that a jongleur tried to memorise the entire work, but that during recital it was easy to forget the precise wording, so he drew upon a store of memorised small sub-groups of words to fill the lapses. They propose that texts of romances represent a blurring of the distinctions between oral and written poetry. They classify the reception and composition of romances thus: formulaic (simultaneous composition), memory absolute (devised prior to recital), memory supplemented by systematic improvisation, memory supplemented by free improvisation, public reading and private reading. Michael Chesnutt (1987) pp.48-67 *passim* similarly argues in favour of minstrel recitation. However, much of the evidence he cites is from predominantly sixteenth and seventeenth century sources, so that its relationship to the extant manuscripts is not clear. Furthermore, Rastoll (1982) pp.96-107 documents how the minstrel guilds tried to control professional competition, maintain a certain standard of behaviour and standards, regulate apprenticeships, and encourage the development of minstrelsy. Such information proves that a tradition of minstrel recitation in some form was in existence throughout this period. Hoyt N. Duggan (1976) pp. 267, 279, speaking of Middle English alliterative romances, concurs that each text could be the product of the combined activities of a poet and performer. This would be particularly noticeable if the performer also acted as scribe, as he would base his copy on both the exemplar and "his aural memory of his own performances."

Middle English alliterative poetry.²³ Indeed, Old English rhythmical alliterative prose or poetry survived into Middle English and probably inspired this later genre of verse.²⁴ The narratives of Middle English alliterative poems and romances were constructed from a series of traditional themes which were “lexically formulated”.²⁵ The themes and formulae used were not memorised but adapted facilitating the reception of the written or heard text. Once such works were written down it was possible to incorporate more complex subject-matter and to compose narratives which were capable of being interpreted in several ways. Written alliterative romances still show evidence of having being influenced by oral traditions, but they tend to contain fewer formulae and those which are retained are used with greater freedom.²⁶

Alternatively, the repetition, stock phrases and so forth could be attributable to a conscious desire on the part of the poet to evoke minstrel performance. He may have wished, as Andrew Taylor suggests, to create for “the solitary reader the pleasures and consolations of an imaginary community”.²⁷ This was a period of transition in reading habits, with people enjoying having amateurs and professionals read to them, even if they could themselves read, as in the scene where Criseyde reads romances to her ladies in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. Furthermore, when people read privately they read aloud. H.J.

²³ Kooper (1994) p.118. See in addition Turville-Petre (1977) pp.16-26; Cable (1991) pp.52-65.

²⁴ Blake (1969-70) p.120.

²⁵ Bäuml (1984-5) pp.2, 3.

²⁶ Bäuml (1980) p.251.

²⁷ Andrew Taylor (1992) p.62.

Chaytor makes the point that the medieval reader had an auditory memory and not a visual and auditory one like a twentieth century reader.²⁸ He recognised words by saying them aloud. In fact as Joyce Coleman states:

What one finds in later medieval England, at least, is a state of acute mixedness, manifested both in the voiced textuality of the read-aloud manuscript and in the interactions of the mode of reception with private reading as ascribed by authors to themselves or to their audiences.²⁹

Chronicles, romances, poetry, and miraculous matters were read in a relaxed atmosphere for enjoyment, while the Scriptures, Saints' Lives and homiletic treatises were read with a more serious intent.³⁰ This transitional phase in reading practices was evident also in writing objectives. Poets combined traditional oral idiom with more sophisticated style elements possible when writing rather than improvising. This traditional idiom was a constant growing treasury built from "traditional rules".³¹ Sylvia Huot has found what amounts to almost an obsession on the part of the writers of French romances "with processes of oral and written transmission, with transcription, translation, compilation and interpretation."³² A similar situation existed in Middle English texts, especially of metrical romances where writers deliberately cultivated orality by alluding to listeners, using tags and formulaic diction.³³

²⁸ Chaytor (1945) *passim*. See also Bäuml (1980) pp.237-65 *passim*.

²⁹ Joyce Coleman (1996) p.27.

³⁰ Joyce Coleman (1996) p.129.

³¹ Foley (1991) p.38.

³² Huot (1991) p.218.

³³ See Machan (1991 b) pp.229-45.

Fundamentally, the way a text interacts with orality and literacy provides us with information about its objectives.

If we look at the opening of the two poems we can see immediately the differences in the presentation of material in the romances. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet adapts the traditional formulae to conform to the issues he wishes to raise, unlike the *Titus and Vespasian* poet who adheres slavishly to them and is unable to rise above them. The *Siege of Jerusalem* begins by relating how:

In Tyberyus tyme, þe trewe emperour,
Sire Sesare hym sulf seysed in Rome,
Whyle Pylat was prouost vndere þat prince riche
And jewen iustice also, in Judeus londis.
Herodes vnder his emperie as heritage wolde,
Kyng of Galile ycalled, whan þat Crist deyed.
Þey Sesar sakles were, þat oft synne hatide,
Þrow Pylat pynded he was and put on þe rode;
A pyler py3t was down vpon þe playn erþe,
His body bonden þer to, beten with scourgis;
Whyppes of quyrboyle by-wente his white sides,
Til he al on rede blode ran, as rayn[i]n þe strete.
Sup stoked hym on a stole with styf Mannes hondis
Blyndfelled hym as a be and boffetis hym ra3te:
"3if þou be prophete of pris, prophecie," þey sayde,
"Whiche [beryn] here aboute bolled þe laste!"
A þrange þornen croune was þraste on his hed,
Vmbe-casten hym with a cry and on a croys slowen.
For al þe harme þat he hadde hasted he no3t,
On hem þe vyleny to venge, þat his veynys brosten,
Bot þay taried on þe tyme, 3if þey tourne wolde,
3af hem space þat hym spilide, þey hit spedde lyte,
XL wynter, as y fynde, and no fewere 3yrys..... (lines 1-23)

Thus the poet commences by establishing the historical setting, rather than invoking God or creating the illusion of oral performance. This leads directly to

the account of the crucifixion of Christ. Pilate was provost at this time and also responsible for Christ's condemnation. The significance of the events is conveyed through the stark images of blood and torture and the taunts Jesus had to endure. Christ is depicted as passive, the victim of strong men, bound and blindfolded to render Him helpless. This passive figure is beaten with *quyrboyle* whips. There is a contrast between the silent Christ and the Jews who taunt Him, calling upon Him to prophesy. His white body becomes submerged in blood which pours forth like rain and the Jews are described as bursting His veins. Yet, despite this violence, Christ does not hastily exact vengeance on them, but allows them forty years to repent. The contrast between the violence of the Jews and the serenity of Jesus amply sets the context for the destruction of Jerusalem. There is no need to recount the miracles He performed. Although a listening audience could have stored this dense and carefully worked out series of images for later reflection, the intricacy of the passage suggests that the work was intended for private contemplation. They would thus be in a position to note the juxtaposition of the historical situation and the religious perception of the events which the poet sets out and which is key to how his narrative develops.

Titus and Vespasian commences rather differently and in more traditional style:

Listeneth alle þat ben in live,
Bothe Cristen man and wive.
I wil 3ou tellen a wonder caas,
How Jesu Crist byhatede was
Of þe Jewes felle and kene;
þat was on hem sithen seene.
The Gospelles I drawe to witenesse

Of þis matere more and lesse;
 And the passioun of Nichodeme,
 If þat 3e take þereto good 3eme;
 And of the geestes of emperoures
 That tellen of þese adventures:
 How Jhesu Crist was doon to deed
 Thurgh þe Jewes false reed.
 Firste they deden hym grete despyt
 Er þat he dyede, I telle 3ou 3et.
 I trow þat þei bilogh hit noght;
 For after they hit dere aboght,
 As 3e may heereafterward lere.
 Listeneth lordes and 3e shall here.
 3e wite well, and sooth it is,
 That many man gylteles hangede is.
 Right soo byfell on Jesu Criste,
 As us shewed the Evangeliste;
 For oure trespas, and noght for his,
 He soffrede here grete shame, I wys.... (lines 1-26)

In this passage we are invited to listen to the tale through conventional devices.

In lines 1-3 the poet asks us to listen as he tells of a *wonder caas*. He then cites several authorities which validate his account. One finds romance tags such as *I wys* and *I tele 3ou 3et*. The passage consists of roughly the same number of lines as that quoted from the *Siege of Jerusalem* and yet in it the poet has only managed to get us to listen. It takes a further 800 lines to relate the chief events of Christ's life. In contrast to the concise style of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, the opening of *Titus and Vespasian* is characterised by repetition and demand for attention, *listeneth alle*, *listeneth lordes* and so forth.³⁴ A social occasion is invoked, with the poet addressing listeners, rather than readers, and this suggests that the poem could have been intended to be performed as well as read. All this is very much part of the traditions of metrical romance. There is no attempt to

³⁴ See Burrow (1971) and Burrow (1984).

highlight profound issues, the difference between historical and religious accounts of the happenings.

One finds similar distinctions in the use of sources by the two poets. The sources named by *Titus and Vespasian* are the canonical Gospels as well as the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Josephus, *The Seven Sages*,³⁵ and "the Gestes of Emperours"³⁶(lines 1-26). F. Bergau, having considered the evidence, concludes that Josephus, *The Seven Sages*, the *Siege of Jerusalem* and the Old English versions of the Veronica legend are not sources of the poem.³⁷ He finds that the main source of the poem is the Old French *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*. The *Titus and Vespasian* poet is simply interested in relating a popular account of the story and not with dealing with the contradictions latent in the material which become apparent when one consults other sources such as those used by the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet.

From line 1696 *Titus and Vespasian* follows a version of *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*. This French tale was not a stable text in either its *chanson de geste* or prose versions and it is not possible to establish which the poet was using as his source. There are ten manuscripts of the poem and twenty-one of the prose, which have been divided into two families by Ford.³⁸ On the whole *Titus*

³⁵ *Titus and Vespasian* (1905) pp.xxv-xxvi.

³⁶ Neither Bergau (1901) p.96 nor Herbert *Titus and Vespasian* (1905) p.xvi have been able to trace this text.

³⁷ Bergau (1901) pp.52-3, 83.

³⁸ *La Vengeance de Nostre Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Prose Versions: The Version of Japheth* (1984) pp. 3-7. See in addition Chapter Two.

and *Vespasian* seems closer to the *chanson de geste* than the prose *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*. Bergau came to this conclusion, but was unable to fix on which extant version of the French text is closest to the poem. All editions consist of reproductions of the text of one manuscript, and there is no critical edition of all the manuscripts and this adds to the difficulty in determining a precise source text. Bergau postulates a lost version close to Ms. L.IV. Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino as the most likely.³⁹ This problem led Herbert to suggest that *Titus and Vespasian* was based on the lost Latin original of the *chanson de geste*, but he provides no evidence for this. More recently, A.T. Gryting has, however, established the sources of the French text as the *Vindicta Salvatoris* and *De Pylato*,⁴⁰ discrediting this theory.

Titus and Vespasian follows *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur* fairly closely from *laisse* six, where Gai has his dream and devises the ruse of pretending to go on a mission to collect tribute from Pilate:

And al þis nyght me met a dreem
 þat I was at Jerusalem;
 Me thoght I stode witerly
 Byside þe temple of Kyng Davy,
 And þere bothe I herde and say
 Fele thynges to my pay.
 And, sire, if 3e wil doon aftur me,
 I shall doo wenden to þat citee,
 And brynge 3ou tipinges, if I can,
 If I may heren oght of þat man,
 And if oght of hym might be founde
 þat myght make 3ou hool and sounde...(lines 1695-1706)

³⁹ Bergau (1901) p.96.

⁴⁰ *The Oldest Version of the Twelfth-Century Poem "La Venjance Nostre Seigneur"* (1957).

Once there he meets a Christian called Jacob whom he decides to take into his confidence. Jacob offers him help and shelter in his quest (lines 1753-1788). He explains that a fool foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem and that he himself was present at Christ's crucifixion. Furthermore, his daughter was one of the four Marys (lines 1789-1850). The narrative of the destruction of Jerusalem is similar in both poems, with Vespasian receiving baptism and three ships of Jews being set adrift, which end up in Flanders, Germany and England (laissez 98-99; lines 4247-4288, 4887-5044).

Indeed, with the exception of the opening and the ending of the French text, the English poet remains quite faithful to this source. He omits the opening five laisses of *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*⁴¹ where the French writer invites his audience to listen, sets forth his theme and explains how Vespasian is stricken with leprosy in order to bring him to the Faith. The fourth and fifth laisses relate how Vespasian asks Gai to go and search for a remedy. Vespasian promises a reward to the finder of a cure and vows to give the man who heals him half his lands. He questions Gai about the prophet who was crucified in Jerusalem. This section is not incorporated into the English text as the English poet has already spent 1695 lines introducing his tale based on other sources (see below). Similarly, the end of the *chanson de geste* is quite unlike the English, but there is no obvious reason for this divergence on the part of the English poet. In laisse 102 Josephus makes a long statement of faith and is baptised. Pilate undergoes a

⁴¹ All references are to *The Oldest Version of the Twelfth-Century Poem "La Venjance Nostre Seigneur"* (1957).

trial in Rhone before imprisonment head-first down a well, and after two years confinement he is swallowed by the earth as are all evildoers (laissez 103-106). Laisse 107 rounds off the poem with a moral that no one can triumph against God. In the French prose version we learn that Pilate is removed from the well, that his face looks black as any fiend and the devils come and collect him. The ending of the French tale is much better structured than the rather long series of unconnected incidents in *Titus and Vespasian*.

The English poet makes a number of omissions, some of which harm the sense of the narrative. Josephus' attempts to convert his family in laisse 65 are to be found only in the French, although it would have been in keeping with the theme of the English poem. Explanatory remarks such as that it snowed and froze so hard that the inhabitants of Haifa could not flee (laisse 36) are ignored by the *Titus and Vespasian* poet, even though this explicates how the siege of Haifa was won.

Many of the changes made by the *Titus and Vespasian* poet are minor alterations, some of which seem irrelevant. A number of episodes are transposed in the English redaction, simply because they are. For instance, the English poet transposes the encounter between Velocian and Pilate, placing it before Veronica's introduction, instead of immediately after (lines 1857-1950). After this Veronica appears and it is she herself who narrates her story (lines 1951-2048), not Jacob before her arrival as in the French poem laissez 12-15. There is no explanation for the repositioning and it does not appear to add anything to the

narrative. Beautiful descriptions are curtailed, and it is obvious that the English poet did not appreciate decorative touches or the use of images to convey meaning, such as those we saw in the opening passage from the *Siege of Jerusalem*.

The main focus of *Titus and Vespasian* is didactic, and in accord with this the poet adds long speeches expounding the Christian faith. One of the most important of these is Clement's long account of creation, sin and redemption (lines 2333-2428). Likewise he adds Josephus' speech to the effect that he and the other Christians would have surrendered long ago if Vespasian had been baptised (lines 3675-3700):

"For had þi lorde Vaspasian
Ymade hymself a Cristen man,
And his sone, with alle his oste,
Er þou come hider, wel þou wost
For hym, hit had ben sikernesse,
þan had we 3olden, more and lesse.
3et is us lever to dye hereinne
þan 3elde us to a Sarazyne.....(lines 3687-3694)

The result of this very specific purpose on the part of the poet is that other elements of the destruction of Jerusalem story are compressed and made less important. For instance, the details of the tactics employed during the siege and campaign in Judaea are considerably fewer than in the *Siege of Jerusalem* and are derived from *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*, not the *Polychronicon* or Hegesippus. No mention is made of Josephus' ruses, for instance, and, in fact,

Josephus himself does not play a very large part. According to Herbert,

Josephus' prophecies (lines 889-914) are inspired by *The Jewish War* iii 8⁴²:

"The day wil come þis toun shall falle
And þe Jewes ben confoundet alle.
Þis citee shall ben overthrowe,
The hegh paleys shall be ful lowe.
Messias shall sende 3ou amonge
Sorwe, meschaunce and wrech stronge.....(lines 893-898)

However, they are more likely to have been taken from the *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola* and there is nothing in these lines from *Titus and Vespasian* to indicate otherwise. It is clear that the *Titus and Vespasian* poet consulted this text, but there is no evidence elsewhere in the poem to suggest that he knew Josephus' work. More time is spent on the story of Mary (also true of the French text) than on the campaign in Judaea. The orientation of *Titus and Vespasian* is clearly not historical, unlike the *Siege of Jerusalem* which is based in part on a Latin chronicle. Furthermore, both *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur* and *Titus and Vespasian* refer on several occasions to how Vespasian, who is predicted to avenge Christ, will do so by laying siege to Jerusalem, causing such a severe famine that a woman eats her infant:

Ad Vapasianum ot puis mout grant mestier.
Sil vint puis en la terre nostre Seignor vanger,
Que firent li Juÿf en la croiz travaille(r)
Et plaier et navrer et tot crucifier.
Cist fist Jherusalem par effors asseger;
Laianz en la cité ot si grant destorber
Que la mere i covint son anfant a menger.
.xxx. Juïs dona l'emperere(s) au denier. (laisse 20, lines 396-403)

⁴² *Titus and Vespasian* (1905) p.xxiv.

Later Josephus is depicted inquiring of his relatives:

"Or avons [nos] le wai que cil aloit querant
Qui fu morz en l'estor d'un fort quarlel tranchant;
Tot ainsi l'avrons nos, ja n'en avrons garant."
Seignor, n'est pas mençonge, por ice vos en chant,
Puis manga la dedanz la feme son enfant. (laisse 65, lines 1468-1472)

Some of these comments are omitted by the Middle English writer, although most are retained. The repetition of certain allusions concerning the prophet who was killed (named in the *Siege of Jerusalem* as Jesus son of Ananias), retained from the French, drives home the same point time and again, giving *Titus and Vespasian* a moralistic, contentious and anti-semitic tone. In lines 1794-1804 Jacob relates to Velocian how this fool has predicted the destruction of Jerusalem. The *knave*, who was killed in the streets, is referred to once more by the poet in lines 3155-3166 and lines 3205-3208:

Hereth now, lordinges efte,
For I mot telle pere y lefte,
Of þe knave, the prophete,
þat was slayn in þe strete.

He concludes the poem by referring yet again to this churl who prophesied and was killed in the streets (lines 5155--5156). The differences between the remarks in the two works is that the *Titus and Vespasian* poet concentrates on the references to the prophet who was killed and not on those concerning the child being eaten by his mother. These references are not necessary as the poet has included a long account of the prophet and his predictions, as well as of the other signs which foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, towards the beginning of *Titus*

and Vespasian. The effect of the repetition of these remarks combined with the detailed narrative relating what the prophet said and did is to weight the poem against the Jews and attempt to stifle any possibility of sympathy for them. It is interesting that the poet chose to omit the references to the infamous act of cannibalism, perhaps because they could be seen as raising complex theological issues. This is certainly true of the account in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. The *Titus and Vespasian* poet did not wish to delve into such issues.

Not only are the readers of *Titus and Vespasian* discouraged from feeling any sympathy for the Jews, they are guided in how to interpret other matters presented in the poem. The additions of the large homiletic sections such as Clement's speech emphasise this. This is wholly unlike the situation in the *Siege of Jerusalem* where although the vengeance is seen as justified, the picture presented is altogether more complex. In the *Siege of Jerusalem* we learn of unsavoury facts about Roman emperors, and the killing of the Jews for their gold is not seen as a just punishment but as a shameful act. In *Titus and Vespasian* (lines 4163-4246) the incident occurs after the siege when the Jews are punished for their actions. The Christians who survive in Jerusalem inform Vespasian of how the Jews have swallowed their gold. He is delighted to learn of this and orders the Christians in Judaea and his soldiers to attend an auction of the Jewish captives. He sells groups of thirty for a penny and instructs the buyers in what they must do to obtain the treasure:

"....Everych take his part of all,
Of everych heed, as wil befall.
In her wombes þei have it broght;

Hit thar not forther ben ysoght.
 Whan 3e have out þat tresour,
 Þat 3e see þere nys noo more,
 Loke 3e doon hem all þe peyne
 Þat any man can thenke or seyn.
 Hange hem, brenne hem, doo hem drawe,
 Flee hem, bore hem, doo hem sawe,
 Roost hem, scalde hem, bete hem, and put,
 And all to peces her limes kut,
 And þus fordoon hem lif and lyme;
 Soo shull we qwenchen her venym.
 And Goddes blessing þei have ay,
 Þat serveth hem [so], til domesday.
 Cometh now, and byggeth fast,
 Ever whil þi lif wil last."
 They comen and boght up everychoon,
 And everych openede his anoon,
 And after dede hem her inwyse
 As hem was beden, þe same wise. (lines 4221-4246)

The effect of the positioning of this passage is to justify the actions of the Romans. The poet certainly feels that it is the correct course of action and has Vespasian express the belief that they shall gain God's blessing for it. The passage exults in sensational detail, dwelling on the mutilation and torture of the Jews. The chief feature of the passage is amplification through variation, as in lines 4229-4232. In these lines in particular the jangle produced by the rhymes is accentuated by the parallel construction of imperative and *hem*, so that the lines read like a chant. Vespasian's rhetoric is designed to arouse the Christians to do their worst to the Jews. In the *Siege of Jerusalem* this episode occurs when on Josephus' exhortations some Jews flee the city before its final destruction:

Myche peple for þe prechyng at þe posterne 3atis
 Tyen out of þe toun and Tytus bysecheþ,
 To for[g]yue hem þe gult, þat þey to god wro3t;
 And he graunteþ hem grace and gaylers bytau3t.
 Bot whan þey metten with mete, vnmy3ty þey were

And fode to defye, so faynt was here strengþe,
 Fful þe gottes of gold eche gome hadde:
 Lest fomen fongen hem schold, here floreyngs þey eten.
 Whan hit was broȝt vp abroad and þe bourd aspyed,
 [Wiþou]ten leue of þat lord, ledes hem slowen,
 [G]oren euereche a gome, and þe gold taken;
 Ffayn[ere] of þe floreyngs [þan of] þe frekes alle. (lines 1157-1168)

Both the Jews and the Roman soldiers give way to greed. The Jews who surrender, faced by the prospect of death and believing the preaching of Josephus, still want to preserve their gold and do so by swallowing it. The Roman soldiers, preferring the money to the men, *goren* the Jews. Titus is not consulted, and indeed he had already granted these men mercy. Thus the killing of the Jews for gold is an underhand and shameful act. A distinction is drawn between the Jews who throw themselves on the mercy of the Romans and the Roman soldiers who take advantage of this and murder them. The presentation of this episode in the *Siege of Jerusalem* raises questions about the validity of military campaigns even if the cause is apparently just.

There are several substantial additions in *Titus and Vespasian* to the account of the destruction of Jerusalem as presented in *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*. These additions consist of long biographies of Pilate, Judas, Saint James the Less (lines 917-990) and Christ. They accentuate the episodic structure of *Titus and Vespasian* and are superfluous to the narrative of the poem. The main source for these additions is the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine, using material from three tales: Cap.45 *De Sancto Mathia Apostolu*.

Cap. 53 *De Passione Domini* and Cap. 67 *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola*. For example, in its relation of Pilate's life *Titus and Vespasian* follows *De Passione Domini* very closely⁴³:

Fuit quidam rex nomine Tyrus qui quandam puellam nomine Pylam, filiam cujusdam molendinarii nomine Atus carnaliter cognovit et de ea filium generavit, Pyla autem ex nomine suo et nomine patris sui, qui dicebatur Atus, unum nomen composuit et nato puero imposuit nomen Pylatus. Cum autem Pylatus tres annos haberet, ipsum Pyla ad regem transmisit: habebat autem rex filium de regina conjuge sua, qui fere Pylato coetaneus habebatur; isti dum annos discretionis attigissent, saepius luctamine, pugna, et funda ad invicem colludebant. Sed regis legitimus filius, ut genere erat nobilior, sic in omni loco Pylato inveniebatur strenuior et omni genere certaminis aptior. Ob hoc Pylatus invidiae livore commotus et felleo dolore stimulatus fratrem suum latenter occidit.....(p.231)⁴⁴

Similarly, *Titus and Vespasian* lines 1493-1510 read:

Hit was a kynge þat highte Tyrus,
Of Spayne, I understande þus.
A mylners doughtur of his lande
He knowlached, I understande.
She hight Pila, her fader Atus.
Her sone was sithen merveillous;
Pilatus þei clepede hym þoo
Aftur hem boþe two.
The kynge on his wife dere
Gate a sone the selve 3ere.
This Pila sithen broght hoom hir sone,
With his fader the kynge to wone.
These children were togedre longe,

⁴³ Pilate's life is recounted, beginning with his birth in Spain to King Tyrus and Pila. He kills his half-brother and is sent to Rome. Once there he murders the son of the king of France. The Romans make him governor of Pontus, from whence he derives his name. Herod admires his slyness and makes him governor of Judaea (*Titus and Vespasian* lines 1489-1582).

⁴⁴ There was a king, Tyrus by name, who seduced a girl named Pyla, daughter of a miller called Atus, and had of her a son. When her son was born, Pyla gave him a name composed of her own and her father's, and called him Pylatus or Pilate. When Pilate was three years old, his mother sent him to the king, his father. The king already had a son born of the queen his wife, and this son was almost the same age as Pilate. As they grew older the two often competed with each other at wrestling, boxing and shooting with a sling, but the king's legitimate son just as he was of nobler birth, showed himself more vigorous and skilful in every sort of contest, and Pilate consumed with jealousy and suffering from liver trouble, killed his brother in secret..... *The Golden Legend* I (1993) p.211.

Til þat þei were bigge and stronge.
In alle dedes, thurgh kynde,
Pilat was alway byhynde;
This agrevede Pilate sore,
He slogh hym privelich þefore.....

