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1

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

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

in THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME TWO

by JOHN ROBERT SIDDLER LITTLEFAIR

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

Department of French

1980

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14. MAY 1984

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CHAPTER SIX
BECKET IN ADVERSITY

We have looked in detail at the early part of Becket's life, from his birth until shortly after the time of his election to the see of Canterbury. We have seen what problems were posed for the biographer of the martyr, and how Guernes, in particular, dealt with them in his poem. One of his major problems was, as we have seen in the previous two chapters, the picture and impression of Becket's life and conduct which he was to create for us, the problem of choosing, in some instances, between emphasis on what Guernes believed to be historical fact, and what he believed to be favourable to the image of the young man and, later, of the aspiring archbishop. Before Becket became archbishop, or, more correctly, before the first signs of discord between him and King Henry II, Guernes could concentrate on such aspects of the archbishop's history in this way, and treat it in the terms laid out above. But in a sense, once there is a rift between king and primate, the biographer's problem is no longer so susceptible to resolution in this way. It is true that Becket has not, in the part of the poem which we have considered so far, been without criticism or reproach, as Guernes has not failed to tell us, but his position has been very far from what it was to be for all but the earliest part of his term as Archbishop of Canterbury. In Guernes' poem, some 6180 lines long, in the edition of the text established by M. Walberg, Becket is archbishop for all but one sixth of its length, some 5105 lines from the moment of his election to the dark afternoon when he fell under the blows of his assassins in his own cathedral, which represents a period



of eight and a half years. For most of the time, the story of the man is that of an archbishop in adversity. We have discussed already (see chapter III) how the biographer may treat his subject and use his material, and we have seen the professed and implicit aims which Guernes set out for himself. The long history of Becket in adversity offers him the opportunity to put these into practice.

It is proposed in the present chapter, to concentrate first and foremost on the figure of Thomas Becket as presented to us by the poet. This may at first seem paradoxical, in that it will be necessary to leave aside certain detailed considerations, especially concerning some of the other important figures in the drama, but to leave them only temporarily, and we shall return to them at a later stage. Moreover, I hope that it will become clear that, in so concentrating our attentions upon the archbishop, we shall be able to discern how the poet is fulfilling his avowed intentions and this will facilitate our consideration of the remaining characters, whilst avoiding in this manner the danger of an inordinate number of diversions and substrata in the account. Of these, however, there must of necessity be some, as there must later be a certain element of repetition of themes and issues already mentioned and in some cases partially, at least, dealt with; whilst this is regretted, it is, hopefully, the clearest way of approaching the subject.

Guernes' account of Becket in adversity may fairly be divided into six sections, as follows:

- (i) Lines 731-1375. First troubles, leading to the Council of Clarendon.
- (ii) Lines 1376-2000. The Council of Northampton.
- (iii) Lines 2001-3980. Becket's flight and the account of his residence in France.

- (iv) Lines 3981-4620. Conferences, conciliation, and the archbishop's return.
- (v) Lines 4621-5145. Becket in England in late 1170.
- (vi) Lines 5146-5595. The murder in the cathedral.

This should enable us to trace Guernes' treatment of his subject clearly and effectively, beginning with the earliest mention of future difficulties.

(i) First troubles, leading to the Council of Clarendon

If any part of Becket's archbishopric was felicitous or even uneventful, we hear nothing of it. It might indeed be surprising for Guernes to discuss a period of tranquillity and relative calm, as this might hardly be calculated to divert or edify his audience, but there is not so much as a suggestion that such a period ever existed in his poem. No doubt it might well have been overlooked by the biographer, whose thoughts must unfailingly have been directed forwards to the impending struggle between Becket and the king. We saw in the previous chapter how Guernes concluded his account of Becket's receipt of the pallium with a long 'sermon' intended for the edification of his audience. Whilst the contents of the passage will be dealt with in a later chapter, it is worth pointing out the manner in which the poet concludes it:

Se vus ne cremez Deu, cremez enfern ki art,

U nuls ki entera n'en istra par nul art.

As bons humes pernez, ki unt esté, reguart,

E a meint pecheür que Deus prist a sa part,

Al seint martyr Thomas, ki fu ocis or tart.

Asez avez oï quels il esteit jadis.

Mordanz ert cume lous, quant l'ainel a suppris,

Mesfaisanz ert e fers, e quereit los e pris;

Or ert simples e dulz, despiseit vair e gris.

E cum plus am̄ Deu, tant fu il del rei pis.

(Lines 726-735)

This passage tells us nothing new about Becket, save in the last line where we learn that a growing love of God is incompatible with a lasting affection for the king. We were assured at the time of his election that he took his office very seriously, and was at pains to fulfil his duties humbly, and with justice and reverence. Now it seems as if his previous misdeeds, of which we have heard in similar terms already, take on a slightly different emphasis, for now they are more closely associated with King Henry, or at least with the memory of Becket's service of King Henry, and so the responsibility for them seems to shift, albeit marginally, away from the new archbishop and towards the king himself. Thus it becomes more natural for his new role to be inimical in the eyes of the king, although Guernes claims, perhaps disingenuously, that he does not understand why the king should have taken such offence. However, he goes on to imply that the king had lost much of his affection for his former companion and officer, even before there was any substantial reason for this to happen, although such a reason seems not to have been long delayed:

Car si tost cum il fu sacrez a cel' honur,

De la parole Deu se fist preecheür,

E del tut entendi al souverain seigneur.

Ne sai se pur ceo l'a li reis pris en haür,

Mes d'iloec en avant l'esluina de s'amur.

Le premier maltalent vus sai jeo bien mustrer.

Car al rei enveia maistre Ernulf ultre mer:

Sun seel li rendeit, ceo li manda li ber.

Dunc se prist durement li reis a emflamber:

"Pur les olz Deu, fet il, nel voldra mes garder?"

"J'ai lettres e cungié, fet il pleneirement,

K'il pot estre arceveske, chancelier ensement.

- Nu l'iert, fet mestre Ernulf; a estrus le vus rent;

Car mult est il chargié de ceo qu'a lui apent.

- N'a suin de mun servise, fet li reis; bien le sent."

(Lines 736-750)

Guernes makes no comment on the incident, declining to say whether the archbishop was right to resign when he did, or whether the king had a legitimate case for retaining his services as chancellor. We saw in the previous chapter that Guernes wished perhaps to suggest that the king had not been happy at the prospect of Becket's becoming archbishop, once he had given the matter more thought than he may have done when first he intimated that Becket might fulfil both roles. These lines would then confirm his doubts and help to explain his anger, but Guernes is now reticent on this point. His source for this incident was William of Canterbury (ch.11, p.12), but the naming of the messenger is only to be found in Guernes' account, so it is possible to credit him with an attempt to investigate this incident to discover more about it. It is worth noting in passing that he does not lend to Becket the excuse for his resignation in quite the same terms as William does: for Guernes, Becket is too engrossed in his new duty towards God to be able to continue; in William's account, he resigns quia ipse non (or, in one reading, vix) uni, nedum duobus, officiis posset sufficere, which is almost, but not quite the same motive. Perhaps more striking is the fact that Guernes declines to suggest, as William does, that there are those who wish to foster ill-feeling between the two, even at this early stage. William's terms are florid, and contain overtones of the parable of the sower, which may account for the lack of parallel in Guernes' account:

"Videns et invidens hostis antiquus novum hominem multiplici virtutum gratia pullulare, ne flores meritorum prodirent in fructus praemiorum, zizania superseminavit quae fructum veteris amicitiae regis et pontificis suffocarent. Et inde seminarium sumpsit"

This assertion is hardly justified by the evidence which William (William of Canterbury, ch.11,p.12)¹ can produce here, however, and since it is hardly logical to the incident in question, Guernes prefers no doubt to show us the king's displeasure.

The second incident adduced by Guernes is the question of the auxilium vicecomitis, or 'sheriffs' aid'.² Here is what Guernes tells us of the incident:

A Wedestoke fu la secunde ire esprise
 Par quei li reis vers lui en grant ire s'atise.
 Car en Engleterre a une custume mise,
 Que "l'aïe al vescuente" est par les cuntez prise;
 Si est par duble solt par les hydes asise.
 Li baron del país le soleient duner
 A ces ki furent mis pur les cuntez garder,
 K'il deüssent lur teres e lur humes tenses,
 Ne que nul n'en deüssent empleidier ne grever.
 Or les voleit li reis a sa rente aturner.
 "Sire, fet l'arceveske, nes devez pas saisir;
 A rente nes poëz aturner n'establiir,
 Car nus nes durrum pas, se nus vient a pleisir.
 Mes tant nus poent bel li vescuente servir
 Ke nus de lur aïe ne lur devom faillir.
 - Par les olz Deu, fet il, tuz erent enrollé;
 E vus en devez bien fere ma volenté,
 Car des voz fera um quanque nus ert a gré.
 - Par les olz, fet li il, que vus avez juré,

Ja n'en i avra un de ma tere dune."

(Lines 751-770)

The archbishop evidently made it clear that if he thought that the king were likely to misappropriate the revenues from this tax, he was not prepared to let it be levied; the issue is really a moral one, but it seems to have involved the archbishop in a defiance of the king's laws. Becket appears in Guernes' account to be very outspoken here, and provokes the king's anger by giving as good as he gets. Guernes does not tell us whether Becket's arguments were successful in bringing the king to change his mind; perhaps the important thing which Guernes wishes to bring to our attention is the fact of the archbishop's opposition, rather than whether it carried the day, and the vehemence and the intensity of his reply to the king.

Guernes stays on the whole close to his source for this episode, which seems to have been Grim's account on this occasion, as William of Canterbury is very brief here. Guernes' account differs in that he does not imply, as Grim does, that the king gave way and then vented his ill-feeling on other members of the clergy, who thus felt little disposed to see the archbishop in a favourable light in this matter. In Grim, this adds to the picture of oppression which is building up against Becket, and increases our feelings of sympathy for him, if we have as yet any.³ Not for the first time, Guernes does not parallel the conclusion made by his Latin source. He may have considered that evidence was lacking to verify this point, but in any case, his purpose is to relate rapidly, and seemingly without comment of any description as to the merits and demerits of the archbishop's conduct, or the king's policy, the various incidents which quickly brought Becket into uneasy and sour confrontation with Henry.

Before we leave this incident, it is worth pointing out one

interesting change which Guernes seems to have made in his translation from Grim's text. According to Grim, the king, criticizing the archbishop for his opposition, tells him: nec dignum est ut contradicas, cum nemo tuos contra voluntatem tuam gravare velit. In Guernes' account, the king tells Becket that he should do his bidding Car des voz fera um quanque nus ert a gre, ^(Line 768) Instead of a reasonable argument, this is now a heavy threat, which the archbishop could hardly let pass in silence. It might therefore be more logical to adopt the reading in one of the manuscripts, which M. Walberg hesitates to sanction completely, although he is aware of the difficulty and postulates another reading,⁴ and replace nus by vus.

Pressing on without comment on justifications or effects or side-issues, Guernes maintains the impression of speed and intensity with which the pressure grew on the archbishop by relating the case of Philip de Brois.⁵ The relevance of this incident is that it leads us directly to the problem of the king's customs and their observance. There was between the king and the archbishop what Guernes terms une mellee fort, ^(Line 771) Philip had been reté ... a tort of murdering a knight. The incident seems to have little to do with the archbishop until the king, dissatisfied with the judgment which has been reached in the ecclesiastical courts, disputes their decision and wishes to try Philip in his own court; Becket intervenes and, according to Guernes, the king seeks some measure of assurance that the judgment and the sentence which have been passed on Philip have been reached objectively, and with no view to shielding him from further punishments.

Guernes follows Edward Grim's account here, turning to the briefer account of William of Canterbury apparently only to discover such details as are lacking in the first sources, primarily the names of those involved in the affair.⁶ Guernes refrains from adding to his account

any judgment of the case, neither commending Becket for his action, nor condemning the king for his angry intransigent demands. Such an outburst would be ill-timed, for Guernes knows that what is to follow is potentially more convincing evidence and material for any opinion he might wish to express, and does not feel that it is necessary to pass comment on the incident, but rather goes on immediately to recount its consequences.

Guernes tells us that the king then had the prelates called together in order to discover their position concerning the custumes del regne, established by King Henry I:

Puis refist les prelaz tuz devant sei venir,
 E volt k'il li pramettent garder e atenir
 Les custumes del regne qu'il aveit a baillir,
 Que ses aiols ot fet en sun regne establir.
 Salf lur ordre, ceo dient, l'en volent obeïr.
 Li reis volt qu'il le facent, salf lur ordre u nun,
 E dit que de cel mot n'i avra ja un sun.
 Tuit li dient ensemble que senz salvatiun
 De l'ordre nel ferunt pur nul' occasiun.
 Idunc se prist vers els li reis a cuntençon,
 E dit que a nul sens nes en lerra guenchir,
 Car al tens sun aiol les soleient tenir
 Arceveske e eveske, que l'um vit puis saintir.
 L'arceveske respunt: "L'ordre ne voil guerpier."
 De cel mot ne se volent li eveske partir.

(Lines 826-840)

Thus we learn of the opposition of Becket and the bishops to the king's customs, the opposition which, when maintained by Becket, was one of the major causes of the rift between him and Henry. We learn

from Guernes, (in an episode which he seems to have found in William of Canterbury, whereas much of his material here is to be found in Edward Grim), that the bishops all agreed, at a meeting with their archbishop, to present a united front in their opposition to the king's customs; as we shall see in greater detail later Guernes seems to make a point of telling us that Roger, Archbishop of York, would support his archbishop in this matter, that he promised K'il se tendra od lui, ne li faldra neient,^(line 850) But this seems to be a calculated intention on the part of the poet, for he now leaves the Archbishop of Canterbury briefly to tell us how, at the instigation of Arnulf of Lisieux, a party was formed against Becket, in which Roger played a part, agreeing with others to accept the king's wishes and obey the customs. We shall return in a later chapter to discuss in detail the machinations of the bishops, but for the moment it is sufficient to note this juxtaposition of statements concerning Roger, and that Guernes lets us know that the archbishop is not unaware of what is going on. It is not surprising, therefore, that the bishops fail to persuade Becket to change his mind, and it is only when Philip of L'Aumone comes to see the archbishop with letters from the pope himself, and from the cardinals, ordering and urging respectively that Becket should give way, that he is in fact persuaded to do so. Even so, Guernes is reluctant to suggest that the archbishop is forced into a position of submission on this point, but rather suggests, as Grim does, that Becket is persuaded by skilful and subtle argument to give way, and only then when he is assured of the king's integrity towards the Church, and can reasonably hope to hear no more about the matter:

Ne ja cuntre sun ordre ne li ert demandé

Custumes a tenir ultre sa volenté.

N'en volt estre vencu, mes greant li sun gré,

E tut li coruz erent d'ambes parz parduné;
 Li reis fera de lui tut seignur del regné.
 E li reis l'aveit ainz sur tuz humes amé,
 E il l'aveit servi par mult grant lealté. -
 Tant l'aveit de paroles li abes enchanté,
 Pur ceo ke il le vit de tel auctorité,
 Que tresqu'a Wedestoke l'aveit od sei mené.
 La li unt fet pramette al rei e greanter
 Que ses custumes volt en bone fei garder
 E lealment. Car mes n'en quide oïr parler.

(Lines 901-913)

Persuasion is evidently closer to deception than is a show of force; and this is no doubt a more satisfactory way for the poet to suggest an explanation of the archbishop's consent to agree to the customs after his previous refusals. Indeed, if it may be suggested that the archbishop mes n'en quide oïr parler, ^(Line 913) the poet may be wishing us to imply such an element of deception, despite the mention of letters from the pope whose very existence must have implied that there was something to be said for Becket to relax his rigid rejection of any agreement. Perhaps this is what Guernes wishes to suggest by saying that Philip is a man of tel auctorité, ^(Line 909) although this is hardly made clear. At all events, King Henry's immediate call for a public retraction of opposition by the archbishop is made to stand in stark contrast to what Becket anticipated. It is indeed probable that the convocation of the Council of Clarendon did take him by surprise, and the reasons which Guernes wishes to put forward, and which he found largely already expressed in Grim's account, may well be historically accurate ones.

As soon as Becket is confronted with the prospect of Clarendon,

he regrets his change of heart. We are now told that he repents of his agreement to customs which are 'unreasonable', although there is no logical explanation given as to why he should not have held firm in his resolve to oppose them in the first place:

Mes l'arceveske peise k'il ot tant trespasé.
 Mult fu dolent el cuer k'ot fet greanteison
 De custume tenir ki est contre raison;
 E mielz volt vers le rei chair en acaison
 Ke mettre seint'iglise en tel cumfusion.
 Ne crient encuntre Deu manace ne prison.
 Quant le rei nel pot veintre, n'i ot que corecier.
 Mes les ordenez Deu manace a detrenchier;
 Seint'iglise voldra, se il poet, trebuchier.
 Ne se volt l'arceveske de rien humilïer
 Pur chose dunt li reis le sace manacier.

(Lines 925-935)

Thus we gather that Becket renewed his opposition to the customs, and the process of persuading him has shortly to be undertaken again; whilst Guernes seems to have little alternative here, in the matter of his sources, to following Edward Grim, and, less often, William of Canterbury, closely, it is interesting to note that neither of them actually tells us that Becket was concerned not to suffer humiliation at the hands of the king; they both inform us that Becket wishes to protect his Church in the face of the king's attempts to weaken its position, and that Becket is more prepared to undergo punishment, prison and exile than to fail in his duty towards God and his Church, but without introducing the element of pride in addition to the moral and ecclesiastical considerations which they attribute to the archbishop.⁷ When the various bishops, knights and earls begin to try

and draw him again from his stand against the king, Guernes tells that, despite arguments, persuasions and other methods of debate, the archbishop pur si grant menace ne perdi sa vertu,^(line 956) Perhaps Becket's courage and strength can be said in Guernes' account to contain an element of personal consideration, as well as moral and ecclesiastical connotations. Finally, two knights templar succeed in assuring him that nothing is intended to the detriment of Becket's 'order', that they will pledge their own honour on this point. This is how Guernes tells us of the archbishop's second acquiescence;

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

(Lines 976-980)

The same considerations, persuasion, promise of integrity, and reconciliation to the king are evident here as they were when Becket ceded for the first time; but added to these are the implications that Becket must consider the fate of the Church, the clergy, and even himself, whilst there is a hint of sophistry in the argument that in giving way he may prevent the king and his supporters from falling into greater sin. Now he gives way because his Church is in danger, whereas only a little while earlier he was resisting lest it should come into danger; yet there can be no hint of weakness on the part of the archbishop; at most he can be shown to be acting against what may be his own better judgment. Admittedly he is in an extremely difficult and unenviable situation, and Guernes seems to adduce arguments which counsel submission which previously he had employed to defend resistance. In just such a situation, such reasoning, if ultimately illogical, is

very human and very attractive, as it was no doubt to the archbishop as well as to the biographer.

As the king had an unpleasant surprise in store, wittingly or unwittingly, for the archbishop, on the occasion of his first retraction, so he has on the second, for he now demands that the customs be written down and sealed by the archbishop, who has just ordered his fellow bishops to agree to the customs. And for the second time Becket withdraws his recent agreement and resists the wishes of the king; again the king's actions are juxtaposed to Becket's anticipation of what would ensue upon his agreement; Guernes passes no judgment upon the king's conduct here, but neither does he indulge in any explicit defence or approbation of that of the archbishop. The archbishop's actions are however rationalized, whereas those of the king and the royal party are not, with the result that we are given some insight into the line taken by Becket, whilst that of the king is made to come as as much of a surprise to the audience as it does, no doubt, to the archbishop. It would be natural for the poet to treat his material in this way, concentrating as he does upon the central figure of Becket, and this facilitates his skilful exposition of the events, if not always their exact chronology, at Clarendon.⁸ We are shown developments very much from Becket's viewpoint, without ever being told that this is necessarily the most tenable or reasonable position. If such an approach seems to come naturally to Guernes, we must none the less admire the skill with which he presents his material.

So Becket opposes the customs for the third time, this time in their written form; this time there is to be no submission; Becket is presented with a copy of the constitutions, but will not put his seal to it. He accepts his portion of the chirograph only sur defens del
(Line 1024)
clergie. M. Walberg⁹ thinks that this is possibly a mistranslation on

the part of the poet of Grim's invitus quidem sed defensionis intuitu, and it would certainly have been more logical to have written pur defens del clergie.

As the meeting breaks up, as a result of Becket's refusal to seal the chirograph, inconclusively, the archbishop speaks out again, and we find him using arguments, now admittedly strengthened, which are similar to those suggested for his agreement to the oral form of the customs:

"Seignurs, fet il, par ceo savrom lur malveistie.

"Or veum bien le laz dunt nus devum guaitier;

Seint'iglise quiderent en cel laz trebuchier."

(Lines 1025-1027)

This is perhaps the tenor of Becket's thought throughout the meeting, but he had been induced to stray from it. Now he seems to have some measure of justification for his opposition to the king, whilst the question of the advisability of his earlier submissions is not raised again. It is worth comparing what Guernes has said here with what Grim has to say, or rather causes Becket to say, at the end of the Council of Clarendon:

"Scio, "inquiens," dammandum fore quod fecimus, si non opus reprobum sana intentio excusaret; hinc maxime illorum experiemur fallaciam, patebunt doli, et laquei nudabuntur, ut amodo frustra expandant rete suum coram oculis pennatorum. Hactenus quidem funes extenderunt in laqueum, ut nos praecipitarent, sed nunc omnis illorum detegitur fraus, ut facile jam caveamus."

(Grim, ch.31, p.383)

Perhaps Guernes felt that the first part of this speech attributed to Becket was too self-righteous, in view of the events which have just been reported. At all events he omits them, and, as is often the case,

is more concise than his Latin source. He certainly does not feel it necessary to imitate or emulate William of Canterbury, who devotes a whole chapter of his account to the relevance of what happened at Clarendon, and advises us that what happened there should serve as a salutary warning to us, and not as an excuse or an example. Such an exposition, in which biblical parallel is used, suggests that William felt that the archbishop had been in some degree at fault in his conduct at Clarendon, and that a defence, or at least an explanation, of what happened had to be provided.¹⁰ We have seen that Guernes intends no great moral lesson to be drawn from his account of the episode, for he certainly does not explicitly suggest one to his audience, but is more concerned to inform us of what went on, and, from the point of view of the archbishop, why. He neither solicits approval nor condemnation of Becket's actions, but, as we have seen, gives us the impression that he was taken aback by certain unexpected and unexplained actions on the part of the king.

Guernes does not set out any of the constitutions for us here, as he will have a better occasion to do so later in his poem. He goes on to tell us what Becket did after he left Clarendon:

Pur ceo k'il ot erré einsi, se suspendié;
 Ne chanta, tresq'il l'ot l'apostoile nuntié.
 Bien vit pur quei l'ot fet, si l'en a deslié:
 Pur delivrer l'ot fet le rei e le clergie,
 L'un de mort e de mal, e l'autre, de pechie.

(Lines 1031-1035)

Thus a potentially embarrassing piece of evidence can speedily be dealt with, especially if the pope can be credited with attributing convenient reasons to the archbishop for any misdemeanours which may be held against him. The pope is also credited with similar vision and

pragmatism over the matter of the legation which Henry soon seeks for Archbishop Roger of York; when he realises that he is incapable, without further assistance, of breaking Becket's resistance, and is advised to act against him, John of Oxford and Geoffrey Ridel are sent to the pope to this end, but are not particularly successful in their mission:

Mes l'apostoile fu hum de mult grant saveir;
 Veit bien ke l'um deit fere mal pur pis remaneir.
 Dit: la legatiun fera al rei aveir;
 Mes de nullui grever n'avra pur ceo poeir,
 Ne celui d'Everwiz n'i purra aseoir.

(Lines 1071-1075)

We have temporarily lost sight of the archbishop, as Guernes tells us of the attempts of the king and his party to find a means of overcoming, if not Becket's resistance, then Becket himself. The question of criminous clerks arises again, and is given as the cause of another violent disagreement between the two men, which develops into a bitter struggle:

Quant il n'en put faire el, griefment li amais,
 E a pape Alissandre les letres renveia.
 E clers e saint'iglise durement guerrea,
 E par tut la u peut les clers forment greva,
 E mult mortal semblant l'arcevesque mustra.
 Entre lui e le rei resurst mult grant meslee
 Des fous clers ki esteient par male destinee
 Larrun, murdriseur e felun a celee.
 Li reis en volt aveir la lei de la cuntree,
 Mais l'arcevesques ad cele lei desturnee,

(Lines 1101-1110)

It is worth noting that the king is shown as persecuting

the clergy first of all without cause, and for no other reason than to annoy or embarrass the archbishop. But soon he finds a convenient reason in the form of the criminous clerks, but not before he in some measure prejudices his case by his wilful and gratuitous attack. This is less accentuated in Guernes' account than in that of Edward Grim.¹¹ Now we see Becket fighting for what he believes to be right, not sparing himself in the defence of his Church and clergy:

L'arcevesque Thomas pur els se combatteit;
 Les hummes sun seignur a estrus demandeit,
 S'il aveient mesfeit, pur ço nes guerpiseit;
 Mais bien offre par tut qu'il les avra a dreit
 En la curt Dampnedeu, se nuls les challengeit.