The only departure the *Titus and Vespasian* poet makes is that Pilate is a friend of Herod's and receives the governorship of Judaea from him, whereas in the *De Passione Domini* Pilate goes behind Herod's back and acquires the governorship over him from the Romans and later sends Christ to Herod to engineer a reconciliation. The trial, condemnation and burial of Pilate at the end of *Titus and Vespasian* lines 4289-4348, 4365-4486 also come from this source. However, for the origins of his imprisonment in a steel barrel (lines 4349-4365) we have to look elsewhere. Particularly striking is the story of Christ's tunic⁴⁵ which is derived from *De Passione Domini* p.232, as this is not present in many versions of the story.

The life of Judas (lines 4488-4884)⁴⁶ is lifted by the *Titus and Vespasian* poet from *De Sancto Mathia Apostola* pp.184-6. It serves little purpose in the

⁴⁵ Pilate is brought to Vespasian and the emperor loves him. An old man explains that this strange occurrence is due to Pilate's possession of Jesus' girdle, which was woven by the Virgin Mary. The girdle saves him from famine and the wrath of his enemies. Vespasian has it removed and the spell is lifted (*Titus and Vespasian* lines 4289-4348).

⁴⁶ Judas is born to Ruben and Ciberia in Jerusalem. His mother has a vision at his conception which predicted his future wickedness, but Ruben ignores it. When the child is born they decide to set him adrift on a boat. The boat drifts to the Isle of Scariot. Here the boy is spied by the Queen who adopts and names him Judas Scariot. Later she has a child of her own. Judas fights with the younger boy and is informed that he is merely adopted. In a fit of jealousy he kills this boy and runs away to Jerusalem. There he gains the goodwill of Pilate. One day Pilate sees an apple tree in Ruben's orchard, the fruit of which he craves. He dispatches Judas to acquire some apples. While Judas is employed in this task he is discovered by Ruben. They fight and Ruben is killed. Ciberia appeals to Pilate for redress and he tells her not to worry. Pilate marries her to Judas. She tells Judas all about her son and he realises what a crime he has committed. In remorse he becomes one of Jesus' apostles. He continues his thieving ways, taking one tenth of all the alms. He values Mary's ointment at 300 pence and when he is not permitted to sell it, he betrays Christ for thirty pence. Later he repents of his actions, returns the money and hangs himself on an elder-tree (*Titus and Vespasian* lines 4488-4884).

poem, other than it being an example of another "wicked bird" as Furnivall quaintly termed both him and Pilate in his collection entitled *Early English Saints' Lives and the Two Wicked Birds Judas and Pilate*.⁴⁷ Lives of Pilate and Judas frequently circulated together, as Du Méril tells us, and this is perhaps why the poet included Judas' life.⁴⁸ The account interrupts the narrative of the destruction of Jerusalem and the conclusion of the poem and after it has been related, the poet says:

Lete we Pilate and Judas dwelle;
Of þe Emperour I wil 3ou telle. (4885-4486)

The purpose of these additions seems to be that the poet wished to tell of all the popular stories which were even tangentially related to his narrative in order to entertain his audience and reconfirm antipathy to the Jews.

This is reinforced and augmented by passages based on the Gospels and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which are extremely long and deal with the life of Christ, and the activities of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who occur nowhere else in the poem. Like the lives of Pilate and Judas, they read like self-contained episodes which could be removed without destroying the sense of the poem. Indeed, their removal would improve its structure. Lines 1-296 are a summary of incidents from the Gospels which are to be found in the lectionary readings, with Caiaphas' prophecies which were to be found in the readings for

⁴⁷ *Early English Saints' Lives and the Two Wicked Birds Judas and Pilate* (1862) pp.106-19.

⁴⁸ *Poésies Populaires Latines du Moyen Âge* (1947) pp.335-68. See in addition Rand (1967) pp.306-16 on the legend of Judas; and *La Venjance de Nostre-Seigneur, The Old and Middle French Prose Versions: The Cura Sanitatis Tiberii....* (1993) pp. 31-2 on Judas and pp.27-34 on Pilate.

Easter.⁴⁹ Lines 390-684 are based on the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, and relate the conspiracies hatched while Jesus is away. Twelve men defend His honour and these are quickly joined by two rich men, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Nicodemus reproaches the Jews for their actions as does Joseph of Arimathea (lines 501-520), with the latter going on to declare himself a Christian, infuriating the Jews who imprison him. He is released by Christ, greatly disturbing Annas and Caiaphas (lines 521-590). We are then provided with a detailed account of Joseph's preaching which leads to further conflict with the Jewish authorities, from whose grasp he is once again rescued through divine aid. Joseph of Arimathea's second imprisonment in a town-wall and his release originate in *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola*. Other elements derived from the *Gospel of Nicodemus* include details concerning the Resurrection, Christ's miracles and Pilate's letter to Tiberius in lines 1385-1460 which is based on the *Gospel of Nicodemus* p. 392.

A number of minor additions based on the *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola* are added by the poet, but contribute little to the narrative. Titus' illness is a case in point, the account of which is quite close in *Titus and Vespasian*, apart from the fact that the incident is split in two at lines 3171-3180 and 3930-4016. This is possibly because the incident serves little purpose, but the poet wished to include it because he had it before him:

Reliquit autem Vespasianus Titum filium suum in obsidione Jerusalem.
Titus autem, ut in eadem hystoria apocrypha legitur, audiens patrem

⁴⁹ The precise origin of these accretions I have been unable to find. It is possibly a missing French text or homily, as it seems unlikely that the *Titus and Vespasian* poet would summarise the material himself.

suum in imperium sublimatum, tanto gaudio et exultatione repletur. quod nervorum contractione ex fregiditate corripitur et altero crure debilitatus paralyti torquetur, Iosephus autem audiens Titus paralyti laborare, causam morbi et tempus morbi diligentissime inquit. Causa nescitur, morbus ignoratur, de tempore autem, quoniam audita patris electione hoc sibi acciderit, aperitur. Iosephus autem vir providus et sapiens ex paucis multa coniecit et ex tempore morbum et causam invenit, sciens, quod gaudio et laetitia superabundanti debilitatus fuerit. Animadvertens itaque, quia contraria contrariis curantur, sciens etiam quia quod amore conquaeritur, dolore frequenter amittitur, quaerere coepit, an aliquis esset, qui principis inimicus obnoxius teneretur. Et erat ibi servus adeo Tito molestus, ut sine vehementi conturbatione nullatenus in eum posset respicere, nec etiam nomen ejus audire; dixit itaque Tito: si curari desideras, omnes, qui in meo comitatu venerit, securus habeatur et salvus. Tunc Iosephus cito prandium fieri praecepit et mensam suam mensae Titi oppositam locavit et servum a dextris suis sedere fecit. Quem Titus respiciens molestia conturbatus infremuit et, qui prius gaudio inrigidatus fuerat, accensione furoris incaluit nervosque distendens curatus fuit. Post hoc Titus et servum in sui gratiam et Iosephum in sui amicitiam recipit. (p.301)⁵⁰

On the other hand, several useful additions which illuminate the destruction of Jerusalem are derived by the *Titus and Vespasian* poet from *De Sancto Iacoba Apostola*. From it he derives the details surrounding the portents (lines 991-1162), Nathan's mission (lines 1281-1385), Vespasian's illnesses (lines 1230-1240), the flight of the Christians (lines 2809-2828), Iosephus' flight

⁵⁰ Vespasian left his son Titus in charge of the siege of Jerusalem. We read in the same apocryphal history that Titus, hearing of his father's accession to the empire, was so filled with joy and exultation that he caught a chill and suffered a contraction of nerves and muscles that left him painfully paralysed in one leg. Iosephus heard that Titus was paralysed, and diligently sought information regarding the cause of the disease and the time that it had struck. The cause was unknown, the nature of the illness was also unknown, but the time was known: it happened to Titus when he heard of his father's election. Iosephus, quick and foresighted as he was, put two and two together, and, knowing the time, surmised both the nature of the ailment and its cure. He knew that Titus had been debilitated by an excess of joy and gladness, and, keeping in mind that opposites are cured by opposites, knowing also that what is brought on by love is often dispelled by dislike, he began to ask whether there was anyone who was particularly obnoxious to the prince. There was indeed a slave who annoyed Titus so much that the very sight of him, and even the sound of his name, upset him completely. So Iosephus said to Titus: "If you want to be cured, guarantee the safety of any who come in my company." Titus: "Whoever comes in your company will be kept safe and sound!" Iosephus quickly arranged a festive dinner, set his own table facing that of Titus, and seated the slave at his right side. When Titus saw the fellow, he growled with displeasure; and as he had been chilled by joy, he was now heated by his fit of fury: his sinews were loosened, and he was cured. Thereafter Titus granted his favour to the slave and took Iosephus into his friendship. *The Golden Legend* I (1993) p.275

from Jerusalem and conversion (lines 3843-3942), and the Jews' attempts to rebuild Jerusalem (lines 5087-5134). Minor alterations to the account of the destruction, which mainly follows that in *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*, have been made in accord with *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola*. These include the fact that Veronica suffers from a flux of blood rather than leprosy. In *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur* Veronica suffers from leprosy which is healed by touching the cloth (laisse 13). Furthermore, the *Titus and Vespasian* poet refers to Gai as Velocian in accord with most other accounts of the Veronica legend and the destruction of Jerusalem story, including the *Legenda Aurea* and the histories. The news of Nero's death and Vespasian's trip to Rome (lines 3165-3199) is derived by the English writer from the same source, *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola*. Vespasian has to return to Jerusalem as the English poet is using *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur* as his chief source and Vespasian plays a prominent role in it. The number of Jewish dead (lines 4269-4288) and the succession of Titus to the imperial throne (lines 5045-72) are of similar origin. The portents at the beginning come after an extended account of the martyrdom of James the Less, which disrupts the structure of the poem. The only differences between the English and Latin works at this point is that the English text provides the poor man who prophesies with a very different speech and informs us of how he is killed. The Middle English poet learnt of his death in *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*, where it is alluded to frequently. All of these additions denigrate the

Jews and glorify Christianity, emphasising the justness of the war and the necessity of eliminating Judaism.

Thus the choice of chief source made by the *Titus and Vespasian* poet is very different from that used by the *Siege of Jerusalem* writer, as he follows in the main a French romance. These choices of source provide evidence of the intentions of both writers. Robert Mannyng of Brunne wrote his *Story of England* in English in order to make it available to:

.. þo þat in þis lande wone,
þat þe Latyn no Frankys cone. (Prologue lines 7-8)⁵¹

Thorlac Turville-Petre argues that Manning writes in English as it is part of his strategy to present himself as a member of the community, as a "priestly author" instructing a lay audience.⁵² Thus writing in English would make a text available to a wider audience, and this is certainly true of *Titus and Vespasian*. Moreover, it is a typical metrical romance, consisting mainly of a poor quality translation of a French romance, while at the same time sharing Manning's aim of instructing the audience. There the similarities end, as unfortunately the poet is unable to distinguish between what would contribute to the theme of the poem and what is superfluous. In complete contrast to this, the *Siege of Jerusalem* is based in part on the *Vindicta Salvatoris* and not on *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*. It follows the Latin closely, changing to other sources only when the narrative requires it.

⁵¹ Rolf Berndt (1972) p.349 provides extensive evidence that French was the language of written communication of an elite minority. M. Dominica Legge (1963) records how up until the end of the fourteenth century Anglo-Norman texts were written for courtly audiences, with many being commissioned by women, as they did not read Latin.

⁵² Turville-Petre (1996) pp.34-48.

The alliterative poem is beautifully written, containing elaborate descriptions, which help convey its theme, a point on which all critics agree, even those who find the poem morally repugnant.⁵³ Although, for the most part the writer of the metrical romance follows a similar French work, he did attach large amounts of didactic religious information, which he has extracted from popular texts that enjoyed wide circulation in both their original Latin and in translation. As M.T. Clanchy points out, English writers using French as their medium frequently state that "their work is expressed in that language so that everyone, 'great and small' (*li grant e li mendre*), can understand".⁵⁴ Such remarks are used to justify the fact that they are not using Latin. One can conclude from this that the status of French was not considered equal to that of Latin in certain spheres, such as history and doctrine. Therefore, if a writer used primarily a French source for a work in English it would carry less weight than a text which had the authority of a Latin source. The function of these additions mainly to be found at the beginning of *Titus and Vespasian* is to give it authority and explain the accepted view of the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem. The link between the destruction of Jerusalem and the passion of Christ, which is to be found in the readings for the tenth Sunday after Pentecost, is emphasised in *Titus and Vespasian*. The audience of the poem is deemed to need instruction. This does not negate its popular, recreational purpose, for as Glending Olson points out,

⁵³ Spearing (1987) pp.165-172, Narin van Court (1995) pp.227-246, Pearsall (1988) pp.11-35, Hamel (1992) pp.177-194, Hanna (1992 a) pp.109-121, Kopka (1887), Lawton (1997) pp.105-117.

⁵⁴ Clanchy (1993) p.203. See Short (1991) pp.229-49 and Ferrante (1982) pp.586-600.

many didactic religious texts were considered to be recreational and entertaining.⁵⁵ However, the manner in which the religious material is presented in this poem is entirely different from the *Siege of Jerusalem*. If we look at the story of Mary and her son we can see this clearly. In the *Siege of Jerusalem* this story is used to raise complex ideas surrounding the Eucharist and the eating of the body of Christ, while in *Titus and Vespasian* the incident is presented merely as the fulfilment of a prophecy and illustrates the suffering of Christians at the hands of the Jews. The gender of the child is said to be female, as in *La Venjance Nostre Seigneur*, which avoids parallels with the Eucharist and the sacrifice of Christ. This is perhaps because the audience of the metrical romance would have had less interest in complex arguments. The *Siege of Jerusalem*, on the other hand is intended for a more sophisticated audience, possibly a clerical readership, as is indicated by the subject-matter and the use of sources. Helen Suggett notes in her survey of the use of French in the later Middle Ages that Latin was generally reserved for correspondence to or between ecclesiastical figures, while French was the standard medium for written communication among the nobility and to officials.⁵⁶ Therefore, the redactor of the *Siege of Jerusalem* was likely to have been a cleric as he had access to Latin sources and moves easily among them, hence his interest in complex theological matters. My contention is that the purposes behind the two works are very different, that the *Titus and Vespasian* poet intentionally writes a poem in which the reader is not

⁵⁵ Olson (1982) *passim*.

⁵⁶ Suggett (1946) pp.61-83. See in addition Clanchy (1993), *passim*, on the general use of French and Latin.

required to be aware of external information or other texts, while the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet composes an intellectually demanding work which requires such knowledge. This perhaps explains the choice of sources (including their language and genre) by each writer. This distinction between the two works is not lessened by the fact that the *Siege of Jerusalem* is also written in English, as alliterative verse was an accepted medium for composing weighty works (see above).

The *Siege of Jerusalem* incorporates material from the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, which was related to the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, as well as from the *Legenda Aurea*. However, the poet does not cite the names of the works he is drawing on, unlike his contemporary, the *Titus and Vespasian* poet, who repeatedly invokes authorities, even ones which he does not use such as the *Seven Sages of Rome*.⁵⁷ This is a significant difference between the two poems. It suggests that *Titus and Vespasian* is constructed by a writer who simply accepts the orthodox view and does not wish to interpret material himself. Furthermore, he uses overtly didactic religious material, such as the accounts of the life of Christ and the activities of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, to give the legendary elements in his poem authority. This would impress his audience with the veracity of his didactic, anti-semitic poem. The *Siege of Jerusalem*, on the other hand, is carefully composed by threading together information from various sources, and intended for a more educated audience as

⁵⁷ Having compared *Titus and Vespasian* with the *Seven Sages of Rome* (1933), I found no evidence to suggest that any passages in the former are based on the latter.

it weaves in texts such as Christ's prophecy from Luke 19: 41-4 without citing its origin. Vespasian vows that:

Or y to þe walles schal wende and walten alle ouere;
Schal no ston vpon ston stonde, by y passe. (lines 351-352)

When this Biblical text is quoted in *Titus and Vespasian* (lines 705-720) it occurs as part of Christ's prophecies concerning Jerusalem and the audience is not required to know its origins, because it is told. This suggests that the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet expected his audience to possess a certain knowledge of religious issues and to be acquainted with the sources. Otherwise the intertextuality of the poem would not be perceived.

However, the *Siege of Jerusalem* is also based in part on a French source, Roger D'Argenteuil's *Bible en François*. Roger D'Argenteuil's work is an instructional text, based in part on the Old and New Testaments and expounding tenets of the Christian faith. The English poet uses it with a clear purpose in mind and not simply because it was available. Both the genre of this French source, a work of instruction dealing with theological matters including the sacraments, and the use made of it by the poet, imply that the composition of the *Siege of Jerusalem* was motivated by a desire to raise certain issues and not simply to provide recreation for a popular audience.⁵⁸

F. Bergau and Kölbing and Day have considered the potential influence of the *Siege of Jerusalem* on *Titus and Vespasian*. Bergau lists the similarities

⁵⁸ See Chapter Six.

and differences between the two poems⁵⁹ and on the whole it has to be admitted that the similarities consist of only very general elements of the story which can be found in most accounts, while the differences are both more numerous and substantial. Having said this, there is one interesting feature which the two poems share, though it is a small point on which to base an argument. This is the fact that Pilate asks for a knife to peel his pear and not an apple. Kölbing and Day argue that this was an innovation on the part of the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet, prompted by the exigencies of alliteration,⁶⁰ and it is followed by the *Titus and Vespasian* poet:

þe wye þat hym warded, wente on a tyme,
Hym-self fedyng with frut and feffyt hym with a pere,
And forto paren his pere, he praieþ hym 3erne
Of a knyf, and þe kempe kest hym a trenchour,
And with þe same he schef hymself to þe herte,
And so þe kaytif as his kynde corsedlich deied. (*Siege of Jerusalem*
lines 1325-1330)⁶¹

þat of oon he borwede a knyfe
For to paren a pere - he drogh,
And þerwith hymself he slogh. (*Titus and Vespasian* lines 4388-4390)

This raises the possibility that the *Titus and Vespasian* poet was aware of the *Siege of Jerusalem* and chose to write a poem on the same subject-matter in a different style and focusing on different aspects of the story. However, the evidence is far from conclusive as the earliest manuscripts of both works date

⁵⁹ Bergau (1901) pp.79-83.

⁶⁰ *The Siege of Jerusalem* (1932) p.xxvi.

⁶¹ See MED under *paren* where there are several references to this story. The earliest to mention the paring of a pear is the *Siege of Jerusalem*. See further Arvidson (1916), *passim*, on the language of *Titus and Vespasian*.

from the end of the fourteenth century, so *Titus and Vespasian* could conceivably have inspired the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet to write a more intellectually demanding text.

This leads us to consider the quality of *Titus and Vespasian* in relation to the *Siege of Jerusalem*. The *Siege of Jerusalem* has a coherent outline with the poet following one source at a time and changing source only when the narrative outline dictates it. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of *Titus and Vespasian*. The religious sections at the beginning fit badly with the rest of the poem, with the poem lacking a sense of continuity. The ending is, as we can see from the previous discussion, interrupted by the tale of Judas which has little to do with the rest of the narrative. The early history of Pilate also constitutes a long and needless digression. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet edits out even details surrounding Pilate's demise, which he found in his source, in order to avoid deflections from the focus of his poem. In fact, at times one gets the impression that the redactor of *Titus and Vespasian* was more concerned with including everything he knew on the subject than with creating a coherent narrative. This is particularly true of the section on the portents, which follows the innumerable prophecies and which is alluded to constantly throughout the rest of the poem. Jesus and Josephus amongst other figures prophesy at length. The Lord bewails Jerusalem's fate:

"If þou wist as myche as I
þou most wepe, I seye þe why.....
There shall noo stoon on oþer bi leve,
But doun þei shul þe to-dreve."
Foure prophetes seiden right þus

Longe byforn oure Lorde Jesus:
Bothe Moyses and Ysaie
And Ely and eke Jeremye.....(lines 705-720)

.....þe noble clerc, Maister Josephus,
Amonges þe Jewes he seide þus
"The day wil come þis toun shalle falle
And þe Jewes ben confoundet alle.....(lines 891-894)

This repetition is due to the poet's inclusion of all the information which he found in the two different sources he was using, when he should have selected just some of the material.

At times the narrative in *Titus and Vespasian* is difficult to follow, such as the section concerned with Josephus' escape and stint in the cave:

Josephus unswared as a man
Ful coyntelich, as nede was than:
"Nay, it wil not wel be soo.
Castest cut, bitwix two and two,
Which of us shal oper ete,
And wech we shal on live lete.
....þus ech of hem oper name,
Til hit to Josephus cam
þat he cut shulde falle upon.
Dye he shulde right anoon;
But God wolde [not] he dyede þan,
For his wyt helpede many a man.....(lines 3879-3892)

It is not clear what the point of this incident is until we look at the source for it, the *Legenda Aurea*, where the episode is tied in to a description of Josephus' character. This description illuminates the incident by showing how Josephus, an honourable man, was driven to this extremity. The poet also appears to have misread the French text where it relates how Japhell survived at Haifa. These difficulties are not to be found in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, where the narrative is

always clear. Josephus' escape is omitted by the alliterative poet, although he was aware of it, having consulted the *Legenda Aurea* for other details.

In fact most of the extra length of *Titus and Vespasian*, 5182 short lines compared to 1334 long lines of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, is taken up with extraneous material, the lives of Pilate and Judas, the martyrdom of Saint James and so forth. These are examples of evildoers, whom one should not imitate unless one wishes to suffer a similar fate, and of good people. This is the outstanding impression which one gains of this metrical romance, that it is a series of exemplary tales. We read of the Creation, Resurrection, of saints and of the "wicked birds". A sense of narrative continuity is not present as it is in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, where each episode leads carefully to the next. In the *Siege of Jerusalem* details about other sieges are not included nor are life histories of characters as these are not pertinent to the story. Fundamentally, a comparison of the *Siege of Jerusalem* with *Titus and Vespasian* illustrates how one can compose a fascinating poem, like the *Siege of Jerusalem*, out of a mass of well-known legendary material if one has clearly defined aims. Alternatively, one can end up with a rather tedious text if one does not have a strong controlling idea and sense of organisation.

This is certainly true of *Titus and Vespasian*, which shares many of the features commonly associated with rhymed romances. It is written in four-stress couplets, using some romance tags and repetition. It is mainly episodic, consisting of a series of stories and incidents with little attempt to link them. The

poet is not interested in the beauty of descriptive sequences, and is concerned solely with including as many stories and incidents as is possible. The differences between *Titus and Vespasian* and most rhymed romances is the choice of subject-matter, the destruction of Jerusalem (most details concerning siege warfare are omitted) and stories of Pilate and Judas, rather than a tale of love or secular battle. This is a deliberate retelling of material widely available in theological and historical texts in a more popular vein. It is thus intended for recreational, though morally improving, purposes rather than as an attempt to stimulate intellectual debate.

Furthermore, like many metrical romances, it is impossible to compile a single critical edition of the poem. Fundamentally, it exists in two versions, as noted above; a short redaction with lines 1-812 and 3114-5184 missing and a long narrative and there are many local differences between manuscripts. It exists in two modern printed editions: Herbert's 1906 edition of the latter for the Roxburghe Club and Rudolf Fischer's 1903-4 edition of the former in Archiv 111 and 112, and an unpublished trial edition of the first 3,000 lines by John Holmes Wilson.⁶² Scribes did not take the same liberties with the *Siege of Jerusalem* text (most of the manuscript copies are virtually complete apart from BL. Ms. Cotton Vespasian E.xvi), which suggests that this work was treated

⁶² Herbert based his edition on BL. Ms. Additional 36523 collated with BL. Ms. Additional 10036, BL. Ms. Harley 4733, Bodelian Library Ms. Digby 230 and Bodelian Library Ms. Laud Misc. 622. Fischer edited Pierpont Morgan library Ms. 898. John Holmes Wilson compiled a trial edition of the first 3,000 lines of the Osborn Ms., collated with Pierpont Morgan Library Ms. 898, Cambridge, Magdalene College Ms. Pepys 2014, Bodelian library Ms. Laud Misc. 622, BL. Ms. Harley 4733 and Bodelian Library Ms. Digby 230 and a transcription of the rest of the Osborn Ms. See in addition Moe (1963) pp.10-5 for a critical assessment of Herbert's edition.

more respectfully and appreciated for the manner in which its author composed it. *Titus and Vespasian* seems to have been seen as a repository of tales that could be altered as need dictated. The numerous surviving manuscripts of *Titus and Vespasian* provide some evidence for the reception of the work and how its audience differs from that of the *Siege of Jerusalem* and this confirms the contrasting purposes of the poets.⁶³ As there are twelve manuscripts of the metrical romance, most of which are quite similar in appearance, I shall confine myself to brief general statements about them and their relationship to the *Siege of Jerusalem* manuscripts,⁶⁴ before examining specific issues relating to the presentation of *Titus and Vespasian*.

Figure 2

BL. Ms. Additional 10036 (F)
 BL. Ms. Additional 36523 (G)
 BL. Ms. Additional 36983 (H)
 Bodleian Library Ms. Digby 230 (I)
 Bodleian Library Ms. Douce 78 (J)
 Bodleian Library Ms. Douce 126 (K)
 BL. Ms. Harley 4733 (N)
 Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Misc. 622 (Q)
 Cambridge, Magdalene College Ms. Pepys 2014 (R)
 Coventry City Record Office Ms. 325/1 (T)

⁶³ The following analysis is based on consultations of the four manuscripts in the British Library and on the descriptions of the manuscripts in *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) pp.108-11, 143-5, 159-72, 178-9, 186-8, 206-8, 226-8, 257-61, 285-8, 303-4. For New York, Pierpont Morgan Library Ms. 898 see Bühler (1961) pp.20-4; Cambridge, Magdalene College Ms. Pepys 2014 see *Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College* vol. v, part 1 (1992) pp.45-6. See also the *Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse* (1963) no.1881 p.219. Phyllis Moe and John Holmes Wilson argue that Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Misc. 622 (Q c.1400) and BL. Ms. Additional 10036 (F a.1425) are the oldest manuscripts. The Aldenham Ms. sold at the Goldschmidt sale in 1938 (now Cleveland Public Library Ms. W qu 91.92-c.468) has been identified as a further manuscript of *Titus and Vespasian*. Moe (1963) pp. 123-77 discovered in the course of her research that it is, in fact, an English redaction of the *Bible en François*. She notes that it dates from the mid fifteenth century and is of East Midlands provenance. The manuscript consists of one hundred unruled folios with 34-41 lines per page, initial letters in blue and red, paragraph marks in red and underlinings in red and black. There are four English texts in this compilation; *The Brut*, a prose chronicle of England to the year 1419 excerpted from the *Polychronicon*, 34 lines of verse (a translation of the *Cur mundus militat*) and the *Bible en François*. The last item has not only been misidentified as *Tius and Vespasian*, but also as the *Vindicta Salvatoris* and the *Destruction of Jerusalem*.

⁶⁴ See Chapter Six.

Interestingly, the quality of the manuscripts of the *Titus and Vespasian* compares quite favourably to those of the *Siege of Jerusalem*. There are two well-produced manuscripts, Bodleian Library Ms. Digby 230 (I) and Coventry, City Record Office Ms. 325/1 (T), just as there are of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, as we have already seen. I is a vellum manuscript containing also a selection of religious poems and moral recipes in English. It is set out in double columns with each line beginning with a capital, punctuation marks at the ends of lines, rubrics in the columns, illuminated borders of foliage in gold and blue and some decorated initials in gold, violet and blue. It contains a small number of annotations and owners' names (*Merget Brabason* f.191^v; *Roger Brabason* 192^r).⁶⁵ On the flyleaf at the end of the manuscript, recto, there is the following signature and inscription: "Fran:/ Richarde/ If happ helpe not/ Hope is hindered William Gresley" and on the same leaf, verso,: "to deith endurit/ Clyfton".⁶⁶ There is a sizable number of scribblings in the margins especially in the first part of *The Troy Book*, where several passages have been marked by a later reader in a careless hand as warranting attention, often with the word "nota".⁶⁷ The various sets of signs in the manuscript have been examined by Ian Doyle, who concludes that they do not suggest that it is a composite manuscript, but rather

⁶⁵ *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) p.258; Moe (1963) pp.12-3.

⁶⁶ *Lydgate's Troy Book* IV (1930) p.29.

⁶⁷ *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes* II (1930) pp.44-5; *Lydgate's Troy Book* IV (1930) pp.25-9.

that it was compiled gradually.⁶⁸ Similarly, T containing a collection of poems by Chaucer, Hoccleve and Lydgate, along with *Mandeville's Travels and Titus and Vespasian*, is a vellum volume with illuminated borders and decorated initials. It comprises two or three sections with separate but continuous quire-signatures in different scripts. Ff.1-95 are written in untidy anglicana formata while the rest is done in fere-textura, both of which can be dated to the second or third quarters of the fifteenth century. The language of the manuscript suggests that it was compiled in the London region, possibly in a bookshop. It is decorated as one would expect of a manuscript of this quality and date with initial capitals adorned with sprays of foliage. On f.1^r there is a framed illustration of a man dressed in white with a hood and skullcap standing in front of green hills, which A.I. Doyle and George B. Pace suggest could be intended to be Aristotle who was thought to have written the *Secreta Secretorum*.⁶⁹ On ff.167^v-168r a late fifteenth-century hand has added 24 quatrains on mortality in English, the first 22 of which are preceded by Latin verses.

Significantly, BL. Ms. Additional 36523 (G), a Middle English miscellany which includes *The Lay Folk's Mass Book* and Maydestone's metrical rephrasings of the Seven Penitential Psalms, has a fine painted miniature of the Virgin and Child in its opening initial, and this is of infinitely superior quality to the only illustration in the *Siege of Jerusalem* manuscripts, that of BL. Ms. Additional 31042. It is a vellum manuscript executed in single

⁶⁸ Cited in *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) p.111.

⁶⁹ Doyle and Benson (1968) pp.23-6.

columns with a seven-line initial in red at the beginning, small red initials throughout, red paragraph marks, proper names occasionally underlined in red and containing no readers' names. *Titus and Vespasian* is in two parts, with the second which starts at line 2735 headed "Here bygynneth the passage of Vaspasian and Titus".⁷⁰ The scribe occasionally replaces obsolete words of OE origin with French loan words and glosses unusual phrases.⁷¹ Finally, in BL. Ms. Additional 36983 (H), a Middle English miscellany containing amongst other works *The Three Kings of Cologne*, two verse Saints' Lives, religious and moral poems and two prose texts concerning the Abbey of the Holy Ghost, the ascenders of the top line, the descenders of the bottom line and the opening initials of each intermediate line are exaggerated and embellished so that swirling patterns extend from them. The text of *The Prick of Conscience* has paragraph marks and capitals which indicate subdivisions.⁷² There are a few scribbled comments on f.1 relating to sheep.⁷³

However, the majority of the surviving manuscripts of both poems are unassuming. Bodleian Library Ms. Douce 78 (J) is a rather small manuscript with nothing exceptional to recommend it. Guddat-Figge points out that it might have originally been composed of two separate booklets with *Titus and*

⁷⁰*Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum 1900-5* (1907) p.124; Moc (1963) pp.9-10.

⁷¹John Homes Wilson (1967) p.xiv. For instance, *er* in line 1014 is replaced with *so*, *iude* in line 1089 with *Juwery* and *napeles* in line 1115 is replaced with *nevertheless*.

⁷² Lewis and McIntosh (1982) p.155.

⁷³*Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum 1900-5* (1907) p.269; Moc (1963) pp.17-8.

Vespasian in one on its own.⁷⁴ On f.93 there is a note dated August 18, 1499. The contents of the volume are in English and consist mainly of religious works in verse such as the *Lament of the Virgin* and the *Complaint of Christ*. Likewise BL. Ms. Harley 4733 (N) is a modest volume, in Middle English. French and Latin (*Proverbs of Old Philosophers* and the *Disticha Catonis*) with some rubricated initials. It is a late manuscript and contains many independent variants. The scribe is working from more than one exemplar and encounters difficulties due to this which he tries to resolve by simplifying the syntax. Unfortunately, he pays little attention to the rhythm and often lengthens a line or adds more without improving the sense.⁷⁵ Significantly, it contains many annotations in both Latin and English recording the contents of the folios, as well as the names of possible owners in sixteenth-century hands on ff.1-3, 27, 127^v (*John Lynell, John russell, John Pygyn, John Bland, John Legus, Brampton*).⁷⁶ On f.26 there is an earlier ascription: "Master John Penyngton, schole maister of Wurcesture, ys possessor of thys booke." Meanwhile BL. Ms. Additional 10036 (F) is very neatly executed and fairly uniform, though small, in single columns with two-line initials, titles and Latin lines picked out in red. Unlike the majority of the manuscripts this largely English volume (apart from Maydestone's rephrasing of Psalm 51 which is in Latin and English) displays

⁷⁴ *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) p.259; Moe (1963) pp.16-7.

⁷⁵ John Holmes Wilson (1967) pp.x, xv-xvi.

⁷⁶ *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) p.207; Moe (1963) pp.11-2.

few signs of having been used.⁷⁷ Bodleian Library Ms. Douce 126 (K), a compilation of Middle English religious verse, is a fair though unexceptional compilation with occasional 1-3 line capitals in red which indicate subdivisions in the texts, annotated in Latin and English and containing four personal names (*hary Chamly grocer* on f.3 and *Wylliam hogson* on ff.15, 22, both c. sixteenth century)⁷⁸ as well as a note in Latin prose concerning archangels and a further note in English dating from Henry VIII's reign on f.93. The large, moderately well produced Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Misc. 622 (Q) is a miscellany of works in English (religious verse and prose, a metrical Saint's Life, *Kyng Alisaunder* and Adam Davy's metrical account of five dreams) with three line initials in blue and red, each column marked off with a box enclosing the text and dividing the two columns. It contains two personal names of fifteenth century date (*Joh. Downe* f.64^v; *Honorius Gonereid* f.71^r) and a seventeenth-century note on a flyleaf: "Thise poems seem to have been wrote by one Adam Davy, as may be gathered from Fol.28 col2b col1 lin.7".⁷⁹ New York, Pierpont Morgan Library Ms. 898 (M) which is of east-midlands provenance, though the language contains traces of southern forms, is also modest. It is fifteenth century in date and has chapter headings in red and rubrication in blue. Significantly, it is the only manuscript to contain *Titus and Vespasian* on its own.⁸⁰ Cambridge.

⁷⁷ Moe (1963) pp.10-1.

⁷⁸ Lewis and McIntosh (1982) p.99.

⁷⁹ *Kyng Alisaunder* (1957) pp.1-3; Moe (1963) pp.13-5.

⁸⁰ Moe (1963) pp.19-20, 48-60; John Holmes Wilson (1967) *passim*.

Magdalene College Ms. Pepys 2014 (R) is a well-written, though not elaborately produced, late fourteenth-century or early fifteenth-century parchment manuscript from the Northampton region containing the *Chronicle of Popes and Emperors*⁸¹ and an English verse chronicle. The texts are written in a clear anglicana hand in black ink with some rubrication. The manuscript has seven-line initials in blue decorated with flourishes which extend down the margins, small blue capitals at the beginning of lines and marginal apparatus for items one and three. It contains some erased inscriptions, the names *Johanni Spycer* son of *Willelmo Spycer*, the dates 1469 and 1493 and a merchant's mark, which is repeated.⁸² Finally, the Osborn Ms. (O) is an early fifteenth-century vellum manuscript written in east-midlands dialect with some northern forms. It contains a mixture of single and double columns and is not decorated apart from some initials in blue and red. There is a two-line inscription in Latin on ff.39-40 which is undeciphered as yet and the signature of *Thomas Redyng*, a possible sixteenth-century owner, on f.40^v.⁸³ The scribe is very careless on occasion in transcribing the text, although he does sometimes emend lines improving their clarity.⁸⁴ This certainly provides us with an indication of the later audience of this manuscript, which suggests that the manuscripts were produced in order to be read and not for display.

⁸¹ See *The Chronicles of Rome: The Chronicles of Popes and Emperors and The Lollard Chronicle* (1999).

⁸² *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) p.46.

⁸³ John Homes Wilson (1967) pp.vi-vii; Moe (1963) pp.19-21.

⁸⁴ John Holmes Wilson (1967) p.xiii.

Thus the manuscripts on the whole display evidence of being read extensively. We can infer that they were popular for a long period, judging by the number of personal names which occur in some of the manuscripts. The personal names are mainly of men, though there is at least one woman's name (*Merget Brabason*), with many possessing the rudiments of Latin as is indicated by the language of some of the scribbles. Three manuscripts of *Titus and Vespasian*, N, K and O, contain annotations in Latin, just like U and L of the *Siege of Jerusalem*.⁸⁵ The manuscripts it occurs in consist of exclusively English pieces, with but three exceptions as we have noted. The conclusion to draw from this is that *Titus and Vespasian* is less likely than the *Siege of Jerusalem* to be included in compilations with substantial Latin texts, indicating that it appealed to a less learned audience which included merchants and women.

Fifteenth-century taste in manuscript presentation is evident with several of the copies of *Titus and Vespasian* containing devices which render the text easier to follow. For instance, H contains red initials decorated with foliage and a bird on f.245^v and f.248^r which divide the poem into sections. R and N are also divided into sections through the use of small blue/ red initials and G with paragraph marks, while M goes further and presents the romance in an entirely new form. In this manuscript the romance consists of eighteen chapters with chapter headings in red, some with prose resums.⁸⁶ This undoubtedly represents an adaptation of the romance for fifteenth-century taste. Furthermore, R and I

⁸⁵ See Chapter Six.

mark the end of each line with a punctus and the opening with a capital. and G highlights the opening of each line in red. Interestingly, the names of people are written in red. The most significant feature is the use of a marginal apparatus in some of the manuscripts, such as R and G. These consist of brief comments on the content of the main text. In N these comments are continued in red from f.55^v (initially just in black ink), with the numbers of the portents, contained in the main text written in Latin and executed as well in red to highlight their importance. This suggests that scribes and patrons felt free to adapt the romance for their own needs.

Let us now turn our attention to the position of *Titus and Vespasian* in these manuscripts and its relationship to the other texts, and consider the evidence this provides of its reception and how it was received in a different manner to the *Siege of Jerusalem*. In F *Titus and Vespasian* is the first item, followed by the *Assumptio beate marie* in verse (the earliest version of this work is the source of *The Assumption of Our Lady* in the *Cursor Mundi*), and *A question of the peynes of helle and how soules desireþ to haue rest in þat place* (Vision of St. Paul) in prose.⁸⁷ Item 5 is a prose manual for the instruction of parishioners in English, *Manuale Curatorum*, which contains *The Lord's Prayer*, *Ave Maria* and Psalm 51. *Titus and Vespasian* is obviously meant to provide exempla to be followed, and warn of the dangers of sinful living. This context emphasises the homiletic elements in the poem. In G *Titus and*

⁸⁶ Moe (1963) pp.50-1 notes that the summaries are simple and concise. Bühler (1961) pp.20-4 lists these chapter headings and prose precises.

Vespasian is again the first item and introduces a selection of verse pieces (*On Will and Wit*, Maydestone's version of the seven penitential psalms and *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*), which indicates that the poem was read as an instructional text of how to lead one's life. This is certainly fitting in the light of the series of examples of good and bad people in the poem. *The Lay Folk's Mass Book* suggests a probable lay audience for the compilation. N presents *Titus and Vespasian* as the third item, preceded by the *Disticha Catonis* with verse paraphrase and the *Proverbs of Old Philosophers* in Latin, French and English by Benedict Burgh, suggesting that it was read as a didactic text. The romance appears as the final item in J, a collection of moral and devotional poetry, and follows a *Prayer to Christ*. It is obviously read as a didactic, religious text in this composite volume. On f.1^r there is an account of Fortune and her wheel, which would appeal to readers interested in the exempla of *Titus and Vespasian* and vice versa. This is followed by *A Lament of the Blessed Virgin* and *A Complaint of Christ*. *The Prick of Conscience* prefaces *Titus and Vespasian* in K, while *How Bernard spekyth to oure Lefdy to wetyn of Godys Passyoun and of here suffering* and a poem on the Passion follow it.⁸⁸ The metrical romance is thus read as pertaining to the aftermath of the Passion and is intended to arouse the conscience of readers. The inclusion of a hymn on virginity and a piece in Latin discouraging matrimony, *Sultus Eris*, suggests a clerical or monastic audience. Q presents the poem in a slightly different, but still religious context. It is

⁸⁷ The *Siege of Jerusalem* is associated with the *Cursor Mundi* and the *Northern Passion* in A.

sandwiched between a song of Advent from the *South English Legendary* and the vision of St Alexius. Interestingly, the opening item in this compilation is a selection from the Old Testament and the final item deals with a pilgrimage to Holy Land. This confirms that the poem was read as a religious text. It is very unusual in that it associates *Titus and Vespasian* with two poems by John Lydgate, *The Sege of Thebes* and *The Sege of Troye*. Guddat-Figge discounts the possibility that it is a composite manuscript, so we are left to infer that *Titus and Vespasian* was here being read as a siege narrative, rather like the *Siege of Jerusalem* in D.⁸⁹ T provides a similar reading of *Titus and Vespasian*. The manuscript contains a selection of poems by Chaucer, Hoccleve and Lydgate. On closer inspection this is not so incongruous as it first appears, as many of these texts are quite moralistic: for example there is Chaucer's *Lak of Stedfastnesse* and Hoccleve's *Learn to Die*. *Titus and Vespasian* is preceded by Mandeville's *Travels* and is followed by Lydgate's *The Sege of Thebes*. So it seems likely that it was received as presenting tales of exotic lands and an account of siege warfare, but also as fitting in with the moral tone of many of the other poems in the manuscript. H also contains some Chaucerian poems: *Truth* and the *ABC Poem*. *Titus and Vespasian* is the sixth item and is preceded by *The Three Kings of Cologne* (prose) and is followed by the legend of St. Michael (a collection of pseudo-scientific material included in the third part of his life). Thus it is

⁸⁸ The *Siege of Jerusalem* occurs in two collections with *The Prick of Conscience*, E and D, while Ms. Porkington 10 contains both *The Prick of Conscience* and *The Siege of Jerusalem* (prose).

⁸⁹ *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) p.258.

associated with saints' lives, popular religious works and also with a historical text (*The Three Kings of Cologne*) that it is to be found with the *Siege of Jerusalem* in two manuscripts. R (one of the three short versions) presents *Titus and Vespasian* as a history together with two chronicles. It is the second item, placed between *The Chronicle of Popes and Emperors*, a translation of the third redaction of the chronicle of Martinus Pelonus, and a chronicle of England in Middle English couplets which is attributed to Robert of Gloucester in other manuscripts.⁹⁰ The former text includes a life of Christ, thus making it possible that *Titus and Vespasian* was interpreted as a religious text as well. Thus on the whole *Titus and Vespasian* was received as a moral, religious text and read in a less varied manner to the *Siege of Jerusalem*. It occurs in primarily religious contexts, with but three manuscripts differing from this rule. Of these, two still allow the text to be perceived in a religious, moral light. Interestingly, it sometimes occurs with fashionable and non-clerical works such as those by Lydgate, Hoccleve, Chaucer and Mandeville. The nature of the manuscripts confirm that it could have been received by a lay audience, particularly the evidence of the three short versions, and that it also appealed to a religious audience.

We can infer from all this that stories of the vengeance of Our Lord and destruction of Jerusalem, and Veronica appealed to a wide audience and were received in various ways. It ranged from popular metrical romances, which were

⁹⁰ *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) p.46; *The Chronicles of Popes and Emperors and The Lollard Chronicle* (1999)

more sensational and moralistic, to historical and religious accounts such as the *Polychronicon* and the *Vindicta Salvatoris*. If we consider *Titus and Vespasian* and the *Siege of Jerusalem* in the light of this, we find that the former displays greatest similarities with the popular tradition in its treatment of sources and choice of verse-form, while the latter, written in a metrical format usually reserved for weighty subject matter, is more closely aligned with historical and theological accounts. *Titus and Vespasian* exhibits the moralising and sensationalistic tendencies, as well as the conventions of metrical romances. In contrast to this, the *Siege of Jerusalem* is often perceived as history and a religious work in recognition of its juxtaposition of the historical reality of the events with the religious interpretation of them in order to provide a reconsideration of the validity of warfare. However, the complex narrative of the *Siege of Jerusalem* led to its being linked with crusading narratives as well, while on occasion *Titus and Vespasian* was valued as of historical interest due to the interest in historical accounts of the destruction of Jerusalem. On the whole, though the manuscripts are similar in quality, the compilations in which *Titus and Vespasian* is contained do not suggest the same variety of readings for this romance as do the manuscript contexts of the *Siege of Jerusalem*. The main finding of the comparison of *Titus and Vespasian* to the *Siege of Jerusalem* is that both poems represent very different treatments of similar material, which stem from the different aims of each work, with the former a popular religious account and the latter an intellectually stimulating historical and theological

narrative. Thus once the poems entered manuscript circulation they were often received by a similar audience and not necessarily the one they were intended for (as is confirmed by the comparable nature of the manuscripts), but were read in different manners on probably different occasions.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TRIBULATIONS OF WAR

As we have seen, the *Siege of Jerusalem* follows an established tradition of writing about the destruction of Jerusalem, yet the various accounts differ in emphasis and interpretation, although the writers believed that what they were writing was the truth and historically accurate. In all of these texts - even the *Legenda Aurea* which incorporates only some of the material relating to the destruction of Jerusalem into a brief saint's life - the story of Mary and her son appears.¹ No two versions of the episode are identical, but the fact that each author includes it suggests that it represented something fundamental to the writers and can be made to signify different things. It is basically a short tale in itself, concerning characters who occur nowhere else in the siege. This implies that one can read the story on its own terms or in the context of its position in the work as a whole. The story of Mary is more than an anecdote: it has a deeper significance which depends upon its relationship to the texts in which it occurs. It is the forces underlying the incident which interest the redactors: violence, cannibalism, and the concepts of motherhood, the body and sacrifice. This motif of mother-child cannibalism has serious implications as regards the poet's attitudes to the Jews and violence. He portrays the Jews not so much as

¹ See Chapter Three for the presentation of this incident in dramatic accounts. In *The Oldest Version of the Twelfth-Century Poem "La Venjance Nostre Seigneur"* (1952) lines 1672-1787 Mary is described as a queen and the story is held to foretell the end of Jerusalem. *The M.E. Prose Translation of Roger D'Argenteuil's Bible en François* (1977) p.86 mentions the woman who ate her son. Chism (1998, p.319) states that the Jews are reduced by desperation to eating their own children, but this comment more appropriately describes the dramatic representations of the story than the *Siege of Jerusalem*. She goes on to argue, with little textual justification, that the sympathy expressed for Mary is twisted to make her and the Jews seem even more monstrous (p.327).

inherently evil, but as misguided, blind and tyrannised by wicked leaders. In the *Siege of Jerusalem* the episode stands as an emblem of the tribulations caused by war and the desperate acts to which people can be driven. In the other accounts it is used quite differently to reinforce prejudices against the Jews. The poet intends his audience to examine for themselves the validity of warfare and the chivalric ideal. He achieves this by bringing out the contradictions latent in the basic story and conveying how people behave in barbaric and uncharacteristic ways when they are in extreme situations. The few females who are mentioned in the poem are almost invariably described as mothers. Due to the tribulations of warfare, though, the Jewish lady called Mary murders and eats her son in a cannibalistic Eucharist. The poet bases the story on the account in the *Polychronicon*, which is quite brief and contains much less background information than the other versions of the tale.

Christ's Body, the Virgin Mary and Medieval Society

According to medieval thinking, Christ's body is present in each element of the Host. In fact, the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 decreed that Jesus was both the priest and the sacrifice, and that His body and blood were contained in the sacrament.² Sarah Beckwith argues that the human body was the bond between the self and society and that Christ's body symbolises this. Indeed, the Host was sometimes described or illustrated as changing into a body, with Christ the priest

² Beckwith (1993) pp.3, 31.

offering himself.³ The body is a potent symbol intrinsically connected with people's perception of society, hence it "affords a cognitively accessible forum for the projection and ritual resolution of concerns vis-à-vis social and physical well-being."⁴ Basically, it was the scene of conflict through which people tried to work out their relationship to the community as a whole and their position in it, as one of those saved by Christ. The Eucharist strengthened the notion of community identity through emphasising the difference between those who partook of the sacrament and those that do not, such as the Jews.⁵ Every aspect of the ceremony - lighting, wording, actions, clothing, and objects - was carefully designed to transmit the symbolism of the Eucharist.⁶ The Corpus Christi feast was established in the thirteenth century as a means of demonstrating the "hegemonic sacramental world-view" of the Church, the teaching, doctrine and the overarching power of the Christian institution.⁷ From the ninth century on, the nature of the Eucharist was debated vigorously and it came to be linked with penance.⁸ Penance is a private act of conscience which precedes Holy Communion, "the universal, cosmic, timeless, supernatural intervention in the world."⁹ The meanings associated with this sacrament of the

³ Walker Bynum (1987) p.77.

⁴ Sanday (1986) p.82.

⁵ Rubin (1992 a) p.44. See also Beckwith (1992) pp.65-8.

⁶ Rubin (1992 a) p.50.

⁷ Rubin (1992 a) p.51.

⁸ Rubin (1991) p.15, 84.

⁹ Rubin (1991) p.85.

Eucharist varied from text to text; for Mirk it was the focal point of beliefs, while Aquinas in *De Sacramentis* associated it with charity, and illustrated this with the story of Abel's offering and the sacrifice of his life.¹⁰ The Eucharist reveals the power of God orchestrating the forces of nature, just as any miracle does, but transubstantiation proves how "regular and reliable intervention" is.¹¹ By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it increases in importance, and one finds manuscript illustrations of the sacrament with the Christ child replacing the bread.¹² The sacrifice of Isaac came to be associated with it and, indeed, images of infanticide play an increasingly prominent role in discussions of the Eucharist.¹³

In addition to discussions about Christ's presence in the bread and wine, the Virgin Mary's relationship with the sacrament came to be debated. A strong tie was seen between Mary and the mass, as Christ's body was born of the Virgin Mary and reborn each time the Eucharist was celebrated. Her role was expanded into that of "a mediator, celebrant, the person who intimately constituted the sacred."¹⁴ Images of the Virgin adorned many altars, and *vièrge ouvrantes* were developed, objects which took the form of a nursing Virgin that opened to reveal the enthroned Christ, and *monstrances* in which the Host is

¹⁰ Rubin (1991) pp.99, 102.

¹¹ Rubin (1991) p.113.

¹² Rubin (1991) p.136 cites the example from the Flemish Ms. of the *Queste del Saint Graal* dating from 1351 which depicts the Last Supper Table with the chalice and Christ child (instead of the bread).

¹³ Rubin (1991) p.136, 139.