(Lines 1126-1130)

Guernes begins by giving us this picture of the archbishop resisting the king, but the ground over which the disagreement took place soon becomes of very great importance in his account; it is not merely the subject of an argument, but a question on which Guernes evidently feels very strongly. His source is Grim's account, but he reduces somewhat that part of the argument which the Latin biographer gives over to the king, reporting it briefly instead of putting the words into the king's mouth, as Grim does, and as Guernes, for the sake sometimes of a more vivid and dramatic presentation to the audience, often does himself, and not mentioning the king's complaint that he had to maintain law and order in his kingdom, but rather choosing to tell us of the barbarous punishments to which criminous clerks would be subjected if Henry had his way. He would have ~~them~~ handed over to secular

(Line 1135)

justice a pendre u a ardeir u vifs a desmenbrer. It is very easy to feel Guernes' anger, and to feel also that he associates himself fully with the archbishop's reply; he follows Grim in making biblical references, which, as we have seen he is normally wary of doing and does only occasionally, when he feels that it is most justified, for he must bear in mind the extent to which his audience would appreciate such a procedure:

"Essamples de justise ne deit pas estre pris
 A cels qui de sei funt tut ço qu'il unt enpris,
 N'a ceaus qui seculer furent e sunt tuzdis,
 Mais a cels u Deus a sun saint esperit mis.
 Autrement en ert hum envers Deu entrepris.
 "Davit li reis, qui out en sei saint Esperit,
 Quant il out Salemun, sun fil, a rei escrit,
 Grant partie del pueple li aveit contredit,
 E si unt Adonie, sun fil, a rei eslit.
 Abiathar le volt sacrer al Deu despit.
 "Pur cel cisme qu'il fist contre Deu e raisun,
 Pur jugier fu menez devant rei Salemun.
 Mais li reis nel volt pas metre a desfactiun,
 Ainz li dist qu'il alast maneir a sa maisun;
 Mais de tut sun mestier li fist suspensiun.
 "D'un sul mesfait ne deit nuls huem dous feiz perir.
 Quant li clers pert sun ordre nel pet hum plus hunir.
 Quant jo dei saint'iglise e les clers maintenir;
 Jes maintendrai tuzdis pur Deu, ki dei servir;
 Pur vie ne pur mort m'en verrez flechir."

(Lines 1156-1175)

This is a picture not only of Becket's determination to resist the king, heroic and forcefully logical, but also of the deep sense of injustice which the poet feels and shares with Becket as he speaks. It is true that much the same arguments are to be found in the original of Edward Grim, but it is fair to say that they gain, firstly from being expressed in a concise form of poetry, and also from the intensity which Guernes is able to bring to his poetry here. The issue of the punishment of crimmous clerks cannot be said to transcend the issue of Becket's disagreement with King Henry, for the two are always and inevitably linked, but neither can it be said to be nothing more than grounds for it, and Guernes' purpose here may not unjustly be said to be to prove the validity of the case as well as to prove the validity of Becket's resistance.

Guernes now tells us how the king threatens to humble Becket, of his anger and impotence. Then we are shown another facet of Becket's fortitude, and the attraction which it exercises:

Lumgement ad duré entre els dous cist estris.
 L'arceveske ne puet fleghir li reis Henris;
 Tut adès mainteneit les fols clers entrepris.
 Tut sul se combateit, n'i ot gueres amis,
 Car tuit pres li evesque s'esteient al rei pris.
 Li autre l'unt laissié tut sul enmi l'estur,
 E le corn unt baillié en main al pecheür,
 Ne l'espee Deu traire nen osent pur pöür;
 Car plus crient asez le terrien seignur
 Que il ne funt Jesu, le puissant creatur.

(Lines 1181-1190)

Guernes now addresses a long and violent apostrophe to the bishops on the weakness and fearfulness of their actions in abandoning their archbishop, in which he accuses them of shirking their duties to God and the Church, of serving the king's cause only for gain, of being, in effect, bishops in name only. We shall return to this original and biting attack in another chapter, but Guernes continues, still in an original vein, to advise the king to consider carefully his position as regards the power and jurisdiction of the Church and those who are invested with its authority. He speaks out on the doctrine of the two swords with all the clear and absolute conviction which is associated with the archbishop himself. The impact of Becket's resistance is heightened because we have just been told of his recent isolation. Now Guernes supports him in his fight against the king, identifying himself with Becket's defence of the clergy and his views on their role and position:

Li clerc sunt serjant Deu e de s'electiun,
 Eslit es sorz des sainz; de ço portent le num.
 Quel qu'il seient, serjant sunt en la Deu maisun.
 N'i as a metre main, nis el petit clerzun,
 Puis qu'est d'uné a Deu, s'esgardez la raisun.
 Reis, se tu es emuinz, curune d'or portant,
 Ne deiz estre en orgueil, mais en bien reluisant;
 A tun pueple deiz estre e chiefs e lur chalant.
 Ne la portes adès, n'avoec ne fus naissant.
 La glorie d'icest mund n'est lungement durant.
 Li clers porte sun merc en sum le chief adès;
 Ne n'est pas al cors, mais a l'aneme, grant fes.

Tunduz est cumme fous, e de luinz e de pres.
 Ne deit estre orguillus vers nului, ne engrès;
 Humbles deit estre a tuz e par tut porter pes.
 Li clers est trodnes Deu; Deus deit en li seeir.
 Aprendre deit tuzdis; mult li covient saveir.
 Discretiun e sens deit en tuz lius avoir.
 Mais Deus ne li a pas duné si grant poeir
 Que ses pechiez nel pusse cum humme deceveir.

(Lines 1236-1255)

The argument is continued at length. The passage just quoted serves to show that Guernes was interested in proving his point for its own sake, that it meant much more to him than just a casus belli, in which the king could be shown to be at fault so that Becket might be justified. Guernes quotes biblical examples to support his case; we hear of Moses and Aaron, when Aaron speaks the words of the Lord when Moses cannot, of God's judgment of Adam, and also of Cain, whose soul he spared. We are told how God humbled the pride of King Nebuchadnezzar, and Guernes also uses his knowledge of the fables of Avienus to show that, perhaps surprisingly, there is no ultimate means of reform for the man steeped in evil. The whole passage lasts more than one hundred and fifty lines, which in itself is testimony to the importance of the issue to the poet, who must surely have tried the patience of his audience eager for news of the next developments in the struggle and less concerned, perhaps, with such proofs of an argument less vital to them than to the poet, not a little, at this juncture.

At the end of this debate, we return to the figure of the archbishop, who, we may presume, has been resisting the king's party on the ground set out in the preceding lines, expounding the way in which God's will is worked out on the earth, and how and why it is manifested. William of Canterbury has a similar passage, in which he tells us of the texts and authorities which the archbishop could adduce in the case for the exemption of the clergy from secular judgment, and quotes many of them for us. They do not coincide with Guernes' examples, many of them being drawn from the Decretum of Gratian.¹² Guernes' examples, not drawn from canon law, would have for his audience at least the merit of being more immediate, more striking and colourful, and better known to his public. William's argument is perhaps closer to that which Becket might be obliged to employ in a learned theological defence of his position, but Guernes gives his audience a more vivid and possibly, from the point of view of the public which he might expect to be addressing, a more convincing picture. This is how he brings this part of his account to a conclusion:

E pur ceo que Deus aime mult mercial justise,
 E plus misericorde k'il ne fet sacrifise,
 A li bons arceveske cele bataille emprise
 Pur les clers maintenir e pur sa mere iglise.
 Bien veit que laie mein n'i devrait estre mise.-
 Quant l'arceveske veit ne purra conquerer
 L'amur al rei, kil het cume del chief colper
 (Car cu'il het une feitz, nel voldra puis amer),
 Sun eire apareilla, si se mist en la mer.
 Dejuste Romenel comencent a sigler.

(Lines 1351-1360)

Thus we learn that Becket, realising that he cannot overcome the king's offensive, attempts to flee. The detail as to the point of embarkation seems to be original to Guernes, but more important is the explanation which is offered when the sailors, out of fear for their safety in helping the king's enemy to escape, invent a specious reason for returning to the English shore:

L'aroveske l'a puis suvent issi cunté,
 E a sun esclient sunt pur ceo returné.
 N'uncor ne l'aveit Deus a passer apreste,
 N'il n'ot uncore pas el champ estreit esté,
 N'a la grant eschermie, dunt Deus l'aveit geté.

(Lines 1371-1375)

Guernes passes on this explanation of how God carries out his plan for Becket from the biography of Edward Grim. There is no suggestion that Becket might have been wrong to attempt to flee the country, but rather that he accepted what was taken to be a manifestation of God's will when the boat was turned round. Guernes does not elaborate on this theme, but passes it on to us as he finds it.

The picture of Becket which we have before the Council of Northampton is of a man at first pressed by the king and his party on a number of contentious matters, but without necessarily being unduly hounded. But once he is persuaded, skilfully and against his better judgment, to submit, we are shown more of the reasoning behind his actions, and how he came to be misled. Once the dispute over the criminous clerks has begun in earnest, we see the unmitigated cruelty intended by the king, the perfidy

of the bishops, and the sympathetic fortitude shown by the archbishop; but Guernes does not put too much emphasis on this last element; he has a point to prove on his own account, which coincides exactly with that which Becket is defending, and appeals to logic rather than to any sense of sympathy or compassion, in suggesting that there can be no justification for persecuting the archbishop in this matter.

(ii) The Council of Northampton.

News of Becket's unsuccessful attempt to escape from England soon became known to the king, whom we see reacting with a mixture of regret, fear and malevolence :

Mes quant li reis oï qu'il dut estre passez,
 Mult par en fu dolent e forment trespensez;
 Car il le cremeit mult, pur ceo qu'il ert senez,
 E cremi k'il ne fust a l'apostoile alez,
 E que tut ne fust mis en defens li regnez.
 Mes ainc pur ceo li reis nel pot de rien fleschir,
 Pur ceo k'il ne s'en pot hors del país fuïr.
 A Norhamtune a fet sun concile establir,
 E prelaz e barons par ban i fet venir,
 Trestuz ces ki en chief de lui deivent tenir.

(Lines 1376-1385)

Guernes tells us that the Archbishop of Canterbury went to the meeting od grant humilitéé. This did not prevent him from taking the king to task over the matter of the squires and horses of some of the king's party, who were using stables which should have been reserved for Becket's party to use. Becket refused

to comply with the king's wishes and answer his summons unless this matter was rectified. Guernes omits, in this opening part of his account of the Council of Northampton, the omen of the weeping timbers in Becket's house at Harrow before he left for Northampton.¹³ Guernes tells us that Becket himself lodged at Saint Andrew's, a fact which Grim tells us only in connection with the last night of Becket's stay in the town; this may be no more than an assumption on Guernes' part. Becket has been summoned to appear in the case of John the Marshal, who claimed that his case for his right to some land on the archiepiscopal manor of Pagenham had been wrongfully dismissed.¹⁴ But Guernes tells us that the primate was emferms al jure ne pot chevalchier. (Line 1419), although he came to Saint Andrew's and had another matter to settle with the king, namely the question of appeal to the pope which Becket wished to make because Roger of York had had his cross carried in the southern province, a reason which is not to be found in any of Guernes' known written sources. The question of Becket's first illness is a difficult one to resolve in historical terms. Guernes no doubt felt justified in citing it as historical fact because it was to be found in the biographies of both Edward Grim and William of Canterbury; but this group of biographers seems to be alone in asserting that Becket was ill at this early stage of the proceedings, and it would not be unnatural for such detail to be transferred forward in time, as well as being stated a second time with chronological accuracy, especially given the circumstances which were to prevail at Northampton. This theory would require either a common erroneous source for the two Latin biographers,

or else a common error, arrived at individually and copied by Guernes.

Becket eventually goes to the meeting, but his request to go to the papal court is refused, and he is moreover fined for non-attendance in the case of John the Marshal. Those who pass this judgment on the archbishop are, Guernes tells us, cume gent senz savein.^(Line 1439) The amount of the fine seems to differ, according to the different biographers; in Grim it is £500, in William of Canterbury £50, in Guernes £300. This last figure is one which is also mentioned, although in a slightly different context, by William Fitzstephen, who also gives, as Grim and William of Canterbury do not, the name of the plaintiff, Johannes, and his precise position, a marescallus.¹⁵ There are certain other details in Guernes' account of the Council of Northampton which might conceivably derive from FitzStephen's account and do not come from either of Guernes' major sources, but there is nothing which can be taken as conclusive evidence of direct borrowing from the text, and Guernes does leave out other details to be found in FitzStephen which might have been useful in his own version - the name of the place over which the land - dispute took place, Pagenham, for example. Possibly Guernes found an oral source who knew FitzStephen, who was present at the Council of Northampton,¹⁶ or who knew his work. One manuscript of Guernes' poem does carry the reading cinc cenz livres instead of treis cenz livres.^(Line 1447)¹⁷

The case of John the Marshal is soon dealt with; Becket refuses to answer in the case; he accuses John of having sworn an irregular oath, desur un tropier.^(Line 1455) (another detail which Guernes has in common with FitzStephen, and not with Grim or William of

Canterbury), and Guernes tells us no more of this case, save that dedenz cel an porent sa char li ver mangier, e les cors

(Lines 1459 - 60)

ses douz fiz..... This may be his reward for his attempt to

(Line 1458)

Deu enginnier, Guernes contents himself with a juxtaposition

of statements here. If there are any conclusions to be drawn, he will not draw them for us. We may contrast Guernes with both of his main sources here; Grim tells us:

" Et miles quidem, qui sanctum archiepiscopum gravare non timuit, et manum mittere in christum Domini, eodem anno amissis duobus filiis, quos disposuit de ecclesiae patrimonio haereditate, ipse quoque vitam perdidit et possessionem. "

(Grim ch.39, p.392)

William of Canterbury informs us that John was guilty of perjury, and concludes in a sanctimonious vein. He treats John to a little sermon, and ends:

" Homini juras ante lapidem, sed nunquid non ante Dominum ? Non te audit lapis loquentem, sed punit Deus te fallentem. Sed eodem anno vir ille divina manu cum duobus filiis suis percussus jurisjurandi religionis(que) contemptae Deum excepit ultorem. "

(William of Canterbury ch.21, p.31)

The king, however, does not seem to have finished with his ex-chancellor yet, for he now requires of him an account of his handling of the royal finances when Henry was his master. Moreover he demands this for the following day, to which Guernes has the archbishop protest that this is unreasonable (as does FitzStephen),¹⁸ but apparently to no avail:

Quant vit que il n'avra l'amur al rei Henri,
 As piez lui est chau, si li cria merci.
 Fait l'a e eshaucié, ço conut e gehi;
 E ço qu'il ad fait, qu'il ne desface ensi.
 "Par les oilz Deu, fait il, or m'avez vus huni."

(Lines 1471-1475)

Thus we get some idea of the serious position the archbishop finds himself in, and a picture of his humility and distraction. The king remains fiercely implacable. Guernes seems to have found some source other than Grim or William of Canterbury for this passage, in which Henry goes on to ask the advice of the other bishops, which, when they offer it, displeases him; he ignores it, and they too find themselves imploring the king's mercy at his feet. The king explains angrily why he should hear the account of Becket's handling of the finances; we hear more of the reasons for Henry's actions at Northampton than we did at Clarendon, perhaps partly because Guernes feels that he is now on surer ground, and partly because the extremity of the archbishop's position is heightened by the display of Henry's intransigence, which does little to recommend either the king or his cause to the audience. Guernes relates the archbishop's relapse into illness, and the growing anger and impatience of the king :

Or veit li arcevesques altre respit n'avra.
 Quant ço vint vers lu seir, a l'ostel s'en ala.
 Li mals del flanc le prist, jur e nuit li dura.
 Achaisunus en ert, e suvent lui greva;
 Par cel'ire qu'il out, dunc lui renovela.

Mais li reis l'endemain pur lui main enveia,
 E jure les oilz Deu que sen acunte avra.
 Il dit: n'i puet aler, d'anguisse tressua;
 E se Deu plest, ço dit que ses mals tresira,
 E qu'il irra a curt, si tost cum il purra.
 Li reis jure les oilz venir li estovra,
 E u il voille u nun, ses acuntes rendra.
 E cum plus ert malades, de tant plus l'anguissa.
 L'arcevesque Thomas rencontre li manda:
 Pur amur Deu le sueffre, ki tut le mund cria.
 Quant veit li reis Henris qu'il nel purra avoir,
 Quidà qu'il se fainsist tut pur lui deceveir.
 Dous cuntes enveia pur s'enferte' veeir,
 Celui de Leircestre, qui pris out de saveir,
 E cel de Cornewaille, que l'en dient le veir.

(Lines 1506-1525)

Despite the obvious pathos of the situation, Guernes cannot be accused of dwelling on the contrast, or in fact of doing much more than give us what he considers to be a fair and factual account of events. The situation as it is presented, speaks well enough for itself, and eventually, we gather, the king granted a respite, although with no very good grace:

De part le rei li unt icel respit dune'.
 Dient li reis voldra l'endemain par verte'
 Ses acuntes oir; n'iert pur rien desturne'.

(Lines 1536-1538)

But the relief is slight; Becket is told that there is a plan afoot to have him imprisoned, or even killed. He is warned

(Line 1547)

by unz sainz huem, to sing the mass of Saint Stephen, which should help to preserve him from his enemies. Guernes passes this piece of information on directly from its source, Grim's biography. The following morning Becket does celebrate this mass, and commends his cause to God. Guernes inserts here a highly damning and damaging assertion about a claim made by Gilbert Foliot to the pope at a later date, in which he stated, according to the poet, that pur sorcerie cele messe chanta e el (Lines 1559-1560) despit le rei. He was lying, says Guernes; he seems less eager to disprove the assertion than to discredit and blacken the figure of the Bishop of London. Becket calls the bishops together to advise him, and explains to them his difficult situation:

"Seignur, fait il a els, pur Deu me conseilliez;
 "Car li reis est vers mei munté en si grant ire
 Que nuls hum ne purreit ne demustrer ne dire
 Cum grant mal il me quiert, od le mielz de l'empire.
 Bien savez e veez a quei il tent e tire,
 Ne nuls fors Dampnedeus ne m'en puet estre mire.
 "E pur ço me dut mult, e sui en grant esfrei,
 Car jo sai le conseil e le secrei le rei.
 Li plus privé de lui le m'unt mustré en fei.
 E pur ço voil aler a curt en cest conrei,
 E la cruz en ma main, pur seürté de mei."

(Lines 1565-1575)

Guernes' source here is William of Canterbury; he follows his narrative closely, relating the same dismay among the

bishops, and their attempts to dissuade him from his purpose, without being able, any more than William can, to tell his audience exactly which words may be attributed to which bishop. They point out that he is in effect going to the court with a drawn sword, which is blunt, whereas the king has a sharp one, should he care to draw it. It is perhaps worth remembering that Guernes has told us that the king has already snubbed Becket over the matter of the Archbishop of York and his carrying of his cross, although Guernes himself makes no reference to this here; at all events, the bishops find their advice rejected as unhelpful again, this time by the primate. Becket, according to Guernes, replies humbly to the bishops' arguments; in William he is moved spiritu Dei; perhaps Guernes sees humility as more becoming, or at least more accommodating, at this moment. In the end, he decides not to go wearing his sacerdotal vestments for the mass, but insists on carrying his cross. Which doing, according to Guernes, he commends himself to God and mounts his horse.

The passage which follows is original; in it Guernes gives his public an appraisal of the situation, and the differences between the king and the archbishop. He emphasises the serious nature of the risk run by those who incur the king's anger; he tells how Becket is feebly deserted by those supposed to be his friends; and he recapitulates the archbishop's position. The last line of the passage looks as if it is derived from Grim's account; the latter tells us, when Becket is warned of the possibility of his execution or imprisonment:

" Expavit pro tristi nuncio, et toto contremuit corpore, ut postea confessus est, minus quidem mortem quam vincula metuens, ne videlicet libertas loquendi pro causa ecclesiae adimeretur quoad viveret; et hoc non solum tunc sed et semper timuisse eum certum est. "

(Grim, ch.42, p.393)

Perhaps Guernes, noting these lines, began to work towards an explanation of them, and having begun to rationalize the archbishop's thoughts, expands his material somewhat.

He concludes his section: plus cremi de prisun que de perdre
(Line 1645)

s'onur^ . This may be intended as more concise and less grandiloquent version of what Grim wrote, but he does not seem to achieve exactly the same result; leaving out any reference to death, Guernes only convinces us of his abhorrence of the notion of imprisonment. He says nothing about the prospective loss of opportunity to speak in defence of the Church, although this is perhaps meant to be implied. Guernes is probably closer than he knew to the truth in suggesting that Becket was concerned about his own honour, but he could scarcely mean to say that it really was more important to him than the notion of imprisonment. Earlier in this passage, Guernes has told us of the king's hatred of the archbishop, before going on to describe the latter's fortitude in his single opposition to the king's purpose:

Mult m'esmerveil pur quei li reis si le haï,
Se pur ço nun qu'il ot sun servise guerpi,
E sun conseil del tut, e de lui departi,
E qu'il s'osa drezier vers lui n'einsi n'einsi.
N'ert pas tant gentils huem; fieble erent si ami.

(Lines 1626-1630)

Whilst this contains echoes of what Guernes had to say about the king's feelings at the time of Becket's election to the see of Canterbury, which occurred some two years earlier, he is surely being not a little disingenuous to claim that he can see no further reasons for the breach between the two men; admittedly hatred is not necessarily a concomitant factor of this breach, and none is obviously suggested on the part of Becket; Guernes has made enough statements about the nature of the king's anger for him to realise the origins of the antipathy; it is true, however, that in his portrayal of the Council of Northampton, the king's implacable fury has played a large part so far, and it throws into relief Becket's brave and resilient stand. The poet concludes these original lines by hinting at Becket's self-sacrifice, if not future martyrdom, which, in this instance, is suffered not for the precise cause which he alleged at Clarendon and which he defended there, but for the greater, ultimate cause of his Creator; there is an element of sanctity in this description which has not perhaps appeared so clearly earlier in the poem:

Li huen Deu out guerpi le terrien seigneur
 E se fu pris del tut a Deu, sun creatur,
 Qui il voleit servir en fei e en amur.
 Sout bien qu'il suffereit un mult pesant estur.
 Plus cremi de prisun que de perdre s'onur.

(Lines 1640-1645)

So Becket comes to the castle, and enters; the king is
 surrounded by ses plus privez druz; his opponent, by contrast,
 has mult poi compaignuns; alone, he enters the room,
cumme bons champions. Even the bishops oppose him, and all but

one, according to Guernes, try to make him put down the archiepiscopal cross which he carries before him, either by words or by deeds. Only Roger, Bishop of Worcester, urges his colleagues to leave him alone, whilst Foliot, at the other extreme, trying to wrench the cross from his hands, calls him an incorrigible fool. He is left alone whilst the king takes counsel, refusing to see the primate and communicating his wrath only by messengers. We are now given a picture of Becket which is not that which Henry used to know; Henry is mistaken over the character of the man, and, suggests Guernes, has been further misled by his advisers, for whom the poet evinces precious little respect; but perhaps at least, the fault lies not entirely with the king, if he has been given bad advice; the bishops have been in the past among those who have advised him:

Ire e malveis conseil unt le rei deceü,
 Qui l'unt vers le saint humme isi fort commeü.
 Li reis aveit ainceis sun estre coneü;
 Or quidout qu'il fust tels cum il l'out ainz veü.
 Trestut esteit changiez: sainz Espirz en lui fu.

(Lines 1696-1700)

We saw in the previous chapter that at the time of the election, we were given a picture of a man who changed, rather than was changed; earlier, he had made a conscious effort to improve his way of life, to live as better befitted the Archbishop of Canterbury. Now we see a man filled with the Holy Spirit, who seems, in the poet's mind at this point to be on the narrow path to sanctity. Becket at this point in the development of the story is deeply involved in bitter troubles, deserted and persecuted.

At this moment we are shown him, really for the first time, in saintly colours.

A little political manoeuvring goes on behind the scenes; the king, anxious to attack Becket on the question of the criminous clerks, is warned by the secular element in his entourage that such a move might only serve to reunite the bishops as a whole behind their primate, as they were, for at least some of the time, at Clarendon. Therefore, whilst rumours circulate about designs on Becket's life, the king summons the bishops to discover if they are prepared to swear to abide by his customs. The bishops report back to Becket in an attempt to bring him also to submit. But, humbly, he dismisses the customs as treacherous and iniquitous, as are those who agree to them, and announces his decision to appeal to the pope:

"E les leis que vus dites a quei li reis s'alie,
 Ne sunt de leauté, ainz sunt de felunie,
 Contre Deu e raisun, pur destruire clergie.
 Ne jo nes tendrai pas pur rien qui seit en vie.
 Par sainte obediēce defent nes tiengiez mie.
 "N'est pas sages^{qui} chiet, quant ne volt relever,
 E mielz vient tost resurdre que trop i demurer.
 E pur ço que la curt me volt si fort grever,
 E vus, qui od raisun devriez od mei ester,
 Apel jo; car ne voil contre raisun aler. "

(Lines 1736-1745)

The bishops are taken aback; Gilbert Foliot asks to be released, but, far from granting this, Becket orders them all to see justice done if any ill should befall him. Henry Bishop

of Winchester advises Becket to resign the archbishopric to the king, in order that peace might be restored. Guernes is careful to tell us that Henry's motives are honest and intended to relieve an extremely difficult situation; no such rider has been added when Guernes has been discussing the comments or actions of certain of the other bishops. Becket is not persuaded by Bishop Henry's arguments, however. The majority of the bishops are also alarmed by the reports concerning attempts to bring down the archbishop which might involve his death, and the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Salisbury, and the Archbishop of York are summoned and addressed to the effect that it will hardly redound to the credit or the benefit of the Church, the king or themselves, if Becket is in fact killed.¹⁹ Obviously, the bishops are made to feel among themselves, as is the poet's audience, where the main threat to the primate within their own camp lies, and who are those who will most readily further the cause of the king against him. Eventually, they all agree to go to the king, and they inform him of their decision to submit a counterappeal against Becket, because he has forced them into a position where they cannot avoid breaking faith with what he had previously brought them to agree to. Guernes tells us their motives are not all the same, for although they are all alarmed, li un i entendirent mal, e li autre feia.
(Line 1799)

Guernes follows William of Canterbury in relating the iniquitous conduct of Gilbert Foliot and Roger of Pont-l'Évêque in secretly advising the king that Becket should be imprisoned, and no doubt rejoiced to be able to tell us that their plan did not have all the desired effect. He sounds here a note which is more pious perhaps than his usual tone, telling us that if man

proposes, it is God who disposes, sometimes with a vengeance:

Car que que li hum penst, fieble est sa poestez;

Deus abat les puissances e les feluns pensez.

(Lines 1834-1835)

In this way, Guernes is able to strengthen the impression he has been giving us that Becket is struggling not only against the mighty wrath of the king, but also against the perfidy of some of his bishops; Grim has called them incentores discordiae; Guernes has told us of their open hatred, but without actually condemning them, and does not miss the opportunity to suggest their evil works are not rewarded, although they are responsible for part of the archbishop's predicament. We are left in little doubt that Foliot and Roger of York must belong to those who
(Line 1799)
entendirent mal.