¹⁴ Rubin (1991) p.142.

held by the body of Mary.¹⁵ She was frequently depicted as a priest, as in the c.1437 panel painting of “The Priesthood of the Virgin” from Amiens Cathedral.¹⁶ Rubin discusses the discourse of bread and food, whereby Mary is seen as the provider of food to Christ, and Christ to all Christians.¹⁷ According to medieval physiology, a mother’s milk originated in the transformation of her blood.¹⁸ Thus Christ ultimately drank the blood of the Virgin Mary, and hence in a sense it is her blood which is spilt at the Crucifixion and is the basis of Christ’s blood, the food of Christians.¹⁹ Furthermore, she is the archetypal mother exemplifying all the desirable qualities, a model for other woman. Mothers were envisaged by medieval writers as displaying certain attributes: generation and sacrifice, love and tender care, nurture.²⁰ In other words she gives birth despite pain and risk to her life, she adores her child and feeds him with her own milk.

¹⁵ See Rubin (1991) pp.143-4 and Walker Bynum (1992) p.101ff. for some examples.

¹⁶ Rubin (1991) p.146..

¹⁷ Rubin (1991) pp.145-8; Walker Bynum (1992) p.101-4.

¹⁸ Walker Bynum (1992) pp.93-100.

¹⁹ Walker Bynum (1982) p.132, (1987) pp.270-1. Warner (1990) pp.199, 203, 206-223 notes how Mary’s breasts and the wounds of Christ were connected in iconography - *Maria Lactans*, French Miracle Plays, Italian “laude” - and hence she encourages His intercession with God the Father on account of her role as nourisher. The *Mater Dolorosa* Virgin weeping at the foot of the cross for her Son is also important in this context. Atkinson (1991) pp.103-6 describes how the Cult of the Virgin Mary arose in the twelfth century and how this image of the weeping mother was focused upon. Indeed, the Virgin mother crying for her son or holding Him as in the *Pietà* exalted the similar ideas concerning motherhood. McInterney (1996) pp.157-82 and Sprung (1996) pp.183-99 both discuss the importance of images of Jesus as mother, which they argue provided a route to salvation for women. Walker Bynum (1987) passim explains that female saints were most often connected with Eucharistic devotions and visions.

²⁰ Walker Bynum (1982) pp.131-3. See de Nie (1995) p.106-17 on the role of Mary as mother in the Gospels and the *Protoevangelium of James*, and medieval interpretations of it.

Motherhood was used to symbolise the role of the Church which provided the hope of eternal life to individual Christians, whom it cared for and nourished.²¹

“Motherhood” is an idea and a social institution as well as a personal reality, and women who mother children (whether or not they give birth to them) necessarily participate in motherhood as defined and understood in their societies.²²

As the debates concerning the Eucharist intensified, the meaning of eating was examined. Theologians looked at what it meant to eat the Host: did it make people cannibals and was it appropriate for the body of Christ to be filtered through the digestive system? The discussion widened, considering other forms of cannibalism, and it was generally believed that digested human flesh would be returned to its original owner in the next life and the cannibal would have to suffice with non-human matter.²³ It was the most serious crime a Christian could commit as it threatened personal identity and raised problems at the Day of Judgement.²⁴ Each age has its own concept of the body, and the materialistic interpretations current in medieval society defining resurrection in terms of rising from death in material form, reinforce the “social, sexual and religious difference for eternity”, thereby emphasising the importance of religious and moral systems in that society.²⁵ Cannibalism was feared as it indicated death and decay, fragmentation, the inability to participate in the Day of Judgement as only

²¹ Walker Bynum (1982) pp.112-6, 138-58 explains that this symbolism was particularly exploited by the Cistercians.

²² Atkinson (1985) p.139.

²³ Walker Bynum (1992) p.244.

²⁴ Walker Bynum (1995) p.31-3.

²⁵ Walker Bynum (1995) p.110.

the whole could enter Heaven. Walker Bynum cites Cantos 32-3 of the *Inferno* where cannibalism is the root of evil. They tell of two conspirators who plotted together in life with one starving the other to death. Not only did he starve his collaborator to death, he treated his sons in the same manner. As they died these children advised their father to consume their flesh as he originally provided them with it. The act they suggest is a hideous sin, “a twisting of fertility and generation, an expression of despair.”²⁶ Fragmentation represents evil, despair, while wholeness signifies Paradise; thus saints endure horrid torture at the hands of their persecutors - frequently dismemberment of some sort - which they will overcome with God’s aid at the final Resurrection.²⁷ The notion of cannibalism is associated with trepidation over social breakdown and is never concerned solely with the problem of food.²⁸ It results from famine, and its control “physically enacts a cultural theory (of order and chaos, good and evil, death and reproduction) that enables humans to regulate desire, to build and maintain a social order”.²⁹ Jesus was sacrificed in order to create a unified community in which there were no distinctions between Jews and Gentiles.³⁰ The legends of the Trobriand Islands recount tales of famine and cannibalism, in one of which there is “a symbolic equivalence between a human victim and items of

²⁶ Walker Bynum (1995) p.299.

²⁷ Walker Bynum (1995) pp.308-17.

²⁸ Sanday (1986) pp.3, 122.

²⁹ Sanday (1986) p.214.

³⁰ Sanday (1986) p.193.

wealth.”³¹ Prolonged deprivation causes a society to disintegrate, raising the possibility of cannibalism and causing the unproductive members of society to be abandoned and allowed to die.³²

Even as a symbol of evil, cannibalism is about control and reproduction - because by providing a map of the unthinkable, people affirm the expected in the socialization of new generations.³³

Comparison of Texts

Let us now turn to the texts themselves and see how these ideas are reflected. The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet is writing a romance in which the historical reality of the siege is juxtaposed to religious interpretations of it. Thus this version of the story differs from that of the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, who was writing for the Romans, the fourth-century Latin translator Hegesippus, and the thirteenth-century friar Jacobus de Voragine. His work also differs from that of the mid-fourteenth-century English Benedictine chronicler Ranulf Higden and the later *Titus and Vespasian*.³⁴

In the *Siege of Jerusalem* (lines 1065-96) Mary kills her son out of the madness of hunger, and her actions and confession cause the citizens to weep and decide that it is better to die in battle than to prolong their suffering. Although at one level her action can be seen as murder, in the context of the

³¹ Sanday (1986) p.29.

³² Sanday (1986) p.30. Hunger is after all a form of extreme vulnerability (Walker Bynum 1987, p.66).

³³ Sanday (1986) p.32.

³⁴ See Chapter One for a discussion of the background of Josephus, Hegesippus, Jacobus de Voragine and Higden and their relationship to the *Siege of Jerusalem*, and Chapter Four for a detailed analysis of

whole poem it can be seen as a sacrifice. This sacrifice may be understood as establishing a connection "between the potent world of supernatural beings and the impotent world of humanity".³⁵ As Christ was sacrificed to save mankind from sin, so Mary's son in the *Siege of Jerusalem* was sacrificed to elucidate the horrors of war - the breakdown of society, loss of identity, evil - to the Jews, to the Romans, and to those who read or learn of it.³⁶ The immediate context of the sacrifice of Christ was the blindness of the Jews to the message of God, while the immediate context of this sacrifice is the blindness of the Jewish leaders to anything outside their power-struggle against the Romans. The story is set in the midst of the poem, and this is crucial to our understanding of it. As the narrative progresses, the Roman commanders become ennobled and the depravity of the Jewish leaders is emphasised. On one level Titus and Vespasian resemble the confessor saints discussed by Charles F. Altman, in that they start off as members of society but then acquire a more exalted role.³⁷ Initially they are afflicted by terrible illnesses, which impedes them in their normal daily routines and business. Both are cured as a result of divine intervention, which inspires them to undertake to avenge the death of Christ. Their illnesses which bear striking resemblances to leprosy, can be taken to suggest past sinfulness as the leper was believed to be morally depraved and immersed in the secular with his

the differences and similarities between *Titus and Vespasian* and the *Siege of Jerusalem*. See further Chapter Two on Jacobus de Voragine and Higden.

³⁵ Leach (1983) p.98.

³⁶ The *Titus and Vespasian* poet feels uneasy with the gender of the child so he follows his French source and changes it to a girl.

³⁷ Altman (1975) pp. 1-11.

bodily corruption mirroring his spiritual state.³⁸ The poem does not fully conform to the test-reward structure, as Titus and Vespasian are converted and then carry out apparently good deeds in honour of God, with no explicit reference to any previous misdemeanours on their part, though they are ennobled by their experiences. The Romans settle down to wait for the Jews to surrender, spending their time in noble pursuits such as hunting and hawking, while the siege continues (lines 885-9). This separates them from the city where Mary is driven through the madness of hunger to eat her own child, representing the breakdown of social identity and order. Titus assaults the city once more after this and we are aware that God is on the side of the Romans with the manifestation of divine power in the form of the marvels which occur. Titus and the Romans return to Rome not merely as a successful general and a conquering army, but as the champions of God. This is the basic outline of the story, but the *Siege of Jerusalem* is troubled by the effect of this war, although ostensibly a just punishment on the ordinary citizens of Jerusalem. He chooses to confront this issue and explore the consequences of military conflict in the episode of Mary and her son.

The name Mary is perhaps itself significant, as it suggests Mary the mother of Jesus. People visit her, not to give her gifts, as they do to Mary and Christ in the stable, but to take her possessions in an inversion of the Christ story. She eats her son, just as one eats the body of the Son of God in the

³⁸Brody (1974) pp.146-96.

Eucharist.³⁹ Mary's son is sacrificed to appease war, while Christ was sacrificed to redeem mankind from sin. The sacrifice of the little boy is therefore a result of the sin of human beings, and it can be resolved only by Titus, God's agent. Mary's name is thus a form of communication in the episode, suggesting the attributes of Christian motherhood which are subverted in this tale. Earlier in the poem the role of the Virgin Mary is alluded to, when Nathan relates to Titus the wondrous life of Christ (lines 100-5) and it is clear that the poet wished these allusions to be perceived.

Mary starts off as a *myld wyf*, then she roasts and eats her son, which is not the act of a good mother. And yet her name conjures up images of the Blessed Virgin, the archetype of mothers. The Blessed Virgin is Queen of Heaven and is frequently depicted in medieval verse as crying for her son. In the poem Mary addresses her son "with rewful wordes" (line 1079) expressing sorrow for their plight, then turns to roasting and eating him. Hungry people break in the door, and she informs them of her actions and how she has saved them some of the meat. She is not punished or shunned for her deed as the other people realise that they themselves are responsible for what she has done, and because her action has taught them how foolishly and atrociously they have been behaving.

The *Siege of Jerusalem* poet dispenses with any prefatory remarks expressing horror at this incident and does not provide any background

³⁹ Noted also by Chism (1998) p.316.

information. In just thirty lines the story is related in stark detail. In a mere two lines Mary, a *myld wyf* (1077), progresses to roasting her own son:

On Marie, a myld wyf, for meschef of foode,
Hire owen barn þat 3o bare 3o brad on þe gledis. (1077-8)

The phrase " þat 3o bare" is significant as the poet wishes to emphasise that the infant is her flesh and blood. If we compare this to a lyric about the Virgin Mary we can find some interesting parallels:

"Moder, reu upon thi beren!
Thou wasse away the blodi teren;
It doth me werse than mi ded."
"Sune, hu micti teres wernen?
I se tho blodi flodes ernen
Ut of thin herte to min fet." (*Stond wel, moder, under rode* 13-8)⁴⁰

This complaint of the Virgin Mary is written in a tradition of affective piety, which aims to arouse the heart of the sinner, rather than stimulate intellectual debate. In the complaint the Virgin Mary weeps for her son's plight, while he consoles her by explaining that his sacrifice is for the sake of mankind. These two roles are combined in the *Siege of Jerusalem*. Mary expresses her pity for her son, and explains that his sacrifice is necessary to save her:

.."Sone, vpon eche side our sorow is a-lofte,
Batail a-boute þe borowe, our bodies to quelle,
Withyn hunger so hote, þat ne3 our herte brestyp;
þerfor 3eld þat I þe 3af and a3en tourne,
And entre þer þou cam out!".....(1080-4)

She thus changes from a good, considerate mother into the slayer of her son.

When the people break down the door to find the individual who has withheld food they find the *worþi wif* (1089). She is indeed a noble woman as

⁴⁰ From *A Selection of Religious Lyrics* (1975) p.19.

she has saved them some food and duly fetches it. The speech she utters to them both horrifies and fascinates:

....."in a wode hunger
Myn owen barn haue I brad and þe bones gnawen;
3it haue I saued 3ou som." (1089-91)

The reference to gnawing bones is added by the poet and it augments the gruesomeness of the occasion, so much so that the greedy citizens depart weeping, and exclaiming:

"Alas, in þis lif how longe schul we dwelle?
3it beter were at o brayde in batail to deye,
Pan þus in langur to lyue, and lengþen our [p]yne." (1094-6)

They thus undergo a transformation as a result of what they witness, from starving and therefore greedy, violent citizens to repentant, saddened individuals, who are shocked that they have reduced a mother, one of their own society, to such a heinous crime.

Mary is a kind of priest figure at the sacrifice of her son, as the Virgin Mary is often depicted in medieval art, and this action renders her an object of pity not of hate. Thus by committing a tabooed act she is transformed into a tragic figure, a measure of the horror of the situation, an illustration of the dire famine in the city. This famine is self-inflicted, because the Jews refuse to surrender and accept mercy from the Romans; they are therefore destroying and consuming themselves. Her son is sacrificed as a consequence of the misguided beliefs and actions of the Jewish leaders, and she is the means of his being sacrificed, as Pilate was the instrument of Christ's death. Formerly she was a source of food for plunder to the starving citizens, and played a maternal role.

This refers to two other fundamental systems of communication, food and kinship, the significance of both of which is inverted. By eating her child Mary is transgressing the rules of kinship in that she kills her son and commits a hideous crime, eating a tabooed meat. By breaking social taboos her actions convey the breakdown of social systems. This is something to which she has been driven by society and the terrible circumstances in which she finds herself.

It is a gruesome scene, and its shocking nature obviously contributed to the popularity of the story. The popularity of horror is reflected in the medieval taste for hideous gargoyles and the detailed descriptions of torture in medieval saints' lives, for instance *Lu vie Sainte Fey, virgine et martire* or the legend of St. Katherine.⁴¹ They were also meant to be inspirational and convey something fundamental, how a Christian suffers for the sake of God. Gruesome torture in saints' lives, therefore, presents an opposition between good/evil, sufferer/torturer. Likewise, Mary and her son suffer and are tortured by the Jewish leaders' refusal to surrender, and are made vulnerable to the attacks of other citizens. Driven mad by their victimisation and consequent hunger she becomes

⁴¹ Translation of an Anglo-Norman poem from BL Ms. Additional 70513 cited by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne in an unpublished paper entitled "Men, Women, and Flesh-hooks: How Horrid is Hagiography?" given at the Medieval Institute, University of Nottingham 23 May 1996:

They stripped St Faith and laid the maiden on this [bed of brass]. Completely naked, the maiden was extended on this bed; they stretched out her tender limbs. [She was very delicate, young and tender so that her limbs were very weak]. Those who did not love the lovers of God kindled a fire beneath as they were commanded; the cruel sergeants placed burning firebrands there in a cross of fire: they threw grease on the flame, those wretches who did not love God; these evil-doers threw grease on the flame, but she bore this pain, this torment, well in the name of Jesus our Lord for whom she had very great love.....It is impossible to utter or describe the cruelty of her martyrdom.

Saint Katherine, shocked at the slaughter of animals in Alexandria at a festival in honour of the Greek gods, went and remonstrated with Emperor Maxentius. She was duly thrown into prison for her audacity and broken on a wheel, but despite the torments she endured she retained her spirit and triumphed over her persecutors with God's help.

Graphic accounts of torture also raise uncomfortable questions about the salacious aspect of sensationalist masochism/sadism in the description of suffering female saints.

instrumental in her son's death. When the neighbours smell the roast they break down the door and demand to have what she has cooked.

Her actions are dictated by the interests of those in a position to make decisions, as they are responsible for the war. The poet notes that the destruction of Jerusalem is undertaken in response to Nero's loss of tribute and to avenge the death of Christ:

þe dep of þe dereworþ Crist dere schal be 3olden.
Now is, Bethleem, þy bost y-bro3t to an ende;
Jerusalem and Ierico, for-juggyd wrecchys,
Schal neuer kyng of 3our kynde with croune be ynoyntid,
Ne Jewe for Jesu sake [i]jouke in 3ou more. (296-300)

Like organised religion and magic, war is a group activity which forces people to confront dangerous unknown forces and conditions and emphasises the importance of "social control". In these situations, issues such as the meaning of life and the value of society are raised. War is therefore a "virtual magico-religious magnet", as through it people's beliefs are challenged and the basis of society called into question.⁴² Immorality and hardship are a consequence of war, and thus chronicle accounts of war, such as the history of Fulcher of Chartres, feature cannibalism.⁴³ War follows an established format with rules and conventions just like any other human activity, and this extreme story is used to shock us into an awareness of its futility, its potential for chaos, its loss

⁴² Ferguson (1990) p.46.

⁴³ Fulcher of Chartres (1969, p.69) relates how during the siege at Archas many of the Christians besieging the city, maddened by excessive hunger, sliced flesh from the buttocks of dead Saracens, which they then roasted and devoured.

of control. Mary's plight is therefore not the result of any malignancy inherent in herself, but is a direct consequence of the war:

Sayþ: "Sone, vpon eche side our sorow is a-lofte,
Batail a-boute þe borwe, our bodies to quelle,
Withyn hunger so hote, þat ne3 our herte brestyþ." (1080-2)

The war affects the other people as well, driving them into anti-social behaviour:

þe smel roos of þe rost ri3t to þe walles,
þat fele fastyng folke felde þe sauere;
Doun þei daschen þe dore dey scholde þe berde,
þat mete yn þis meschef hadde from men loyned. (1085-8)

Thus the poet encourages his audience to view the incident in the light of the horrors consequent on war and the chaos which results from the overturning of social and religious systems. The Jewish people are not depicted as inherently evil, just tyrannised by wicked leaders who refuse to see reason, withholding tribute and failing to atone for Christ's execution.⁴⁴ This contrasting of religious and political motifs for the Roman campaign in Judaea detracts from the honour and integrity of the Romans and suggests that all wars arise due to a conglomeration of factors. One can infer from this that the imperial army must share the blame for the hardship in Jerusalem.

Fundamentally, the poet is using Mary to communicate what he wishes to express, and to achieve this end he chooses, omits and adds details. He deliberately does not sketch in her background (social standing and origin) as in other versions, and this omission makes her a more universal type of figure. The

⁴⁴ The story is thus not used to reflect anti-Semitism in the way that Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale* does. See Meale (1997) pp.56-7. Restrictions of space prevent me from further elaborating on the differences between this poem and the *Siege of Jerusalem* at this point, but a detailed comparison of the two works will form the basis of a future paper.

episode consists of the following elements: a woman named Mary; her child; her home in Jerusalem; the fact that it is two years into the siege; people eating shoes and leather; the plundering of Mary's house; the killing and roasting of the child; her speech concerning why it is better that he does not live; people attracted by the aroma; her saving of part of the meat; her reasoning over why they should eat it; the reaction of the people. These elements are included in some form and order in all six versions of the story examined here. The outlook of the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet differs radically from other romancers (the *Titus and Vespasian* poet), chroniclers (Josephus, Hegesippus and Higden) and religious writers (Jacobus de Voragine), none of whom are concerned by the fate of the Jews who they deem to be wicked.

The most detailed account of the siege is that of Josephus, with the episode of Mary eating her son occurs in the middle of the account of the siege in *The Jewish War*, Book 6, pp. 433-9. It follows a long description of the obstinacy, viciousness, greed, and misuse of power on the part of John and Simon, the Jewish leaders. Josephus is delegated by the Romans to urge the Jews in Jerusalem to surrender (pp. 313-33). He informs them that it is futile to struggle against famine and that, because of the atrocities they have committed, God is on the side of the Romans. He goes on to say that the Jews were never successful in battle, losing to Babylon, Antiochus, and Pompey. The followers of John and Simon endeavour to prevent any leaving the city, while the wealthy are daily slaughtered, allegedly for trying to desert, but in actual fact for their property. Houses are searched for provisions; wives snatch food from husbands.

children from their fathers, mothers from their babies. Meanwhile Simon and John pursue a policy of persecution of the rich. Titus exhorts Simon and John to accept mercy, but his offer is scorned. When Titus sees this he calls God as his witness that he is not responsible, and augments his offensive on the city. Simon's atrocities are enumerated and we learn how John plunders the Temple. It is at this point that we hear the tale of Mary. The sufferings of the citizens increase; people die in large numbers, plagued by the brigands who search them in case they might be hiding a morsel of food. Necessity forces the starving to eat belts, shoes, leather, grass and gold.

As one can see from this summary Josephus depicts the war as a futile, vain, obstinate attempt at defiance by the Jews in the face of a far superior force. Josephus argues that fate decrees that imperial powers such as Rome will simply sweep through other nations, conquering as they pass. The Jews therefore cannot possibly expect to defy mighty Rome indefinitely, a sentiment which would appeal to Josephus' intended Roman audience. It is in the light of this inevitability that we are to interpret the episode of Mary and her son.

Having established the background to the incident, Josephus continues:

But why tell of the shameless resort to inanimate articles of food induced by the famine, seeing that I am here about to describe an act unparalleled in the history whether of Greeks or Barbarians, and as horrible to relate as it is incredible to hear?

(Book 6, pp.433-5)

He sketches in Mary's background; she is a noble woman of great fortune from the village of Bethzuba in Peraea who has managed to bring most of her assets with her to Jerusalem, where they were plundered by Jewish leaders daily. This

is significant, as one of the two reasons that Josephus cites for her actions is rage at the loss of her possessions. One of the chief features of Josephus' account of the siege is the Jews' desire for money and possessions. Simon and John rob, plunder and kill their own people in order to augment their wealth, and do not abstain from raiding the Temple.⁴⁵ This is matched by their disregard for human life. Simon slays Mathias, who opened the gates of the city for him on top of the bodies of his dead sons. Furthermore, they allow no one to leave, though many wish to surrender to the Romans. Mary, as a woman of wealth, is directly affected by their policy of persecuting the rich, and also of their followers searching for food. It is this specifically which deprives her of her possessions and food and leads her to commit an act "against nature" (Book 6, pp.435-7) to satisfy her hunger with meat, and her anger with revenge. She explains to her son that his death will provide her with both. It is the followers of Simon and John who are attracted to the house by the aroma of her roasted child. After her long speech they leave and Josephus finishes by saying that they are:

in this one instance cowards, though scarcely yielding even this food to the mother. The whole city instantly rang with the abomination, and each, picturing the horror of it, shuddered as though it had been perpetrated by himself. (Book 6, pp.437)

⁴⁵ In the Old Testament we read of several prophecies of the final desolation of Judaea because of the Jews' corruption, greed, and violence, as in Ezekiel 6 and 2 Kings 6. Lamentations 4: 9-10 describes the terrible state of the country due to the prevalence of these vices:

They that shall be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away stricken for want of the fruits of the field. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

In II Kings 6: 24ff. Ben-hadad, king of Syria besieges Samaria causing severe famine and deprivation for the inhabitants of that country. As the king of Israel passes by a city wall he hears a woman cry for help and goes to her aid. She explains that another woman came to her and persuaded her to agree to a plan that would satisfy their hunger. This entailed eating one of their sons one day and the other the next. Her son was boiled and eaten but the next day when it was the other mother's turn to kill her son she hid the boy. All quotations and references are from *The Holy Bible: The Authorized King James Version* (1831).

The reaction of the partisans, and their abstention from the meat, implies that they realise that the woman's action is a direct consequence of theirs, and each citizen realises that it could have been him, rather than Mary, who perpetrated it, as each is a victim of the regime in Jerusalem. It suggests the collective responsibility of the community for this act of barbarity. Her act of cannibalism conveys the complete breakdown of social order, and loss of identity, conveying how the Jews are now reduced to animalistic behaviour. The fact that she is motivated by fury as well as hunger indicates that she is an agent as well as a victim of the events in Jerusalem, and this renders her less sympathetic. Titus feels impelled to destroy the city for this latest atrocity.

The episode is dominated by greed and anger. Mary is wealthy and finds her riches a prerequisite to life, so much so that one of the reasons she kills her son is to gain revenge upon those who deprived her of her possessions.⁴⁶ She is robbed by the Jewish leaders and their followers, who are equally greedy, and are prepared to stoop to any level in order to acquire more wealth. Furthermore, both Mary and the Jews lay little store on human life; Mary kills her son, Simon slays Mathias, the rich are slain for their gold and so forth. The focus is not so much on the quality of Mary's motherhood, but on her relationship to her wealth, with her son as simply one of her possessions. In the Old Testament, indeed,

⁴⁶ In the film entitled *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*, written and directed by Peter Greenaway (1989) the wife is disgusted by the brutal behaviour of her husband and takes a lover. When this lover is gruesomely murdered by her husband she engages the services of the cook and has her lover roasted whole and served to her husband at a feast. He is forced to eat some of the roasted man before she shoots him. Thus the concept of using cannibalism to gain revenge is still a very powerful idea.

having children was regarded as extremely important.⁴⁷ This valuing of children has become perverted to a love of goods - the consequence is destruction. Her behaviour is a futile act of defiance, for through it she loses her son as well, though she saves her own life temporarily. Had she and the Jews accepted their fate all this would have been unnecessary. It is not just the leaders who are at fault but the Jewish people, all preying upon one another.

Hegesippus changes the emphasis of the war in his account: it is no longer a grim struggle among various factions in Judaea and of Jews against Romans, but instead it is a conflict between the Romans, on whose side God is, and the barbaric Jews, who are all envisaged as rotten to the core. In his prologue (p.3) he states that he wishes to give Josephus' narrative a more Christian interpretation. The civil war material is not mentioned, and the conflict is like that of the morality plays, a binary opposition between good and evil. The Romans are exalted above the Jews as shining examples of how people should behave. This comes across clearly in the impassioned speech Titus makes upon learning of Mary devouring her son. He raises his hands towards heaven and invokes God as his witness. Hegesippus is also very interested in classical authors and rhetoric, and this grounding in rhetoric and the classics is reflected in the new material he incorporates into the narrative. It also leads him to amplify the speeches, so that one finds extended monologues expounding events. This is the chief innovation which he makes in the Mary episode (Book

⁴⁷ See Genesis 30 which relates how Rachel and Leah strove to bear Jacob children, especially sons:
And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.

V 40-1, pp.381-8). Her initial speech is considerably lengthened, as is her speech to the intruders and Titus' summing up of what has occurred. Josephus merely has her enumerate the difficulties surrounding the child, and ask the child to provide food and vengeance for her, and to be a wonder for the world. Hegesippus expands her speech with an impassioned plea to her son to save her, his mother. She speculates over what to choose as a burial-mound, selecting her womb as the most suitable burial chamber, and concluding that he is duty-bound to save her. His body will provide the nourishment, so that she may survive; thus her body will be a living sepulchre. The toning-down of the revenge-motif is striking as it breaks down the distinctions between the Jews. The partisans demand her food in a threatening manner, and she begs them not to be angry and provides them with what she has. She assures them that the food she provides them with is her own, and does not belong to others. She speaks to her son as she serves his flesh, in a priest-like role, calling him the checker of assassins and provider of festival foods. The reaction of the intruders is not noted as it is superfluous after this dramatic monologue displaying the woman's reasoned madness. Her insanity is evident in how she speaks to his roasted remains, informing him that he has saved her life and is also catering for her guests. She is thus providing the dead body with roles of some importance in order to justify her actions. She addresses him as if he were not dead, but serving an active useful life of which he should feel proud. By envisaging him thus she can wipe her deed from her mind and try to convince the intruders of its justification. Mary says that at first she acted as pity dictated, but that now she must act out of

the necessity of hunger. She is also angry at being plundered, but this is not foregrounded. However, she does generously offer some of the meat to the people who arrive, and she explains why they both can and should eat it. All we learn about the people who come is that they are many in number and are enticed by the aroma of the meat. Their reaction is not given, but the deed is soon infamous among Jews and Romans.

Titus' reaction is recounted over several pages. The very length of his speech (pp. 384-8) suggests his extreme repugnance and how he will make them atone. He comments on how the Jews are worse than animals, for even animals treat their young with tenderness:

Ad bellum quidem uenimus sed non cum hominibus dimicamus.
Aduersus omnem rabiem beluarum ac ferarum, quid sensibilia loquar?
Aduersus omnem rupium immanitatem decernimus. Diligunt ferae fetus suos, quos etiam in fame sua nutriunt, et quae alienis corporibus pascuntur, a consimilium ferarum abstinere cadaueribus. Hoc ultra omnem acerbitatem est, ut membra quae genuit mater uorarit.

(Book V 41, 384-5)⁴⁸

Higden, by the very nature of his work, an encyclopaedic history, gives us a very succinct version of the story. He follows Hegesippus quite closely at this point in terms of the story-line, but omits the rhetorical flourishes and dramatic speeches (Chap.10, pp.444-7). He omits Mary's background and status, merely stating that she is a stranger, and confines himself to reporting the purport of her speeches and Titus'. Her initial speech to her son consists of three lines:

⁴⁸ The translations of Hegesippus are my own. I have followed the Latin as literally as possible:

"We came to this war, but we do not contend with men. Against every madness of beasts and wild animals, what should I speak feelingly? Against every monstrosity of uncivilized people we proclaim judgment. Animals hold dear their young, which they nourish in their hunger. and they feed their bodies, they abstain from the bodies of similar animals. This above all is cruelty, that a mother devoured the limbs, which she begat."

Fili mi, sæva omnia te circumstant, bellum, fames, incendium, latrones: redde vel semel matri quod ab ea sumpsisti. Redi in id secretum a quo existi. Feci quandoque quod pietatis erat, faciamus modo quod fames persuadet. (Chap.10, p.444)⁴⁹

It contains echoes of the equivalent speech in Hegesippus, except that in the latter's version it is a page long:

saeua te circumstant omnia, bellum, fames, incendia, latrones, ruinae....redite in illud naturale secretum....fecimus quod pietatis fuit, faciamus quod suadet fames.
(Book V 40, pp.382-3)⁵⁰

This incident is a verified event that took place during the siege. Higden lets the actions speak for themselves, not commenting on them as Josephus does, or dramatising them as Hegesippus does. He simply records the incident along with many others in his work, as part of his history of the Roman world. It conveys the desperate straits of the losing side as the Roman army sweeps onwards to triumph. For Higden history had an inevitable course to run, as God was behind it all. He therefore does not dramatise specific incidents or make the protagonists in his account rounded, fully developed characters. What the incident teaches, if we perceive it in the light of Higden's objectives as laid out in his prologue, is that only dire consequences can be expected when one opposes God's will.⁵¹ Mary's action is the consequence of the Jews' opposition to divine authority.

⁴⁹ The translation is from BL Ms. Harley 2261 included in Joseph Lumby Rawson's edition p.445:

"My son, alle cruelle þinges compasse the abowte, batelles, hungre, brennenge, and thefes, wherefore restore to thy moder that thow haste receyvede of here; goe into that secrete place from whom thow come. I did somme tyme that pite requirede, now lete us do þat hungre inducethe and movethe."

⁵⁰ "You are surrounded with all harsh things, with hunger, with fire, with robbers, with ruins.....Go back into that natural secret place....we did what pity suggested, we will do what hunger encourages."

⁵¹ Higden concludes his prefatory remarks with the analogy that the present work is divided into seven rivers, following Isaiah's prophecy, that the path of God may be clear for his people to follow.

She is suffering from severe deprivation of food when first introduced, and quickly decides that it is necessary to take her son's life. Necessity turns to dire necessity when people turn up and threaten her for some food. She offers them some, expounding valid reasons for dining with her, but her action and words serve only to cause widespread horror.

The context of the episode of Mary eating her son (Chap. 63, pp.301-2) in the *Legenda Aurea* is very different. It is included in the saint's life *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola*. This commences with the etymology of the saint's name and contains a brief account of his life. The connection between the saint and the destruction of Jerusalem is that the devastation of that city was possibly permitted in response to the Jews' killing of the saint. Jacobus de Voragine cites Josephus as the authority for this, only to disagree with Josephus' suggestion, saying that it was mainly on account of the death of Christ. He goes on to say that God does not desire the death of any sinner, and so when preaching failed to have any effect on the Jews, he tried other means (Chap. 63, p.298). In the end he inspired Titus and Vespasian to besiege Jerusalem. At this point *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola* follows the *Cura Sanitatis Tiberii*⁵² version of the Veronica legend, which relates the miraculous healing of Vespasian, who had worms in his nose (Chap.63, pp.299-300). Jacobus de Voragine does not recount the whole story of the siege, limiting himself to a few incidents, each of an extraordinary nature. The story of Mary is one such incident, and it is closer to Josephus' version than to Hegesippus', though Jacobus refers to both writers. The

implications are that Jacobus had access to considerably more information than he chose to include and that he deliberately selected the extraordinary elements. Saints are figures that one is supposed to emulate and hence those who obstruct them or thwart them are people to be rejected or destroyed. The Jews slew both Saint James and Christ and refused to be guided by any warning provided by the Lord. This saint's life deals with the blindness and the obstinacy of the Jews in the face of the wonders of the Lord. Hence God's miracles, such as the curing of Vespasian, and Josephus' curing of Titus, illustrate the power of God to help those who believe in him. Mary's eating of her son signifies the depths to which people are driven when they oppose God. This interpretation of the episode in the *Legenda Aurea* is confirmed by Jacobus de Voragine's account of what happened when the Jews tried to rebuild Jerusalem. On the first morning when they commenced work they found crosses drawn in dew sprinkled all over the ground, and so they fled. The following day each beheld a cross of blood on his clothes and fled. On the third day when they began work, a fire came from the earth and devoured them. The focus is not on the conflict between good and bad, but on the wicked Jews and their actions. This is a demonstration that the Jews will not turn from evil, and are duly punished by God.

The implications of all this are that Jacobus de Voragine interprets the story of the destruction of Jerusalem as the manifestation of God's power. The might of God's will is evident everywhere in the saint's life, and failure to recognise it has dreadful consequences for the Jews. Had they recognised it, they

⁵² See Dodschütz (1899) pp.163**-189**.

would have received mercy, as God did not wish any sinner to die. This elucidates how we are to perceive the mother, who is not named. She is a rich, noble woman, concerned with worldly things, who falls prey to thieves. Thus she intends her roasting of her son in part to provide a scandal to the robbers and a warning to the ages. Later she informs the robbers that it is her own son, in other words her possession, which she has cooked. God permits this to happen in order to warn the Jews how their behaviour and motivation is undesirable and does not benefit themselves or society.

Titus and Vespasian is a poem which dwells both on the evil-doers, and on the Christians and Romans. Unlike Hegesippus' Christianised paraphrase of Josephus, Higden's presentation of the story in the light of God's providential plan, or Jacobus de Voragine's dwelling on the manifestation of God's will, this work concentrates on highlighting Christian figures at every point in the story. Fundamentally, we receive a series of examples to follow - Mary, Josephus, Titus, Vespasian - and a series of examples not to follow - Judas, Pilate, Simon, John, a series similar to a daisy chain, rather than like Hegesippus' morality play structure. The *Titus and Vespasian* poet is writing for a less learned audience than Hegesippus, and to this end he simplifies the structure of the narrative into a linear sequence of examples and dwells on horrific incidents including, for instance, more than one story of cannibalism. This fascination with horror is comparable to what we find in the legends of Saint Fey and Saint Katherine, which were mentioned earlier, and was obviously part of the appeal of this popular romance, as it was in saints' lives. People enjoy exploring the extremes

of behaviour, while at the same time being reassured by a happy ending. In *Titus and Vespasian* the Romans conquer and destroy Jerusalem, while Saint Fey and Saint Katherine receive their reward in the next world. The implications of this for the poem are that we must understand the material in the light of simplified Christian ideology which divides people into good and bad examples, with all the good examples being Christians.

The version of the Mary incident related by this poet includes many interesting changes (lines 3394-3546).⁵³ Mary is described as a Christian, who comes to Jerusalem, not to find safety, but to visit a friend called Clarice. She is thus not merely acting out of the desire for self-preservation, but to renew a friendship. Her friend is as virtuous as she and the two of them spend their time "in penance and in oresones" (3424). Their virtue and religious zeal render them exemplary figures. They live in "grete distresse" (3426) due to the famine and thievery in the city. It is due to this famine that Mary's daughter dies from hunger. This is of the utmost significance as the poet has decided to change the sex of Mary's child, even though all of the other accounts state that it was a boy. He probably deems it inappropriate, as a male child leads to comparison with the Virgin Mary and Christ. Furthermore, the poet describes how the little girl dies of natural causes, rather than being murdered. This alteration necessitates other changes such as the omission of Mary's speeches concerning why she is justified in killing her child. The poet is conditioned by fourteenth-century English society and religion and feels compelled to omit anything which might suggest

⁵³ All references are to *Titus and Vespasian* (1905).

the breakdown of motherhood and religion. The eating of a child by his mother, which is in *Titus and Vespasian*, illustrates the breakdown of social taboos - forbidden food, failure to care for one's child - but the killing of an infant by his mother, which is not in *Titus and Vespasian*, is in breach of three of the Ten Commandments - committing murder, failure to respect one's neighbour, coveting of others' possessions. The poet does not wish to dwell on matters such as the validity of violence, unlike the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet, and apparently feels compelled to omit anything which might suggest the breakdown of religion. Mary refuses vehemently to eat the dead child, despite Clarice's encouragement, not wishing to succumb, like Clarice, to the disintegration of social values prevalent in Jerusalem, and she beseeches the Lord to send them grace. God sends an angel bidding her to follow Clarice's advice, in order that the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem will be fulfilled. Mary must participate in the depravity prevalent in Jerusalem in order to illustrate the folly of the Jews who have created this situation, as God wishes to make an example of them. The introduction of the angel is significant, as it suggests parallels with an Old Testament story, the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. This story would have been quite familiar to the *Titus and Vespasian* poet and his audience, for example through the mystery play cycles. Like Abraham, Mary in *Titus and Vespasian* obeys God's command to eat her daughter, just as Abraham is willing to sacrifice his son. The aroma from the roasted child attracts not only partisans but Pilate also. He dispatches his servants to find and seize the food, which they do, leaving the women with nothing. He thus acts as God's angel does in the

Abraham-Isaac story, saving Mary from continuing to behave in this heinous manner in eating her daughter, by having the human flesh taken from her. She, however, has already partaken of this repast (line 3468). People are reduced to eating gold and silver, but these do not alleviate hunger, so they begin to devour human flesh. Pilate forbids cannibalism, but before long they recommence:

Yche opur man his neghbour ete,
As for deynte þei helde hit swete. (3513-4)

There is a distinct difference between representing named characters involved in cannibalism and referring to it in a general statement about the atrocities in an enemy city. There is also a great difference between murder and consuming the remains of one's child upon the instructions of an angel of God. Both actions are horrific, but the fact that one is acting reluctantly upon God's instructions shows the straits one can be reduced to as one of God's chosen by the misdeeds of others. The emphasis is placed on the fact that Mary must do this against her will to fulfil the judgement decreed upon Jerusalem by God.

It is significant that Mary is depicted as a Christian, just as Josephus is when he is introduced shortly after this episode, for we are only allowed to have sympathy with Christians. The Christian victim, Mary, is preyed upon by Pilate, who of course executed Christ. Hence, although the poet removes one comparison with Christ, he introduces another, more acceptable one; the mother as victim, just as Christ was an innocent victim. The Jews are responsible for the suffering of Christians, as their ways are wrong and inhuman. The incident is followed by Jacob's conversation with Josephus. Vespasian sends Jacob to

inquire how the citizens in Jerusalem are faring. Jacob goes to the wall and engages in a discussion with Josephus, during the course of which Josephus reveals that he is a Christian, having been healed of a grave wound through a miracle of Christ's. Jacob responds by relating how Veronica healed Vespasian, and explaining that Vespasian will show no clemency to the Jews. Josephus explains that he and other like-minded Jews would have surrendered long since if Vespasian had been baptised. It is clear from this that the poet envisages the siege as a struggle between Christian and Jew, good and evil, the enlightened and the blind, clearly signifying those whose example we should follow and vice versa (3567-3708). A little later, Josephus and eleven others escape to a cave where they conceal themselves. Josephus will not surrender to Vespasian as he is not a Christian. When their food supplies are exhausted they cast lots to decide whom to eat. Eventually Josephus alone survives, having presumably eaten the flesh of his companions, and is forced to surrender himself to Vespasian. Jacob pleads for him with the result that Josephus is shown mercy (3850-4022). The implication of this story seems to be that it is only as a last resort that one should submit to non-Christians. These people make a conscious decision to use lots in this manner and to resort to human flesh as food. The desperation of the measure illustrates the gravity of submitting to the non-Christian Romans after escaping from the Jews. This episode is a little ambiguous as the poet does not explicitly tell us how to interpret it. He perhaps feels that it is easy to understand in the light of what he has already recounted of Josephus. *De Sancto Jacoba Apostola* in the *Legenda Aurea* contains an earlier version of the incident where we learn

that Josephus and his eleven companions take refuge in an underground vault after the fall of Jotapata. Josephus' eleven companions refuse to surrender to Vespasian and resolve to offer themselves as a blood sacrifice to God. Josephus as chieftain must be the first to die, but he persuades them to choose the order of sacrifice by drawing lots. He takes charge of the procedure and makes good his escape. Jacobus de Voragine's description of Josephus as strong, agile and prudent, which elucidates the episode, is omitted by the *Titus and Vespasian* poet and this implies that he felt that the story was amply explained by his earlier delineation of Josephus' character. Josephus is a Christian and therefore an example to be emulated. His reasons for suggesting the lots must therefore be in accord with this earlier statement that the Christians in Jerusalem will not surrender to Titus and Vespasian as they are not baptised.

The conclusions to be drawn from these incidents (the story of Mary and the later events) are that the *Titus and Vespasian* poet has created two sides in Jerusalem; the Jews and a Christian minority. He was perhaps influenced by the literature and accounts of the Crusades, such as that of Fulcher of Chartres, which deal with the rescue of Jerusalem and other cities from Saracens. There was of course a Christian minority in Jerusalem in the Middle Ages and this is reflected in the text under discussion, which highlights the wickedness of the Jews and provides a focus for the reader's sympathies, leaving no doubt as to the justification of destroying Jerusalem. As we can see, Mary is a good person, a Christian, an example to be emulated, while Pilate is a bad man, non-Christian, and certainly not to be copied. Clarice is also a good person, a Christian,

although she is not so exalted an individual as Mary, giving in to her hunger through desperation and proposing to eat the little girl. For this reason she is an example who provides more attainable standards of goodness, and also a measure by which to estimate Mary's excellence.

The foregoing analysis elucidates the handling of the Mary episode by the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet in many ways. He changes the Mary episode fundamentally - omitting Mary's background, the thieves and the focus on greed, the reference to civil strife in Jerusalem, long speeches - in order to bring out its implications with regard to Christian history. His poem is concerned with the deep underlying structures, the facts and actions, but not with vilification. His account is succinct, and is closest to Higden's version in terms of details and interpretation. He depicts the Jews, not so much as evil, but as misguided, blind and tyrannised by wicked leaders. Mary, a Jew, seems more realistic in his account, due to the addition of everyday phrases such as "rostyþ rigge and rib" (1079) and "with rewful wordes" (1079) bringing out the pathos of the situation and the desperate acts to which people can be driven, so that they become animals:

Wo wakned þycke as wolues þey ferde. (1074)

He does not include Titus' speech denouncing the Jews as worse than animals as do Hegesippus (pp.384-388) and the *Polychronicon* (p.448). This version, therefore, is not merely a section forming part of a diffuse history, encyclopaedic chronicle, or homiletic work, but part of a carefully structured poem exploring the tribulations caused by war. The contrast between it and *Titus and Vespasian*

is crucial to our understanding, as it conveys the difference between an explicitly didactic, heavily religious work, which borders on religious propaganda, and a more weighty account focusing on the nature of warfare and the motivation of those involved. Thus the Mary episode in the *Siege of Jerusalem* is very different from that of the other five texts, although it is based on the same material.⁵⁴ The gruesomeness of the episode obviously added to its appeal, but the changes each writer saw fit to make illustrate how the writers perceived it to have deeper significance, so much so that the story endured from the first to the sixteenth centuries.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ See above and Chapters One and Six.

⁵⁵ See Chapter Three.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MANUSCRIPT CONTEXTS OF THE *SIEGE OF JERUSALEM*

The *Siege of Jerusalem* survives in more manuscripts than any alliterative poem other than *Piers Plowman*, probably because of the issues it raises. In addition to this it deals with very popular subject-matter and is selective and astute in its handling of sources. It occurs in a variety of miscellanies and this suggests that it could be read in different ways, reflecting the complexity of the narrative, its concern with the validity of warfare, and its historical and religious subject-matter. Each of the eight extant manuscripts is an individual witness as to how the poem was received. In order to understand its reception, therefore, we need to examine it in the light of the texts with which it is preserved. By looking at the poem in its medieval contexts we will be able to understand more fully the themes pursued and the issues raised by the poet. Furthermore, some of the scribal variations which are to be found in the different copies illustrate the impact of the poet's preoccupation with motivation and people's behaviour in extreme circumstances. Examining the contemporary audience of the *Siege of Jerusalem* and their reaction to the text will elucidate what we have already discovered about the poem and will enable us to see why this poem appealed to a larger audience than most alliterative works.

Most manuscripts were commissioned, or produced by bookshops with a specific customer in mind, and this dictated the type of volume produced. V.J. Scattergood notes that in the court of Richard II the evidence of library

catalogues, inventories, and the wills of the aristocracy suggests that, although, they had a preference for didactic Latin and French literature, they also enjoyed romances (mainly in French) for recreational reasons.¹ The career diplomats, civil servants, officials and administrators welcomed the *serious-minded* poetry of Chaucer and others and by the early fifteenth century this taste for Gower and Chaucer had spread to the aristocracy.² From this we can deduce that the audience for romances in English, as opposed to those in French, is more likely to consist of members of the gentry and merchant classes than of the nobility. Middle English romances appealed to “earnest-minded lay readers from the middle strata of medieval society”.³

The *Siege of Jerusalem*, like most fourteenth-century romances, survives in mainly fifteenth-century manuscripts and this is sometimes one reason for the divergences between copies of romances. In order to render these fourteenth-century narratives more appealing to their audiences, compilers sometimes adapted them to accord with the fashion at the time. For instance, as Derek Pearsall points out, the surviving manuscripts of a romance such as *Beves of Hamtoun* suggest that the copying of the work was almost “an act of recomposition”,⁴ while the independent fifteenth-century version of *Guy of Warwick* in Cambridge, University Library Ms. Ff. ii. 38 adds a description of

¹ This evidence is problematic as the sparsity of English works in wills and inventories could be accounted for by the low esteem of works in this language as opposed to texts in French or Latin and the consequent plainness of the manuscripts.

² Scattergood (1983) p.40-1.

³ Boffey and Thompson (1989) p.292.

⁴ Pearsall (1975) p.126-7.

the dubbing of Guy and his friends, and concentrates on chivalric elements rather than violence and vulgarity.⁵ He concludes that:

What might be seen, from the point of view of the textual purist, as debased texts of little value, may be seen from this point of view in a more fruitful way as part of a process of literary transformation and metamorphosis of which we in the end are the inheritors, not the resurrectors.⁶

Due to the changing nature of the audience for literature, with increasing numbers of lay readers texts began to be presented in new ways. Greater care is taken to indicate how to read a text, and particularly English works, as these would appeal to those who had not enjoyed the benefits of monastic training, with its emphasis on the importance of Latin. Fifteenth-century copies of romances are often divided into strophes, fitts, passus, paragraphs and chapters, even where the original fourteenth-century work does not appear to have any, as in *Titus and Vespasian* (see chapter five). *The Wars of Alexander* and *Piers Plowman* begin each passus with a Latin *incipit*, perhaps appealing to the secular clergy and certainly providing these works with an air of authority, and clearly signalling the end of each section. One can find a series of romances in two fitts⁷ and these systems of fitt or passus in romances can be linked to the structural pattern evident in these poems, a series of linked battle scenes or an exchange of speeches. The significance of these divisions is that they divide the text into shorter more manageable segments that are reader-friendly like chapters in modern novels or chapters and subsections in academic monographs. The

⁵ Pearsall (1976) pp.62-3.

⁶ Pearsall (1984) p.129. See also West (1973) pp.12-29 on the nature of manuscript transmission and discrepancy and pp.47-53 on variants.

⁷ Hardman (1992) p.75.

segments are indicated by manuscript evidence (increased size, form or colour of letters, paragraph signs in the margin) and textual evidence (occasions of appeal, announcement of a new subject).⁸ This is paralleled by the situation in academic books, as throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the production of research aids, such as *capitulationes*, *correctoria* and *concordantiae* increased, paralleling the improvements in the organisation of texts, and this trend accelerated in the fifteenth century. The desire was to make both academic and literary texts easier to use,⁹ something which is much in evidence in the various copies of the *Siege of Jerusalem*.

The amount of differences between copies of individual texts varies and may be conscious, reflecting current styles or the traditions of improvisation, or accidental.¹⁰ It is important, however, to make a distinction between metrical and alliterative romances. On the whole metrical romances display more pronounced differences in texts of the same romance, so much so that it may be well nigh impossible to find one authoritative text, as we noted earlier.¹¹ It is

⁸ See Burrow (1984) pp.61-4.

⁹ Minnis (1979) p.385.

¹⁰ Nicolas Jacobs (1992) pp. 61-70 lists seventeen types of scribal substitution in his study of Cambridge, University Library Ms. Ff.ii.38. These seventeen categories cover the replacement of obscure words, lexical and syntactical glossing, attempts to heighten or tone down style, changes to metre and rhyme, as well as misconstructions, inattentive copying, misreading, omission, inversion of couplets, misdivision of words and casual errors. An idea about the kind of changes he finds can be gained from the following selection from the lists he supplies on pp.31-41, where he provides instances of lexical glossing: 26 þo] when, 33 turneyng] justynge, 57 abiden] dud a byde; syntactical glossing: 32 sschal] schulde, 33 mai] myght, 80 ne wot neuere] wyste not; alterations irrespective of sense: 5 and sechen] to seke, 12 mochel idouted] moost doghtyest; misconstructions: 158 þerwhile 3he mi3te 3he] the whyle sche may; reminiscence of previous lines or anticipation of what is to come later: 139-40 anon... euerichon] euerychone...forth anone; homeographs: 91 3ong] boght, 495 wel a fin] well and fyne. Glossing or paraphrasing occurs when the transcriber is attempting to clarify what he finds in his exemplar, while most of the other alterations are symptomatic of reading in order to copy a text rather than to follow its content. Moreover, as Benskin and Laing (1981) p.56 note, scribes rarely leave the language of their exemplar unchanged, either converting it thoroughly or partially into their own dialect.