Henry's next line of attack, for an attack it now most certainly is, is to summon his former chancellor to answer for £30,000 for which he had been responsible whilst he had held that office. Becket replies, quite correctly, that he had been discharged from all such accounting at the time of his election; the Bishop of Winchester, we remember, made a point of establishing this, and the poet of relating it to us, at the time. Guernes has delayed this argument longer than either of the two Latin biographers, whom he is following quite closely, alternating between the two, and who had adduced this reasoning at an earlier point in their accounts of the proceedings, when Becket was asked to produce a similar account of his financial dealings immediately after the case of John of Marshal had been disposed of, although

William of Canterbury does repeat the fact more explicitly at the corresponding point in his narrative. Becket's refusal to answer produces yet another burst of anger from the king, which Guernes conveys to us far more vividly than either William or Grim:

Quant il unt fait al rei ceste parole entendre,
 D'ire devint vermeilz plus que carbuns sur cendre.
 "Pur les oilz Deu, fait il, ne volt acunte rendre?
 E si est mis huem liges: jugement en voil prendre!
 - Sire, funt il, mais d'el, dunt mult plus volt mesprendre.
 "Quant il est vostre huem liges, il vus deit fei porter
 E tenir en tuz lius vostre honor e garder.
 E quant vus volt tolir vostre curt e fauser,
 E apele autre curt, de col poëz grever,
 Car iluec vus volt il granment desonurer.
 "De cel poëz jugier, funt li dunc li barun.
 - Alez al jugement, fait il, senz targeisun."
 Al jugement en vunt la maisnie Nerun.
 Lur pere espirital jugent comme bricun
 Qui li reis le presist e mesist en prisun.

(Lines 1854-1865)

Again we see rather more of the king's side of the picture than was the case at Clarendon; it is true that Guernes finds the material rather better documented than was the case before, for both William of Canterbury and Edward Grim go into more detail than they did in that instance, and Guernes feels justified in imitating them. In this context it is hard to believe that if he did have a copy of FitzStephen's Vita to consult, in which the events

are set out carefully day by day, his own version would not have reflected more of the pattern and detail of this work than the occasional distant resemblances which can better be explained by oral transmission.²⁰ But it is also true that the king's purpose in itself seems to have become clearer, and its vindictive nature does little to enhance our opinion of him. Guernes borrows the image of Nero's household from Grim; the metaphor implies round condemnation of the process of passing judgment on Becket, but he is more concise than his source, and omits two further references to rank injustice to be found in Grim, without, however, lessening his effect, and his terseness strikes home with more bite than the lengthier Latin version:

" Itur ad iudicium, ubi iustitia locum non habuit, ubi iustus opprimitur, condemnatur innocens, addicitur aequitatis amator nemine resistente seu contradicente. Quid familia Pilati, quid milites Herodis, quid Neronis malitia nequius excogitavit? Nihil hic legi, nihil relinquitur aequitati. Denique ut libera daretur delinquendi licentia, nemine reclamante decretum est, ut redactus in vincula in carcerem retrudatur velut perturbator et proditor communis pacis.

(Grim, ch.46, p.397)

Grim does not tell us what part, if any, the bishops played in this episode, but Guernes, who has already told his audience of the secret plan of Foliot and Roger of York, has the latter come out of the meeting where Becket's fate is being decided, and arraign the archbishop, who replies "Satana, fui d'ici"^(line 1870)^.

William of Canterbury has retold a similar incident, but placed

it earlier in the proceedings, soon after Becket's entrance into the hall carrying his cross. Coming where it does in Guernes' account, it reveals the duplicity of the Archbishop of York, who has already done much to damn himself in our eyes by his defection to the king's side in order to add to the persecutions of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The king, still refusing to see Becket, now sends two barons, the Earls of Leicester and Cornwall, to pass sentence on the archbishop. Guernes is content, for approximately fifty lines, to present a factual account of the exchanges between the two parties, in which Becket denies that he holds any lands from the king's hand, deflects the question as to whether he owes the king fei, and refuses to hear judgment passed, forbidding this in God's name. The earls hesitate in face of this pronouncement, and withhold judgment. There is indeed little need for the author to expatiate at this juncture, and he must have been well aware that in doing so he might endanger the dramatic nature of the events and impair his public's appreciation of the scene. He wisely allows the events to speak for themselves. Only when the archbishop establishes that he is not yet considered a prisoner and decides suddenly to leave the council do we find overtones of partiality reintroducing themselves, and giving us a picture of the impressive religious isolation of the man as, to cries of "traitor", he carries his cross, and with it his honour, out of the hall:

- E jo m'en vois a tant" respunt li Deu amis.
 Dunc s'en revunt al rei cil dui riche vassal,
 E li sainz arcevesques parti de sun estal.

Ingnelement eissi de la chambre real;

N'en mena compaignun fors Deu l'espirtual.

En sa main destre tint la cruiz arceveschal.

(Lines 1910-1915)

As he leaves, derided and abused on all sides, some throwing bundles of straw at him, Guernes gives us an original picture and comparison, which throws into sharp relief the saintly nature of the man, and which contains hints of religiosity, which, as we have seen, are still relatively rare in Guernes' Vie; we are also reminded of the cause for which Becket is fighting:

Ensi firent Giwiu, quant hum ot Deu jugié:

Vilment l'unt escrié, batu e coleié,

Enmi le vis li unt escopi e rachié.

De sun gré le suffri Deus pur l'umain pechié,

E cist pur delivrer de vilté le clergie.

Li malvais qui quidierent le rei servir a gré,

E garçuns e putains, unt saint Thomas hue

E derochie de torges; car Randul l'out rové.

Mais cil qui Deu cremirent e qui l'orent amé,

En unt od grief suspir celement pluré.

(Lines 1936-1945)

This is the first mention that has been made for some time of Becket's defence of the clergy, which was so central to the debate at Clarendon and subsequently, and with it comes the association of Becket with the figure of Christ, which lends a tone of piety and sanctity to him; but perhaps one of the reasons that this is so striking in its religious aspect is the fact that we have been given a very full picture of events at

Northampton, and the poet has not interrupted the sequence of events to impose any great degree of moralising upon us; occasionally we have been reminded of the archbishop's integrity, and when this has happened, we can see that Guernes has given us a rather more saintly picture than he did before; we have been told more than once that Becket is now filled with the Holy Spirit, that God is his only friend. Thus Becket is distanced not only from the bishops, who generally, although not uniformly, have been inimical to him, but also from the impression we had of him earlier. This may in some respects reflect his actual behaviour as it was seen at the time, but we are now shown a man in whom the Holy Spirit resides, and is seen to do so much more appreciably than was evident before. But generally, the poet has given us an account of developments which has been factual and relatively circumspect insofar as the portrayal of Becket has been concerned; the picture of the king and the bishops has perhaps been more coloured.

We continue to learn something of the king's mind when we hear that he ordered that Becket should be allowed to depart in peace, unmolested, lest the report of harm bring the king into disrepute. This political, rather negative motive is not enhanced by the picture of Becket as he flees even so, fearfully from the threat of detention, helped again, it would seem by God's hand as he helps Becket's squire, whom Guernes calls Trunchet, to find the right key out of a big bunch at the first attempt, so that Becket and his small retinue can unlock the doors and hasten their way into Saint Andrew's:

Ne volt ilueckes Deus l'arcevesque laissier.
 De tant cles cum cil pout a dous mains enpuigner,
 A la dreite clef est asenez al premier.

Li portiers entendi a batre un pautenier;
 E li bers s'en eissi, qui Deus aveit mult chier.

(Lines 1961-1965)

This is by no means portrayed as a miracle, but is closer to a manifestation of how God's will is done; he arrives back safely in Saint Andrew's. He celebrates nones and vespers, not omitting to praise and serve God at all times. Guereduné ^(Line 1975) li adā, Guernes tells us. We then see a very simple scene of Becket entertaining the poor at his table, having invited them in from the streets. This has perhaps overtones of the parable of the Wedding Garment²¹, but Guernes describes the scene simply and without affectation or suggestion of any lesson to be drawn from it:

Dunc rova qu'um fesist les povres enz venir.
 Les tables en fist l'um del refreitur emplir.
 Jo crei qu'il pensa d'el ventre farsir;
 Nepurquant il manja assez, tut a leisir,
 E ad fait bel semblant pur les suens esbaudir.

(Lines 1981-1985)

This reveals Guernes' interest in minor details, and beyond showing that Becket put a brave face on his misfortunes in order to keep up the spirits of his small band of supporters, the passage's main attraction lies exactly in the detail itself. We must presume either that Becket considered the king's preventive actions ineffectual, or that he was ignorant of them; behind what seems to be a carefully constructed diversion, the details of which seem to be original to Guernes' account, the archbishop

prepared his departure from Northampton. He is believed to be sleeping in a bed placed behind the altar, over which a guard is placed. The following morning the bed will be found empty.

William of Canterbury glosses the archbishop's flight with a number of scriptural precedents: Jacob from Esau, Paul from Damascus, David from his enemies, ne lucerna Israel extingueretur. Thomas flees, ne libertas ecclesiae periclitaretur.

William concludes :

" Fugit, non ut mercenarius, qui videt lupum venientem et dimittit oves et fugit, quia non deerant qui ministerium supplerent ecclesiasticum, sed ut oves de longe tueretur quos sub lupinis faucibus tueri non poterat; fugit, non praelium sed a praelio; fugit redivivam malorum machinationem, et clamoriam victorum confusionem, Petrus, quia fugere nolui, abnegavit; Johannes, ne negaret, aufugit."

(William of Canterbury ch.31, p.41)

Despite earlier testimonies, both in Guernes and in the Latin accounts, that Becket feared to lose the ability to defend the Church, recent events have undoubtedly suggested that there was an element of fear for personal safety on the archbishop's part; whether Guernes felt that William's examples were incongruous, or simply unnecessary in the context of Becket's circumstances, he does not follow them.

The persecution by the king, the perfidy of the bishops, the account of Becket's illnesses, all go to suggest a picture of Becket under increased and unrelenting pressure; at the same time, Guernes gives us an impression of a man who has changed in

some respects from his earlier self. We are now told explicitly that he is filled with the Holy Spirit, he has saintly qualities, he is set apart from his fellow bishops both by their own actions and by, apparently, the working of God's providence upon him; there is less emphasis upon the cause he upholds than upon the man himself; and occasionally, at intervals between the factual description of the events at the Council of Northampton, it seems as if our sympathies are being actively invoked for the troubled archbishop.

(iii) Becket's flight and the account of his residence in France.

After the Council of Northampton, Becket was not to come as close to the presence of the King of England for a long time; at Northampton, the king seems to have remained cloistered in an upper hall, communicating his messages to the archbishop by a third party. Becket was to spend much of the next six years in French monasteries, but although for much of the time he might feel that he was relieved of the immediate physical danger of the latter stages of the Council of Northampton, the king did not make his exile easy by ignoring him, but attempted to defeat him from a distance, and harass him when he could not do enough to defeat him. Thus Becket, likewise struggling from afar to assert the validity of his case, enjoyed no easy retirement, but rather was compelled to continue his resistance to Henry's will from the continent, until at last a means might be found whereby he could return without either man seeming to have lost the battle, and perhaps equally important to both, without having lost face. But that was not to be for six long years.

The speed and the secrecy of Becket's flight from Northampton testify to the danger in which he felt himself to be. Guernes

has a detailed passage on the itinerary of the archbishop, telling his audience how he fled first to Lincoln, stayed for a while at Sempringham, and only when he felt that it was safe and that the king must have believed him already out of the country, crossing from Sandwich to the French coast and arriving between Gravelines and Marck. Guernes tells us that he and his three companions travelled mainly under cover of darkness, with Becket using the assumed name of Brother Christian. The poet no doubt understood the appeal and sense of excitement which this adventurous episode would hold for his audience, and this is heightened a little by the detail, which seems to be peculiar to the French poet, that Randolph de Broc, despite the king's injunction to the contrary, would dearly love to vent his dislike of the archbishop on his supporters. We learn from Guernes the names of Becket's three companions, the two Cistercian monks Robert de Cave and Scaiman, and his squire, Roger de Brai, which are not to be found in Guernes' known written sources; his basic source appears to be Grim's account here, but Guernes' account is rather fuller than the Latin text, and he may have heard oral accounts of this part of Becket's story, which might well have been quite vivid. Certainly, if we are to believe both Grim and Guernes, the little party must have ridden very hard to cover the distance from Northampton to Lincoln in one night, some seventy miles. M. Walberg believes that it would scarcely have been possible, and thinks that the two biographers must have been ill-informed on this point.²² Hence it is possible that the oral sources for this may have given rather imaginative accounts of Becket's flight;

Guernes follows Grim in this detail, and he may have followed oral sources for others, so that it is not necessary to think that he has invented details for himself. His geographical knowledge of England may not have been good, and in any case, for all his attention to detail and attempts at accuracy, such a criticism may easily have been overlooked by him. It is quite natural that Becket should be the centre of our attentions, and that we should be told less of his companions; even so, Guernes does go to the trouble of informing us that Scaiman and Roger arrived at Sempringham by a different route from Becket and Robert, which is the sort of detail he is hardly likely to have invented. The picture of Becket at Sempringham is intended to invoke our pity for his adverse and reduced circumstances:

Qui veïst le saint humme seeir a sun mangier,
 Que il n'aveit od lui ne clerc ne chevalier
 Quant Roberz s'en eïssi, ne estrange ne chier,
 Senescal ne garçun ne cou ne buteillier,
 De pitié l'en pouïst trestut le vis muillier.

(Lines 2071-2075)

If Guernes does invent, it is not so much the picture of Becket, which he may have heard, but which is quite natural and must in all probability have been real, but the detail of its effect; he brings us to imagine as easily as he himself can the pathos of the archbishop's situation. Similarly, on Becket's arrival in France, we learn of the miserable beast which he must ride, *faute de mieux*, and how he falls upon the beach; such detail betokens an interest in a factual accuracy which is not

essential to the narrative; it also adds to the picture of pity which the poet has created around the archbishop at this point in his account, when his fortunes are at a very low ebb. We should note that Becket here is le saint humme^(line 2071).

Guernes tells us of two unproductive incidents; the first was a meeting with the justiciar Richard de Luci, who failed to persuade the archbishop to return to England with him, even though he promised that he would be able to reconcile him to the king. Discussion turned to disagreement, and Richard departed in anger. The second was an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a safe conduct from the Count of Flanders. Eventually Becket leaves Saint Omer, where he had been resting, advised and assisted by Milson, Bishop of Therouanne, again under cover of darkness. Evidently the Count of Flanders was not to be trusted, and Becket seems to have enemies on the continent as well as in England. He travelled on to Soissons, where, at last, fortune seems to have favoured him:

Mais mult li esteit bien a cel'ure avenu,
 E maint humme l'unt puis a miracle tenu;
 Car danz Henris de Pise, qui des chardenaus fu,
 E li reis Loëwis sunt d'autre part venu;
 Es rues de Seissuns sunt entreconeü.

(Lines 2151-2155)

This piece of information is to be found not in Grim's account, but in that of William of Canterbury. We can see that Guernes makes very little of what might by some have been regarded as a miraculous event; he does in fact no more than

pass on the information almost exactly as he finds it in William's account, and if some men wish to account it for a miracle, then we will be told that such a view exists:

" Factum est autem, cum urbem Swesionem ingrederetur, non sine divino nutu, quod et miraculo ascribi posse quidam putaverunt, rex Francorum Lodowicus et Henricus Pisanus cardinalis pariter urbem ingressi sunt. Quibus cum exsiliū sui causam exsul exposuisset, jussit eum rex apud se residere, et consilium et adjutorium per omnia promisit; cardinalis, in causa patrocinium."

(William of Canterbury, ch.34, p.43)

Guernes also borrows the latter part of this passage, for having told us of the chance meeting, he goes on to tell us:

Sa cause e sun eissil lur aveit denuntié.
 Li buens reis Loëwis en ad eü pitie',
 E sil volt retenir par mult grant amistie'.
 E danz Henris de Pise li ad covenantié
 Par tut li aidera. Si fist il senz faintié.

(Lines 2156-2160)

This is the first time mention has been made of the French king since we heard of Becket's military exploits as chancellor in the service of Henry II, when Louis VII was the enemy against whom Becket was fighting, a fact which did not really detain us at the time. Immediately King Louis is contrasted to his English counterpart, not so much in a study of kingship as in

respective treatment of an archbishop. Guernes does not need to labour the point; the contrast speaks for itself, and hereafter we are always made to feel, even on the occasions when we are not specifically told, that it is li buens reis Loewis who helps and protects Becket during his exile, and who makes efforts to bring about a reconciliation.

Meanwhile, we learn that Henry II has not been idle. First of all we learn that he has sent envoys to Louis; they begin by reminding him of a prior agreement that neither of them would harbour any who fled from one kingdom to the other. The aim is manifestly to find and detain Becket, as Louis soon forces them to admit. We shall return at a later time to consider the part played by King Louis VII, but for the moment it will be sufficient to note the clever and ironic tone he uses, deflecting easily all arguments that Becket has been his enemy, and expressing his admiration for him:

- L'arcevesque Thomas, fait li reis, bien le vi,
 Le chancelier ki tant servi le rei Henri.
 Del regne l'a chacié, sil het encore issi
 Que il ne puet avoir recet ne la ne ci.
 Mult li a bien rendu que tant bien l'a servi!

(Lines 2201-2205)

The French king cannot be persuaded that Becket is deserving of punishment, or that he should be handed over, even if Louis knew his whereabouts; Becket has been a truly loyal servant to his king:

- Sire quens, fait li reis, bien sai par verité,
 Quant servi sun seignur par si grant leauté,
 S'eüst esté mis huem, qu'il me servist a gré.

E quant il li conquist casteals e herité,
 Tant le deüst il plus tenir en grant chierté.

(Lines 2216-2220)

Guernes' details here come from Grim's account, with certain details borrowed from William, but he heightens the contrast between the two factions here with a largely damning catalogue of the members of Henry's embassy, which is not to be found in his written sources. Guernes again takes the opportunity to attack in virulent terms the Bishop of London, who is singled out for particular vilification in this passage.²³

The attempts of the embassy to further the king's cause in the papal court in Sens met with an equal lack of success; one of them was reproached by the pope for an unwarranted attack on the Archbishop of Canterbury, and we learn also that, to the obvious pleasure and amusement of the poet, the Latin of the messengers was not all that it might have been. Their main purpose, according to Guernes, who follows Grim in this, is to have two cardinals appointed to act as legates in the matter, whose decision should be final. This affords the poet the opportunity to attack the cardinals, refer to the cunning of the English king, and praise the pope for his sagacity and firmness in this matter. (He was not always to be credited with such qualities by the poet, as we shall see):

Li reis ert riches huem, sages e de grant art;
 Sout bien que chardenal sunt pernant e lumbart;
 Coveitus sunt d'aveir plus que vilain d'essart.
 Li reis ad dous privez, Screl e dan Blanchart:

Tost funt del buen malvais e del hardi cuart.
 Ne porent l'apostolie par engin deceveir.
 Il lur ad respundu cum huem de grant saveir:
 "Tel poesté ne puet nuls chardenaus aveir.
 Par mei n'avra nul d'els de desraisun poeir;
 En poesté de pape ne voil nul aseer."

(Lines 2281-2290)

The Latin author knows nothing of the poor Latin of some of the messengers, nor does he imply that King Henry may try to use silver and gold to achieve his ends. Guernes is far more explicit than Grim in stating how Henry, or his embassy on his behalf, might seek to influence developments in his favour. This allows the poet to contrast the sagacity and honesty of the pope in this instance with the alleged rapacity of the cardinals. Guernes' implied knowledge of such tacit activities allows him to show the archbishop's enemies in a very poor light. It is worth noting that Guernes never implies that Louis VII may have hidden political motives in harbouring Becket. He never seeks to probe Louis' actions beyond their face value when, as is usually the case, they favour Becket's cause.

Guernes goes on to inform his audience of another incident at the papal court, whereby the pope was almost induced to grant a legation to Archbishop Roger of York, but is dissuaded from this purpose by Renaud FilsJoscelin, who seems to have played an equivocal role in the affair. The whole passage is rather

obscure, and seems to have little purpose beyond an attempt at historical completeness in the matter of the pope's refusal to countenance any of the requests of the king's party.²⁴

Thus the king's envoys departed empty-handed, and four days later Becket arrived at the papal court. We learn that his reception, before he sees the pope himself, is cool, since Henry's embassy, otherwise fruitless, seems to have made most at the courtway of supporting his opponent. Coming before the pope, Becket offers, instead of the customary gift, only the copy of the chirograph given to him at Clarendon. Both William of Canterbury and Edward Grim say in their Vitae at this stage that Becket attempted to resign the archbishopric into the hands of the pope; William does not actually tell us the outcome of this incident, although we gather that the pope did not sanction his resignation; here, however, is Grim's version of the incident:

"Et ut mihi pro certo dictum est, jus archipraesulatus sui in manu domini papae resignans expostulavit ut aliquem doctiorem et fortiorem de Anglorum ecclesia in eorum metropoli episcopum constitueret cardinalem. Sanctus autem papa elevans filium amplexatur, osculatur, lacrymas lacrymis immiscens, et Deo gratias referens, quod virum tam humilem spiritu, pastorem tam sollicitum in salute ovium, advocatum tam constantem in causa, imo in multis causis, Dei invenisset. Dignitatem ergo, quam refutaverat, quia neminem ad hoc onus fortiorem esse cognoscebat, dominus papa reddendam esse decrevit, renitenti etiam et invito."

(Grim, ch.53, p.403)

It is dangerous to argue very forcibly or very often about an author's intentions ex omissione. We have seen that much of Guernes' material comes from Grim, but this is only the major of several sources, and once the poet has to handle more than one a degree of omission is inevitable, given that his purpose was something more than collation, or an expansion of one particular source; therefore, in many cases, details omitted by the poet may be omitted for purely physical reasons, and in the present study attention has been given only to such omissions as are striking or surprising. It is not perhaps unjust to judge that this omission is deliberate, as opposed to casual; the detail of Becket's attempt to resign the archbishopric is, after all, potentially important and significant. Grim tells us that he was reinstated by the pope because he was the man best equipped for the position; effectively, all doubts about the validity of his election in 1162 are removed, but not before Becket, to appearances at any rate, has acknowledged his unsuitability. As it has not been in Guernes' nature to suppress details which do not necessarily increase the archbishop's stature in our eyes, it may be safe to enquire whether there might be some other reason for this omission. Guernes used both the passage immediately preceding and the one immediately following the relevant passage in Grim, so we may presume that he did not overlook it. The most likely explanation seems to me to be that, having noted that Grim introduced the passage ut mihi pro certo dictum est, he was not satisfied that the information was well enough substantiated, and being unable to find any firmer authority for this evidence

than those before him, he did not include it in his account. If this is so, it suggests that he required a considerable degree of historical authentication for his material, especially in such circumstances as these. This would not be the first occasion on which he omitted material for which Grim had not claimed complete responsibility.²⁵

Becket, falling at the pope's feet, is given leave to read out the customs; he is continually interrupted by the Cardinal William of Pavia, in particular, who, leaning towards the king's side in the conflict, tried to defeat or deter the primate by close reasoning. But the latter, like Solomon, we are told, in his wisdom, was not to be beaten in this way, and, after half a day of such wrangling, he proceeded to read aloud the customs as contained in the chirograph (returned to him no doubt for the purpose). We see that the pope is portrayed as being favourably disposed towards the archbishop in this matter, and is minded to view the constitutions in much the same light as Becket does:

L'apostolies l'asiet juste lui erramment,
 E bien seit il venuz, ço li ad dit suvent;
 E mult li seit bon gré que si grant fais enprent
 Qu'encontre rei de terre saint'iglise defent.
 Par tut li aidera, la u raisuns consent.
 L'arcevesque Thomas sovent le mercia
 De sun bel acuilleit, e que tant l'onura.
 L'apostolies les leis vidunc escumenja
 E celui, qui qu'il seit, qui ja mais les tendra;
 E desuz anatheme a tuzdis conferma.

(Lines 2381-2390)

The pope's condemnation of the Constitutions of Clarendon is made to seem more sweeping here than it probably was.²⁶ Grim does not include anywhere in his vita's complete list of the constitutions, although he has given a summary of six of them whilst treating the Council of Clarendon; at a similar point in his account, William of Canterbury includes a full and accurate table of all sixteen, although three of them are not numbered.²⁷ Guernes did not recite the customs whilst dealing with developments at Clarendon, probably because he foresaw a more opportune moment to do so; Becket is now in the presence of the pope, and it is at this moment that Guernes chooses to translate the customs; this he does fully, on the whole accurately, and with his own comments attached to each article.²⁸ He simplifies the customs in some respects, but this is partly due no doubt to the exigencies of his medium. Partly his representation of the customs, which is more than a mere outline, must make allowance for the patience and comprehension of his public, whom he could not hope to be as intricately concerned with the finer points of the customs as he himself was. The customs are not devoid of interest for the layman, although they concern more nearly the cleric, but once the listener had grasped the basis and the nature of the conflict between the king and his archbishop, and the general direction of the customs, he may have understood as much about them as he wished to. Guernes finds fault with each of the sixteen constitutions in turn, and the nature of his censorship varies from religious

to political to moral; sometimes more than one of these elements are present in one of Guernes' judgments. It is not proposed to look at every one of the customs and what Guernes has to say about it in turn, but we shall take three examples to see how Guernes deals with them.

Here is Guernes' translation and judgment on the second of the constitutions, concerning the granting of churches within the fief of the king in perpetuity.²⁹

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

(Lines 2401-2405)

Guernes' concise translation of the custom is followed by an ironic appraisal of the king's position relative to his kingdom, from which he shows us how, logically, he can gain control over churches within his fief, and, by extension and by implication, of the whole church.

The first part of the twelfth constitution deals with the question of vacant priories, abbeys and bishoprics, and what should happen to the revenue from them; here is what Guernes tells us about this:

Se delivrast el regne nuls lius, cum eveschiez,
 Priorez, abeie u nuls arceveschiez,
 Li reis en saisireit les rentes e les fiez;
 Les espleiz en avreit e tendreit en ses giez,
 Tresque li lius sereit de pastur conseilliez.

- Jo ving en plusurs lius que li reis out saisiz:
 N'i esteit nuls des hostes ne povres recueilliz;
 Jo fui defors la porte del portier escundiz;
 Carité n'i fu pas, c'entendi a ses diz.
 Li reis prist tut fors tant dunt li lius ert furniz.