¹¹ See Brunner (1958) pp.64-73 passim on the manuscripts of Middle English metrical romances.

also true that there are considerably more surviving metrical romances and that they are more likely to exist in multiple copies, whereas few alliterative romances are found in more than one extant manuscript. Furthermore, the northern tradition of alliterative romances (*Siege of Jerusalem, Destruction of Troy*) consists of redactions of historical material from Latin or French, rendering substantial differences in copies less likely, as they were intended to have a didactic as well as a recreational purpose.¹²

Although it is possible that the purpose and subject-matter of texts affected the way in which scribes dealt with them, it is more likely that the complexity and tightness of the alliterative line dictated the way in which they were transcribed; short rhyming couplets may lend themselves to improvisation based on systematic use of rhyme-words, but the alliterative line is altogether more complex. Many models and explanations have been proposed to explain the complex patterns of Middle English alliterative verse, of which Robert William Saporas¹³ and Hoyt N. Duggan's¹⁴ are but two. With such a rich tradition available to the poet in terms of phrases and of metrical patterns he could easily have produced completely metrically regular poems, if he so chose.

The text with which the scribe finds himself confronted may well be full of

¹² This is not an airtight rule, for although it is generally true that metrical romances show more variation than alliterative romances, *Piers Plowman* is an alliterative work which survives in fifty-three manuscripts, and at least three very different authorial versions, with considerable scribal corruption.

¹³ Saporas (1977) deals with four-beat lines, rather than with half-lines, and theorises that greater variation is to be expected in the stressed positions in the first half-line than the second. Matonis' reservations (1984) concerning the assumption that alliterating words will always be stressed have now been discredited by Hoyt N. Duggan. She had argued that sometimes metrical and dramatic considerations take precedence over the requisites for alliteration.

¹⁴ Hoyt N. Duggan (1986) demonstrates, based on evidence which he has gathered from a computer-aided study of a corpus of 25,606 half-lines from fifteen poems, that unrhymed alliterative poetry is a highly structured form. See in addition Hoyt N. Duggan (1994) pp.131-54 on the connections between

intricate syntactical forms rather than short couplets with many interchangeable phrases. Thus the metrical, alliterative and syntactic patterns render large-scale variation between copies of alliterative works difficult, as to alter the lines continually would disrupt the sense and verse-form. Hence, although many of the 1334 lines of the *Siege of Jerusalem* differ slightly from manuscript to manuscript due to scribal variation and dialect changes, it is still possible to construct a critical text of the poem, unlike some metrical romances. In other words there are no substantial reworkings of passages, large omissions or sizable innovations.

Minor alterations were inevitable in the process of transcription due to the nature of manuscript production, which occurred through the copying of exemplars that could exist in the form of complete volumes or of separate quires. A.I. Doyle adds to this that quires, which were often made up into individual booklets, could be easily assembled and bound up with other quires to form miscellanies,¹⁵ or a text could be copied from different booklets leading to variations in quality.¹⁶ These booklets differed in size, consisting of one or sometimes several gatherings, determined by their content.¹⁷ In fact, medieval manuscripts could be small libraries. Philippa Hardman discusses the idea of a library '*in parvo*' in relation to Ms. Advocates 19.3.1 which consists of a series of booklets, almost all by the same scribe, with a few consisting of more than

phonological conditions and the fixed metrical forms of the alliterative long line. Golston (1997) and Cable (1991) provide interesting descriptions of the hermetic nature of Middle English Alliterative metre.

¹⁵ Doyle (1989) p.112.

¹⁶ Robinson (1980) p.61.

¹⁷ Robinson (1980) pp.46-69.

one quire;¹⁸ these were assembled at a later date to form the existing volume.¹⁹ These processes of reproduction are interesting, as it means that a scribe could copy a long text such as the *Siege of Jerusalem* from the quires of different copies of the romance, thereby producing a hybrid text. He would borrow a section of text, copy it and return it before borrowing the next part. This appears to be the explanation behind the text of BL. Ms. Cotton Caligula A.ii (C), as it was copied from two exemplars representing two different traditions of the poem.²⁰

These divergences between manuscript copies, the presentation, the contents of the compilation and the annotations provide information about the “social, commercial, and intellectual organization” of texts.²¹ In recent years scholars have begun to study texts in terms of their codicological contexts rather than as separate entities. This approach, known as *materialist philology*, is based on the premise that codices are not simply objects which preserve works, but are in fact planned in accordance with a specific agenda which affects the way that the texts they contain are read.

As Ralph Hanna argues, to appreciate fully the nature of “miscellaneity” in compilations such as those in which the *Siege of Jerusalem* occurs, “one

¹⁸ Hardman (1978) pp.262-73.

¹⁹ Furthermore, the *pecia* system, practiced mainly on the continent, made available loans of quires from stationers to students in order that the latter could build up their own copies of texts gradually and inexpensively. They would hire a quire of the work they desired and copy it before returning it and at a subsequent date they could obtain a further quire of this text or some other and transcribe it, thereby producing their own compilations of texts or excerpts of long works which they could then use for their studies [Griffiths and Pearsall (1989) Introduction p.4].

²⁰ See discussion below.

²¹ Nichols and Wenzel (1996) p.1

cannot be satisfied with a reading demarcated by the tools of codicology or textual criticism: as did its compilers, one must read the texts, for they embody a rhetorical strategy".²² If one examines the whole of a volume like Winchester College Ms. 33, it is possible to distinguish a thematic core. In other words the compiler starts off with a specific project in mind, to produce for instance a volume of crusading narratives. However, he may compromise his intention if he is unable to find exemplars of all the texts he desires or if he acquires the temporary use of an unthematically related exemplar which he may not ever see again. Thus the producers of volumes endeavoured to utilise all the materials to hand to maximum benefit and this renders compilations both thematic and random in nature.²³ Individual texts are, therefore, contextualised and read in alternative ways in different miscellanies. The number of interpretations possible of any work is limited only by the type of material it contains. For instance, if a narrative contains historical and religious subject-matter, as does the *Siege of Jerusalem*, a multiplicity of readings are feasible. On the other hand, fewer thematic readings are possible of medical treatises. Pertinently, Hanna notes that "fourteenth- and fifteenth-century vernacular book production tends to imitate prominent forms of literary production", the "miscellaneous poem".²⁴ Popular works range from *The Canterbury Tales*, which is fundamentally a collection of stories framed by the idea of a pilgrimage, to narratives, which although they appear unified on first sight like *The Prick of Conscience*, do actually cover a

²² Hanna (1996) p.44.

²³ See Hanna (1996) pp.47-8.

²⁴ Hanna (1996) p.49.

variety of themes. Indeed, this is possibly the reason why the *Siege of Jerusalem* exists in more manuscripts than any other alliterative poem apart from *Piers Plowman*, for although it has a single unified narrative, the poet is at pains to bring out the contradictions inherent in his material and highlight a range of serious issues.²⁵

To summarise the arguments so far in this chapter, the variations in texts could be due to the reciters of the romances, or scribes influenced by the traditions which informed the composing and reciting of the works. The technicalities and subject matter of alliterative romances, often historical and/or derived from Latin sources, render large-scale differences in copies less likely, though this is far from being a general rule. Furthermore, the penchant in the fifteenth century for more elaborate formats of presentation and the changing composition of the intended audience (more lay readers) affected the way miscellanies were compiled. This makes the manuscript contexts of works extremely important, as the sorts of literature with which a work is associated indicate how it was received, the items in any miscellany and the order in which they occur being determined by preference of the patron or the interests of the scribe and how he envisaged the volume and its contents. Therefore, an examination of the manuscripts of a specific text, in this case the *Siege of Jerusalem*, should provide us with some indications as to the reception of the work, how and by whom it was read, and, indeed, whether variations between

²⁵ *Titus and Vespasian*, a contemporary Middle English romance on the same subject survives in twelve manuscripts and its greater popularity is probably due to the fact that it is a more fashionable type of work; explicitly didactic and encyclopaedic, incorporating every item the poet found which was even tangentially relevant.

the manuscripts make any substantial difference at all to our understanding of the text.

The Manuscripts

There are eight manuscripts and one fragment of the *Siege of Jerusalem*: they are BL. Ms. Additional 31042 (A), BL. Ms. Cotton Caligula A.ii (C), BL. Ms. Cotton Vespasian E.xvi (V), Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Misc. 656 (L), Cambridge University Library Ms. Mm.v.14 (U), H.E. Huntington Library Ms. HM 128 (E), Lambeth Palace Ms. 491 (D), Princeton Robert Taylor Ms. (P) and the fragment in the Devon Records Office. I am taking Hanna's work on the manuscripts of the *Siege of Jerusalem* as my point of departure as he has established the stemma for the manuscripts (reproduced in figure 2), which takes into account their dialect and date. It is my intention to build on this to see what we can learn about how the different copies of the poem were read. Hanna divides the manuscripts into three groups.²⁶ The first group consists solely of the Oxford manuscript (L), the transmission of which Hanna finds difficult to account for, except that its "producers did, as a matter of routine, acquire products of other literary communities."²⁷ Hanna hypothesises that beta, the archetype for all the other manuscripts, was a text which existed in the same general area as the author. He notes that both the Taylor and Thornton manuscripts (P and A), the oldest of the texts from the gamma branch, are of firm Yorkshire provenance and contain other texts which were popular in that

²⁶ Hanna (1997) pp.83-93.

²⁷ Hanna (1997) p.92.

area. In addition to this, a sizeable quantity of northern/ North Midland spellings survive in the Cambridge manuscript (U), the oldest delta text, the alternative tradition derived from beta, indicating that its exemplar can be traced back to the North. Hanna has argued that later gamma manuscripts (mid fifteenth-century) filtered down into the Midlands in accord with his hypothesis of “the Midlands trickle-down” of texts, whereby works were copied into other dialects and transmitted outside the original area of composition.²⁸ This leaves the southern manuscripts of D and U, which date from the second quarter of the fifteenth century. Hanna suggests that:

Here we may be dealing with some variety of patronal distribution, in which the fruits of a provincial culture have been marketed by that patron within the ambit of a developing national, capital-based culture.²⁹

He finds three possible avenues for this: that the Clifford earls of Skipton, patrons of Bolton Abbey where he argues the poem was possibly composed, were responsible for its reaching London; that it arrived there through Duchy of Lancaster sources; or that the patrons of the Lambeth scribe's work provided him with yet another alliterative text to copy. Other alliterative works, such as the H.E. Huntingdon Library Ms. HM 114 *Piers Plowman* B-text, exist in manuscripts transcribed by this individual reflecting the interests of his commissioners. The Huntington and Caligula copies (E and C) most likely represent a dispersal of exemplars from London for the provincial market. Interestingly, the scribe of C had access to a text both in the gamma and the delta traditions, resulting in a hybrid text.

²⁸ Hanna (1989) p.123.

²⁹ Hanna (1996) p.93.

Figure 3

The stemma of the manuscripts of the *Siege of Jerusalem* is reproduced from Ralph Hanna III (1996) *Pursuing History* p.91.

L Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Misc. 656

P Firestone Library Robert Taylor Ms.

D Lambeth Palace Ms. 491

U Cambridge, University Library Ms. Mm.v.14

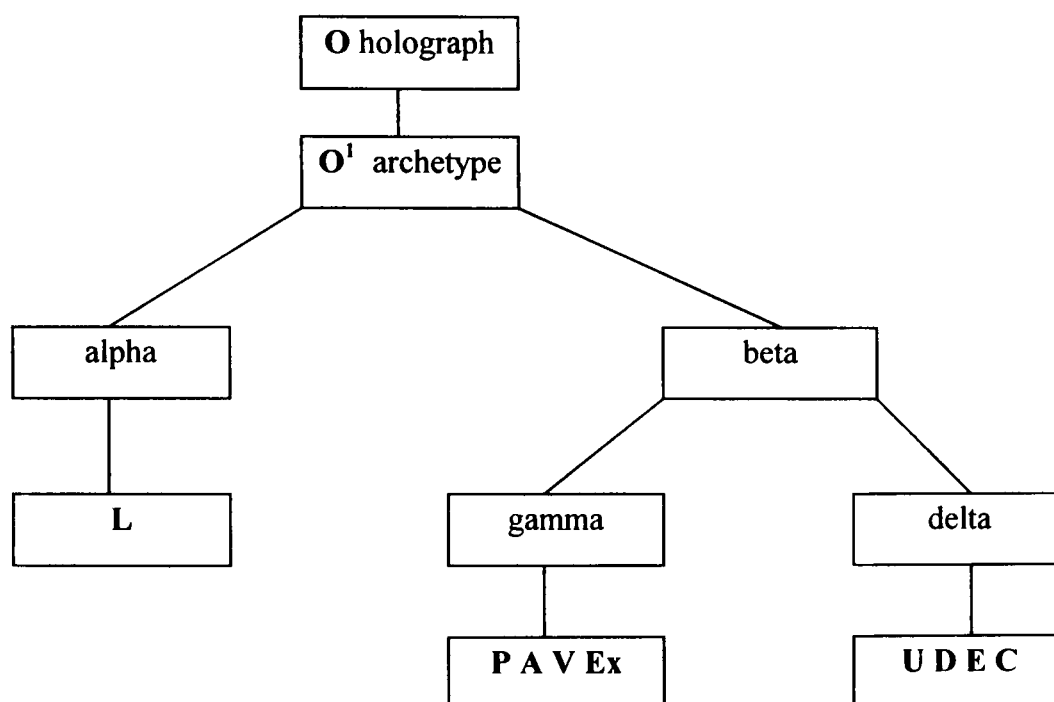
E H.E. Huntington Library Ms. HM 128

A BL. Ms. Additional 31042

V BL. Ms. Cotton Vespasian E.xvi

C BL. Ms. Cotton Caligula A.ii

Ex Exeter, Devon City Record Office Ms. 2057



I shall start by giving a brief description of each manuscript in order to present a picture of the surviving copies, before going on to draw some general conclusions from this and to discuss specific issues to do with the final products of the poem and its context in relation to the other contents of the manuscripts.³⁰ Let us begin with the most luxurious of the copies, such as it is, Cambridge University Library Ms. Mm.v.14 (U), containing the *Historia destruccionis Troie* by Guido de Colonne, the *Liber Magni Alexandri tocus orbis conquestoris in xij annis* and the *Siege of Jerusalem*, which has illuminated borders in gold, blue, red, and white and some decorated initials, though not in the *Siege of Jerusalem* section. Guddat-Figge points out that the *Siege of Jerusalem* is not so elaborately illuminated as the two Latin pieces, perhaps because it is merely in Middle English.³¹ This volume, which appears to be the work of the scribe Richard Frampton,³² has many annotations in English and Latin, as well as several names in later hands,³³ which confirms that it was a manuscript that was used extensively over a long period of time. One can infer from the fact that the *Siege of Jerusalem* is to be found with the two Latin histories in the same hand that the intended audience of the manuscript was well-educated and possessed more than the mere rudiments of Latin.

³⁰ I have consulted BL. Ms. Cotton Caligula A.ii, BL. Ms. Cotton Vespasian E.xvi and BL. Ms. Additional 31042, studied a microfilm of Cambridge University Library Ms. Mm.v.14, as well as looking at xeroxes of sections of the other texts. For the Exeter fragment see Swanton (1990) pp.103-4.

³¹ *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) p.109.

³² See below.

³³ *Arthur Maynwaring* f.1^r; *Robert Cotton* in Greek letters f.1^r, f. 207^r; *Richard Broyes* f.208^v; *Edwardus Savage Capillanus* f.208^v; *Johannes Redmayn* f.208^v; *Johannes Kyngsinn of Endbern* f.208^v. See *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge IV* (1980) pp.320-1.

The majority of the surviving manuscripts of the poems are less grand, with Lambeth Palace Ms. 491 (D) described by Guddat-Figge as “plain”. In its present form it consists of two fifteenth-century manuscripts, the first part containing the *Siege of Jerusalem* in mixed parchment. The second part, with which it has been bound, is really quite separate and I shall not deal with it.³⁴ The text of the *Siege of Jerusalem* is of southern provenance, though some northern characteristics are retained, and the scribe has difficulty with unfamiliar northern names.³⁵ The scribe is a regular copyist, possibly John Carpenter, secretary to the City, a man who is known to have transcribed two other volumes.³⁶ Significantly, the manuscript shows extensive evidence of use, having soiled pages and containing several scribbles and the names of owners in later hands with no indication of date.³⁷ Two of these men have been identified as John and Thomas Pateshale from Barking, who were probably connected with the company of mercers in the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth centuries. Julia Boffey and Carole Meale hypothesise, on the basis of extensive research, that it is likely that the Patsalls or Pateshales became wealthy merchants and invested their money in land, particularly in Essex, rising to the ranks of the gentry.³⁸ The Patsalls’ interest in Arthurian romances is typical of persons from the London

³⁴ Lewis and McIntosh (1982) pp.80-1.

³⁵ Hooper (1934) pp.38-9.

³⁶ I am grateful to Ralph Hanna for suggesting this to me in a personal communication.

³⁷ *Jhon pattsall* ff.8^r, 30^v, 117^v, 139^v, 152^r, 167^v, etc.; *dymond mertyn* f.30^r; *carrier martyne* f.30^r; *Thomas Pattsal* ff.8^r, 47^r, 168^r; *Jhon pressoun* f.54^v; *Thomas sharpe* ff.116^v, 130^r; *Jhon hays* ff.232^r, 239^r; note to *Jhon Pysant* by *Th. Patsall* f.284^v; *Thomas Patsall delybyng in the tone of barakyng* ff.22^v, 123^v, 149^r, 198^r, etc.; *Rychard Persey* ff.44^r, 109^v, 172^r, 265^r; *Thomas Pysant* ff. 1137^v 211^v; *Edward shambet* f.198^r. See *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace: The Medieval Manuscripts* (1932) pp.681-4.

³⁸ Boffey and Meale (1991) p.161-2.

area, where a high percentage of the extant manuscripts originate. Furthermore, several of these volumes were in the possession of merchants. D's varied contents encompass the *Tractatus Anglicus de gestis Anglorum Brute Vulgariter nuncupatus* (English prose), *The Three Kings of Cologne*, *The Awyntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*, a piece on the four types of animals associated with venery, as well as the *Siege of Jerusalem*.

BL. Ms. Additional 31042 (A), a diverse miscellany of twenty-six items in both prose and verse ranging from romances to biblical paraphrases, prayers and a dietary assembled by Roger Thornton for personal use, is designated by Guddat-Figge as "modest", although comparatively large in size with red capitals for paragraphs, and borders and initials in red and blue.³⁹ It has the further distinction of being the only copy of the *Siege of Jerusalem* which contains an illustration, the decorated opening initial on f.50^r, which contains fine examples of the leaf-forms popular in the fifteenth century, as well as male and female profiles and a grotesque face, all in black ink. This and a similar one on f.33^r at the beginning of *The Northern Passion* are the only decorative initials in this manuscript, which suggests that Thornton considered them of greater importance than the other texts and believed them to be linked in subject-matter, or at least that his exemplar treated them as thematically connected, and hence illustrated them in that manner. There was a range of decorative techniques available which could be used depending on the importance of a text. Some of the Latin items in the Thornton's other manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral Ms. 91)

³⁹ See Thompson (1987) passim; Hanna (1984) pp.122-30 passim; Hudson (1984) pp.70, 78 and Keiser (1979) pp.158-79 passim.

contain a much higher degree of rubrication than any of the other texts which he copied, although the *Morte Arthure* and *Octavian* in the same manuscript do contain borderwork of animals, grotesques and leaf-forms and the former romance even has a full page of ink sketches of two knights, the upper body of a third, and a horse.⁴⁰ Karen Stern concurs that the scribe deals more carefully with devout texts, poems on sacred history, than other works, providing them with coloured capitals and so forth.⁴¹ The miscellany was compiled gradually, as Thornton's signature occurs on separate sections probably indicating ownership of the parts before they were all bound together.⁴² Not only had Thornton regular access to materials which he copied, he also illustrated the collection himself. This ties in with the procedures Pamela de Wit and A.I. Doyle describe, of individuals such as students copying works piecemeal and thereby building up their own collections. Thornton was a prominent citizen of Ryedale in the North Riding, who had responsibility for the collection of taxes and was connected professionally with men such as William Gascoigne and Brian Stapleton, members of parliament. These two individuals were related through marriage to the Scropes, the Rooses and the Percies, families where possession of books is recorded.⁴³ The works which Thornton copied were owned by men of differing social status.⁴⁴ The evidence of wills, though far from conclusive, suggests that

⁴⁰ Thompson (1987) pp.56-7, 59. Hardman (1994, pp.250-74) argues that there are spaces left in both the London and Lincoln manuscripts for illustrations to be added later. It is still significant that these decorations were added. See *The Thornton Manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral Ms. 91)* (1975).

⁴¹ Stern (1976) p.33.

⁴² Thompson (1987) p.2.

⁴³ Keiser (1979) p.164, 168. See further Keiser (1983) pp.111-9 on the life of Thornton.

⁴⁴ See Keiser (1979) p.169.

romances were rare in Yorkshire and those which do exist are more likely to be in French.⁴⁵ This statement needs to be heavily qualified by the fact that wills tend to mention only certain kinds of books, especially religious and liturgical volumes. At the very least this suggests a different attitude to copies of texts in the vernacular, that they were not valued so highly. On ff.49^r and 139^v of the Thornton manuscript the name *John Nettleton* appears and this has led to speculation that he was a later owner. Two John Nettletons, a father and son of Hutton Cranswick in the East Riding of Yorkshire (both noted book collectors in the sixteenth century) have been proposed as likely owners. A further name *Willa Frostt* appears on f.73^v in red ink and he is possibly yet another owner of the manuscript.

Similar in physical appearance to this volume is BL. Ms. Cotton Caligula A.ii (C), a compilation of forty-one items, most of which are narrative texts (several romances and a chronicle), while the rest are didactic and devotional (medical recipes, prayers). This manuscript is small in size, containing a mixture of single and double columns (prose and long verse lines in single columns and couplets in double columns), with initials in red, the opening of lines and decorative flourishes highlighted in red and yellow, as well as some blank spaces left for capitals. It is written in cursive hand, apart from the titles, running heads and colophons which are done in book-hand. Frances E. Richardson argues that the manuscript's features indicate that it was compiled in a bookshop. There are two personal names - one in part one, *Donum Jo. Rogers* f.3^r, and one in part two, *Thomas Cooke* f.144^v.

⁴⁵ Keiser (1979) p.173.

Another comparable manuscript is H.E. Huntington Library Ms. HM 128 (E), a predominantly religious collection that also contains both a fragment and a copy of *Piers Plowman*, and a section from the liturgy beginning at f.97^r which was possibly bound in afterwards. It is unassuming, written by as many as six scribes in Anglicana with occasional secretary forms, ruled in lead, though much of this has faded, with single boundary lines. On f.1 there is a carefully delineated eight-line initial in blue and red, filled with vine leaves, which extends downwards along the margin. Folio 113 has a similar opening initial, except it is larger, roughly twelve lines in length. In the pieces copied by scribe one, each new section of an item commences with six- to four-line red and blue initials with decorative swirls, while scribes two and four use three- and two-line initials for this purpose. All three have paragraph marks in both colours, underline Latin biblical quotations in red, and employ running headlines. Scribes three, five (who copied the *Siege of Jerusalem*) and six use three- and two-line initials and paragraph marks in red only.⁴⁶ The manuscript contains the names of probable owners, *Richard Rycharde* on f.1 in a sixteenth-century hand, *Alleksander London* in a late fifteenth-century or early sixteenth-century hand on f.101^r, *cysley* in a fifteenth-century hand on f.144^v, *betoun brygges* c.1500 on f.149^r, and in the same hand on f.153 *Maude*.⁴⁷ Added to this is the well-known note by John Bale in Latin saying “Robertus Langlande, natus in comitatu Salopie in villa Morimers Clybery in Clayland and within viij miles of Malvern hills, scripsit piers ploughman, lil. In somer season....” and another sixteenth-

⁴⁶ *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library* (1989) pp.161-2.

⁴⁷ Lewis and McIntosh (1982) p.147.

century note stating that "Robert or William Langland made pers ploughman", both inside the cover on the same leaf.⁴⁸ R.B. Haselden and H.C. Schulz argue on the basis of these inscriptions that this is the manuscript mentioned by John Bale in his *Index Britanniae Scriptorum* as being in the possession of William Sparke.⁴⁹ Finally on f.1^v there is a list of the contents dated in pseudo-medieval arabic numerals 1751 and the same individual has annotated the manuscript, particularly ff.95-6, and on f.92 he notes at line 9138 of *The Pricke of Conscience* "The other manuscript ends here" which could be a reference to BL. Ms. Egerton 657 as both it and E belonged to Adam Clarke (1760?-1832).⁵⁰ Ralph Hanna III argues that the collection was produced for a religious community. The B-text of *Piers Plowman* was copied to open the third booklet, and two later scribes expanded it to include the *Siege of Jerusalem* and *The Goode Wif taught hir doughter fele tyme and ofte gode*.⁵¹ Furthermore, A.I. Doyle argues that the nature of the hands and the presentation of the collection suggests that it may have been compiled for pedagogic reasons.⁵²

This leads us to Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Misc. 656 (L), an assorted religious collection which also contains the C-text of *Piers Plowman*; it is a neat manuscript with running titles containing a Latin entry on the last fly-leaf which explains that it was owned by *Joh. cemp* in Ticehurst in Kent, now in East

⁴⁸ Cited in a *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Middle English Romances* (1976) p.304. See Kane (1965) pp.42, 44.

⁴⁹ Cited in *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library* (1989) p.163.

⁵⁰ *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library* (1989) p.163.

⁵¹ Hanna (1997) p.25.

⁵² Doyle (1982) p.94.

Sussex, a man of whom nothing else is known, though the contents of the volume indicate that he could have been a priest. Possibly he is the same John Kempe, Archbishop of Canterbury (c.1440-1454), who came from this area. The manuscript, on the basis of dialect evidence, appears to have been compiled in the Oxfordshire area towards the end of the fourteenth century.⁵³

Finally, let us turn our attention to BL. Ms. Cotton Vespasian E.xvi (V), a plain volume decorated with red and blue initials very much in the same mould as the majority of the books containing the *Siege of Jerusalem*.⁵⁴ A.I. Doyle notes that the quires containing the *Siege of Jerusalem* originally formed part of a large volume and are written in three or four secretary hands that resemble more closely those of clerics than of Thornton.⁵⁵ It could have been compiled for a monastic audience, as such an audience would have been interested in both the scientific and religious items which it contains: *The Three Kings of Cologne*, *An Account of Prester John*, and three treatises on the calendar, science and physiognomy. It continued to be of interest to the religious and was later bound with a thirteenth-century register of Lincoln cathedral charters and a Latin chronicle of Lichfield.

Although generally the *Siege of Jerusalem* is copied in single columns, as this is commonly deemed the most appropriate for the long lines of alliterative poetry, there is one exception to this, Princeton Robert Taylor Ms. (P). This is possibly due to the fact that it is one of the oldest manuscripts from the end of

⁵³ Doyle (1982) p.93.

⁵⁴ See *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts I* (1883) pp.185-6.

⁵⁵ Doyle (1982) p.95.

the fourteenth century. It is written in elaborate Bastard Anglicana and according to N.P. Ker originated at the Augustinian priory in Bolton, although Doyle disputes this.⁵⁶ The selection of contents for this miscellany appears to have been dictated by an interest in religious items, especially those which deal with the Passion, as is indicated by the Pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes passionis Christi*.

Thus the physical appearance of the manuscripts containing the *Siege of Jerusalem* provides us with a great deal of information as to the reception of the poem. The manuscripts display, on the whole, an uniformity in character and appearance. There are two beautiful, well-produced manuscripts, U and the fragment Exeter Ms. 2507 (Ex).⁵⁷ This suggests that the manuscripts were produced in order to be read and not for display. This is complemented by the evidence of use and ownership to be found in these manuscripts which confirm extensive use. We can infer that they were popular for a long period, judging by the number of personal names in later hands which occur in some of the manuscripts. The personal names are mainly of men, with many possessing at least the rudiments of Latin as is indicated by the language of some of the scribbles. Two manuscripts, U and L, contain annotations in Latin; the former inscription relating to the subject-matter in the first item of that manuscript, and the latter connecting the other volume with its owner *Joh. cemp*. The presentation of the codices, the annotations, the use of Latin and the nature of the productions suggest that four of the manuscripts were intended for a religious

⁵⁶ Doyle (1982) p.93.

⁵⁷ Swanton (1990) pp.103-4. It was discovered in a binding and is too fragmentary to provide us with much information, hence we shall not consider it at length here.

audience (E, U, V and P), one for a priest (L), two for members of the minor gentry (A and D) and that one is the product of a bookshop (C). Such a readership gives substance to the view that the *Siege of Jerusalem* was valued for its raising of serious issues (motivation, human behaviour, warfare), its discussion of historical and religious matters. This type of audience (religious persons, clerics, gentry) appreciated serious-minded poetry and would have been interested in how the poet brings out the contradictions inherent in his material and highlights the dilemmas of warfare. All the manuscripts are compilations, in which the *Siege of Jerusalem* is but one item. The types of compilations that we discern among the manuscripts provide us with more information about the reception of the poem.

Presentation

Let us now turn our attention to the presentation of the text of the *Siege of Jerusalem* in each of these volumes in the expectation that this will throw light on the nature of the readership envisaged by each scribe or editor. The first point to note is that there is a strong desire to divide the text into easily accessible sections, with most copies clearly marking the caesura in every line so that one can perceive the metrical pattern (U, C, E, V and L). In addition, in C and E we find that it is divided into four-line strophes, indicated by scribal marks in the margins, so that the reader can process small units of information at a time. Meanwhile, E, P, V and U also contain slightly larger unit divisions, paragraphs, signalled by paraph marks in the margins in E and U, while P and V use large

opening initials. In the case of the Cambridge manuscript these paragraphs tend to consist of roughly eight lines, although they vary considerably. The scribe treats them as small units of sense approximately twice the size of the strophe divisions in other manuscripts and varies the number of lines, depending on where it is more appropriate to end a unit. In E, P and V the paragraphs are much larger and fulfil a similar function to the passus divisions found in four of the *Siege of Jerusalem* manuscripts. L, the oldest of the manuscripts dating from the end of the fourteenth century, divides the *Siege of Jerusalem* into four segments, which each end with a half-line tag, "Now blesse vs *our* Lord!"; "& god 3yue vs *grace*"; "& god 3yue vs *joye*"; now rede ous *oure* lord". The first passus consists of lines 1-441 of the printed text (the exploits of Nathan, the conversion of Titus and Vespasian, the start of the campaign in Judaea, the Romans' preparations for battle and their assembling on the field of combat). Passus two commences with the Jews gathering to meet them, going on to deal with the battle itself, Caiaphas and his demise, another battle, Josephus' ruses, the Romans' decision to starve the Jews into submission, and how they occupy themselves with hunting and hawking. At this point there is a definite turning point in the narrative, because at line 893 attention shifts to Nero and the imperial succession. However, the latter part of this section tells of Mary and her son, the famine in Jerusalem, how Titus refuses mercy to the Jews, the renewal of attacks on the city. The final passus begins at line 1109 for no apparent reason as it simply divides the account of these onslaughts. U presents the poem in eight numbered passus, with each number referring to the passus which has just been completed. These segments are just as arbitrary as those in L. For instance, there is a division at line 185 in

the midst of the scene where Nathan converts Titus. He has just explained to Titus all about Christianity, Veronica and Christ. Titus is impressed and expresses his new-found belief in God and vows to avenge Christ's death, at which point his cancer is cured. The next passus begins with Titus asking Nathan for a token and learning of the Trinity and baptism. This subdivision of the text disrupts their conversion and is completely inappropriate. U is unusual in that it has both paragraphs and passus divisions; the compiler obviously felt the need to arrange the text into large sections and then slightly smaller sections within them. There are elaborate initials at the commencement of each passus, with the paragraph marks on the same folio executed in a complementary manner, displaying a great deal of leaf-forms and other typical fifteenth-century ornamentation. Each passus is separated from the next with the word *passus* and the number in Latin placed in central position on the line dividing one passus from the next. In C the passus division is indicated by the word *passus* in the margin, followed by the number in Roman numerals. The segments correspond reasonably closely to those in U, with passus four commencing in C at the equivalent of line 635 in the printed text and line 633 in U, and passus six starting at line 893 in both. Similarly, Thornton's copy (A) also incorporates this feature, but none of its five passus is numbered. We find a large modest initial at the beginning of each section. Here the word *passus* is placed in the central position of the dividing line. The first, third, fourth and fifth divisions correspond to those in L, while the second occurs at the same point as the fourth in U, at line 633. In the excerpt in V we find the words "Septem passus" in the margin opposite what would be line 1109 in the printed edition (the scribe

probably only had access to booklet(s) containing the later part of the text). Having examined these divisions I have to concur with Hoyt N. Duggan that they are scribal rather than authorial.⁵⁸ Only one of the passus divisions occurs at a natural break in the text, with the rest simply disrupting the flow of the narrative. They were probably incorporated in an early copy and thereafter transcribed or adapted by subsequent scribes. This would explain the similarity in some of the passus breaks and recurrence of the tag phrases which we noted in L in the other texts. The religious had had access to education and manuscripts throughout the middle ages, while from the beginning of the fifteenth century onwards there appears to have been a more widespread availability of texts to lay people. Thus there was a move to render copies easier to follow for those less accustomed to reading manuscripts. This fashion for subdividing texts pervaded all areas of book production in the fifteenth-century and this treatment of the *Siege of Jerusalem* indicates that its compilers considered it a narrative which raised issues that were still relevant in the half-century following its composition and therefore updated its format to appeal to later audiences.⁵⁹ The other feature to note about the physical appearance of the manuscripts is that in E there are line numbers every five lines in the margin, added by the scribe. This adds to the effect of the other devices used in this copy to divide the text into a reader-friendly form.

⁵⁸ Hoyt N. Duggan (1976-7) p.224.

⁵⁹ See Chapter Four on the presentation of *Titus and Vespasian*.

Local context

The *Siege of Jerusalem* is to be found in four religious miscellanies, two historical compilations, one historical and religious collection and one manuscript containing religious and scientific pieces. This suggests that the poem was perceived as a weighty text of either religious or historical interest or both, which raised issues worthy of contemplation. The language of the items in these compilations contains further indications as to what kind of audience was interested in such texts. U is a predominantly Latin codex, containing two lengthy Latin chronicles in addition to the *Siege of Jerusalem*, the first of which, is about Alexander. It appears to have been particularly valued by its owner judging by the number of Latin notes scribbled in the margins. The poem occurs in three other manuscripts with substantial Latin texts (disquisitions on the calendar and science in V, prose chronicle in C and *Sequentiae in dominicis et festis totius anni* in E), and one with a little Latin (doggerel and a Latin and English macaronic metrical paraphrase of Psalm 51 in A). Furthermore, the *Siege of Jerusalem* is to be found in two compilations which also contain *Piers Plowman* (L and E). Ann Middleton has shown that the audience of *Piers Plowman* was "interested, by virtue of social location and experience, in the foundations of Christian authority, and right relations as well as faith within the Christian community."⁶⁰ It included a large clerical body, as well as laymen involved in similar activities (counsel, education, administration, care for the community).

⁶⁰ Middleton (1982) p.104.

Interestingly, the local context of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, i.e. its position in the manuscripts and its relationship to the texts which precede and follow the poem, provides further evidence as to how the poem was received and read. In U the *Siege of Jerusalem* follows a Latin prose history of Alexander and a Latin history of the destruction of Troy and it is apparent that the poem is here intended to be read as a straightforward history. Indeed, Frampton the scribe responsible for this volume, also copied the same two Latin chronicles into an extensive codex entirely in Latin, which is to be found in Glasgow University Library. Other manuscripts such as A suggest more than one possible reading for the poem. As Guddat-Figge points out, the *Siege of Jerusalem* is the third item in A and along with the two previous texts (extracts from *Cursor Mundi* and *The Northern Passion*)⁶¹ forms part of the Christian story, starting from the Creation, and continuing with the birth of the Virgin Mary and ending with the destruction of Jerusalem. The redaction of the *Siege of Jerusalem* is followed by *The Sege off Melayne*. This may indicate that the *Siege of Jerusalem* is perceived by Thornton to be a Christian history and also a siege narrative. He knew that he

⁶¹ The *Cursor Mundi* is a Northumbrian poem which narrates the creation of the world up to the time of Christianity and is a compendium of religious legends. It is divided into seven ages: (1) The Creation to Noah; (2) the Flood to the Tower of Babel; (3) Abraham to the death of Saul; (4) David to the captivity of Judaea; (5) The parentage of the Virgin Mary to John the Baptist; (6) The baptism of Jesus to the finding of the Cross; (7) The Day of Doom to the state of the world after Doomsday. It ends with a series of short poems on topics such as the Festival of the conception of the Virgin Mary. Thornton transcribes selections from the fifth and sixth ages, lines 10630-14933, and lines 17111-17188 of the EETS edition which recount the childhood of Mary, the early life and ministry of Christ and a debate between Christ and Man. It is full of elaborate metaphors with the birth of Christ being compared to a sun beam passing through glass and marvellous stories as when the child Jesus, during the flight to Egypt, orders a palm tree to bend down so that they may eat its fruit. The tree remains bowed down until it is commanded to return to its normal position and on account of its obedience a spring bursts from its roots and it will later be replanted in heaven. See *Cursor Mundi* (1874, 1893), i-iv, ed. Rev. Richard Morris.

The *Northern Passion* concentrates on the later stages of the life of Jesus - the council of the Jews, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Supper at Simon the Leper's, the Bargain of Judas, the Last Supper, Gethsemane, the Trial before Caiaphas and Denial of Peter, Death of Judas, First Trial before Pilate, Trial before Herod, Second Trial before Pilate, the Legend of the Cross, the Forging of the Nails, the Road to Calvary and Crucifixion, the Harrowing of Hell, Longinus and the Entombment, the Setting of the Guard, Resurrection, the Appearance to Mary Magdalene, the Bribing of the Guard. See *The Northern Passion* (1913, 1916) i-ii, ed. Frances A. Foster.

was going to copy the *Siege of Jerusalem* immediately after *The Northern Passion* as he ruled the first part of f.50^r in double columns for the end of *The Northern Passion*, and the second part in single columns for the *Siege of Jerusalem*. Naturally, he would have wanted to select a suitable text to follow them, and John J. Thompson suggests that *The Sege off Melayne* fulfils this criterion and was not copied simply because of its account of a siege, but because it formed part of a sequence with the two previous texts. Unfortunately, the incomplete nature of *The Sege off Melayne* prevents it from fulfilling its intention of describing the miracle of the Virgin Mary as well as the miracle of Christ.⁶² These miracles complement the healing of Titus and Vespasian in the *Siege of Jerusalem* and also link in thematically with the history of Christianity. Philippa Hardman goes further than this and proposes that items 5 and 7 were originally intended to be integrated into this thematic core relating Christian history, the lives of the Virgin Mary and Christ, and the continued significance of these stories. These two items are short lyrics, one addressed to Mary and one on the Passion.⁶³ They are interrupted by *Pe Romance of Duke Rowlande and of Sir Ottuell of Spayne off Cherlls of Fraunce*, a second Charlemagne romance. This romance was possibly selected on the grounds of its resemblance in subject matter to *The Sege off Melayne*. Both are crusading poems, and this may suggest that the *Siege of Jerusalem* might have been held to be of crusading interest. The other noticeable feature of this manuscript is that items 12, 25 and 26 are *The Quatrefoil of Love*, *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* and *A Tretys and god*

⁶² Hardman (1994) pp.263-4.

⁶³ Hardman (1994) pp.264-5.

schorte refreyte bytwixe Wynnere and Wastoure, three alliterative poems. The latter two poems consist of debates between Youth, Middle Age and Old Age, and the principles of saving and squandering. Youth and the spendthrift are depicted as young knights and the poems certainly reflect upon the moral attitudes and concerns of youth and knighthood. Thus the *Siege of Jerusalem* is perhaps also valued here as a fine example of alliterative verse. Furthermore, it was probably selected for this miscellany as it raises matters of concern to the interested and educated lay reader. The *Siege of Jerusalem* is concerned with personal motivation, human behaviour in extreme circumstances and the justness of warfare. It is placed, though, in the section containing religious narratives, rather than romances. Thornton preferred to organise his miscellanies around subject-matter than around genre, as Karen Stern points out.⁶⁴ However, like all compilers, he tried to utilise whatever exemplars were to hand and his volume is thus both thematically and randomly organised.

Similarly, C presents the *Siege of Jerusalem* in a context where multiple readings are available. The opening item is *The Pistill of Susan*, an alliterative tail-rhyme poem which narrates the tale of Susan and the Elders which is ultimately derived from the Book of Daniel in the Vulgate. However, the *Siege of Jerusalem* is copied as item 35 in the predominantly religious last three-quarters of the miscellany, which implies that it was deemed to be of religious import. This reading is confirmed by the fact that it is followed by the *Cheuelere Assigne*, a semi-alliterative chivalric romance of crusading interest, and *Isumbras*, a religious romance which relates a variant of the St. Eustache legend.

⁶⁴ Stern (1976) p.213.

Interestingly, item 34 is a Latin prose chronicle from Brutus to Richard III, from which we might infer that the poem was deemed to be of historical interest, like the texts with which it is associated. The fact that the poem is associated with the *Cheuelere Assigne* also indicates that the poem may have been held to have relevance to those interested in the crusades. The final two items in the compilation are two saints' lives excerpted from the *South English Legendary*, St Jerome and St Eustache. Thus the *Siege of Jerusalem* is presented in a thematic cluster which deals with saints, eminent persons from history and pious knights, persons to be emulated. The compiler most likely believed that Titus and Vespasian were figures of comparable status to those who feature in these other texts.

V is a strange compilation, where the last three items deal with the calendar, science and physiognomy. The two items which precede the *Siege of Jerusalem* (item 3) are a prose narrative of *The Three Kings of Cologne*⁶⁵ and *An Account of Prester John*, an historical text. The volume appears at first sight to have been compiled from whatever exemplars were to hand, as there seems to be little connection between the contents, apart from the focus on historical subject-matter. *The Three Kings of Cologne* is a copy of a c.1400 Middle English translation of the *Historia Trium Regum*. This was written by John of Hildesheim, a Carmelite friar, between 1364 and 1379. The inspiration for the chronicle was the translation of the three bodies of the kings to Cologne in 1164 by Rainald of Dassek and the fact that a finger from each of the cadavers was preserved in the cathedral at Hildesheim. John of Hildesheim recorded the

⁶⁵ See *The Three Kings of Cologne* (1886).

legend to magnify the importance of Cologne and by extension Hildesheim. He based his account on the Bible, the Fathers, popular traditions and a variety of documents that were available in the locality. It was an extremely popular work, translated into many languages, which tells the story of the three kings who visited the infant Christ with presents and of their later martyrdom. More than half of the narrative consists of digressions which deal with the customs, geography, politics and locale of the East. Much of this is retained in the abridged English version. These descriptive elements about the East which resemble the information one finds in travel books like *Mandeville's Travels* would certainly fit in with disquisitions about science and physiognomy. The second text also deals with the East, indeed a brief account of Prester John is to be found in *The Three Kings of Cologne*. According to John of Hildesheim he was selected by the three kings to be their successor and was named after John the Baptist. He was emperor of India (the Middle East and Africa) and promoted Christianity in his lands. He had problems with the Nestorines, a heretic sect, whom he was tricked into helping with their wars against the Tartars. He later repented of this and order was restored, with the Nestorines defeated and dispersed. Thus the first three texts in this manuscript all deal with the East, history, religion (particularly the Passion of Christ) and warfare (against the enemies of God), forming a thematic cluster, which is linked in a general way through its information about the East with the second half of the volume, the more explicitly scientific material.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Travel literature was heavily influenced by the language of chivalry and romances and crusading texts were similarly influenced by the exotic accounts of foreign lands. See Goodman (1998) *passim*.

In fact, several manuscripts allow the *Siege of Jerusalem* to be read as both an historical and a religious narrative. D provides another example of this, with the *Siege of Jerusalem* capable of being read as an historical narrative, preceded as it is by the *Tractatus Anglicus de gestis Anglorum Brute Vulgariter nuncupatus*, a chronicle of English history up to the death of Edward III. *The Three Kings of Cologne* follows it, indicating an alternative religious context for the poem. It is possible that *The Three Kings of Cologne* could have been received in this manuscript as a historical rather than as a religious text, but it seems impossible that its religious significance would have been ignored entirely. This text, indeed, seems to have been connected in the minds of some with the *Siege of Jerusalem*, as it is also linked with the poem in V. *The Awyntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* is transcribed after this text and this supports the view that the *Siege of Jerusalem* was felt to be of moral value. *The Awyntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* juxtaposes two incidents, the appearance of the ghost of Guenevere's mother to her daughter and a combat at the court of King Arthur. Its theme is the vanity of the world and the limitations of the chivalric ethos, querying the nobility of violence and warfare. This ties in with the concerns of the *Siege of Jerusalem* poet who deliberately highlights the contradictions in the story of the destruction of Jerusalem in order to encourage his readers to question the validity of combat and the motivation and behaviour of those involved. *The Three Kings of Cologne*, in parts, also deals with battles and the questions of when fighting is morally acceptable, as we have seen earlier. The manuscript not only contains romances such as *The Awyntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* which were held to be edifying as well as

entertaining and capable of raising historical and moral issues, but also includes a chronicle of English history.

In the other manuscripts, the *Siege of Jerusalem* is clearly interpreted as a work of theological merit (L, E and P). In L the *Siege of Jerusalem* is preceded by a later addition on the flyleaf in the scribal hand containing some moral precepts and it is followed by *Piers Plowman*. The *Siege of Jerusalem*, like *Piers Plowman*, is thus seen in the context of works that discuss religious topics and more general concerns about life, and may be intended here for a clerical audience. The items that are transcribed after *Piers Plowman* confirm this, a selection of quotations from the Bible, perhaps for a sermon on the Creed, a sermon on the Ten Commandments and quotations from the Scriptures, all in English. This suggests that the manuscript may have been designed for a parish-priest in part as an aid to sermon writing. E once again contains both *Piers Plowman* and the *Siege of Jerusalem*, but in reverse order. The compilation is introduced by *The Prikke of Conscience*, and is concluded with *The Goode Wif taught hir doughter fele tyme and ofte gode*. Felicity Riddy suggests that this later text might have been intended for a clerical audience, as clerics would be employed in instructing girls.⁶⁷ Thus the poem was possibly regarded as a religious didactic text, dealing with theological concerns. Similarly, in P the poem appears to have been valued for its theological focus and discussion of the aftermath of the Passion. It is preceded by the Middle English translation of the Pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes passionis Christi*.⁶⁸ This text is quite a

⁶⁷ Riddy (1996) pp.73-5.

⁶⁸ Hanna (1997) p.84.

learned work and would have appealed to clerics and like-minded individuals, and this confirms the reading suggested by the previous compilation.

According to Ralph Hanna III, the different compilations in which the *Siege of Jerusalem* is to be found allow it to be interpreted in alternative ways as we have been discussing. He notes that the *Siege of Jerusalem* is associated with romances in C, that in A it is associated with a poem of crusading interest, and that in U it is read as a classical history.⁶⁹ On these points there is little room for dispute, as we have seen. However, he claims that the *Siege of Jerusalem* is read as "a quasi-scriptural narrative, a pendant to the Passion" in P, L and D, and probably V and E.⁷⁰ This is possibly overstating the case. D presents the poem more as an historical than a "quasi-scriptural narrative". The prose narrative of the three kings of Cologne deals with the infancy of Christ and also, briefly, with His Passion, but is similar to the *Siege of Jerusalem* in being of both religious and historical interest. It certainly could be termed "quasi-scriptural", though not perhaps "a pendant to the Passion". However, Hanna is obviously not basing his designation of the reception of the *Siege of Jerusalem* in the Lambeth manuscript on this connection with the story of the three kings of Cologne, because if so he would have held the reading of the text in V to be precisely the same. As for L, it contains both the *Siege of Jerusalem* and *Piers Plowman*, both of which are complex narratives that are neither solely nor chiefly concerned with the Passion. Indeed the only manuscript in which the *Siege of Jerusalem* appears to be read as "a quasi-scriptural narrative" is A, which Hanna holds associates the poem with

⁶⁹ Hanna (1997) p.84 and Hanna (1992 b) pp.123-4.

⁷⁰ Hanna (1997) p.84 and Hanna (1992 b) pp.123-4.

"gospel-based interest" and "crusade poetry". This simplifies the situation, for, as we have seen, almost every manuscript of the *Siege of Jerusalem* provides a context in which multiple readings of the poem are possible. Thus not only do we have to consider the differences between the eight compilations, we also have to examine the alternatives raised by each individual copy. Pamela R. Robinson and Murray J. Evans' theories about how the *Siege of Jerusalem* was received must therefore be rejected, as each copy of the romance provides varied readings, not the self-same one.⁷¹

Finally, there is the question of the provenance of the manuscripts, and of who would be interested in commissioning miscellanies containing a northern alliterative romance. The manuscripts were transcribed in the dialects of NW. Oxfordshire (L), West Yorkshire (P), North Yorkshire (A), London (U by Richard Frampton), the East Midlands possibly East Anglia (C), Rayleigh, Essex (D), the East Midlands possibly Rutland (V), Central North Midlands (Ex) and South Warwickshire (E).⁷² This demonstrates that the poem inspired more than the regional interest described by Michael J. Bennett and other scholars, though the work could have appealed to those of similar standing outside this region. Michael J. Bennett argues that the north-west Midlands was a highly cultured area due to Richard II's advancement of men from Cheshire, and that this created the milieu in which alliterative poetry thrived.⁷³ Elizabeth Salter postulates that the alliterative movement coincided with the period of co-operation between the

⁷¹ Robinson (1972) pp.42-57 and Evans (1995) p.50-1. See Chapter Six for a fuller discussion of their theories.

⁷² Lawton (1989) p.147; Hanna (1997) pp.83-93.

King and barons in the mid-fourteenth century. The nature of western alliterative romance was dictated by the availability of sources. The Bohuns, who commissioned *William of Palerne*, for instance, had a collection of predominantly moral and historical material.⁷⁴ James R. Hulbert once argued that the castles of the Mortimers, Bohuns and Beauchamps and other barons were social and cultural centres which encouraged the writing of poetry.⁷⁵ He adds, somewhat less convincingly, that they were in opposition to the king and wanted something more English.⁷⁶ This theory has been challenged and discredited by Lawton and others, as neither the dates nor the historic situation validate Hulbert's proposition.⁷⁷ Thornton certainly fits into the class of country gentleman, being a professional man prominent in his local community in Yorkshire and connected with members of parliament. Two of the other miscellanies have been linked to religious establishments on the basis of their contents, as we have already seen. The likely owners of the other manuscripts are men of professional status with moral and social responsibilities (as outlined by Ann Middleton), or clerics. The provenance of the manuscripts means that the scribes or their predecessors were confronted with a dialect not their own, while the southern scribes also had to deal with an alien poetic tradition. This naturally led to great variations between the copies of the poem, particularly in the southern texts. Scribes felt impelled by their training and lack of reverence for

⁷³ Bennett (1979) pp.63-88; Bennett (1983) pp.26-40; Bennett (1992) pp.3-20 for a revised version of this theory.

⁷⁴ Salter (1966 a) pp.146-50.

⁷⁵ Hulbert (1930-1) p.412.