(Lines 2486-2495)

He goes on to attack the conduct of those involved, and the blame for his personal misfortunes redounds ultimately no doubt to the king and his customs - even when these customs have not yet been put into practice. He evidently feels that the involvement of the laity in ecclesiastical affairs can only be gravely detrimental, as well as unjust.

Thirdly, Guernes objects to the last of the proposed constitutions, whereby the sons of villeins ought not to be ordained without the consent of the lord on whose land they were known to have been born:

Fiz a vilain ne fust en nul liu ordenez
 Senz l'asens sun seignur, de qui terre il fust nez.
 - E Deus a sun servise nus ad tuz apelez!
 Mielz valt fiz a vilain qui est prouz e senez,
 Que ne fait gentilz hum failliz e debutez.

(Lines 2541-2545)

This is a moral condemnation of a proposal which seems to be aimed at perpetuating the class distinctions which existed in Henry's time. It would not necessarily be seen in that light at the time, but Guernes objects to the implications of such a system. His audience might appreciate such a defence of the poor.

Not one of the customs is passed over without comment, whether of the terse nature of the judgment on the contentious third custom, that of the traditio curiae, of which Guernes says
 (Line 2410)
a tort deit um perir douz feiz d'un seul mesfeit, which is the objection taken from the bible (Nahum 1:9) and used by Becket and others against the king; or whether he objects at greater length, sometimes with irony, to the heights to which Henry seems to be trying to raise his own jurisdiction, and the injustices which this causes.

The pope, Guernes tells us, was no less stringent in his judgment on the proposed constitutions; he condemned them, and Guernes takes this opportunity to praise the archbishop for his opposition:

As fous e as feluns i out plasible lei.
 Contredire la deit chascuns hum qui ad fei,
 Car par tut desplaiseit al celestien rei.
 Sun champion en ad mult eshaucié, ço vei,
 Qui enprist la bataille pur vaintre cel desrei.

(Lines 2551-2555)

Here we have a picture of Becket in battle, fighting as he did at Clarendon to uphold the cause he believed in; but he is fighting, we are now told, not specifically for the Church or for the clerks, but for his celestien rei,
 (Line 2553)
 which raises the archbishop off the purely human level.

We now learn that the pope commends the archbishop to the care of Guichard, abbot of Pontigny. The poet goes on to say that he has digressed, but that it is no part of his

(Line 2562)

purpose to fere corruptiuna. He is evidently mindful of his pledge to be truthful, and his awareness of the difficulties created by the digression testify to this, as much as the digression itself does to his wish for completeness. Even if we wish to dismiss this as no more than a platitude, we might care to wonder why the poet should feel the need to make the assertion which he does at this stage.

Henry tried to prevent Becket's escape, but in vain; God helped Becket, but Guernes does not attach too great importance to this; Henry, his pride no doubt wounded, lashed out angrily, in a gesture of revenge, against all those who might be associated with the archbishop's cause:

Quant ot li reis Henris l'arcevesque s'en fuit,
 Durement s'en marri, e si conseilhier tuit.
 Tuz les porz funt guaitier e de jur e de nuit,
 Qu'il n'i puisse passer od plain chalant n'od vuit.
 Mais pur neent le fait, car Deus l'en ad conduit.
 Quant nel poent trover en trestut' Engleterre,
 Ne trover nel purrunt, s'a Sanz ne l'augent querre,
 Sun mautalent e s'ire li reis mustre e desserre.
 As parenz saint Thomas ad prise si grant guerre
 Que tuz les fist chacier hors de tut sa terre.

(Lines 2566-2575)

The picture of Becket's people being forced from their homes and the archbishopric being handed over to the care of Randolph de Broc is a pitiful one, but our pity is soon

extended to the archbishop himself, when he is informed of what has happened. Although he takes the news in a piously philosophical and stoic way, the king's cruelty is soon reflected upon him, and affects him:

Ne pout en lui diables de nule part entrer.
 Fait l'out de grant richesce e del país jeter;
 Par sa char le voleit e par sun sanc trubler:
 Par nul ennui ne pout sun esperit muer.
 Tut le mal qu'il suffri ne vus puet nuls mustrer.
 Quant li sainz veit venir les suens a lui fuitiz,
 E les enfanchunetz pendre as meres as piz,
 E que lui e les suens aveit li reis proscriz,
 Mielz volsist estre morz, mult fort est amatiz.
 Mais en Deu prent confort e es devins escriz.

(Lines 2606-2615)

Thus the king's viciousness acts upon the archbishop, even at a great distance. Although we see the misfortunes of those whom Henry has exiled, it is, not unnaturally, the feelings of Becket himself on which the poet concentrates the attention of his public. We learn that he took comfort in the scriptures; Guernes borrows from Grim the example of the exile of Abraham, but perhaps it is significant of the poet's intentions here, that, having taken his lead from Grim, he goes on to quote two more biblical instances from which the archbishop is supposed to have taken comfort; these are the selling of Joseph by his brothers into Egypt, and the flight of Joseph and Mary into Egypt to save the infant Jesus from the

cruelty of Herod; it is rare that Guernes shows more willingness to use biblical parallels than his Latin sources, as we have seen already, and it is difficult to see how Guernes could have discovered what thoughts were in Becket's mind at this time. He obviously felt justified by the circumstances in adducing the examples he does to represent the archbishop's frame of mind at this time to his audience. Despite the help of King Louis and the French barons, Becket was still oppressed by the measures taken by Henry against him.

Guernes now summarizes new measures taken by King Henry designed to injure the archbishop's cause, measures which were drawn up at Clarendon and which were designed more specifically than the original Constitutions of Clarendon to deal with the problems created by Becket's opposition; they forbade receipt of letters from Becket or the pope, appeals to either the pope or the archbishop, and imposed such other strict controls as the detention of anyone in orders entering England from the continent, and his subsequent extradition if he should be found lacking the necessary papers from the king.³⁰ Having summarized them, Guernes proceeds to translate them more precisely, although he first inserts an incident, which is to be found only in FitzStephen among the Latin biographies; this concerns Roger Bishop of Worcester, who was the only one of the bishops to obey the primate and disobey the king, by travelling to the continent to see the archbishop. Guernes seems to exaggerate the extent of the exile undergone by Roger.³¹

Although Guernes does not approve of the new customs, he does not comment on them as fully or as critically as was the case with the first set of customs. It is true that the later measures dealt much more with questions of procedure than with the actual rights of the Church, but they still involved great inconvenience and danger to those in orders (although nowhere do they threaten death, as Guernes says they do). Perhaps he felt that his audience had understood the inherent message from the first exposition in his poem; also their bearing on Becket himself is only indirect; when Becket's followers were exiled, this was reflected on Becket, and we were shown his sorrow; on this occasion, we are told of the weakness of the bishops, who are cowed into acquiescence to the king's wishes, if not into explicit agreement. Guernes also takes the opportunity to disparage Roger of York, stating, in lines 2652-2653, that he has so much money on his side that Rome may be said to have shifted to York.

Guernes goes on to lament the predicament of the Church as it suffers through Henry's actions. It is noticeable that the poet makes mention of Becket here, not merely implicating him in the sufferings of the Church, but on this occasion demonstrating the extent of his self-sacrifice. We observe the troubles of the Church itself and the sufferings of Becket on behalf of his Church:

-Veez cum grant dolur, quel mort e quel juise
 Suffreit a icel tens la sainte mere iglise:
 Que sa dreiture faire n'osout ne sa justise;
 E s'ele le fesist, la venjance en fust prise.
 Pur les dreiz sa mere a li fiz sa teste mise.-

(Lines 2721-2725)

Strictly speaking, Becket can only imagine and lament the sufferings of the Church at this time; it is not he who has directly to experience them; but he is identified with them very closely, so that they are reflected in him. It goes without saying that there is no suggestion of Becket's direct responsibility for these troubles on the part of the poet at this stage; we shall see later that Becket himself is reported as expressing feelings similar to those of responsibility in this matter.

Before we leave the issue of the new constitutions, we should look closely at one of them, namely that in which Guernes discusses the issue of the destination of Saint Peter's Pence. Guernes actually states that to his mind the king must have it! However, rather than for once showing King Henry to be in the right, Guernes is employing a heavy irony here; the king is currently acting as if he had, in addition to his own powers, all the powers of a pope, a legate and an archbishop - thus the Church could in no way match his claim to Saint Peter's Pence. For once, Guernes is straying from his aim to be fair and truthful, but only in order to achieve his ironical effect.³²

If we wish for evidence of the difficulties and dangers of an author using more than one source, we may find it in the history of the coronation of Young Henry, Henry II's eldest surviving son, as King of England. Guernes has no reason to wish to relate this event so long before it actually took place, and one of his written sources, William of Canterbury, tells us about it at the appropriate time. But Guernes has been following Grim more than William, as he tends to throughout his Vie, and overlooks William's account and follows Grim,

who has gravely misplaced this important incident.

In its present position in Guernes' account it serves as a preface for the letters which passed between the various parties and the archbishop, and which Guernes is shortly to relate, and reveals the great distance between the position of the archbishop and, seemingly, the rest of the English clergy. But such was not its true historical purpose, or effect.³³ It is perhaps improbable that Guernes should have been aware of the true timing of the coronation, and yet, in following Grim, not noticed the mistake he was making; we must conclude that he did not know when the coronation had taken place. This mistake also suggests that he did not always check his sources against oral accounts; perhaps he did so only when he felt, or was made to suspect, a degree of doubt or a lack of authentication in his major written sources. We have seen already that sometimes, when he is in doubt about the authenticity of his written sources, he apparently feels it necessary to omit the material in question. But in this instance he evidently places an exclusive and implicit trust in Grim's knowledge of the history of his own country; I can offer no plausible explanation as to why Guernes should ignore William's evidence on this matter, beyond pointing out that in William's account the details are given between various letters which Guernes does not take from William.

Having told us, fairly briefly, of the coronation, Guernes goes on to attack the prelates who perpetrated this

injury to the dignity of the see of Canterbury. We next learn of exchanges of letters between Becket and various other parties. The three prelates principally concerned in the coronation of young Henry were the fause trinité,^(Line 2773) of Gilbert Foliot, Jocelin of Bohun and Roger de Pont l'Évêque, and now we learn that they are doing all in their power to uphold the king's cause and defeat the archbishop; they write to him, informing him he is in the wrong in the matter of the king's customs, and that he should obey his temporal master. Guernes begins this section of his poem with a summary of letters exchanged between the archbishop and the other bishops, before going on to give a translation of some of the correspondence which he must consider to be most important. It is not possible to say which letters Guernes claims to be representing here; he makes no direct references to the texts at this point. He seems, however, to take the ideas which may be found in the letter "Quae vestro, pater," written by the English clergy to Becket in 1166, a letter which he subsequently translates. He takes in particular the salient idea of the relationship between Church and State, and develops the theme of the two swords. In doing this, he does tend to give a rather simplistic view of the case against the archbishop, which he delights, no doubt, in attacking.³⁴ He returns to the problem of the two swords, and tells us that the archbishop, inspired by God, replied in all humility to the objections presented to him by his colleagues. This part of Guernes'

poem has no direct parallel in any of his written sources, and it is true to say that he has reported what must have been the substance of Becket's thoughts and replies in such a way that the views seem to be his own as much as the archbishop's; we are left in no doubt as to where Guernes' sympathies lie; he does not emphasise that these are the thoughts of Becket, but presents them initially in that fashion, and then concentrates on expounding them so that he might convince his public of their validity:

Humblement respundeit li sainz a lur escriz,
 E par les escriptures confermout tuz ses diz.
 Ne pot estre en nul liu pur els tuz contrediz.
 Herbergiez ert en lui pur veir sainz Esperiz,
 Qui dedenz lui parlout e par qui il ert fiz.
 As terriens seignurs deit hum bien obeir,
 Tant cum al siecle apent; mais s'il volent tolir
 A saint'iglise rien, ne lur deit hum suffrir.
 E se l'um les esparne, qu'um nes voille ferir,
 Quant Deus revoldra bien, ne li purrunt guenchir.
 Li prelat sunt serf. Deu, li reis les deit cherir;
 E il sunt chiés des reis, li reis lur deit flechir.
 Deus est chiés des prelaz; pur sa lei maintenir
 Devreient il estendre les cols, prez de murir:
 Deus suffri mort en cruiz pur s'iglise franchir.
 De Deu tienent li rei, de sainte mere iglise:
 A li e as suens deivent e honor e servise,
 Car de li unt il lei e la corune prise;
 Ele deit bien avoir, e tuit li suen, franchise,
 Quant par sa mort li ad Nostre Sire conquise.

(Lines 2796-2815)

As was the case with Guernes' discussion of the defence of the clergy after the Council of Clarendon, we can see the need of the poet to justify the argument per se. He does tell us that Becket is directed by the Holy Spirit, but this fact is not insisted upon in justifying the line of argument; and, as was the case before, the opposite side of the argument is not explained to the reader or the audience in any great detail. We see not a picture of persecution so much as an exposition of what amounts to a political theory, which the poet wishes to prove as much as did the archbishop himself.

To this end the poet includes in his work a translation of a letter in which the archbishop demonstrates to the king the superiority of spiritual power over temporal power; this is the letter "Expectans exspectavi", in which the king is exhorted to repent, and is shown numerous biblical precedents of royal intransigence and opposition to the will of God, as embodied in the ecclesiastical powers, and the punishments which befell those who resisted or defied them in this way. Becket quotes among his examples the idolatrous king Ahaz, the sacrilegious Uzziah, and warns the king against incurring the retribution exacted on them by the Lord, and King David, who was not afraid to admit his guilt and confess before Nathan to receive absolution.³⁵ Becket reminds the king that royal power is bestowed upon him by divine grace, and that he should be wary of forgetting this fact. The crux of Becket's argument is contained in the following lines of Guernes' translation:

"Dous choses a el mund par quei est governez:
 Des reis e des evesques la sainte poestez.
 Quant pur jugier sera tuz li munz assemblez,
 Li prelat respundrunt pur les reis corunez.
 Tant est greindre lur fais e plus pesant asez.
 Mult des evesques firent jadis escumengier
 Reis e enpereurs e d'iglise chacier:
 L'empeur Archadie fist iglise voidier
 Innocenz l'apostolie, nel volt pur li laissier,
 Pur ço que saint Cristone suffri a essillier.

(Lines 2991-3000)

If we compare this passage with the text of the original letter,³⁶ we can see how closely Guernes has kept to it in his efforts to render the meaning:

" Duo quippe sunt quibus principaliter regitur mundus, auctoritas sacra pontificum et regalis potestas. In quibus tanto gravius est pondus sacerdotum, quanto et de ipsis regibus in divino sunt reddituri examine rationem. Nosse certe debueratis ex illorum vos debere pendere iudicio, non illos ad vestram posse redigi voluntatem. Plurimi namque pontificum, alii reges, alii imperatores excommunicaverunt. Et si speciale aliquid de personis principum inquiratis, beatus Innocentius Arcadium imperatorem excommunicavit, quia consensit sanctum Joannem Chrysostomum a sua sede expelli."³⁷

Becket has found his examples in Gratian's Decretum, and used them in his case against King Henry. Guernes, feeling

that all the examples adduced by the archbishop are justified, produces them all accurately in his translation. None of the Latin biographers has reproduced this letter in his Vita; we have seen its relevance to Guernes in his version.

The next letter which Guernes translates is Becket's letter to King Henry "Desiderio desideravi". Again the rendering of the Latin is an attempt at great accuracy; the text appears in Grim's account, albeit at a later stage in the proceedings, but obviously there is the problem of fidelity for the author writing in the vernacular, especially when this involves the rendering of the meaning in verse. Guernes' priority is to give us as faithful an equivalent of the original as is possible. The message of this letter is not dissimilar to that of the previous one; the king is again told of the superiority of the sacerdotium to the regnum, but more briefly and with less lengthy quotation of biblical or historical authorities than was the case in "Exspectans expectavi". He is also reminded of the vows he took upon his coronation, and warned forcibly as to the danger to his soul from God's vengeance should he not alter his attitude towards the Church. Becket justifies his reproaches in the following manner, which adequately reflects his interpretation of the relative positions of the regnum and the sacerdotium:

"Pur treis choses pur vus, que vus voil denuncier,
 D'od vus parler eü ai mult grant desirier:
 Mes sire estes, dei vus e voil vus conseilier;
 Mes reis estes, pur ço vus dei aveir mult chier;
 Mes fiz estes en Deu, si vus dei chastier."

(Lines 3066-3070)

If we look again at the letter in its original form, we shall see how Guernes is striving for an accurate translation into French:

"Propter vos ex tribus causis: tum quia dominus meus estis, tum quia rex meus, tum quia filius meus spiritualis. Eo quod dominus, debeo vobis et offero consilium meum et obsequium, quodcumque debet episcopus domino secundum honorem Dei et sanctae ecclesiae. Eo quod rex, teneor ad reverentiam vobis et commonitionem. Eo quod filius, officii ratione ad castigationem teneor et coercionem."³⁸

Becket reiterates his view of the Church's position relative to the State:

"En dous ordres de gent est faite saint'iglise:
 Del pueple e del clergie est e faite e asise,
 E per dreit aunie est en ceste divise.
 La cure unt li prelat de la part Deu conquise,
 Qui a salu des anemes seit e traitie e prise.
 " E Deus dist a saint Piere e as clers, bien le sai:
 " Tu ies Pieres, e sur ceste pierre ferai
 M'iglise, e ma maisun i edefierai,
 E les portes d'enfer par li depecerai."
 Ceste poeste unt li clerc, nient li lai.
 " Al pueple sunt li rei e l'autre baronie
 Qui les lais unt suz els e en lur mainburnie,
 E les leis seculers e poeste saisie.
 Mais si deivent traitier ço qu'il unt en baillie
 Que saint'iglise seit tut' en pais aunie.

" E lur poesté prennent li rei de saint'iglise;
 Mais el n'a pas la sue de nul de voz reis prise
 Fors de Deu, sun espus, qui li aveit conquise.
 Sur les prelaz pur ço n'avez pas comandise
 De faire u de laissier la clergille justise.

(Lines 3111-3130)

This again is a faithful rendering of the Latin of Becket's letter.

Guernes now goes on to give us, in translation, the exchange of letters between Becket and the English clergy. He begins with the letter from the latter, which, we are told, was written on behalf of the English bishops as a whole, but in reality was by Gilbert Foliot, who, however, put no names to it. This little piece of information is only to be found in Guernes' account, and we could only guess at its source. It is a strange detail to pass on at this stage, but it evidently does not predispose the audience to a favourable reception of the contents of the letter, which is known as "Quae vestro, pater"³⁹. In it, Becket is exhorted to take a more moderate, conciliatory, compromising line, to prevent the Church being more severely aggravated and harmed by the consequences of the conflict; to be reconciled to the king; to absolve those whom, we learn now for the first time, he has excommunicated; and to inform him of the appeals made by the bishops to the pope against Becket. Becket's reply addressed to Foliot⁴⁰, "Mirandum et vehementer stupendum", carefully answers and refutes all the points made in the first letter, and reaffirms the

position which he has taken up, denying that he owes any of his advancement to the king, and that he is therefore not ungrateful in his attitude. He accuses the bishops, as he himself had been accused, of being insensitive and inattentive to the cause of the Church which they should be protecting. The reason for the inclusion and juxtaposition of the two letters is clear. Guernes wishes to demonstrate beyond all doubt that the archbishop is justified in his stance, that his case is beyond reproach, and that all such criticisms therefore can be satisfactorily countered. This is virtually a political justification of his argument. Guernes translates the two letters more fully than Edward Grim, who gives briefer versions of both of them. If we remember also Guernes' liking for completeness, we shall see why his audience is subjected to the translation of these letters in an almost exhaustive form.

Thus Guernes has translated four letters, the first two of which give a detailed account of Becket's case and stance, and the fourth of which refutes criticisms made of him in the third. The author's choice is of course limited by what resources he may have available to him in the form of relevant correspondence, but he gives no consideration to other letters which he could have found in the biographies of Grim and William of Canterbury. His selection of these four letters seems calculated to give an exposition of the archbishop's position, to justify that position by showing the validity of his case, and also of his cause, and to show that counter-arguments can be refuted. It is a political justification of the cause of the Church as well as a defence of Becket's championship of it;

this we may see from Guernes' concluding remarks on the subject:

Tels letres enveierent al saint humme ultre mer

Li prelat qui deveient saint'iglise tenses.

Les custumes del regne voleient alever

En sainte mere iglise. Mais li saintisme ber

S'en combati adès, e pur li delivrer.

Custume n'est pas dreiz, bien le poèz veir.

Kar chascuns riches hum qui Deu ne volt cremeir,

Alieve sur sa gent custume a sun voleir.

Une custume ad ci, la en vei altre aveir.

Mais Deus n'aime custume, mes fundement de veir.

(Lines 3566-3575)

Before he finally leaves the subjects of the customs in this section, Guernes makes a comment upon the various old customs, such as those of Henry I, and those of William II, who in particular, was punished by God for his temerity in his conduct towards the Church; Guernes' expression is particularly strong here, for he tells us categorically of William Rufus that li cors en est purriz e l'aneme est en turment.¹ Even Henry I, for all his extra-marital activities and brutality in dealing with the clergy, is not assigned to his fate with so much emphasis; Guernes' message, which seems to be an original one, seems to be that Henry II will have to search very hard to find what may be termed good customs upon which to base these he now wishes to enforce; Guernes' source of inspiration may have been some comment passed at Canterbury, or it may have been an original reflection

on his part, in which case his knowledge of the history of England at the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth centuries, at least in its broader outlines, seems to have been better than his knowledge, or at least chronology, of recent events in England.

At last Guernes brings us back to the figure of the archbishop himself, and his life at Pontigny. In contrast to the discussions and debates on state and ecclesiastical policy which the poet has been relating, we are now given a very austere picture of the physical deprivations willingly undergone by Becket:

Dous anz a Punteigni li sainz hum sujorna.
 Mais a clerc ne a lai sun estre ne mastra;
 Neis a ses privez, quanque pout, se cela.
 Les eises de sun cors fu^l e esluigna,
 E el servise Deu jor e nuit se pena.
 Dunc comença sun cors durement a grever
 E les grosses viandes, chous e nes, a user;
 E les bons mes se fist priveement embler,
 E sis faiseit as povres en la vile porter.
 Car si clerc l'en volsissent, sel seüssent, bläsmar.
 Mult sovent le blasmeient que tel vie meneit;
 Kar il ert granment fiebles e trop se destraigneit.

(Lines 3611 - 3622)

We learn of his cold baths, his trouble with his cheek; the contrast is sharp, and stark; no doubt it was intended to be; in much mediaeval hagiography, there is a detailed account of the physical tortures undergone by the martyrs

in their persecutions before they were finally put to death.⁴¹ Apart from the relation of his murder in the cathedral, Becket's history contains no exact equivalent to this sequence of events. The need for some such parallel may have existed, consciously or unconsciously in his biographers, as indeed it seems to have existed in some form in the man himself, and the self-imposition of his sufferings goes some way towards creating a comparable picture of the archbishop. This is not to say that Guernes necessarily rationalized the problem in this way; indeed, in scheme, and to a considerable extent in tone also, he is following the account of Edward Grim,⁴² but during the relation of Becket's stay at Pontigny and Sens, we see a picture of the man which is intended more than anything which has gone before to invoke our amazement and pity for Becket; to this end we are told of not only his self-imposed sufferings, but also of miraculous healings effected by him, and his visions, information which has no direct connection or relevance to the political and ecclesiastical discussions which have immediately preceded it. We have been convinced of the validity and justice of his cause; the audience must now be convinced of the man's sanctity, and before he is put to death.

Accordingly, Guernes tells us of a vision which came to Becket whilst he was at Pontigny; once when he was deep in prayer, he saw a vision in which, opposed by all at the papal court, with the exception of the pope, who was helpless in the face of so many, he is finally killed by assassins who remove the crown off his head with their swords.⁴³ Guernes, finding

the incident in Grim, concludes bien li ad Deus pramis qu'il
 (Lines 3649-3650)
sereit en sa cause pur saint'iglise ocis^.

Similarly, he finds in an anonymous Passio attributed to Grim the story of a lay brother who was told by the Virgin Mary to go to the archbishop who could cure him; which was done successfully.⁴⁴ Guernes concludes, after this incident:

Mulz malades quari de sun relief demaine.

La fille a un riche humme en devint tute saine,

Qui out esté fievrose mainte lunge semaine.

N'out el país nul humme si plain de fievre vaine,

Par sun relief n'eüst santé tute certaine.

(Lines 3671-3675)

Although Guernes does not imitate all the material available in this fragment, and is rather more circumspect in his treatment of it (for instance, he does not tell us precisely that the lay brother vomited cum immensa sanie undecim ranulas), we can sense that he is being less critical of his sources here than he was of such accounts of manifestations of sanctity ~~than he was~~ in earlier parts of the poem. Yet Becket's sufferings are self-imposed, just as his change in his mode of life was at first self-imposed; but in the meantime, as we have seen, Guernes has on several subsequent occasions suggested that Becket was changed, and that he was filled with the Holy Spirit. This is perhaps less a conscious change on Guernes' part than a failure to apply, in the face of so much evidence of the archbishop's sanctity, quite the same critical

spirit which he displayed earlier, although, as has been stated, his account is still rather less dramatic and miraculous than are his sources.

Meanwhile, King Henry, who, we are reminded, mult le het,
(Line 3698)
ne l'ad mis en obliA, determines to dislodge Becket from Pontigny, when he has been there two years, and to this end threatens action against the Cistercian order in England, should its French counterpart continue to protect and provide for Becket. When Becket learns of this he decides to leave of his own volition, despite certain attempts, notably by the abbot, to prevent this; tearfully, they bid him farewell, but Henry's aims have been thwarted, for King Louis renews his offer to Becket to give him an alternative home and provision in his exile; Becket accepts, and so transfers to Saint Columba at Sens for the duration of his exile. Henry now tries to trick Louis by a number of means, all of which fail.

Guernes relates the vision referred to already, but prefaces it with another which is even more explicit:

Par un jur quant mult fu penez en oreisun
E par devant l'autel jut en affliction,
Cum il esteit a us, od grant devotium,
S'aparut Deus a lui en veire mustreisun,
Si l'apela dous feiz Thomas, par sun dreit nun.
"En tun sanc, fist li il, m'iglise eshauceras.
- Qui es, Sire, fait il, qui ci visité m'as?
- Jo sui Jesu, tis frere. Tu glorifieras
M'iglise par tun sanc, e eshaucié seras.
- Einsi iert a mun voil,"₃o respondi Thomas.