⁷⁶ Hulbert (1930-1) p.406.

any dialect in particular, as we noted earlier, to alter what they found in their exemplar. Mary Hamel suggests that Thornton was a more accurate scribe as he was an amateur. He certainly corrected his work diligently, adding missing words and perhaps supplying words of his own invention (as, for example, *seynt*), and although he has a tendency to change the dialect into his own, he does not always do so.⁷⁸

Scribal Variations

Fundamentally, the manuscripts of the *Siege of Jerusalem* reflect late fourteenth-century and early fifteenth-century taste in presentation and decoration. They conform to what we know about the ownership of vernacular romances, with two of the manuscripts sharing a common readership with *Piers Plowman*. The pronounced religious and historical character of the romance meant that it appealed to clerics also. The poem was copied in various areas by scribes proficient in different dialects, with the southern scribes, who lived outside the areas where alliterative poetry thrived, confronted by the unfamiliar conventions of the form. We shall now examine two sections from each of the copies of the *Siege of Jerusalem* to see what changes resulted from the translation of the poem into different dialects, the confusion over the conventions of alliterative verse, and the effects of fifteenth-century taste. These may affect the way the poem is read, and confirm or refute the readings suggested by the poem's positioning in the manuscripts.

⁷⁷ Lawton (1989) p.143.

⁷⁸ Hamel (1983) p.123.

The section which I shall examine consists of lines 1077-1094 from the incident of Mary and her son. The passage is in seven of the manuscripts, but unfortunately it is illegible in my copy of P. The transcripts of these sections are to be found in Appendix One, and it is on the basis of these that the following analysis is made. The second passage is of interest because it is an excerpt from one of the memorable battle-scenes in the poem.

Most of the variations which are to be found between the different manuscripts are not particularly significant in themselves, but the cumulative effect can be of importance. It tells us that each scribe felt the need to translate the poem at least partially into his own dialect, perhaps as it was easier to transcribe it thus since these forms came naturally, or to render it more accessible to his patrons. The omissions are most likely due to inattentive copying, as are some of the minor differences in spelling. Deliberate changes in words or phrases are of more interest, as although these rarely alter the sense of the line, they do tend to disrupt the alliterative patterns of lines. Line 526 is a typical example of the kinds of changes which scribes made. In U and C the pattern of this line is **aa/ aa**⁷⁹; in D, A, L and P it is **aa/ ax**; and in E it is **aa/ xx**. The first half-line is basically the same in all the manuscripts, though some possess the conjunction *and* and some do not. The second half-line does not remain constant. In U and C it reads, "and trumpe(r)s ful(l) trie/ trye," while D varies this by replacing *trie* with *crye*. *Trie* is a form of the verb *trien*, which in the past participle can be used as an adjective meaning "choice, excellent, or

⁷⁹ See Appendix One. A represents an alliterating stressed syllable and x a non-alliterating stressed syllable.

fine,”⁸⁰ and this ties in with the adjective *curious* in the previous line of both these manuscripts. *Crye* could be a reminiscence of how the clarions *cried*. Alternatively and more plausibly, it could be a case of misreading on the part of the scribe, as the similarity between the letter forms “t” and “c” in manuscripts render confusion easy. A, L and P are all very different, describing what the instruments are doing: “tyndillede one harde,” “tonelande loude,” and “tutill þai hye.” *Tonelande* is a past participle that conveys the “producing of sounds like thunder, thundering” and the MED cites L line 526 as an example of its use.⁸¹ *Tyndillede* is perhaps a misreading of *tonelande*, or a variant of *tinklen* (to tinkle, ring lightly, resound) as it is a word I have been unable so far to find elsewhere, and is intended to mean something similar.⁸² *Tutill*, however, can be traced back to *tutelen*, a verb that means to “whisper, speak, suggest, say”, and is not very suitable in this context.⁸³ The scribe is trying to follow the alliterative sequence, but either he misreads his exemplar, or it is corrupt and he inserts a verb that does not quite carry the meaning of the line. He endeavours to rectify this by adding “þai hye” to suggest the loud noise of the instruments. In E neither of the two stressed syllables in the second half-line alliterates, “and mynstracys ynowe.” *Mynstracys* is a variant spelling of *mynstralcyys*, musical instruments, which ties in with the trumpets and pipes, but does not convey the loud sounds resonating through the battle as such.⁸⁴ It is possibly an attempt to complete a

⁸⁰ MED “trien” and “tri(e)”.

⁸¹ MED “tonelande”.

⁸² MED “tinklen”.

⁸³ MED “tutelen”.

⁸⁴ MED “mynstralcyys”.

line which was not legible in the exemplar or incomprehensible in its vocabulary and thus the transcriber confines himself to finding a phrase that will suit what has just been said, rather than trying to follow the metre and alliteration. Although these variations have important implications for the metrical form of the line, they do not alter its sense radically. In fact, alternative phrasings in passage one, which is in itself a variation on a common topos, the opening of a battle scene, are unlikely to generate much difference.

The case with the passage to which I want to draw attention is a little different.⁸⁵ If we look at Mary's epithets we find that in line 1077 she is referred to as *myld(e)* (U, A, V, L, D), *good* (C) and *mydewyf* (E). *Mydewyf* is a misreading of *mylde wyf* which alters the emphasis of the line, while the alteration to *good* changes the sense slightly. *Mydewyf* can refer to a midwife in our modern sense of the word, but it can also suggest a "saint who aids women in childbirth" like St. Mary Magdalene.⁸⁶ *Mylde* is an adjective with a range of meanings - merciful, forgiving, lenient, soft, kind, gracious, humble, gentle, friendly, pleasing, lovely, excellent - and was often used as an epithet of the Virgin Mary - *ladie milde*, *maide milde*, *milde moder*.⁸⁷ Fundamentally, four of the manuscripts ascribe qualities to this woman that the Virgin Mary was commonly believed to exemplify, while a further manuscript associates her with childbirth. What interests me about this line is, that in four of the texts we read of *one* Mary or Marion, whereas in A we learn of *o saynt Marie*. The use of the

⁸⁵ See Chapter Six for a detailed examination of the episode and its analogues and sources.

⁸⁶ MED "mid-wif".

⁸⁷ MED "milde".

word *saynt* is fascinating, as it suggests that upon seeing the name Mary, Thornton immediately thought of saints and the Virgin, and a comparison between the story of the Virgin and Christ-child and this incident was set-up in his mind, an issue which is expounded in Chapter Five. In line 1089 the woman is referred to in A, V and L as the *worthiliche/ worthy/ worpi* wife, while in U, D and E this is omitted, and in C it is replaced with *wofull*. Thornton maintains this comparison between the Virgin and the woman, which he makes more explicit, and the V and L scribes also follow this course, though without making it so clear. In E, D and U, whatever the reasons for the omission of the adjective, whether it was inattentive copying or not, it highlights how the woman has changed. She is now simply a wife, no longer *mylde*. The seventh manuscript raises another possibility; the employment of the word *wofull* suggests that the woman is an object of pity, a person reduced to this by force of circumstance. In E, line 1092 is entirely replaced to emphasize the horrific nature of the action of the woman as she partakes of a morsel of roasted human flesh:

And fette forth of here child. a gobat red yroosted.

The initial reaction of the intruders is omitted to accommodate the change. This develops the reading suggested by the omission of *worthy* in line 1089. Thornton, significantly, adds a line just after 1079:

Sayse entre thare þou owte come and etis the rybbis.

Although this is an instance of anticipation (of line 1084), it does drive home the theme of cannibalistic behaviour, making a stark contrast with the use of the word *saynt* three lines earlier.

Thus Thornton interprets the episode as reflecting the horrors of war, reducing a saintly lady to consuming her son in a kind of cannibalistic Eucharist. The woman herself is not blamed, but sympathised with. Her action shocks the other citizens into re-evaluating their actions. There is certainly no criticism of the Jews as a barbaric people who are likely to commit such acts as we find in dramatic retellings.⁸⁸ The other manuscripts do not bring out these parallels to the Virgin and Christ-child to the same extent. C, however, does indicate that she is deserving of pity. V and L concur that the woman is a worthy person despite the condition to which she is lowered. In contrast to this U, D and E suggest a change in the woman in the course of the episode. She alters due to the deprivation of war and becomes capable of committing an act of extreme violence. E emphasises the abjectness of her action by omitting the reaction of the intruders and replacing it with a graphic description of the roasted corpse. These three manuscripts suggest that the woman has been transformed by the war, making her a less sympathetic character. Thus the nature of the scene and the scribal variations which indicate different interpretations of it raise important questions about the horrors of warfare, and the actions to which people are driven by extraordinary events.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that the nature of the manuscripts does affect the way the *Siege of Jerusalem* was/ is read. The types of compilation in which it is copied reflect the historical and theological weight of the material in the poem. However, these miscellanies also suggest other readings for the poem, that it could be read in the light of crusading literature or

⁸⁸ See Chapter Three.

other alliterative poetry, as well as being a text dealing with vengeance for Christ's Passion. The subject-matter and manuscript evidence suggest that it appealed to a similar audience to that of *Piers Plowman*, although not exclusively so. This is implied by the presentation of the text, which conforms to fifteenth-century taste, and the fact that many of the volumes were probably intended for a clerical audience. Textual variations between manuscript copies can add to the multiple readings available of the text in the case of certain incidents in the poem, but on the whole they merely indicate how the poem inspired interest in areas outside where it was written, and beyond the traditional centres of alliterative verse. In fact, one of the most fascinating features of the poem is its complexity, which has led to all this interest and makes possible a variety of readings and interpretations.

The range of evidence presented in this multidisciplinary study of the *Siege of Jerusalem* emphasises the uniqueness of the text. One all-encompassing theme, a thread that runs right through the previous pages, is that the intention behind the poem is to raise the moral issues concerned in warfare, human motivation and people's reactions to extreme circumstances. As we have seen, analysis of the text in terms of its social and literary contexts and its unparalleled structural design demonstrates that it was the result of an intelligent, innovative, and highly refined reworking of traditional sources, the product of careful redaction and conscious invention guided by clearly established traditional tropes, verse-forms and genres. The *Siege of Jerusalem* is not merely an attempt to translate history and religion into poetry and romance, but is instead designed to examine contemporary issues such as the importance of the Eucharist, attitudes to the Jews, and the validity of war, as well as the imagined past. It bears witness to how its author and audience perceived their place within the twin schemes of political and salvation history, and understood their present condition. This is probably why it exists in several manuscripts and why it deserves wider scholarly attention.

I have transcribed the following extracts myself, from the manuscripts in the British collections, together with copies of the two codices in the United States. The first passage occurs in seven of the manuscripts (BL. Ms. Cotton Vespasian E.xvi starts at line 966). The second passage occurs in all eight manuscripts, but it is unfortunately illegible in Princeton Robert Taylor Ms. Most abbreviations have been expanded, and this is indicated throughout by the use of italics, except in those instances where it is unclear what has been contracted. I have also left ampersands where they have been used instead of the conjunction *and*. An attempt has been made to suggest the devices used to divide the text of the poem in the various manuscripts.

Passage 1: lines 522-540

Cambridge, University Library Ms. Mm.v.14 (U)

Stedes stamnped in stede; vnder stele wedes
 Stiffe men vpon stedes; striden vpon lofte
 Knyghtes crossen hem self; and catche her helmes
 Clarions cried fast; and curioses pipes
 Tymbres and tabours; and trumpes ful trie
 Thei yaf a shrike in a shoure; tho shrinked the Jewes
 As wommen shrillen on hye; when water hem neghes
 ¶ Thei laughten launces on one; and lopen togeder
 Os fyre out of flyntstone; thei hewen on harde
 Dust droue vpon loft; and dryued aboute
 As thunder in thik reyne; thrilles the skyes
 The bolde beerns there aboute; brusten her speres
 Knyghtes kneled a doun; to the colde erthe
 ¶ Fighthen fast on fote; and ay the fals vnder
 Titus *tournes* him on one; telles of the best
 For iustith the ioliest; in ioyning of werre
 And sen with a bright bronde; betes on harde
 That the brayne and the blode; on the bronde left

Lambeth Palace Ms. 491 (D)

Stedis stampid in þe stede vndir stele wedis
Stiff men in stiropis strydyn vp on loft
Knyghtis crossyn hem self cacchyn her helmys
Clarions cried faste and cornmuse pipes
Tymberers and taberers & trompers crye
They yaf a shrike in a showte to shame wiþ þe iewn
As woman wepith & waylith whan watre her neigh
þei laught launces a none & lepyn to gidris
As fire out of flynt stone hit ferd hem bytwene
Dust drove vp a loft drivyng aboute
As thundur in thik reyne þirlid þe skyes
They bare bernys þurgh out brost her speris
Knyghtis knelyd a downe to þe cold erthe
Fightyn fast in þe feld and ay þe fals vndir
Titus turnith anone and tollith of þe best
Fornistid þe iolyest with ioynyng of werre
And sethin with a bright bronde betith on hard
þat þe brayn and þe blood on þe bronde last

BL. Ms. Cotton Caligula A.ii (C)

¶ Stedes stamped in þe place; vndur þe stele aray
Styffe in þe styrropes; stryden vp on lofte
Kny3tes and crossen hemselfe; & cacchen her helmes
Claryones cryden faste; & curyous pypes
¶ Tymbres, tabers; & trumpers full trye
They 3afe a shryke & a showte; for to shrynke þe jewes
And wymmen wepyn on hy3e; whêne watur he ny3eth
They kaw3te launces a noue; & leppên to gydur
¶ As fyer out of flynte stone; thus faredde hem by twene
Duste drofe vp on lofte; dryuyng a bowte
As þounther in thykke rayne; persheth þe skyes
The berne barnes þer abowte; brosten here speres
¶ Kny3tes kneled a downe; to þe colde erthe
And fow3ten faste in þe feeld; & euer þe fals vnþir
Tytus turnede hym a noue; & tolleth of þe beste
Forth justeth þe joly kny3te; with joynyng of werre
¶ And aftir with a bry3te swerde; betheth on faste
That þe brayn & þe blode; vp on þe swerde lafte

BL. Ms. Additional 31042 (A)

Stedis stampeñ one the felde stuffede stele vndir
 And styffe meñ in sterapis strydeñ one lofte
 knyghtis crossede thaym selfe and caste one thaire helmys
 With lowde claryons crye and cormous pypis
 Trompis and taboreres tyndillede one harde
 With a schakande schowte thane schrenked the jewes
 Als womeñ weltir solde in swonñ when watir thaym neghys
 thay laughte launces anone and leppeñ to gedirs
 Als the fyre owt of flynte stone ferde thaym by twene
 the duste draue appoñ lofte the dale all abowte
 Als thonowre and thike rayne threpande in skewes
 thay bere beryns thugh brustyñ with launces
 knyghttis thruscheñ downe thraly vn to þe colde erthe
 thay fyghte faste in the felde and aye the false vndir
 downe sweyande one swatte *with* wttyñ sware more
 Titus turnes hym to and tollis of the beste
 Iusters of the jolyeste with pynynge of werre
 And sythyñ with a bryghte brande brittynes one harde
 that the blode and the brayne appoñ the bent lefte

Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Misc 656 (L)

Stedis stampen *in* þe felde; stif steil vndere
 Stipe men *in* stiropys; striden alofte
 kny3tes croysen *hem* self; cacchen here helmys
With loude clarioun cry; & alle kyn pypys
 Tymbris and tabourris; tonelande loude
 3euen a schillande shout; schrynken þe jewes
 As *womman* schal *in* a swem; whan hire þe water ne3ep
 lacchen launces a non; lepyn to gedris
 As fure *out* of flynt ston; ferde *hem* bytwene
 Doust drof vpon lofte; dymedyn alle aboute
 As þonder and þicke rayn; þrowolande *in* skyes
 beren burnes þrow; brosten launces
 kny3tes crosschen *doun*; to þe cold erþe
 Fou3t faste *in* þe felde; & ay þe fals vndere
Doun swowande to swelt; *with out* swar more
 Tytus *tourneþ* hym; to tolles of þe bestes
 for justes þe jolieste; *with* joyned of werre
 Sup with a bri3t bronde; he betiþ on harde
 Tille þe brayn & þe blod; on þe bent ornen

H.E. Huntington Library Ms. HM 128 (E)

stedes staunped in þat stede; vnder steel wedes
 stef men in styropes; stredyn vp on lofte
 (475) kny3tes crossyd *hem* self; & cawthen *hem* helmys
 ¶ Clarions cryed faste; & coryous pypes

tymbres & tabres; & mynstracys ynowe
 whan þis noyse was ymaad; þo tremblyd þe iewes
 as wommen wepeth an hey; whan þat sorwe hem ney3eth
 ¶(480) Thei lawgthen launces anon; & lepyn to gydres
 As fyr owt of flynt stoon; it feerde hem betwene
 dust dref vp on lofte; & dryued abowte
 as thunder in thikke reyn; hurleth in þe skyes
 ¶ The bare barnes thorw owt3; burstyn her sperys
 (485) kny3tes knelyd adoun to þe colde herthe
 foughtyn faste in þe feeld; & ay þe iewes vnder
 þere was non mercy at al; but alle to deth wente
 ¶ Tytus turnyd hym anon; & kylleth of þe beste
 For iusteth þe iolyest; with ioynnyng of werre
 (490) & also with a bry3t brond betyth on harde
 that þe brayn & þe blood; on þe brond lafte

Firestone Library Robert Taylor Ms. (P)

Stedes stampes in þe felde stith stele vnder
 Sithen in þair stiraps þai striden on lofte
 Knyghtes crossed þaim selfe & tachid þair helmes
 With loude clarions þai crye & *with* cormus pypes
 Tymberes & taburus tutill þai hye
 Lachyn launces onone lepyn to geder
 Als fyre oute of þe flyntstane ferde þai be twene
 Duste dryuen on lofte & dymmed abouteñ
 Als *thouour* in a thikrayne & thrymbland schoures
 Beryns borne er thurgh brysten þair launces
 Knyghtes croschid doune to þe colde erthe
 Faght faste in þe felde & ay þe fals vnder
 Titus tornes þaim to & tolles of þe beste
 For Iusted of þe Iolyeste for Iunynge of were
 Sithen *with* a bright brande betis on faste
 þat þe brayne & þe blode on þe bent rann

Passage 2: lines 1077-1094

Cambridge, University Library Ms. Mm.v.14 (U)

¶ One marion a mylde wyf; for meschief of fode
 Hir owen child that she bare; braid on the coles
 Rosted ribbes and rigge; with rewely wordes
 And soñ on ilk syde; sorough is on honde
 Aboute the burgh bataille; vs all forto quelle
 With inne hunger so hote; that nyghe the hert bresteth
 Now yelde me that I the yaf; and ayen turne

¶ Entre there thow out kome; and etes a shulder
 The smelle aros sone o lofte; al in to the strete
 There fele fastyng folk; feled it sone
 Doun thei casten the durre; dyen she shuld
 That mete in that meschief; fro hem had ykept
 Then saiden the wyf; in a wode hunger
 Myne owen barn haue I brad; the bones al to gnauen
 Yit haue I saued yow sum; and a syde fetched
 Of the barn that she bare; and then her blode chaungeth
 ¶ Forth thei went for wo wepand ful sore
 Said allas in this lyf; how longe shal we duren

Lambeth Palace Ms.491 (D)

One marion a myld wyf for myschef of food
 Her owne barne þat she bare bred on the colis
 Rostyd rybbis and rigge with rulich wordis
 Seyd sone on eche syde sorowe ys on honde
 About þe borow batayle our bodyes to quelle
 With yn hungir so hote þat myn hert brestith
 Now yeld me þat y þe 3af and ayen turne
 Entre þere þow out come and etys þe shuldir
 The smelle ros of þe roost right in to þe strete
 Ther fele fastyng folk fastyd had longe
 Doun dasshid þei þe dore dye shold þe bierde
 That mete in þat meschef from men had yloynd
 Than seyde this wif in þat wood hungur
 Myn own barne have y bred & þe bonys gnawyn
 Yet have y sauid yow some & a syde fecchyd
 Of þe barne þat she bare & her blood chaungid
 Forþe þei went þan for wo wepyng ful sore
 & seyde alas in þis lyf how long shul we dure.

BL. Ms. Cotton Caligula A.ii (C)

¶ Oon marye a good wyf; for myschefe of foode
 Here owen chylde þat she bare; leyde hit on þe coles
 She rostedde rybbe & syde; with rewfull wordes
 ¶ Dere sone sche seyde on eche a syde; sorowe is on honde
 And sore batayle with oute forth; oure bodyes to kyll
 With inne hongur is so hoote; þat nyȝe oure herte breketh
 And þerfore ȝylde to me þat I þe 3afe; & aȝeyne turne
 ¶ Entur þer þow out come; & þanne eete sche a shuldur
 The smell rose of þe roste; a bowte in þe strete
 That many fastyng folke; þer felede þe sauour
 Downe dasschedde þey þe dores; dye þat womman schulde
 ¶ That mete in þat myschefe; frome menne hadde i keppte
 And þanne sayde þat wofull wyfe; in a wode hongur

¶ Myne owen chylde haue I roste; and þe bones gnaweñ
 3ette haue I saued 3ou somme; and þe syde fette
 Of þe chylde þat she bare; þanne all her bloode turned
 Forth þey went for woe; wepyng full sore
 Alas þey seyde in þis lyfe; how longe schall we lyfe

BL. Ms. Additional 31042 (A)

O saynt marie a mylde wyfe for meschefe of fode
 hir awen barne that scho bare made brede one the gledis
 Scho ruschede owte ribbe and ryge with rewefull wordis
 Sayse *Entre* thare þou owte come and etis the rybbis
 And sone appone ilke a syde oure sorowe es newe
 Alle *with* owttyñ þe burghe oure bodyes to melle
 And *with inn* es hungre so hate that nere our hertis brystis
 And therefore 3elde þat þou 3afe and a3ayne torne
 Entre þare þou owte come and etis the childe
 the smelle rase of the roste righte in the strete
 that fele Fastande folke felide the sauoure [addition in margin]
 And downe thay dascheñ the dore and hastely thay askede
 Why that þat mete in þat meschefe was fro meñ laynede
 than sayde that worthiliche wyfe in ane wode hungre
 myñ aweñ barne es my brede and I the bones gnawe
 3itte hafe I sauede 3ow some and a syde fechide
 Of the barne þat scho bare bot than thaire ble chaungede
 And furthe wente þay with woo wepande full sore
 And sayde allas in this lyfe how lange schall we lenge

Bodleian Library Ms. Laud Misc. 656 (L)

On marie a myld wyf; for meschef of foode
 Hire owen barn þat 3o bare; 3o brad on þe gledis
 Rostyþ rigge & rib; *with* rewful wordes
 Sayþ sone vpon eche side; *our* sorow is a lofte
 Batail aboute þe borwe; *our* bodies to quelle
With yn hunger so hote; þat ne3 *our* herte brestyþ
 Perfor 3eld þat j þe 3af; & a3en tourne
 & entre þer þou cam out; & etyþ a schouldere
 þe smel roos of þe rost; ri3t to þe walles
 þat fele fastyng folke; felde þe sauere
 Doun þei daschen þe dore; dey schulde þe berde
 þat mete yn þis meschef; hadde from men loyned
 þan saip þat worþi wif; in a wode hunger
 Myn owen barn haue j brad; & þe bones gnawen
 3it haue j saued 3ou som; & forþ a side feccheþ
 Of þe barn þat 3o bare; & alle hire blode chaungeþ

A way þey went for wo; wepyng echone
& sayn alas in þis lif; how longe schul we dwelle

H.E. Huntington Library Ms. HM 128¹(E)

- ¶(1000) Ther was on marion a mydewyf þat for defaute of fode
Her owne chyld þat she leyde vppon þe colys
And roostyd bothe ruege and rib with wol rewely wules
3he seyde soone on eche syde our sorow is on honde
¶ Aboute þe town is bataill oure bodyes to quelle
(1005) Wythynne hunger so hard þat myn herte bresteth
Now 3eelde me þat I the 3af and a3en tu3ne
In to my body ther thow com out & eet faste of his shulder
¶ The smel ros of þat rost anoon in to þe strete
& many fastyng folk felt it soone
(1010) & doun dryuyn þe doore and deye 3he shulde
For mete in þat meschef fro hem dode kepe
¶ Thanne seyde wyf in her wod hunger
Myn owne child haue I brend and þe body gnawe
But 3it haue sauyd sum to parte with 3ow þis tyme
(1015) & fette forth of here child. a gobat red yroosted
Forþ þey went for wo. wepyng wol sore
¶ & seyde alas in this lyf how longe schal we dure
It were better at abreyd. in batayle to deye

BL. Ms. Cotton Vespasian E.xvi (V)

And one marion a mylde wif; for defaute of foode
Her owen barn þat she bare; brad hit on þe gledes
Rostes rib and rigge; *with* reufull wordes
And said sonne on eche side; oure sorowe comes on honde
Bataille *with* outen burgh; oure bodies to quelle
Withynne is hungur so hote; þat negh oure hertes bresten
þerfore yelde þat I þe yafe; and againe turne
Entre þere þou oute come; and etes a shuldre
þe smel arose of þe roste; right in þe strete
þat fele fastannde folke; felten þe sauoure
Doune þey dasshed in þe dore & said dien shulde þe barin
þat in myscheff had from men good mete leyned
þanne said þe worthy wif in wode hungre
Myn owne barin haue I brede and þe bones gnawen
Yette haue I saued you *somme*; and a side fette

¹ The xerox for this section was unclear and difficult to read and in places I have had to consult the list of variants for this manuscript in *Siege of Jerusalem* (1932).

Of þe barin þat she bare; and al her blode chaungede
Furthe wente þey for woo; wepande sore
And said allas in þis liffe; howe longe shull we dwelle

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