(Lines 3851-3860)

This incident is to be found in Grim's account chapter 67, and Guernes translates it very accurately, although he omits Grim's conclusion:

" Hoc ille non mediocriter animatus oraculo, magis de die in diem ad amorem coelestis patriae suspirabat, cupiens dissolvi et esse cum Christo. "

(Grim, ch.67, p.419)

Guernes concludes this section of his poem with an account some hundred lines long of the ordering of Becket's day at Sens.⁴⁵ Despite Becket's worthy attempts to keep his sufferings and privations secret, certain people were bound to get to know of them, and thus the knowledge was transmitted. Guernes follows Grim closely, although sometimes he includes details not to be found in Grim's account. The oral tradition at Canterbury would readily supply details on such a matter, although this is precisely the sort of material that oral transmission would very rapidly exaggerate and distort for purposes of edification and amazement. We hear of Becket's early rising to praise God, his private tears and scourgings, his dissimulation to prevent knowledge of his abstinence from becoming widespread, his prayers, his hair-shirt worn to aggravate his body, and we are even told that he flogged himself when all others, even his confessor Robert of Merton, had retired. He blames himself for the troubles which accrue. The whole picture, which doubtless contains much that is true, at least

in essence, before it might later become distorted, could only serve to awe and amaze the public, to bring them to revere the figure of the martyr; this is how Guernes' concludes his account:

Tele vie mena li sainz huem e suffri,
 N'a nul humme suz ciel nel mustra ne gehi,
 Fors a Brun sun vaslet, si cum dire l'oi,
 Qui ses haires lava e de ço le servi,
 E Robert sun proveire, qui les nuiz le bati.-

(Lines 3976-3980)

Such is Guernes' attempt to authenticate the edifying picture he has given; it echoes distantly the pitiful picture of Becket in flight from Northampton, and stands in strong contrast, intentionally so, to the political and ecclesiastical struggles and discussions which have come between the two. Whilst we may sense that Guernes is not willing to pass up the opportunity of showing his audience this pitiful picture of Becket in what is, in a physical sense at least, self-imposed adversity, and is perhaps less critical of his sources than he has shown himself in the past, he does not openly invite admiration or reverence by means of panegyric; his tone here is only a little above the factual, as if he were still concerned with the veracity of what he is telling us; and the fact that he chooses this tone, which does not differ greatly from that of Edward Grim in this instance, in preference to any other, may in turn make us wonder whether the poet himself does not question the

value, if not the veracity, of the events which he is relating. We saw that, at the beginning of the relation of Becket's quarrel with the king, the poet did not explicitly comment upon the rights and wrongs of the situation, although it was not difficult to discover where his sympathies lay; in this instance, a similar show of restraint, at a time when the figure of the archbishop might be exalted, is if not remarkable, perhaps a testimony to the author's attempt to retain a degree of historical perspective at a time when, if edifying panegyric was his main motivating force, we might expect him to abandon his historical pretensions far more openly than is in fact the case, and indulge in panegyric with scant regard for historical authenticity. The reasons for this restraint may thus be twofold.

(iv) Conferences, conciliation, and the archbishop's return.

The picture of Becket's self-imposed sufferings during his exile, first at Pontigny and later at Sens, following contrastingly upon the account of the exchange of important letters, is ended as suddenly as it was begun; with no real attempt at transition or integration of this description into a chronological pattern of events, Guernes leaves this aspect of the archbishop's exile and turns to the problems which were raised by the attempts to reconcile Becket and King Henry. Guernes, having given a brief summary of Becket's tribulations, turns abruptly to the actions of the King of France at this time:

Mais li honurez reis de France, Loëwis,
 Endementieres s'est durement entremis
 Que il fesist le rei e saint Thomas amis.
 L'apostolies i ad sovent ses briefs tramis
 As concilies qu'il unt de l'acorde entre els pris.

(Lines 3981-3985)

Having told of Louis' intentions, and of the pope's frequent letters to the same end, Guernes goes on to record the series of meetings, some of unrelieved unproductivity, some exasperating, some hopeful, until through them some form of agreement is arrived at.

The first meeting which was proposed, according to Guernes, should have taken place at Pontoise; the poet tells us that when Henry learnt that the pope was to be present, he decided not to attend the meeting, and turned back. It is difficult to see where Guernes might have found any written evidence for this piece of information; there is no mention of such a meeting, or even the proposal of such a meeting; in any of his written sources. It is true that, as M. Walberg has pointed out,⁴⁶ in one of his letters Becket does refer to a meeting which was to have been held at the Cistercian monastery near Pontoise, between the pope and the King of France, and which seems to have proved abortive; also mention is made in FitzStephen's account of a much later occasion when Pontoise was to have been the venue.⁴⁷ But we may fairly doubt whether Guernes had direct access to either of these sources, and, even if he did, we could formulate at best an improbable solution to this problem. This would involve his lifting the reference out of its original

context, thus altering its purpose, and, if the source were FitzStephen here, it would have required a lack of care in chronology, which, although not unknown in Guernes,⁴⁸ is rarely a satisfactory solution of such problems in his vie. Moreover, FitzStephen makes no mention of the pope in this instance, Guernes' brevity and lack of precision here suggest an oral source of a vague and unrewarding nature, but he may have decided to include the material in a desire for completeness, or effect. Its content predisposes us against Henry. Had he had more details, Guernes would presumably have passed them on to us, despite the fact that this was the first of a series of unproductive and thus potentially rather uninteresting meetings, from the point of view of his audience. Guernes' purpose might have been modified by more facts. In an article which deals with the problems of the details of the meetings between the French and the English kings in the years 1164 - 1170, and in which, due to the variations offered by the French poem, special attention is paid to it, M. Louis Halphen shows that Guernes is not totally incorrect in telling us that Pontoise was the venue for a meeting which never in fact took place, for he finds a source which confirms the evidence given by Guernes here.⁴⁹ We may conclude, whatever the source of Guernes' material here, that he included it in a desire for completeness, with the possible qualification of the light in which it shows King Henry and the consequent effect, whereas a meeting which never took place, coming so early in the proceedings might easily be ignored by most other writers.

The second meeting took place, according to the French poet, at Nogent-le-Rotrou. Again the prime mover is said to be King Louis, who attempted to bring Becket and King Henry together in order to reconcile them. Henry, however, is not interested in such a proposal, although for no very clearly defined reason; he merely tells Louis that he does not wish to take the matter any further. Louis makes a reply which redounds to his and the archbishop's credit, and shows Henry to be making a mistake in taking this attitude:

" E jel larrai tresbien, fait Loewis li ber.

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

E de lui retenir sui je tut aaisiez:

Car de sun grant sens est mis regnes enhauciez,

Li vostres suffeitus e forment enpeirez:

Greignur mestier que jo certes en avriez."

(Lines 4000-4005)

Thus Henry's refusal to consider an accommodating solution concerning Becket is shown to affect his whole kingdom adversely. Louis goes on to tell the archbishop that he can have no confidence in bringing about a reconciliation, owing to the intransigence and lack of sense shown by the King of England, and he concludes by reaffirming his beneficence and goodwill towards Becket. The passage contrasts in a strong manner the good nature of li gentilz reis de France and the obstinacy and ill-temper of his English counterpart, as well as emphasizing the beneficial effects of Becket's residence in France; this is perhaps a political consideration which Louis

couches in more moral terms to discomfort Henry; Guernes, putting these words into the mouth of Louis, chooses to add no comment to them, feeling no doubt that none was needed. As the speech stands, the audience is struck most by the moral overtones, and might overlook the political aspects of the situation.

The source of this passage in Guernes' version remains unknown. M. Étienne, M. Walberg and M. Halphen alike fail to find any written source, although the last named does, with hesitation, bring forward evidence to suggest that there is some historical basis for Guernes' account of such a meeting.⁵⁰ On the evidence of the previous episode, it may be fair to suppose that the poet did have some oral source, at least, for his account. It is unlikely that he would choose to invent such a meeting, especially as he feels he can be precise as to its venue. Similarly, he may have learnt enough of the general purport of the exchanges which took place between the figures involved to construct a speech such as Louis might have delivered, if he were unable to convey his exact words, and we must concede that in all probability he could not. Thus Louis' message is relayed to us succinctly, and the poet no doubt allowed himself to show us the way in which Louis may have rebuked and criticized Henry, and to show the latter to be at fault. The message, for all its relative brevity, which may suggest to us that Guernes did not have a great deal of material on which to base the account which he gives here, is admirably clear and effective.

We may have here an example of the poet's using a little licence and controlled imagination, and we should admire the skill and success with which he applies them.

The third of the meetings reported to us by Guernes in this catalogue took place at Montmirail; M. Halphen⁵¹ and M. Walberg⁵², J.C. Robertson⁵³ and P.A. Brown⁵⁴ have all pointed out Guernes' error in stating that such a meeting took place, and the very fact that Guernes follows this account immediately with that of another meeting which, he alleges, took place soon afterwards at the same venue may be sufficient to arouse our suspicion. All four of the critics mentioned above agree in fact that the first of the 'Montmirail' meetings took place indeed at a spot between Trie and Gisors, which FitzStephen names as Plancas (Les Planches), and this is confirmed by the letters of Becket himself and John of Salisbury.⁵⁵ It is difficult to see how Guernes could have corrupted any of the written sources available to him in order to mistake both the venue and the identity of the two cardinals who were to help to effect the reconciliation.⁵⁶ We may presume a conflict between the written evidence and the oral accounts which he may have heard, but, as we have mentioned above, Guernes does make a number of demonstrable factual errors in this section of his poem. What is more interesting and more significant is the use to which he puts the account of Becket's vision, of which no written account occurs before that of Herbert of Bosham,⁵⁷ and which we must therefore ascribe to oral sources.

Guernes opens his account of the 'first meeting' by naming, incorrectly as we have seen, the two cardinals who were to be instrumental in the negotiations between king and archbishop; and although he states that they would have willingly deceived the archbishop, the king, it seems, is surprisingly ready to give way and concede to virtually anything that the archbishop wishes to demand:

A Muntmirail unt puis un parlement eü.
 Dui chardenal de Rume i sunt al rei venu:
 Vuillames de Pavie e dan Johans i fu
 De Naples, qui al rei se sunt del tut tenu,
 E l'arcevesque eüssent volontiers deceü.
 Li reis lur dist que tant se volt humilier
 Qu'il frea l'arcevesque quanqu'il voldrunt jugier,
 E quanque saint'iglise en voldra otrier,
 Se c'est que l'arcevesques s'i volsist apuier.
 "Si fera, funt li il; ço ne puet il laissier."

(Lines 4016-4025)

It seems that the king, prepared to give ground in this way, is facilitating a reconciliation with his exiled archbishop. Yet, as Guernes goes on to tell us, the series of interviews seeking a reconciliation are scarcely as yet under way. The curiosity of the audience is no doubt aroused as to what could have gone amiss on this occasion. Guernes, quoting as proof, either for accuracy or verisimilitude, the archbishop's (Line 4029) gent privee, tells us that the night before the meeting was due

to take place, Becket had a vision which foretold to him what would happen and what the outcome would be.⁵⁸ We saw at the beginning of the poem that Guernes was rather wary when discussing visions and assessing their validity as acceptable evidence in his work, omitting material for which he had written evidence in Grim's Vita, for example. But now, with Becket in adversity, exiled and oppressed, and paradoxically, faced with an offer from King Henry which it might be difficult for him reasonably to reject, Guernes is quicker to attest this vision in support of the archbishop. Indeed, Becket, to whom recently Guernes had referred as l'arcevesques^(Line 4024) becomes at this juncture saint Thomas^(Line 4027). This is perhaps more than a coincidence or a desire for variety or simply the demands of meter. It is part of the process of sanctification of Becket, which we have noted earlier in this chapter to have begun. It is very necessary to enable him to use the evidence of the vision in a convincing way. The citing of his followers as being apprised of this vision may serve to verify that Becket did in fact inform them of it; the saint Thomas helps to convince us of the archbishop's credibility in this matter.

Vis li fu qu'en un liu de li reis esteit.

Un mult bel hanap d'or, u doré, li offreit

Li reis, tut plain de vin, e beivre li roveit.

Il esguardout li vin: si truble le veeit

Que beivre ne l'osout ne prendre nel voleit.

Quant il ot esgardé le hanap tut entur

E vit le vin si truble qu'il en out grant hisdur,

Dous iraignes vit surdre des funz d'une tenur;
 Sur l'un ur s'asist l'une, e l'autre sur l'autre ur.
 "Ostez, fait il; ne voil beivre ceste peur."

(Lines 4031-4040)

The following morning Becket summoned his clerks, related the dream to them, and, in a manner rather reminiscent of Joseph's interpretations of the dreams of the baker and the butler and ultimately of Pharaoh himself when he was imprisoned in Egypt, explained the significance of his dream to them.⁵⁹ The golden drinking-cup offered to him by King Henry represented the seemingly fine offers which contained the cloudy wine, symbolic of Henry's fraud and trickery; the two spiders represented the two evil cardinals who wished to aid and abet in his deception. Guernes continues his poem after Becket's explanation in a striking and stark manner:

Quant il vint al concilie, les cardinals trova.
 Li reis dit qu'en ces dous volentiers se metra,
 E quanqu'il jugerunt volentiers ensiwra,
 E quanque saint'iglise esgarder en voldra.
 Il vit bien les engins e tresbien se guarda.

(Lines 4051-4055)

Thus Becket's subsequent refusal to enter into any negotiations until the king has made full restitution to himself and his followers concerning their possessions and their rights as they were when Henry banished them from England comes in Guernes' account to be not the stubborn and intransigent posture of a recalcitrant subject but the wise and careful action

of a pastor defending his rights and those of his flock, an action prompted by the direct inspiration of God Himself. Seen in this light, Becket's refusal to co-operate is not only understandable, it takes on the air of a prudent strategic success.

According to Guernes, the next meeting between Henry and Becket also took place at Montmirail. Although there is general agreement among the other biographers that such a meeting did in fact take place there, we find details in Guernes' account which are not to be found elsewhere. Some of his information may be derived directly or indirectly from the account of William of Canterbury,⁶⁰ but here again there are wide divergencies. The opening exchanges scarcely seem to have been auspicious:

Saint Thomas demandeit les dreiz de saint'iglise,
 Possessiun e rente que li reis en out prise;
 E li reis, la custume qui el regne iert asise:
 Ses costumes ne volt laissier en nule guise.
 Saint Thomas ne volt faire, ço dit, si grant mesprise.
 Tant alerent entr'els clerc e lai tute jur,
 Que li reis dit: ne quiert mes qu'il en ait honur;
 Face li ço que firent as suens si anceisur;

(Lines 4081-4088)

Indeed, the whole episode, with the messengers passing back and forth between the two men, the intransigence shown on both sides and the growing general hostility towards Becket, is strikingly reminiscent of the events which took place at

the Council of Northampton (see above, section (ii))

As on that occasion, however, Becket sinks to the depths of isolation and rejection in Guernes' account, only to be vindicated before the episode is closed. From Guernes' (Line 4077) approbation of Bernard de la Coudre, sainz hum de grant bunté, and Simon, prior of la Chartreuse de Mont-Dieu, huem de grant honeste, (Line 4078) who had been appointed by the pope to find a solution, we may deduce that Guernes thought that Becket may have trusted them, although their efforts, also mentioned by the poet, seem to have availed him little in this instance. Becket's reply to Henry's demand for unswerving observance of his customs, in the manner, as he says, of Anselm, is shown to be a model of prudence and reason:

ja Dammedeu ne place
 Que il deie tenir chose dunt rien ne sace;
 La u il firent bien, dreiz est que il le face,
 E la u il mesfirent n'en volt sivre lur trace;
 Car n'a en cest siecle humme a la feiz ne mesface.
 Sainz Pieres li apostles, que Deus tant honura
 Que en ciel e en terre poesté li dona,
 Jesu Crist sun seignur par treis feiz reneia.
 E ço ne fereit il pur quanqu'en cest mund a,
 Ne ja contre raisun custume ne tendra.

(Lines 4096-4105)

The king immediately accuses Becket of having no desire for a peaceful settlement, and all present seem to agree

that the archbishop is not being as reasonable and co-operative as his adversary:

"Seigneur, fait dunc li reis, il n'a cure de pais.
Veez cum jo li faz amur e grant relais ! "
Dunc unt tuit escrié l'arcevesque a un fais;
E cleric e lai li crient que trop esteit engreis.

(Lines 4112-4115)

The poet then gives us a picture of Becket praying in his isolation and despair:

Quant l'arcevesque veit que tuit li curent sure,
Nul ne s'en volt a lui apuier a cel' ure,
Del quer parfunt suspire e des oilz del chief plure,
E prie Jesu Crist, qui saint'iglise aüre,
Qu'il ne face tel plait dunt envers Deu encure.

(Lines 4116-4120)

Then, according to Guernes, Henry shows himself to be willing to allow the judgement of three French bishops, and to abide by their decision. We find no direct evidence of this in any of the other written sources, and we may assume its origins to be in the oral tradition at Canterbury.

Becket is agreeable, adding only 'sauf sun ordre', and of course this infuriates the king, who will not allow it. Despite

pressure from all present, Becket, again here li sainz

arcevesques, stands firm. The king, sensing sofisme e grant

engin, will not accept Becket's formula of salve la fei Deu,

and we are unmistakably reminded of the sequence of events

at the Council of Clarendon in 1164, the more so when Becket,

feeling the weight of opinion against him, gives way and grants the king's suggestion. But, according to Guernes, the matter was not to be so easily resolved:

Quant l'arcevesques out al rei tut otrié
 E se furent a ço d'ambes parz apuié,
 Dunc ad li arcevesques sun capel jus sachié,
 Li reis Henris, le suen; dunc se sunt aprescié,
 Qu'en pais s'entrebaissassent e en veire amistié.
 Fait dunc li arcevesque, qui Deus esteit mult pres:
 "Sire, a l'onur de Deu e la vostre vus bes."
 Fait dunc Gefrei Ridel: "Ci ad soffisme adès.
 - Veire, par les oilz Deu, fait il, n'a soing de pes."
 Dunc turna sun cheval, si s'en point esclès.

(Lines 4151-4160)

Whilst John of Salisbury's letter to the Bishop of Exeter⁶¹ uses the word sophismata, no other biographer puts these words into the mouth of Geoffrey Ridel; no doubt the oral tradition at Canterbury, having no reason to love Geoffrey, may have done so, and Guernes, for the same reason, feels able to accept this. We notice, as Becket is again apparently responsible for the rupture in negotiations, notwithstanding the part played by Geoffrey Ridel, that Guernes reminds us of Becket's sanctity: li arcevesques, qui Deus esteit mult pres (Line 4156). Although similar written accounts of this encounter may be found in other biographies and letters, none of them resemble that of Guernes in the points of detail; again the oral sources are probably responsible for much of the poet's

information here, but it is interesting and significant to note how he uses this material, which on first inspection seems to do little to recommend the archbishop's course of action to us.

First of all Guernes tells us how Becket is vilified and abandoned by laity and clergy alike, how the French accuse him of having flung the chance of peace to the winds for nothing, how they call him a wicked traitor. Becket, however, according to Guernes, interprets matters in a very different manner:

"Grant tort avez, fait il; jo vus tieng tuz pur orbs.
 De grant hunte nus a Damedeus wi estors,
 Apeler traïturs e malveis de noz cors;
 Relaissié nus en ad, e tut c'en a mis fors.
 "Or ne nus demande el mais qu'il en ait honur,
 Que tenum les custumes si cum nostre anceisur;
 E nus li graantames. Mes ja mais a nul jur
 N'i avendra pur humme. Merci al creatur
 Que sumes eschapé de si grant desonur !"

(Lines 4171-4180)

This forceful and apparently original account of Becket's reaction to the earlier criticism does much to refute the arguments catalogued against him; having, once again, shown Becket to be in a seemingly weak and vulnerable position, the poet shows his ability to turn the situation so that it reflects credit on the archbishop. We can find no exact parallel for this speech in any of the

other written sources, and the gist of the speech probably comes once again from the oral accounts at Canterbury, although, once again, we may admire how well Guernes is able to manipulate the material in Becket's defence; not that Guernes allows us to believe that the episode is closed. We have been shown how, according to the poet, Geoffrey Ridel had influenced the king and brought about, indirectly at least, the situation as it now is. Now we are shown how the king, having publicly praised Ridel for his advice, comes to realise soon afterwards the error he has made in rejecting Becket's offer of peace, and how he sends the Bishop of Poitiers after the archbishop in an effort to bring him back for an agreement to be reached. Guernes then gives us a rather picturesque account of the bishop's hasty pursuit of Becket, and his vain attempts to bring him back for a further conference:

L'evesque le siwi tut a col estendu;
 E quant il vint a lui, si li ad respundu
 Que ja mais a cel point u il l'orent eü
 Ne vendreit pur nul humme, car contre raisun fu.

(Lines 4212-4215)

Letters in the Materials, vol.VI 491-511, confirm this vain enterprise on the part of the Bishop of Poitiers, but hardly in such evocative terms. What is perhaps of greater interest than Guernes' sources for this information, which was again probably quite well known at Canterbury in the years

after Becket's death, is the poet's basic treatment of the whole Montmirail episode. After the passage quoted above, the poet passes on to discuss the conference at Montmartre, so that, in the version which has come down to us at least, the reasons for Becket's further change of heart are not given or discussed, but a new topic, reawakening the interest of the audience, is skilfully introduced; thus we have seen how the king is shown to regret what he considers an incorrect judgement, and must attempt to correct it, but now how Becket changes his mind yet again - at least we are not allowed to dwell upon it, so rapidly do we pass on to new material; but more than this, it is interesting to consider Guernes' treatment of that part of the proceedings where Becket alienates the opinion of the French. Guernes tells us how they vilified and abandoned the Archbishop; seemingly he has lost irrevocably their trust and support, only to convince them, and the audience of Guernes' poem, with a stirring speech, which, we may suppose, brought home to them the errors of their ways. If he is isolated, then it is in strength and the knowledge that he is right. Let us compare this with the account of William of Canterbury, who agrees with the French poet on the basic details, but on whom the latter evidently did not rely greatly either for the details which we find in his poem, nor, moreover, for the force with which he handles them:



" Secutusque regem Francorum per loca ad confabulandum more solito non habuit accessum. Nam abalienabatur interim rex ab eo, nondum intelligens inspirante Verbo praetextati verbi mysterium. Cumque compelleretur adhuc Thomas per episcopum Pictavensem oblatae paci stare, aperuit Dominus intellectum regis, et ait archiepiscopo, " Tu solus e nobis viam veritatis incedis. Nos omnes caligine caecitatis et seductionis involvimur. Ab hac die et deinceps tibi protectionis nostrae subsidia non deerunt."

(William of Canterbury ch.67, p.75)

In this account, it is at least implied that divine inspiration revealed the error of his ways to the French king, and the latter, having discovered this, makes a pious speech which reinforces the impression of the archbishop's sanctity and proximity to God. The implication is that the reader should be awestruck and inspired by the exceptional sanctity of the archbishop which elevates him above the plane of other men, rather than his unusual, but on a human level, more credible, qualities of courage and steadfastness which separate him from other men in Guernes' version.

The next conference to take place, according to Guernes, was held at Montmartre. Again it is the desire of King Louis of France to bring about a reconciliation which instigates developments. Indeed, it seems to be the persistence of Louis which wins from Henry the concessions which the latter makes; Becket is not directly involved for the moment, so

any progress is due to the offices of 'li buens reis de France', rather than any softening or reconsideration on the part of Henry:

Mais li reis d'Engleterre ne lur dist ço ne quei.
 Mais li buens reis de France ne l'en laissa pas kei;
 Dist lui qu'il se menout vers Deu a grant beslei,
 Quant a sun arcevesque ne porte amur ne fei.
 Tant li dist li bons reis e tant le bastuna,
 Que li reis d'Engleterre li dist e graanta
 Que de tute sa rente la meitié li rendra,
 E a lui e as suens, de quanque pris en a,
 E en la curt de Rume de l'altre se metra.

(Lines 4237-4245)

William of Canterbury also attributes the initiation of this conference to Louis, without however emphasising the degree of the French King's insistence. ("Ubi rogatus a rege Francorum et regis optimatibus apud Montem Martyrum...")⁶² Indeed, in the Latin account, Louis has immediately before this withdrawn his support from the Archbishop, only to restore it, as we have seen⁶³, following the events of the Montmirail Conference.

At all events, the prospects look good until Henry refuses to give Becket the kiss of peace, and although in Guernes' account the archbishop states that on a personal level the kiss of peace is relatively unimportant to him, the formality is necessary, and a decision is deferred to a further meeting.

The next meeting was due to take place at Fréteval, as Guernes now tells us, but before he goes on to discuss this, he returns to discuss the events of the evening which followed the meeting at Montmartre. As was the case after the meeting at Montmirail, Becket finds himself severely criticised by his own entourage for his intransigent stand; again he answers the charge in a manner which reveals his greater perspicacity, although no reason other than the evident mistrust of Henry is suggested:

"Maistre Guntier, fait il, vus desirez forment
 D'aler en Engleterre; ne m'en merveil neent.
 Mais n'i avrez esté, ço sachiez veirement,
 Quarante jurs entiers, tut adesseement,
 Que n'i voldriez estre pur cinc cenz mars d'argent."

(Lines 4276-4280)

No source can be found for this episode, and it does little beyond reminding us of the earlier Montmirail admonitions; it does perhaps give Becket a more active part in a meeting where most of the credit seems to have gone to Louis. It also, by the mention of Maître Gontier of Winchester, one of the archbishop's clerks, gives the poet the opportunity to introduce verisimilitude and to produce a witness for this information; presumably it was he who gave the poet this detail; (it may also be Maître Gontier who had knowledge of the messenger's name, Madoc, in line 4289, which likewise adds colour and verisimilitude, and which does not appear in other accounts.) It is such men who would have been in

a position to furnish aspiring biographers with a wealth of detail to add to the more famous episodes in the martyr's life, and Guernes would clearly welcome such assistance and material in his desire for completeness.

Before Guernes goes on to discuss the conference at Fréteval, he tells us of the exchange of letters between Becket and the pope, and the pope's letter to Henry, in which the pope instructs both parties to seek the means of reconciliation; William of Canterbury gives a much fuller and more explicit account of the details than does the French poet here; the latter contents himself with the general tenor of the letters, concluding with what amounts to a mild criticism of the pope, who, or so Guernes seems to infer, is exhorting Becket to a degree of effort and care which he himself deems unrewarding:

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

(Lines 4301-4305)

Having once introduced the subject of the conference at Fréteval and having abandoned it abruptly, Guernes now returns to it. He gives a much fuller source than either of his two major Latin sources, Edward Grim and William of Canterbury. That such details as he gives are substantially accurate may be judged from Becket's own letter

to the pope.⁶⁴ However, much of the important discussion took place in the middle of a windy plain, and neither the archbishop nor the king had a single attendant with him; it is typical of Guernes that he should stress on more than one occasion the consequent imperfection of his own knowledge to his audience:

Saint Thomas e li reis furent mult lungement
 Enmi le champ tut sul a estreit parlement;
 Un sul n'i apelerent de trestute lur gent.
 Tut ço dunt il parlerent ne sai plenierement,
 Mais partie dirrai del veir, mun escient.

(Lines 4356-4360)

Again it is King Louis who is responsible for the initiative, and this, combined, so Guernes tells us, with Henry's fear of the pope's threats, is sufficient to raise hopes of a successful outcome. But the stumbling block is again the king's alleged oath never to give Becket the kiss of peace; an element of possible anti-climax enters the account here:

Quant d'ambes parz quidierent e clerc e chevalier
 Que li reis le volsist de bone pais baisier,
 Fait il: "Sire arcevesque, a vus voil conseillicher."
 Emmi le champ tut hors le mena del puldrier;
 Nului n'i apelerent, nul n'i volt aproscier.

(Lines 4336-4340)

Guernes, however, skilfully turns this to advantage, and uses the distance between the two men and their respective followers to create an atmosphere of tension and mystery,

whilst delighting in being able to give his audience
a touch of colour and confidence about the archbishop:

La u parlout al rei saint Thomas a cheval,
De quisse en quisse sist, sovent changot estal,
L'une quisse en la sele e l'autre contreval;
Car les braies de haire li firent si grant mal.
A grant orguil le tindrent cil qui ne sorent al.

(Lines 4351-4355)

As to such details of the encounter as Guernes is able
to give us, the concessions seem to lie all on the part of
the king, where Becket stands firm in his resolution.
Indeed, the king seems to repent of his having listened
to any other advice than that of his archbishop, and
states his intention to mend his ways in this respect:

- Tuz conseilz voil des ore, fait li^{is}reis, laissier,
Fors sulement le vostre, u me voil apuier.
E nis tut mun reaume vus voldrai jo baillier.
Henri mun fil vus voil, e la garde, chargier;

(Lines 4371-4374)

It should be noted that whereas Becket's reasons for
refusing this undertaking - his all-exclusive concern to
manage the affairs of his Church - are given fully and
carefully, no reason is adduced for Henry's decision;
we are left to presume that the combined effect of the
archbishop's steadfastness, the good offices of the French
King, and the veiled and unspecified threat of the pope, have
brought it about. Although he refuses to accept the charge

personally, Becket does have certain constructive suggestions to make on Henry's plans:

"Mais se volez la terre e le regne laissier
 Pur le servise Deu, e vus voilliez cruissier,
 A Huun de Beauchamp, cel leal chevalier,
 Vus lo jo vostre regne e voz fiz a baillier;
 E jo lur aiderai al regne conseillier."

(Lines 4386-4390)

Guernes now reiterates that his knowledge of events is necessarily imperfect, preferring this honest approach to a pretence of omniscience, firstly because it is in his nature and secondly because he knows the isolation of the two men dictates it:

De multes choses unt entr'els dous desputé
 Dunt um ne m'a encore acointié n'acerté;
 Ne tut ne puet pas estre en mun livre noté.

(Lines 4391-4393)

Despite this apology, Guernes goes on to give us several very interesting exchanges between the archbishop and the king; these of course take on a greater air of veracity simply because Guernes has just protested that anything of which he cannot be certain has been omitted. The issue under discussion is the restitution of land and possessions to those of Becket's followers who had lost them as a result of the Archbishop's flight from England. Although Becket accuses Henry of having no compassion on the weak and innocent, the

king is able to answer this charge:

"C'est par vostre mesfait, fait li li reis Henris,
 Qui hors de mun realme en alastes fuitis,
 Senz ço que nuls eüst vers vus de rien mespris;
 Pur ço vus enveiai e parenz e amis.
 Mais tut ert adrecié, quant vendrez el païs."

(Lines 4401-4405)

This seems a fair and honest admission on the part of the king, and fair restitution; it is passed over without comment by the author. Instead Becket tackles him immediately over the question of the coronation of the young Henry as King of England. Again the king admits:

"Veirement i mespris, fait li reis, bien le vei;
 Mais bien ert adrecé, se j'amender le dei."

(Lines 4409-4410)

According to Guernes, the king tells Becket to take what action he thinks necessary over the three bishops who officiated in the ceremony, promising that he will interfere no more in the affairs of the church. It begins to seem strange that after so much time and so much wrangling the king should concede all this ground without putting up more resistance or imposing certain conditions upon the agreement. But the author has skilfully and effectively concealed his interpretation of the king's words until the conclusion of this strange encounter:

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

(Lines 4419-4420)

There is no doubt in Guernes' mind here that Henry is simply going through with an agreement which he has little intention of keeping, certainly not if it creates difficulties for him. Guernes' judgment is doubtless coloured by later events, and it would be difficult, given the feelings at Canterbury in the years immediately after Becket's death, the time when Guernes was there, to find any other interpretation; indeed it would have been relatively easy for the poet to put on to the king's words and actions here the stamp of the blackest treachery, and to inveigh long and loud against him. But Guernes refrains; a number of reasons suggest themselves. Firstly, Guernes rarely tries to read the mind of the king, but simply relates his actions and decisions, and allows them to speak for themselves; with an audience preponderantly predisposed in Becket's favour, the natural reactions of those listening would render any such thoughts expressed by the author superfluous. Secondly, the author cannot be absolutely certain of the king's thoughts, and other accounts, including Becket's own, suggest that he was not attempting to be disingenuous,⁶⁵ and of course however strong the feeling might run at Canterbury in the archbishop's favour, the king had done his public penance for any part he might have had in his murder, and the poet must have been conscious of this. Thirdly, to discuss the king's motives would deflect attention from the archbishop to the king; and finally, it might detract from the final scenes of the poem in which the murder is actually

described and its consequences discussed. Whatever Guernes' thoughts on these points, his brief and ominous conclusion is dramatic and effective.

There follows a brief discussion on the question of the kiss of peace, and the king again prevaricates, postponing the kiss until a further conference at Tours almost in the same breath, according to Guernes, as reiterating his oath never to bestow it upon the archbishop. This apparent duplicity on the part of the king would seem to be a contradiction neither to the king himself, nor in all probability, to Guernes, and a modern reader is doubtless more conscious of it than a medieval audience would be. After a brief and inconclusive discussion over Geoffrey Ridel, whom Becket had excommunicated in 1169, and who had only a provisional absolution from the papal envoys, in which each party apparently stated that the first move towards reconciliation lay with the other, Guernes passes on to discuss the conference of Tours; his account of the conference of Fréteval, whilst, from our point of view, somewhat lacking in clarity and conclusion, gives what is no doubt an accurate reflection of the significance of the meeting; its apparently successful outcome was going to prove more illusory than real.

The conference, which, according to Guernes, took place at Tours very soon after the meeting at Fréteval, poses certain problems; in terms of advancing a reconciliation, practically nothing seems to have been achieved; indeed, all that took

place, so the poet tells us, was a very brief exchange between the king and the archbishop, in which Henry informed Becket that his fears were groundless. For Becket, his fears aroused by discussion among his own followers, simply desired to saveir s'i entendist ço qu'en aloud disant (Line 4450). Having learnt that the king had no intention of honouring his promises - the source of such information is not revealed to us, the archbishop resolves upon swift action:

Forment en fu trublez li huem Nostre Seignur.
 Ses sumiers fist chargier en la pointe del jur,
 Rova qu'il se mesissent erramment el retur.

(Lines 4456-4458)

The king, seeing this departure, hurriedly sends after the archbishop and requests him to await his arrival to discuss the matter. When Becket informs him of the ground of his departure, the king reaffirms his intention to honour his promises. Guernes adds, darkly, ne sai s'i out faintié (Line 4481). The inference being that he was being less than honest. At all events, a further meeting is proposed for Amboise the following day. Neither Grim nor William of Canterbury mention such a meeting as that which took place near Tours; Herbert of Bosham, and very briefly, William FitzStephen are alone among the biographers to mention a meeting at Tours, and the three accounts differ largely, except in that Herbert agrees with Guernes about the archbishop's anxieties. Roger

of Howden also mentions a meeting which took place in Monte Laudato, qui est inter Turonim et Ambasiu, at which a peaceful solution between the two parties was achieved.⁶⁶ Guernes' sources were therefore presumably oral, but the incident seems scarcely worthy of note; Guernes' desire for completeness is perhaps linked to a desire to illustrate the untrustworthy nature of the king, and he reports Becket as having admonished Henry in the following terms:

"Reis, fait li sainz Thomas, mal estes enseigniez.

Vus n'estes mie tels cum estre soliez

Al tens que vus servi, ainz estes tuz changiez,

Quant en vostre cite' ai mes guages laissiez.

Nel fesist Loewis pur enguagier ses fiez."

(Lines 4476-4480)

Although the king refutes these charges, subsequent events would prove to the audience the justification for the archbishop's doubts, and the uneasy peace about to be settled at Amboise is rendered more dubious in our minds.

The conference at Amboise, held the day after the events related above, was the last in the long and exhausting series related by Guernes with so much attention to detail and such attempts at veracity. Guernes' account is brief, almost perfunctory, and he relates it without comment; he gives a translation of the text of Henry's letter announcing the settlement of the peace, as does William of Canterbury.⁶⁷

Although the king appears to be prepared to make a full restitution, the archbishop wins the poet's evident approbation

by insisting that written copies of the text be provided and published, as if to signal his victory:

Mais li sainz arcevesques, qui mult par ert senez,
 Comanda que li briés fust escriz e mustrez
 Altresi as estranges par tut cum as privez;
 Car del retenir fu li moz forment notez.

(Lines 4517-4520)

Thus the long, tedious and often exasperating series of conferences draws to its conclusion, albeit a palpably imperfect and unstable one. We have already noted and demonstrated that in this section of his poem Guernes is more prone to factual error than is perhaps the case elsewhere in his work. The very extent of the negotiations and the number of different meetings which took place may help to explain, although not excuse these historical inaccuracies. We have seen the archbishop tread most carefully and with full insistence upon the restitution of his and his people's lands and titles, steadfastly convinced of the justice of his cause, even when he was obviously alone in his views and when his very steadfastness was taken as stubbornness and folly by the closest of his supporters and advisers. The fact that, in the end, he seems in Guernes' poem to have won the day, and that it has been the king who has given ground, may be reason enough for Guernes to refrain from more comment on developments. The kiss of peace, an issue never happily resolved, he passes over without mention in the last analysis, forgetting it as it was apparently forgotten by Becket at the last.

Any doubts and fears which linger after the long years of exile and the many fruitless meetings lie not in the stand which the archbishop has taken, but are shown to exist because of the untrustworthy nature of the king and the probable fickleness of his promises, a subject to which Guernes will shortly return. The reputation of the archbishop has been enhanced through the examples of pertinacity and perspicacity which the poet has been able to cite, whereas the image of the king has suffered, not only through the doubts thrown up by the nature of his intentions and promises, but also the striking contrast which Guernes makes between the King of England and the King of France, who is made to appear to be striving constantly and tirelessly for a reconciliation. Guernes must have felt that no further comment from him was necessary. As far as the technicalities of any settlement are concerned, he restricts himself to the basic demands of the archbishop for restitution and justice, and his audience is made to see the success and failure of the meetings in these terms.

The demonstrable historical inaccuracies themselves, whilst necessarily detracting from the poet's worth as a historian, shed some interesting light upon his aims and methods. It is interesting that in the early part of the poem Guernes quite readily follows Grim on factual material, but refrains from including some of the Latin writer's accounts of visions, whilst occasionally adding a name or location which does not appear in the Latin text; so in this section of the poem, following

much the same pattern and principles, he allows himself to be misled over a detail as striking and important as the timing of the coronation of young Henry. Apart from revealing this, in this case unfortunate, debt to Grim, it confirms that Guernes' interest lies not so much in investigating the motives of the various parties in their actions during this part of Becket's history as in creating a favourable impression of the archbishop. We have already seen how Guernes almost totally neglects the motivation of the king; he also passes over Becket's very considerable feelings of anger and outrage over the insult done to the See of Canterbury, and therefore, by direct imputation, to him - as Henry no doubt intended - to emphasize the sterling qualities of the archbishop's resistance and fortitude. Not that we should imply that Guernes was alone among his contemporaries in giving this emphasis, for to the medieval as to the modern mind it is more striking and dramatic an angle, and one more calculated to appeal to the imagination of his audience. But such a basic and evocative appeal could have been made without the length and relative tedium to which Guernes felt constrained to go, albeit in some cases misguidedly. Despite the difficulties of sifting fact from fiction, myth and ever-increasing legend from history, and despite the very natural desire to hold his audience captively enthralled, we can, nonetheless, in his long enumerations, in his careful and generally faithful translation of many of the relevant letters from prose Latin to French verse, in his efforts, ultimately unsuccessful,

to impose a logical and consequent order upon his material, deduce another desire, not simply for credibility, but for completeness and historical accuracy; that he failed to achieve a uniform historical accuracy, and that he indubitably gave an interpretation, generally restrained and by allusion rather than by direct accusation, should not obscure a considerable attempt at discernment in dealing with the material available to him on his part.

This point is amply demonstrated by the detail and attention which he next devotes to the activities and negotiations which took place between the peace settlement and the archbishop's actual return to England and Canterbury. Immediately after the peace concluded at Amboise, Becket sets about trying to bring about the conditions which the king has agreed to. Guernes gives facts and figures concerning the restitution, reiterating his by now familiar refrain of Becket's insistence and the king's prevarication, for such seems to be the most favourable interpretation he wishes to impose on the king's actions here:

D'Ambaise fist en France saint Thomas retourner

E cum sun messagier en sa besuigne aler.

E a Ruem se durent andui entrecuntrer;

La li dut li reis faire cinc cenz mars aporter,

Dunt il porreit ses detes a cel' hure aquiter.

Car li reis li dut rendre par fine convenance

Quanqu'il out pris del suen e des suens a vaillance;

Ne l'en volt sainz Thomas faire nul' alegance.

Mais li premiers deniers est encore en balance;
Li reis l'ad mis encore en mult bele suffrance.

(Lines 4526-4535)

Guernes, who gives a fuller, more detailed account than any other biographer, most of the others passing over these exchanges completely, goes on to illustrate the reluctance of those acting on the king's behalf to comply with the king's expressed wishes. Similar details can be found in Becket's own correspondence, but doubtless colourful and vivid accounts of injustice and hardship were still forthcoming at Canterbury when Guernes himself arrived there:

Les justises le rei firent lunge traïne.
Tute l'arceveschie remest einsi frarine,
Ainz que cil dui eüssent des maners la saisine,
Ne remist buef ne vache ne chapuns ne geline,
Cheval, porc ne berbiz, ne de blé plaine mine.
A la Sainte Marie Magdalene en esté
Furent li arcevesque e li reis acordé.
Tresqu'a la Saint Martin l'unt par respit mené,
Ainz qu'il eüst saisine de sa proprieté,
Tant que Randulf del Broc out tut pris e fulré.

(Lines 4551-4560)

Guernes goes on to give some highly personal views, and wonders who will, at the day of judgement, be faced with the responsibility for such failures to carry out justice, Randolph de Broc, who was directly responsible, or the king himself, to whom Randolph was responsible. We shall return to these reflections on the part

of the poet later. Meanwhile, Becket, at last presumably satisfied that, if all was not perfect, at least matters were sufficiently in hand, turns his mind to his own return to England:

Si tost cum Saint Thomas fu acordez al rei,
 De sun fuc li sovint, qui petiz ert en fei,
 Qui aveit meserré par seignuril desrei.
 El país enveiad sun angele devant sei,
 Qui sa veie esneast e ostat le fangei.

(Lines 4581-4585)

The question of why such considerations had not occurred to the Archbishop of Canterbury before this juncture, or if they had, why they had not been given more explicit expression, is one which poses itself more readily to the modern mind than it would to Guernes' audience, but reveals once again the poet's pre-occupation with a successful outcome to the archbishop's cause to the exclusion of what must have been in this case a real neglect resulting, presumably, in spiritual casualties; Guernes' mention of the archbishop's zeal and desire to return to the care of his flock at this time would evoke approval amongst the audience, rather than the reverse. There is here, for almost the first time in Guernes' account of the various conferences and their consequences, a definite echo of the words of Edward Grim on this subject; Grim's words are Sanctus autem, memor desolati gregis, qui per absentiam pastoris a recto tramite deviarat.⁶⁸ (Grim deals with this period of the archbishop's life almost exclusively by quoting the various relevant pieces of correspondence.)

Having despatched John of Salisbury before him, the archbishop makes his final preparations for departure. But before he leaves, he is due to have one further meeting with Henry:

Quant saint Thomas s'en dut en Engleterre aler,
 Li reis Henris le dut a Ruem encontrer,
 Si cum il out pramis, faire deniers livrer.
 Unes iteles lettres li ad faites porter;
 Bien les vus savrai lire, ses volez escuter:

(lines 4596-4600)

Without further comment, although we may detect an air of almost scornful cynicism and resignation in the poet's tones, he goes on to give a very accurate, almost literal translation of Henry's letter to Becket, in which he gives the king's reasons for his non-appearance in Rouen.⁶⁹ The major reason for this was the threat which King Louis was posing to the king's possessions in Auvergne. Perhaps one reason for Guernes' reticence on the point is the involvement of King Louis of France in a way which rather tarnishes the picture of him which Guernes has built up. At all events, he feels no need for further comment, but conveys accurately the king's assurances that his son will act in good faith in his father's stead, and his decision to send his clerc : mult privé (Line 4611), John of Oxford, to accompany the archbishop.⁷⁰

On receiving the king's letter, Becket hesitated no further, and, accompanied by the aforesaid John of Oxford, set sail for England, thereby ending his six-year exile on French soil. Despite evident misgivings about the stability of the peace

and the validity of the king's promises, Guernes has as yet given us no indication of the enormity of the tragedy which must now be looming large in the mind of the audience. It is for this very reason that he knows that his purpose will best be served by as accurate an account of events as he can give at this juncture. Having, in the section of the poem we have just discussed, emphasised the archbishop's long-suffering tenacity, perspicacity and resolution to see his unflinching, unwavering conviction that he was right when all around were assuring him that he should give way, and having, on fairly rare occasions as we have seen, mentioned the archbishop's sanctity in stark contrast to the behaviour of the English King, the poet is conscious that he has done enough not to need to prejudge the issue by emotive or evocative reference to the events which he has to unfold later in his poem.

(v) Becket in England.

No sooner has news of Becket's intended return to England reached that country than opposition to him springs up. The three bishops who had opposed him, since he became Archbishop of Canterbury, Gilbert Foliot, Jocelin de Bohun and Roger de Pont l'Évêque instigate and foment malice and ill-feeling towards him. Guernes follows William of Canterbury fairly faithfully here, in recounting the plans to l'arcevesque e les
(Line 4630)
suens maistreier. Both William of Canterbury and Edward Grim, in fact, quote in full a long letter from Becket to the

pope in which he gives details of the nature and the extent of the opposition to his return, but Guernes, by retelling events in his own words, gives what is perhaps a more vivid, and since it does not purport to be in the archbishop's own words, seemingly more objective view of developments:

De destrusser ses hummes, de ses coffres cergier,
 De prendre tuz les briefs que il pout purchacier
 A Rome; ja un sul ne l'en voldrunt laissier.
 Les porz firent issi cil trei prelat guaitier;
 Mal encontre voleient lur pere apareillier.

(Lines 4636-4640)

To increase the strength of their opposition, they enlist the help of three of the archbishop's inveterate enemies, Renaud de Varenne, Gervais de Cornhill and the man who, according to Guernes, was one of the worst and most persistent offenders against the archbishop, Randulph de Broc. Even though the vehemence of the feelings of these people towards the archbishop can scarcely be doubted from what has already been stated, it still shocks and surprises to read that tuit trei jurent le fiz Marie, se l'arcevesque
(Lines 4644 - 4645)
encontrent, il i perdra la vie. Here Guernes is translating the words to be found in the accounts of William of Canterbury ⁷¹
 (nobis caput amputaturos) and Edward Grim (nobis capita amputaturos). Both these authors, as we have just seen, are quoting Becket's own letter to the pope, and Guernes unhesitatingly accepts his account, which in the light of events popular opinion would

have helped to spread at Canterbury. Although Guernes, as we have seen many times, exercises at least a degree of judgment in adopting material from his sources, he is perhaps at his least critical when dealing with material which seems to come to him, albeit indirectly, from the pen of the archbishop himself, certainly by this stage of his account. Knowing where his sympathies unhesitatingly lie, we should not be surprised by this fact, but modern historians have tended to suggest that Becket, conscious of the possibility, at least, of martyrdom, was prone to hyperbole and over-reaction in the last weeks of his life.

When he learnt of the reception that he could expect, the archbishop, Guernes tells us, was in no way dismayed, but desiring, as we have seen, to return to his duties and the care of his flock, took an almost disdainful attitude when he arrived at Wissant before crossing the Channel to end his long exile:

Tut ç'a hum l'arcevesque e mustré e nuncié;
 Car si ami l'oïrent, qui l'en unt accointié.
 De nule rien purquant ne s'en ad esmaïé;
 Mais de sun país out e tendrur e pitié,
 E des francs qui li ourent en sun eissil aidie.
 De sun país veer aveit grant desirier,
 E des suens ramener od lui e conseillier,
 Que li reis Henris out sis anz fait essillier.
 A Witsant est venuz; ala par le gravier
 Pur esgarder l'oré e pur esbanier.

(Lines 4646-4655)

We may take this as a timely reminder of Becket's sanctity, in strong contrast to the reprehensible machinations which seemed to be going all around him. In fact, if we compare this with William of Canterbury's account, we shall find a greater degree of piety and otherworldliness in the words which he puts into the archbishop's mouth:

"Subjecit, "Crede, fili, nec si membratim discerpendus eram, ab incepto itinere desisterem. Non metus, non vis, non cruciatus degenerem revocabit ulterius. Sufficiat Dominicum gregem sui pastoris absentiam luxisse septennem. Hanc autem extremam petitionem a meis obtinere votis omnibus exposco, (nihil est quod magis hominibus debeatur quam ut suprema voluntas, postquam aliud velle non possunt, adimpleatur), quatenus ad ecclesiam, a qua arceor in vita, vel mortuum efferre non graventur, si Dominus inpraesentiarum servum suum de corpore mortis hujus educere disposuit."

(William of Canterbury, ch.1, pp.86-87)

William goes on, with suitable biblical references, to show the archbishop's resolve to return to lead his flock.⁷²

In Guernes' version, a further similar warning brought to Becket by a messenger from the Count of Boulogne only serves to stiffen the archbishop's resolve, even if he should be tut par pieces (Line 4667) detrenchier, as a result. When, however, he is told that the three bishops qui tant l'unt guerreie, (Line 4682) were awaiting his arrival at Dover, he despatches letters bearing the announcement of their excommunication to them. Their reaction was, Guernes tells us, a perhaps predictable fury:

De duel^e de coruz furent descoluré,
 Pur poi Randulf del Broc n'out le vaslet tue;
 Mais il nel pout trover, car Deus l'ad desturné.

(Lines 4698-4700)

Details to corroborate this information are to be found in the accounts of William of Canterbury, who learning of the three bishop's evil intentions, states Ecce reformatæ pacis initium.⁷³ Guernes is perhaps more circumspect, but no justification, interestingly, is given for Becket's action, beyond the fact that the three had indeed tant l'unt guerreis (Line 4682). We have seen⁷⁴ what were Becket's probable motives in taking this action at that particular moment, but it is relatively rare for Guernes to report an action of the archbishop with so little explanation. Such gratuitous acts seem to come mainly from his enemies, and of course a failure or refusal to rationalise them usually adds to the impression that they are wrong and ill-intentioned.

The following day, Guernes tells us, God sent the archbishop a favourable wind for the often rather perilous crossing of the Channel, and he arrived safely at Sandwich, deliberately avoiding Dover where, he knew, a hostile reception was awaiting him. At Sandwich, on the other hand, he was met by mult granz pueples des suens.^(Line 4720) However, his respite proved to be brief.

The three bishops, learning that Becket had landed, immediately went to Sandwich to find their archbishop. Guernes recounts how John of Oxford, fearing the worst, went

to meet them in order to prevent them from coming to Becket armed and with very hostile intentions. The French poet, following closely Becket's letter which both Grim and William of Canterbury quote⁷⁵, tells us John's reasons for acting in this way:

Johans d'Oxeneford, quant il les vit armez
 Venir vers l'arcevesque, mult en fu trespensez.
 Car bien sout que fols fu e malveis lur pensez,
 E sout bien que li reis en sereit mult blasmez,
 Se Thomas l'arcesvesque i fust point mesmenez.
 Dunc est alez a els, qu'il n'en fist targeisun,
 E mostra lur l'acorde del rei e del barun.
 Dist lur de part lu rei e comanda par nun
 Que il ne li fesissent, ne as suens, se bien nun;
 Car li reis en sereit retez de traïsun.

(Lines 4726-4735)

We can see that John of Oxford spells out his message in very clear terms, and he was no doubt justified in his fears, as later events were to prove. On this occasion, however, his good offices were successful, and Gilbert, Jocelin de Bohun and Roger de Pont l'Évêque, if we are to believe in the extremity of their original intentions, came with their followers unarmed and their demands somewhat modified to meet their archbishop; thus, for the moment, John of Oxford had succeeded in preserving the honour of his king, which, Guernes no doubt felt, was the least that might be expected of him in this situation.

The poet feels no praise is due to him for this piece of conciliation.

The demands of the three bishops have now been reduced to a desire that Simon, the Archdeacon of Sens, who was travelling with Becket, should take an oath of loyalty to the king, but the archbishop refused to allow even this, forbidding any of his clergy to take such an action; as if to underline the completeness of Becket's success and his firmness here, Guernes goes on to tell us:

Ne li poeient faire rien encontre sun gré,
 Car des suens out od li mult grant pueple asemblé.
 Ne volt rien pur els faire. Dunc s'en sunt returné;
 E li sainz arcevesque ala a sa cité;
 Vol entiers i ala, car mult l'out desiré.
 Li muine e la gent l'unt reçu a grant chierté;
 A grant procession sunt contre lui alé.-

(Lines 4749-4755)

For Becket, so long in exile, so long oppressed, this rapturous welcome and popular acclaim as he entered Canterbury after six years in France must have been indeed a happy day, and Guernes, sensing the triumph of the archbishop at this moment, takes advantage of his success to paint a very interesting and significant picture of him in this brief respite which was perhaps a fleeting hour of victory:

Tant cum il vesqui puis, sainte vie mena;
 De servir sun Seignur quanqu'il pout se pena.
 Vedves e orphenins e povres guverna,

Dras, viande e sollers e deniers lur dona;
 E trop poi en veneient a lui, ço li sembla.
 Ne nuls huem de justise deveier nel poeit.
 Neïs as clers le rei les iglises toleit
 Quis aveient purprises, e a cels les rendeit
 Quis aveient perdues; e al dreit se teneit.
 Bien sout que pur justise murir li covendreit.

(Lines 4756-4765)

This is an interesting description, first of all, because it seems original; certainly it does not mirror any account of a similar nature in William of Canterbury nor in Edward Grim; it may remind us of the account given by Guernes of Becket's stay at Pontigny in its tones of piety and its implications of saintliness; but then Becket was acting in adversity; now he is shown triumphant in his own cathedral city; moreover, his actions can no longer even seem to be inspired by a desire to combat adversity, but are shown to be a determination to do God's work for its own sake, because he was the man to do it. We are shown all the manifestations of his sainte vie: his good works towards the poor and needy, his restorations of properties misappropriated during his absence, and the lasting feeling that however much he might be doing, he could not do enough in the service of God. These are the attributes and actions which Guernes now paints of the holy man of God, for the purpose of stressing to his audience the innate goodness and evident sanctity of the archbishop. The poet was no doubt correct in sensing that this was a timely moment to remind

his audience of this fact. It also shows Guernes for the first time since before the discussion of the conferences emphasising Becket's saintliness, and almost for the first time since the beginning of his account of his life painting a picture of Becket the saint when he was not in a position of grave danger or complete adversity. Certainly for the first time in Guernes' account there is a sense of urgency, of imminence, in the words bien sout que pur justise murir li covendreit (Line 4765). Thus Guernes makes sure that his audience appreciates his saintliness, the extent to which al dreit se teneit (Line 4764).

However great his piety and almost unworldly goodness may seem, he still feels compelled, nevertheless, to establish himself again in England, and he desires to see Henry II's son, young Henry, who had been crowned King of England. No doubt Becket wished to consolidate his position whilst he felt in the ascendancy, and perhaps, as is revealed in the letter which Becket sends to the young king, his true intention was to achieve a settlement over the vexed question of the coronation, but nothing of his motives is revealed to the audience by Guernes at this point. He links the events together in a simple, seemingly uncritical manner:

Mais poi après iço qu'il revint d'ultre mer,
 Ne volt pas longement en sun sié demurer
 Qu'il n'alast al rei de la terre parler.

(Lines 4766-4768)

His first step towards this end was to send Richard,

prior of Dover, who was later to succeed Thomas as Archbishop of Canterbury, with a letter to the young king. We learn from Guernes, who is following largely William of Canterbury here,⁷⁶ that it was only after considerable difficulties that Becket's messenger was admitted to Henry's presence to read his master's letter; at that time the king was considering a novel scheme for the filling of vacant sees, which seems to have been of a decidedly uncanonical nature and would surely not have met with the Archbishop of Canterbury's approval. Eventually Richard, having pursued his goal assiduously, was admitted to Henry's presence and able to read to him the archbishop's letter. There is a marked difference in the treatment of this incident between the accounts of William of Canterbury and that of the French poet, although, as we have seen, the letter follows the former quite rigorously in the facts of this episode. The new plan envisaged a form of election which did not require the sanction or approval of the Archbishop of Canterbury; no doubt the bishops responsible for drawing it up in collaboration with the king wished to exclude the necessity of consulting Becket in such matters - there were six sees vacant at this time. William of Canterbury goes to quite considerable lengths, quoting Gratian and Cassiodorus, among others, to demonstrate the irregularity such proceedings would entail; his purpose seems to be to provide a definitive and indignant case for the rejection of such a scheme. Guernes, on the other hand, is much briefer, giving only the simplest outline of the plan, restricting himself to a plain and unequivocal rejection of it: Senz comant del primat ne

(Line 4795)

deit estre aleveland. He goes on to say that all the bishops of the realm must be present or at least consulted by letter, rather than a select and convenient few, before any election can take place. But having given this brief résumé, he goes on to give his own views on the matter, as a member of the clergy. He states that great care must be taken in such elections, and that the representatives of the Church must be seen to be above reproach, must be shining examples to the rest of the community, and suggests, or at least implies, that any deviation from the established procedure, especially such as that proposed by the three bishops whom he has already named as being among Becket's greatest adversaries, can only have the direst consequences; he concludes:

Um deit a saint'iglise doner si net pastur
 C'um li puisse sun chief suzmettre par honor.
 Saint'iglise est espuse al soveraing Seignur;
 E s'um done a s'espuse malvais gouverneur,^{il}
 A Deu e a s'espuse en fait um deshonor.-

(Lines 4831-4835)

Guernes is thus much briefer than William of Canterbury; it is true that his last words here reflect a thought of Williams⁷⁷, and that they obviously share to a great extent the fears and the indignation ~~which~~ the plan ~~was~~ the king and certain of the compliant bishops were proposing:

" Talem itaque in pontificali constituite sede cui et nos,
 qui gubernamus imperium, sincere capita nostra submittamus,
 et ejus monita, dum tanquam homines delinquimus, necessario

veluti curantis medicamina suscipiamus. "

(William of Canterbury, ch. 11, p. 107.)

But, in the last analysis, Guernes is undoubtedly different from William's. However interested and involved Guernes might find himself in this matter, he knows that the intricacies of the arguments cannot be of consuming interest to his audience, and therefore he limits himself to a short but powerful personal opinion, the force and intensity of which are calculated to impress his audience, rather than to convince them by any subtleties of argument;⁷⁸ in this way he is still able to impute a grand tort to Becket's adversaries, showing not merely their animosity towards their primate but also the calculated damage they were wilfully doing to their mother Church. It is a powerful, skilful, original and concise piece of writing on the part of the French poet, and one which no doubt achieved its desired effects.

The impression is reinforced when Guernes goes on immediately to tell us the reception which first greeted Richard of Dover when he arrived at Winchester:

A Wincestre est li mes l'arcevesque venuz.
 Mais li uis de la chambre li fu mult defenduz;
 Car de clers e de lais fu dutez e cremuz,
 Qu'il n'aportast tels briés u n'eüst pas saluz
 E par quei alchuns d'els ne fust dunc suspenduz.

(Lines 4836-4840)

Despite this initial hostility, however, Richard is successful in reading Becket's letter in the king's court.

In it, Becket assures the young King that he wishes no harm to anyone or anything, but desires only to show his esteem and love for his sovereign; he inveighs against those who have maligned him, who have stated that he wished anything but peace and honour. It is interesting that Guernes, in following in the main William of Canterbury's account of the king's studied reaction to this letter, chooses to ignore the evidence of consultation with the Archdeacon of Poitiers and with the Earl of Cornwall to concentrate on the part played by Geoffrey Ridel, whom as we have seen, the French poet holds particularly, perhaps with Roger, Archbishop of York, to be a danger and an anathema to the Archbishop of Canterbury's cause. He seems to have conveyed the Latin writer's words, brief as they are, with particular venom and vehemence. William writes in the following way :

" Ex quibus Gaufridus, 'Novi', inquit, 'regis patris voluntatem; consilio nunquam interero quo discernatur ille filii regis praesentiam videre, quem non dubiis indiciis contendit exhaeredare."

(William of Canterbury, ch.14, p.111)

Guernes renders the same message, almost equally briefly, but in the following unequivocal terms:

E danz Gefreiz Ridel li ad dit e juré

Que li vielz reis l'en sun curage mustre:

Il ne volt pas qu'il deie a cel humme parler,

Qui le volt del reaume, s'il puet, deseriter,
 La corune del chief e tolir e oster.

(Lines 4879-4883)

There seems little reason to believe that in this instance Guernes had any other direct source than the Latin text; however he seems to have persuaded himself that Geoffrey's sole purpose was to attack the archbishop at every opportunity, and so at every turn Ridel is painted for the benefit of Guernes' audience in very simple black terms. He assumes the character of a true and unmitigated villain. Here the audience can see how he has seemingly twisted words of Becket in a very malicious and destructive fashion, for a few lines earlier Guernes had quoted Becket, in his translation of the latter's letter to the young king, read by Richard of Dover, as saying:

"Mais de c'est en mun quer grant amerté asise,
 Que ne vus ai el chief la corune d'or mise,
 Sulunc la dignité de nostre mere iglise;"

(Lines 4871-4873)

The next few lines contain, as has been pointed out, errors of timing and location on Guernes' part.⁷⁹ They contain information of a meeting, which had something of the nature of a confrontation, between Becket and certain officers of the king. The main meeting is between Becket and Joscelin de Louvain. The theme is by now almost familiar. Becket is accused of wishing to deprive the young king of his crown,

of seeking to violate the king's laws and customs, of leading an army about the country, of excommunicating the bishops. It was probably such reports, exaggerated and embellished, which provoked Henry II's final and fateful outburst against his archbishop. Guernes follows both William of Canterbury⁸⁰ and Edward Grim⁸¹ in this section of his poem, although, as is often the case when rendering dialogue, he lends colour and vigour to the verbal exchanges, as the following lines show (the arguments of Joscelin, suggests Guernes, had been carefully dictated to him before the meeting by the three bishops whom Becket had recently excommunicated):

"Vus menez par sa terre les chevaliers armez,
 E clers d'estrange terre el pais amenez,
 E avez ses prelaz de lur mestier sevrez.
 Or volt li reis Henris que vus les asolez.
 De ço e d'autres choses granz torz fait li avez."
 Dunc respundi li ber, ne s'i volt pas plus taire:
 "N'est pas dreiz, fait lur il, ne nel vi ainc retraire,
 Co que li plus halz fist plus bas peüst desfaire;
 Parkes ço que la pape fait, conferme e fait faire
 Nel puet plus bas de lui par dreit metre en repaire."

(Lines 4896-4905)

Such exchanges suggest to the modern reader that the reconciliation effected whilst Becket was in France some weeks earlier was little more than illusory. To Guernes' audience they would convey the injustice of the accusations made by the king's parties against the archbishop, and once again his

resolution in standing up to his aggressors and refuting their allegations, refusing to be cowed by their veiled threats. He does on this occasion, however, offer a form of solution which seems to offer a satisfactory outcome for two of the bishops, Gilbert Foliot and Jocelin of Salisbury, but not, notably, for Roger Archbishop of York, whom, as Becket himself has previously stated, can only be absolved by the pope himself. This solution involves a form of oath or undertaking on the part of the two bishops to be bound to the Church and to keep peace, and a council with the young king and the other bishops. Any tentative steps made by Becket, however, which must have seemed like great concessions to Guernes' audience after what has gone before, are brusquely rejected by Joscelin, and Guernes goes on to give us the archbishop's momentous interpretation of this rejection in simple and affecting terms:

Fait li dunc Jocelins: "Quant en ço vus tenez
 Que les prelaz le rei asoldre ne volez,
 Or vus defent li reis ses burcs e ses citez
 E viles e chastals, que mar i enterez.
 Faire vostre mestier a Cantorbire alez!
 -Quant ne puis, fait li sainz, par ma parole aler
 Paroses e eglises conseillier e garder,
 Ne puis pas mun mestier faire ne celebrer."
 Par iteles paroles entendi bien li ber
 Qu'il deveit par martire hastivement finer.
 Dunc comanda a Deu, qui des bons est saluz,
 Les Lundreis e la cit. Puis s'en est revenuz.

(Lines 4921-4932)⁸²

This is the second time in relatively rapid succession that Guernes has reminded his audience of the archbishop's impending fate. There can be little doubt that now that the poet has related the archbishop's return to England and has reached the account of the last few weeks of his life, he wishes to impress upon his audience the sanctity of the man, and Guernes reinforces this picture most emphatically in the next eighteen lines of his poem:

Maint miracle a fait Deus la u fu descenduz,
 D'avogles, de contraiz e de surz e de muz,
 De leprus cui revient e santez e vertuz.
 Comandé s'est a Deu, e puis s'en returna.
 Enz emmi le chemin, la u il mielz erra,
 Es viles e es burcs les enfanz conferma.
 Del cheval descendi la u hum les porta;
 En nul liu de servir Deu grief ne li sembla.
 Deu servi volentiers. N'i estuet alumer
 Par tut la u s'estut as enfanz confermer;
 Les chapeles poum qu'i sunt faites, trover.
 La fait Deus cius veer, surz oïr, miz parler,
 Leprus munder, les morz e revivre e aler.
 Einsi s'en repaira saint Thomas a sun sié.
 Tant cum vesqui, se tint puis en s'arceveschié.
 La u il vit les povres, en a eü pitié;
 El servise Deu s'a jur e nuit traveillie.
 Bien saveit sun martirie, si l'aveit denuncié.

(Lines 4933-4950)

This passage is remarkable for a number of reasons: the closest written source is evidently the relatively brief passage to be found in Edward Grim's account:

" Quanto autem fervore fidei, quanto desiderii coelestis inflammatus amore redierit, ac si auditis quae quidem poterant terrere consolatus, testem tenemus gratiam sanitatum quae per illud iter coelitus monstrabatur, postquam ad superos sanctus martyr ascendit. Nam ubi restitit parvulis imponens manus, diversa laborantibus aegritudine salus restituta est."

(Grim ch. 73, pp. 427-428)

Guernes has obviously amplified his account considerably from that given in the Latin account, however, and no doubt such information as he includes was of the type most frequently and most popularly heard at Canterbury in the years which followed Becket's death. We can indeed be quite sure that the poet must have been selective in this matter, and that he omitted many of the miraculous stories which were already becoming widespread and moreover widely accepted at the time he was writing.⁸³ What is surprising is that Guernes decided to include such material at all, if we bear in mind the extreme wariness which dictated his critical approach to accounts of such miracles in the early part of his poem, especially concerning Becket's birth. We have seen how accounts of miracles which appear in other biographies, and which must have been known to him, are not to be found in

his own poem. This is the only occasion that Guernes gives an account of miracles which occurred in the archbishop's lifetime, and if we read his poem carefully, it is not actually made clear that they did occur whilst he was still alive, although this seems to be the implication, and this is no doubt the way in which Guernes' audience would interpret his words. Guernes wishes to remind his audience of the sanctity of saint Thomas, and indeed he would be aware that popular demand virtually demanded this of him at this stage. Not surprisingly his own strong religious beliefs, coupled with this popular demand, would almost naturally overcome any exigencies of historical accuracy which have normally characterised his approach. Guernes clearly believes in Becket's sanctity, and such evidence presented at the end of his life is proof of this, whereas evidence at birth, when he has had no opportunity to gain sanctity, is treated by the poet with far greater suspicion. It is characteristic of Guernes that he emphasises the hand of God in his account, which is a rationalisation sufficient to satisfy the mediaeval mind, and in many cases of course the modern mind also.

The passage is also effective in a way which Guernes has used quite skilfully before; it tends to lend weight and credence to Becket's next action, although there is no necessary connection between Becket's desire to help and pity the poor and to serve God on the one hand, which was

Guernes' final point and one which he was careful to emphasise, as opposed to the material concerned purely with attested miracles, and his action of excommunicating Robert de Broc, and the other actions which he took on Christmas Day 1170, on the other. Guernes follows Edward Grim in telling us that the reason for the excommunication of Robert de Broc was the latter's docking of the tail of one of Becket's packhorses, a crime which Guernes labels ^(Line 4953) tel vilte⁸⁴. Perhaps more serious in its implications was the sentence of excommunication which Becket had already passed on the Bishops of London and Salisbury and on the Archbishop of York, and which Becket confirmed that day. Also included under this anathema was Randulph de Broc, of whom Guernes says:

E de Randulf del Broc, qui l'out forment grevé
 E out maint de ses hummes sovent enprisuné.
 Dunc ad maudit tuz cels par qui out mal esté
 Del rei, e qui a t'ort aveient meslé
 E qui le meslereient mais a sun avocé.

(Lines 4961-4965)

Guernes goes on to report the very violent conclusion of Becket's pronouncements against his malefactors, again following closely Edward Grim's account:

"De Jesu Crist" fait il, " seient il tuit maldit!"
 Dunc a geté aval, quant il out cel mot dit,
 Desur le pavement la candeille en defit
 Que lur memorie seit ostee de l'escrit,
 E il mis hors del regne u li bon sunt eslit.

(Lines 4966-4970)

At this juncture Guernes leaves Becket to go to the three prelates affected by his anathema; he skilfully gives the impression that they are reacting to their archbishop's latest pronouncement, whereas we know that they learnt of his actions at the time of his embarkation for England; indeed there would scarcely have been time for the actions described as taking place on Christmas *day*, the reaction to them and the consequences to happen in the space of five days. In fact, Guernes achieves this clever intensification and impression of speed by going back in time, changing his written source as he does so. He now follows William of Canterbury carefully to show the angry reaction of the three, especially of the Archbishop of York:

Rogier del Punt l'Evesque, quant vit e entendie
 Qu'en escumengement fu mis e en devie,
 Ne volt venir a dreit, ne n'a merci prie.
 Car mult out felun quer e gros e surquidié,
 E li diables out dedenz lui pris sun sie.
 Mais li autre prelat e si dui conpaignun,
 Gileberz Foliot e Jocelins par nun,
 Voleient repairier a satisfactiun,
 Faire a lur arcevesque e dreiture e raisun.
 Bien conurent entre els tute lur mesprisun.
 Mais cil del Punt l'Evesque les ad fait meserrer,
 Contre Deu e raisun e decier e aler;
 Compaignuns volt avoir al malice mesler.

(Lines 4971-4983)

Roger goes on to make an impassioned speech against any submission, revealing all his hostility and animosity towards the Archbishop of Canterbury. He is successful in preventing his fellow bishops from seeking absolution, and together they resolve to cross the sea to see King Henry II, who was in Normandy at that time. We shall have reason to return to the figure of Roger de Pont l'Évêque later and in more detail; for the moment we must note Guernes' blackening account of him, and how Jocelin and Gilbert Foliot, scarcely characters made sympathetic in the course of the poem, are moderate and mild by comparison. They, states Guernes, are ready to admit tute lur mesprisun^(Line 4990) and seek forgiveness, until dissuaded by the evil wiles of the Archbishop of York.

Characterisation of any but the all-important figures is, for the benefit of the audience, usually strictly limited, as we shall see, but as the climax of the poem approaches, Guernes has tended to polarise even more noticeably, emphasising Becket's saintliness on the one hand, and painting a very black picture of the Archbishop of York on the other.

Guernes follows William of Canterbury very carefully in giving his account of events here,⁸⁵ but he cannot refrain from giving his own version of Roger's words and thoughts as the three bishops embark together for the continent:

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

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

A vostre chief ferai mal chevez a turner."

(Lines 5008-5010)

This attack launched by Roger is a very damning one, nor, as we shall see, has Guernes finished incriminating him in the archbishop's murder.

We now leave the three bishops as they set off for Normandy and travel there ourselves, to discover Henry's reaction to the news of Becket's behaviour, which has been made known to him by letter from England. Again Guernes skilfully goes back in time to give an impression of urgency and speed in developments. When the king hears of Becket's actions, Guernes tells us, mult out le quer irié^(Line 5014). The intensity of his anger can be judged by the violence of his reproaches and the awe of his servants in the face of this outburst:

En sa chambre en entra d'ire desculurez;
Dit qu'il ad malveis hommes nurri e alevéz.
En malveise gent est sis pains mis e guastez,
A ses dolurs ne part nul de tuz ses privez !
Mult aveit tuz les suens par ses diz esfreez.
Funt il : "Que s'a li reis si fort a dementer ?
Se il veüst ses fiz u sa femme enterrer
E trestute sa terre ardeir e enbraser,
Ne deüst il tel duel ne faire ne mener.
S'il eüst rien oï, bien le deüst mustrer.

(Lines 5016-5025)

There can be no doubting of the king's fury here; and although the climax of this scene has not yet been reached,

for the three bishops have not yet arrived from England, the king continues his bitter outburst, uttering in the course of it the words which are popularly held to be the inspiration for Becket's murder:

-Uns huem, fait lur li reis, qui a mun pain mangié,

Qui a ma curt vint povres, e mult l'ai eshalcié,

Pur mei ferir as denz ad sun talun drecié!

Trestut mun lignage ad e mun regne avillie:

Li duels m'en vait al quer, nuls ne m'en a vengié!

(Lines 5031-5035)

But although we learn that the whole court shared their

monarch's anger and indignation, there is no suggestion that Henry uttered any direct instructions that Becket was to be murdered; that threats and schemes for revenge were hatched and discussed in the court is at the least possible, as Guernes tells us was the case. But he is careful to mention no names at this juncture, and he suggests that it is the intensity of the king's displeasure and the loyalty of those around him to preserve his honour that sparked off the reaction in the court, rather than any more direct order from the king himself. It may be that the men who became murderers of the archbishop are included among those of whom Guernes says:

Par fei s'en comencierent pluisur a alier

Que la hunte le rei hasterunt del vengier.

(Lines 5039-5040)

But we cannot be sure of this; these may be no more than expressions, eventually to prove mere words, which gave vent to

the deep anger felt for Becket at that particular moment. Guernes is following here the order of events as given by William of Canterbury; we can see how closely he is translating from the Latin here if we compare the lines of Guernes' poem which we have just considered with what William tells us :

" Unus homo qui menducavit panem meum, levavit contra me calcaneum suum, Unus homo, beneficiis meis insultans, dehonestat totum genus regium, totum sine vindice conculcat regnum. Unus homo, qui manticato et claudio jumento primum prorupit in curiam, depulso regum stemmate, videntibus vobis fortunae comitibus, triumphans exsultat in solio."
 Coepit igitur in regia clientela percrebescere se ignaviae argui, irrogatus injurias domino non curare, contumelias obtentu pacis dissimulare. Concipiunt animos, iram exacuunt, odium mutuo loquentes instigant, et unanimes in primatem inflammantur.

(William of Canterbury ch.29, p.122)

Guernes may have simplified a little the arguments of the king for the benefit of his audience, but there can be little doubting the intensity of the anger which grew against the Archbishop of Canterbury. Guernes gives an accurate rendering of William's words and meaning, conscious perhaps that he knew that for the events at Bur he was probably a more reliable source than any he might find at Canterbury itself. He also follows William in relating the sequence of events when the three bishops arrived at the court, at least in their earlier

stages, although later, as we shall see, Guernes includes some interesting and original material.

The three prelates immediately threw themselves at the king's feet, in great distress; whereupon the king, forgetting for a moment his own anger and indignation (Dune
(Line 5046)
ad li reis Henris mult changié sun semblant), asked them the cause of their agitation. Once again it is Roger, Archbishop of York who speaks:

"Tuz cels ad mis Thomas en escumengement
Qui a vostre fiz furent a sun coronement,
E cels qui consentant en furent ensement."

(Lines 5056-5058)

The king scarcely has time to exclaim that if this is so, he himself is placed under the anathema, for he too consented and indeed instigated the coronation of young Henry as King of England, before the archbishop pursues his argument; it is not so much the outrage and injustice which the three of them are suffering, he explains, somewhat ingratiatingly, it seems, for he knows that their only crime has been to serve their king loyally and faithfully, but the fact that Becket has vilified and shamed them to the people of England in treating them in this way, which is the cause of their grief. He includes what Guernes no doubt considers, and in fact probably was, an exaggerated account of Becket's militant behaviour since his return to England, a report calculated to add further fuel to the fire of the king's anger:

"Puis qu'il fu el país venuz e repairez,
 Par vostre terre vait de granz genz espeisiez:
 Chevaliers e serjanz, d'armes apareilliez,
 Maine, e crient qu'il ne seit autre feiz essilliez;
 Quiert aides par tut, qu'il seit plus esforciez."

(Lines 5066-5070)

But for all Roger's subtle hinting and insinuations against Becket, his distinctly unfavourable presentation of events as far as the latter is concerned, it is the closing part of Roger's speech, as given by Guernes, which is of greatest interest and significance. He concludes in this way:

"Mais de ço qu'il nus ad tel tort demenez,
 Comme malvaises genz huniz e defamez.
 Se vus en faites el, n'en serez mais blasmez;
 Mais or atendez tant qu'il seit aseurez:
 Bien e tut choiement vengier vus en purrez."

(Lines 5076-5080)

Thus Roger is shown to be advocating that King Henry should bide his time before taking a stealthy yet conclusive revenge upon the Archbishop of Canterbury. This is the strongest evidence so far of Roger's hatred of Becket, and the strongest also of his implication in the events leading up to the latter's death. Guernes' source here was undoubtedly William of Canterbury, and it is interesting to compare his version with the lines of Guernes which we have just read:

"Subtinulit ille (Eborancensis): "Aequanimiter ferenda tempestas est, quam declinare non potes, ut ex quieta mente et modestia tolerantiae lacessitus et pessus injurias videri merearis. Quod facile fieri potest, si dissimulare potes inpraesentiarum irrogate, et injuriantem quasi securum ad tempus dimittis."

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

Although the message is essentially the same, William makes Roger much less overt, much less threatening than does Guernes, who seems determined to impute to the Archbishop of York a bitter desire for revenge, openly urging the king to seek it when a suitable moment presents itself. Guernes has already told us that Roger was bent on revenge and moreover that he mult seut mal mesler e deriere e devant^(Line 5050). This point he has just illustrated, and he pursues this theme, but first clears the ground for his argument in a most subtle and skilful way. Before he goes on to consider the actions of Roger of York and the four knights, Guernes tells his audience about the general reception of the Archbishop of Canterbury's letter and the arrival of the three bishops at the king's court. The picture which he paints of the reaction of the court is one of threatening anger:

Dunc jurerent sur sainz, e entre-afié sunt,
 Qu'en tuz les lius del siecle u trover le purrunt,
 Par desuz le mentun la langue liu trarunt,
 E les oilz de sun chief ansdous li creverunt;
 Ja mustier ne altel ne tens n'i garderunt.

(Lines 5091-5095)

Only the first line of this section seems to be taken from William of Canterbury's account.⁸⁶ No doubt the remainder is accurate in that it conveys the depth of anger and indignation which welled up against Becket, even if the details seem a little colourful. After a brief statement on the role played by the room at Bur in history, Guernes returns to this theme of general anger; at first this seems a little surprising, but he does so for a specific purpose:

Tuz li mielz de la curt se sunt entrafie'
 De faire e de furnir cele grant cruelte'.
 Mais en mun livre n'erent escrit ne nome':
 Quant par amendement lur ad Deus pardone',
 N'erent par mun escrit el siecle vergunde'.
 Tant furent espire' del felun susduiant
 Tut li mielz de la curt e tut li plus vaillant
 E tut li plus sené, e Engleis e Normant.
 E sunt ale' as porz, cha li un, la alquant:
 Diepe e Winchelse', Barbeflué e Witsant.

(Lines 5101-5110)

The purpose of this last exercise was to prevent news of the plans reaching Becket, but what is interesting is the way in which Guernes states his belief that just and honest men were led astray by the passions aroused at that time, and his statement that he will not name them, as they may have made their peace with God in this matter, and, since, for all he knows, they may have been forgiven by God, it is not his place to reveal their identities here, and put them to shame. He emphasises

several times that those misled ^{are} tut li mielz de la curt,
 (Lines 5107-5108)
tut li plus vaillant, tut li plus sené. He does not go

so far as to say that he personally attaches no blame to them, but he seems to be saying that he will not do so publicly.⁸⁷

But Guernes' approach does differ substantially from that of other biographers here. Both Grim and William of Canterbury emphasise two points in their treatment of this material:

firstly, they stress the importance of the hostility which the whole court felt towards Becket at this time, and it was part of this hostility which found its expression in the actions of the four knights who left quietly to murder the archbishop.

Secondly, both are very quick to exculpate the king himself, stating categorically his ignorance of the departure of the knights and of their intentions. Indeed, both include at this point in their accounts long testimonies to the king's innocence. William of Canterbury's account is particularly

lengthy and detailed, and he goes on to include a whole chapter, running to two pages, which he entitles "Excusatio regis", in which the king later explained his involvement, or rather lack of it, to the monks of Christchurch, Canterbury, who would include among their number at that time the author of

the Vita Sancti Thomae, of course.⁸⁸ When we come to consider Guernes' account, we find that he too stresses the degree of hostility at the court at Bur, but we should remember that he has laid more emphasis than either of his written Latin sources on the malicious influence of Roger of York in provoking this hostility. Secondly, he makes virtually no

reference to the king at all here. He neither absolves him from blame, nor castigates him for his anger; he skilfully leaves any mention of the king's penitence and contrition until after his account of Becket's death, thereby increasing its effectiveness and leaving this part of his account untrammelled by suggestions of remorse on anyone's part, and our unswerving sympathy must now be entirely reserved for the martyr.

But far from suggesting that the four knights departed on their own initiative, Guernes implicates Roger of Pont l'Évêque in Becket's murder in the most incriminating fashion. In so doing, and in naming both the group of four and the Archbishop of York he is pointedly going back on his avowed decision not to name names, and in a most remarkable passage, which merits quotation in full, goes on to reveal the details of the murderous plot:

Mais cil quatre felun e li Deu enemi
 (Par lur malvaise vie furent de Deu haï):
 Hue da Morevile, Willaumes de Traci
 E Reinalz li fiz Urs e li quarz altresi,
 -Ço fu Richarz li Brez, - sunt de la curt parti.
 Rogiers del Punt l'Evesque les aveit conveiez,
 E a faire le mal les ad mult enticiez:
 Par Thomas est li regnes troublez e empeiriez;
 S'il esteit mort, ço dit, tut sereit apaisiez.
 De quanqu'il en ferunt prent sur sei les pechiez.

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

(Lines 5121 - 5145)

With this relatively mild rebuke to the king, Guernes lets the four knights depart for England. But this criticism of Henry is of little weight when set beside the evidence which Guernes has set down against Archbishop Roger. With the exception of the naming of the four knights, to be found in William of Canterbury's account, the whole of the quoted passage is original. No other biographer attacks Roger for playing any direct part in plotting Becket's death; certainly Roger of Pontigny, who, as we have seen, uses Guernes as a source, does not include this information. Yet Guernes seems quite categorical in his assertions that the four knights

were in the pay of the Archbishop of York, that he briefed them with the charges that they were to put before Becket when they arrived at Canterbury, that he told them plainly peace would be restored by Becket's death, that he poisoned their thoughts to such an extent that, together with the payment, he becomes worthy of comparison with Judas in his selling of his master to the Jews. The attack on Roger is so virulent and so damning that Guernes must have carried his audience with him. He has gradually built up the figure of the Archbishop of York as being the arch enemy of Becket, as being an evil and corrupt force; whether he bases his accusations here on any oral source or whether he has simply extended the flimsy evidence of his written sources to compound his case against Roger it is ultimately not possible for us to know. Certainly Roger is never incriminated elsewhere in this fashion, and it would seem strange that such an important piece of evidence should remain unknown to other writers; Roger was never charged with more guilt than his part in the coronation of young Henry in 1170, and strangely no further mention of him is made in Guernes' poem, either in the context of guilt or of repentance or punishment, whereas Gilbert Foliot, for example, is made to express his grief and contrition. He is, almost conveniently, forgotten. All this seems to suggest that Guernes sought a villain for his piece, and what evidence he could find pointed to Roger as the most likely candidate. That a deep animosity existed between the two archbishops from the earliest associations

at Canterbury is beyond doubt, and Guernes has carefully nurtured this animosity since the beginning of his poem and the first mention of Roger of Pont l'Évêque.⁸⁹

But the poet seems now to be almost fanatical in his conviction of Roger's guilt, to which however, as we have just noted, he does not return. The safest conclusion is that in a desire to provide the knights with a strong motivation, and perhaps to deflect some of the blame from the king himself, Guernes has allowed circumstantial evidence, at best scanty in this instance, to suggest Roger, Becket's oldest enemy, as the instigator of Becket's murder. If so, he has allowed his instinct for historical accuracy to desert him here, but we have noted this phenomenon more than once before as the time of the murder in the cathedral approaches and both he and his audience become more conscious of the martyrdom and therefore the sanctity of the archbishop. We should not overlook the fact that in doing so the poet has provided his audience, albeit temporarily, with a complete villain and an object of their loathing and reprobation in the process, in the manner of a dramatic production.

Nor should we forget that in the second version of the poem, Guernes does not include the exonerating lines on the king's conduct which are to be found in the fragment of the first draft, and perhaps he increased the blame attached to the Archbishop of York in accordance with this more critical, condemning spirit.

With the four knights now instructed, eager and ready to depart, the scene is now set for the climax of Guernes' account.

(vi) The murder in the cathedral.

There can be little doubt that the story of Archbishop Thomas Becket's murder in the cathedral by the four knights, inspired by the anger of King Henry II, is the part of Becket's life which is best known to the greater part of the populace; in many cases it will be the only part, where other details of the archbishop's life will remain unknown, or perhaps only known sketchily. This is true in modern times, and has probably been true through the centuries. It is a phenomenon, scarcely a very surprising one, which has existed since the last quarter of the twelfth century. That the details of the murder should rapidly become widely known, even before Becket was canonised, is a natural process. We know from the account of William of Canterbury, who fled the cathedral a matter of minutes before Becket died, and from that of Edward Grim, who remained with the archbishop and was seriously injured in attempting to protect him, that witnesses were few indeed in those last moments, but they were not lacking during the later events of the late afternoon of December 29th 1170, which took place immediately before the murder, and even if they had been, the testimony of Edward Grim alone, who seems to have been in the archbishop's company continuously during the last hour of the archbishop's life, would have served to fill any gaps in our knowledge. It would be this part of the account which a mediaeval audience, like a modern one, would find most compelling, which the biographers would find themselves happily

called upon and entreated to recite most frequently. It is this part of Becket's life alone which has survived in the fragment of Benedict of Canterbury's work which has come down to us. It is here, perhaps, that we should expect to find the greatest concordance between the accounts of the biographers, and in this we should not be too greatly mistaken or disappointed. In the group of biographers which concern us, that is to say, William of Canterbury, Benedict of Canterbury, Edward Grim and Guernes, we shall find the following details in all their accounts: the unexpected arrival of the four knights at Canterbury, their admission to the inner room where Becket was finishing his meal with his monks, the initial exchanges between the knights and the refusal to be cowed by their threats: the departure of the four, the anxiety and haste of Becket's followers as they hustle him into the main body of the cathedral to hear vespers, the return of the knights, armed this time, a further, more heated discussion as Becket's supporters melt away, the final angry words, Becket's refusal to flinch or to leave the cathedral, and his murder. All agree also on the archbishop's readiness, amounting almost to willingness or even eagerness to suffer martyrdom. But equally we should not be surprised to discover differences and discrepancies between the various accounts, despite the broad agreement which can be reached on the most important details of the last hours of the archbishop's life.

Guernes opens his version of this section of Becket's

history by relating quite rapidly the details of the four knights' journey to Canterbury; their crossing of the channel in two pairs, two to Dover, two to Winchelsea: (this is a detail mentioned by none of Guernes' written sources): their reunion at Saltwood Castle, where they met with ~~Randulph de Broc~~: their gathering of a force of armed men, who accompany them to Canterbury four days after Christmas, with violent intentions to avenge the king:

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

(Lines 5166-5170)

Guernes' main source at this point seems to be William of Canterbury, although, like Edward Grim, he makes a passing comparison with Herod's slaughter of the innocents, in rather more explicit fashion than the Latin writer.

Guernes' account of the entry of the four knights into Becket's presence differs from those of the Latin biographers in that it is preceded by an audience with the seneschal William FitzNigel, who had not accompanied Becket during his exile, and who was now requesting permission to go the court of King Henry in France; Becket duly gave his consent, but as William left, he was met by the four knights, who sent him back to the archbishop to announce their presence, which he did. Becket ordered them to be admitted, but on

entering they sat down sullenly at the far end of the room from where Becket was finishing his meal, and no exchange of greetings took place. Guernes tells us that he does not know whether this was deliberate on Becket's part, or whether, being so deeply immersed in conversation with his monks, he simply did not notice them; at all events, when his attention was again drawn to the fact that they had entered, he seemed much puzzled by their reticence. The silence was eventually broken by Becket's calm greeting to them, but the only response he received was FitzUrse's quietly spoken Deus t'^(Line 5227)ait, at which, Guernes tells us, the archbishop immediately realized that they were come for no good purpose.

There follows the account of the exchanges between the knights and the archbishop which culminates in the departure of the intruders to arm themselves, as events were to prove, for the next encounter. This part of Guernes' poem bears marked similarities to three accounts, those of Edward Grim, William of Canterbury and, for the first time that can be positively identified, to the work of Benedict of Canterbury, of whose work, as we have seen, only a fragment has come down to us. By far the strongest resemblance, however, is to the first of these sources, Edward Grim, who, as we have seen, was with the archbishop in his final moments and received a severe arm wound in attempting to protect him from the first blows which fell upon the archbishop. We may speculate as to whether Guernes judged him the most accurate

and reliable source for this reason, but the fact remains that at times the French poet follows Grim's account almost literally.

Initially, FitzUrse informs Becket that they are come on the king's business, and requires to know whether he wishes to hear them in private or in the presence of his monks. After an unproductive exchange of civilities on this point, Becket calls all his people into the room, stating:

"Lai me cel uis ester:

Les paroles que j'oi ne deit un pas celer;
 Mais fai me tost chaenz tuz mes clers rapeler
 De mun privé conseil; nes en voil pas sevrer."

(Lines 5241-5244)

Thus the whole of Becket's entourage was present at this stage, and Guernes, as if wishing to illustrate the evil intent of the knights, and God's providence, tells us that it was as well that they were all recalled so speedily:

S'il ne fuissent ariere isi tost revenu,
 Se li felun eüssent arme u cultel eü,
 Entr'eaus l'eüssent mort; car puis l'unt coneü.
 Nis pur poi qu'il ne l'orent ocis e abatu
 Del bastun de la cruiz. Mais Deus l'ad destolu.

(Lines 5246-5250)

This detail, like so many others in this part of Guernes' poem, is borrowed from Chapter 77 of Edward Grim's

biography. Reginald FitzUrse pursues the catalogue of charges against the archbishop, accusing him of not keeping the peace agreement which he had concluded with King Henry, but of entering his kingdom with armed men, of excommunicating all those who were party to the coronation of Young Henry, and of wishing to deprive the latter of his crown; finally he states that the archbishop is to come to the king's court to give his reply to these charges. Becket calmly and reasonably refutes all these accusations, stating on the matter of the excommunications that in the last analysis they originate with the pope, and not with himself. Reginald takes up this last point, objecting that it is he, Becket, who has instigated the excommunications. He does not seek to deny this, but replies that the three bishops concerned must not look to him for aide ne solaz^(Line 5287), but rather should seek absolution at the pope's door. All these developments take place relatively rapidly, and the exchanges are certainly of a nature to hold the attention of an audience naturally eager to know the outcome. The archbishop is shown to be calm and composed in the face of this attack, and well able to answer the charges brought against him; in this respect Guernes can show him to have the better of the argument at this stage, which was probable, as he would have a much clearer and more profound knowledge of the issues under discussion than FitzUrse, whose grasp of the issues was demonstrably much more shallow and confused. The rising anger of the knights would no doubt have been fanned

by Becket's confident rebuttal of their charges, although Guernes, not unnaturally, does not seek to rationalize their actions, but rather shows them as becoming steadily more desperate and extreme.

At this juncture, Guernes omits a detail included by Grim, that of the knights' order to leave the kingdom, which Becket immediately refuses to do:

"Nunc igitur," aiunt carnifices, "hoc est praeceptum regis, ut de regno et terra quae ipsius subjacet imperio cum tuis omnibus egrediaris; neque enim pax erit tibi vel tuorum cuiquam ab hac die, qui pacem violasti." Ad haec ille, "Cessent," inquit, "minae vestrae et jurgia conquiescant."

(Edward Grim, ch.78, p.432)

Guernes does not render this in his poem, so that the next words of the knights, telling the archbishop that he will be better guarded than before, and will have little opportunity to flee, as he did once before, make little sense in his account, as they follow the archbishop's words on the excommunications and the need for obedience to the pope. He returns shortly to the question of leaving the country, however, as we shall see.

Guernes follows Grim in telling us now that Becket is neither alarmed nor dismayed by the threats which the knights utter, but announces his determination never to be forced into a flight from his see again:

Ne s'en est sainz Thomas esfreez n'esmaiez:

"N'en serai par nul humme, fait il, ja mais chaciez.

Ja mais n'iere pur humme fors del pais getez.

- Coment? funt li il dunc; pur le rei n'en istrez?"

- Nun, fait il; de la mere n'iere ja mais trovez.

N'en istrai pur nul humme; ici me troverez."

(Lines 5294-5299)

Guernes informs us, as Grim does not, that these words were particularly provocative, and they had their effect upon his four adversaries. En ire les aveit cil moz mult (line 5300) enflambeza. Moreover, the poet goes on to show the king almost in a favourable light, as Becket expresses his faith in his monarch and his disbelief that he would resort to such threats. This statement may naturally have been no more than a subtle piece of psychology on the part of the archbishop, and the king is scarcely raised in our esteem at this moment. Indeed, the confrontation between Becket and the knights is now too immediate for the king to occupy our thoughts, whatever his part in this drama may or may not have been. In Grim's account Becket here expressed his faith both in his heavenly king and in his earthly monarch. Guernes, more briefly, omits one and attenuates the other. But his words convey nonetheless the archbishop's resolution, his admonition of the knights' threats, his scorn for their violence.

Guernes now turns to two other sources, William of

Canterbury and Benedict of Canterbury, to find and include in his poem an exchange which Edward Grim does not mention. Becket cites his grievances against the king's representatives who, he claims, have committed numerous offences against his church and his people, seizing the former and beating the latter, stealing his wine and docking the tail of his packhorse. FitzUrse replies that such accusations and grievances should have been set before the king in his council if there were any substance in them. The archbishop replies that the king granted him power, as the knight himself must remember, to deal with and correct such matters on his own authority. Given the enormity of the event which all Guernes' audience know to be imminent, it seems almost incongruous that Becket should haggle at this juncture over barrels of wine and packhorses. But not only does it grant him the opportunity to remind the knights, and thus, Guernes his audience, of the settlement with the king, according to which Becket interprets his right to restitution, it shows Guernes' desire to give a complete picture once again. There can be little doubt that such matters, minor as they may seem to us, were an integral part of Becket's interpretation of the peace agreed with Henry, and almost constituted a test-case in establishing the degree of the king's goodwill. As such, Guernes includes them; they are scarcely the issue over which the archbishop's death was resolved, but the discussion here reflects, in the mind of Becket himself, the importance of the understanding with the king, and of the degree of freedom to exact justice which

he understood to have become his through the peace concluded with Henry. Guernes' poem, by including them, offers a more complete account of the exchanges, from which the strength of Becket's position is emphasised to the audience. We are brought to appreciate that Becket is shown to be in the right, that his demands and actions are fully justified, that it is the knights who are infringing the terms and spirit of the agreement. Becket concludes this part of the argument with a forceful affirmation of the justice of his claims and actions:

"Se mei en estoveit testimonies vochier,
 Reinald, ja fus tu la, e dui cent chevalier,
 U li reis m'otreia que deüsse vengier
 Les torz de saint' iglise. Jes ferai adrescier,
 E mei le covient faire: ç'apent a mun mestier."

(Lines 5316-5320)

The argument now shifts slightly, the knights asking Becket whether he considers the king a traitor to his word, and whether the archbishop is not dishonouring the king by his behaviour concerning the bishops who officiated at the coronation of young Henry. Becket again denies these charges, affirming his right, acknowledged and confirmed by King Henry himself, to act as he has been doing to protect sainte mere iglise.^(Line 5338) When threatened with violence if he does not absolve those whom he has excommunicated, Becket's reply is dramatically unflinching:

-Se vus estes, fait il, de part le rei venu,
 Ne serez par menaces plus duté ne cremu.
 Ici poëz ferir, en cest col tut a nu;
 D'un cultel de mæalle ne vus ert defendu."
 Mist sa main a sun col. E cil s'en sunt eissu.

(Lines 5341-5345)

Guernes here has given a version which seems to draw on the accounts of all three of his written sources at this juncture, but he is briefer, more succinct, and therefore more dramatic than the Latin writers. He does not use Grim's evidence that Becket charged the knights at this point with having come with the intention of killing him, which Grim relates in the following way:

"Num me,' ait, 'venistis occidere? universorum Judici commisi causam meam; unde nec minis moveor, neque enim gladii vestri promptiores sunt ad feriendum quam animus meus ad martyrium. Quaerite, qui vos fugiat; me enim pede ad pedem in praelio Domini reperietis.'"

(Edward Grim, ch.78, p.433)

Rather he follows Benedict of Canterbury in recording the readiness of the archbishop to die, and does not directly charge the knights with the intention of seeking his death. This makes his account shorter than that of Grim, and, as we saw to be the case in the early part of the poem, Guernes avoids widening the issue by biblical or historical comparisons, maintaining a more direct and immediate approach to Becket's

circumstance. Only after the knights have departed, uttering threats and charging that Becket should be closely guarded, and Becket had followed them to the door of the room, does the archbishop, according to Guernes, return, sit down and fall into conversation with John of Salisbury, whose advice, suspecting what the plan of the four knights might now be, is that Becket should call a meeting of his council. Guernes shows Becket to answer this speech with composure and resolution, and John's further statement seems to emphasise Becket as a man apart from his monks and other followers:

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

Ne pur mort de justise ne me verrez flechir.

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

Ne il ne sunt pas mielz apresté del ferir

Que mis curages est del martire suffrir."

Fait li maistre Johans: "Ne sumes apresté

Que voillum mes encore estre a la mort livré;

Car en pechié gisum e en chaitivité,

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

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

(Lines 5371-5380)

This exchange is particularly interesting when we compare it with the account given by Benedict of Canterbury:

"Unus autem clericorum suorum, videlicet magister Joannes Saresberiae, vir litterarum multarum, eloquentiae magnae

profundique consilii, et, quod his majus est, in Dei timore et amore fundatus, conquerenti tale dedit responsum: 'Domine', inquit, 'res nimis admirabilis est, quod nullius admittis consilium. Et quae necessitas fuit tantae excellentiae viro ad ampliorem malignorum illorum exacerbationem surgere, et post eos ad ostium usque procedere? Nonne satius esset, communicato cum his, qui praesentes sunt, consilio, mitius eis dedisse responsum, qui tibi quidquid possunt machinantur mali, ut te ad iracundiam provocatum in sermone saltem capiant?' Sanctus autem, qui pro justitia et libertate ecclesiae ad mortis angustias, tanquam ad quietis delicias, suspirabat, inquit, 'Consilium jam totum acceptum est. Novi satis quid agere debeam.' Et magister Joannes, 'Utinam, annuente Deo, bonum sit.'"

(Benedict of Canterbury, *Fragmentum I*, p.9)

The early part of Guernes' account of the conversation contains much less implied criticism of Becket's action than does Benedict's version of John's speech, and conveys much less than the Latin account of John's misgivings. Moreover, Benedict himself tells us of Becket's willingness to die pro justitia et libertate ecclesiae, whereas Guernes has the archbishop utter this willingness himself. Guernes does not wish to convey to his audience the calm and subtle reasoning of John of Salisbury, but rather concentrates on those elements of the exchange which reveal and emphasise Becket's sanctity and piety. On the other hand, the poet shuns any reference to a warning vision which Becket had, according to William of Canterbury, whilst he was at Pontigny.⁹⁰ Guernes is usually

suspicious of visions. At this point in his poem he is drawing Becket in simple, readily identifiable lines for his audience, concentrating now on his firmness and resolution, now on the justice of his cause, and sometimes on the sanctity which he displays, all calculated to reveal Becket in the most favourable light. This in itself we shall hardly find surprising, but we should note the skilful selection and arrangement which the poet employs to achieve his picture. Now, more than ever, we must remain assured in our belief in the archbishop.

We learn that, whilst this conversation has been taking place, the knights were outside, arming themselves in the grounds of the cathedral. As Guernes ominously points out
(Line 5384)
Tost furent apreste de grant mal comencier. Guernes here makes borrowings from all three written sources, Edward Grim, William of Canterbury and Benedict of Canterbury; now he seems to be following one of the three most closely, and then another; nor must we underestimate the strength of the oral tradition at this stage in Becket's story. All three Latin writers agree that the archbishop showed no fear or concern at his circumstance, displaying a total disregard for danger. Guernes conveys Becket's state of mind when he is told by his monks that the knights are preparing for violence:

-Ne me verrez pur ço, fait il, rien esmaier.

Ci atendrai tut ço que Deus m'i volt jugier.

(Lines 5389-5390)

Similarly, all three Latin writers give details of how the knights initially found their way into the cathedral barred, but eventually found an alternative route, aided by Robert de Broc.⁹¹ Guernes accordingly gives us these details in his poem. At this juncture Guernes tells us that many of the monks fled, only a handful, including Edward Grim, remaining with the archbishop. The poet cannot resist making the natural comparison with the disciples deserting Christ at the approach of the Roman soldiers to the Mount of Olives:

Quant la gent saint Thomas les oïrent venir,
 Cume berbiz pur lous s'en pristrent a fuïr,
 Si cume li apostle, quant il virent saisir
 Le maisnie Pilate Jesu, qui pur murir
 Esteit venuz el mund, pur s'iglise establir.

(Lines 5411-5415)

This is a further example of Guernes' emphasis on the sanctity of the archbishop in the last days of his life. We see another interesting example of this as the few monks who have remained with him try to usher him away to a place of safety, which they imagine to be in the cathedral. We learn that Becket is still reluctant to go with them, and Guernes cites the following reason:

Car puis qu'il repaire d'essil d'ultre la mer,
 Dist il, oiant plusurs qui l'ai oï cunter,
 Qu'il murreit en cel an, bien le volt afermer.
 Or n'i out mais de l'an que dous jurs a passer:

Li tierz ert pres alez, u il deveit finer.

Nis le jur de Noël li oï um gehir,

Oiant pluisurs qu'i erent pur sun sermun oïr:

"Ci sui venuz, fait il, entre vus mort suffrir."

Or ert venuz li jurs quel covint acumplir.

E sa vie e sa mort l'unt fait mult halt martir.

(Lines 5421-5430)

Guernes does not tell us how Becket knew with such certainty that he was going to die, but rather he emphasises, in characteristic fashion, the fact that reliable witnesses as to his statement were not lacking. He goes on to reinforce this point, quoting this time as his source Alexander of Wales, who is not mentioned by any of the French poet's written sources:

Nis idunc a la fin de sun sermonement

Ad dit un de ses clers en prophetizement,

Alissandre de Wales, oiant mult de la gent:

"Chaienz ad un martir, saint Alfe, veirement;

Un altre en i avrez, se Deu plaist, a present."

(Lines 5431-5435)

It is typical of Guernes that he should not give instances of visions or divine revelations, as do, at slightly different stages of their narratives, but very much to the same end, William of Canterbury and Benedict of Canterbury.⁹² Becket's credibility is established in his account by, on the one hand, the very status he has attained in our eyes, and

on the other, by the testimony of the witnesses whom the poet is quick to attest. Not surprisingly, however, his account is not entirely free from the type of cliché which must have abounded at Becket's tomb in the last quarter of the twelfth century:

E sa vie e sa mort l'unt fait mult halt martir (Line 5430).

If we compare this statement with the first five thousand lines of Guernes' poem, we may be surprised to find him talking in terms of Becket's life earning him the crown of martyrdom, for this has hardly been Guernes' approach to Becket's life; even in the account of his death, he usually manages to retain a less panegyric tone than the Latin biographers, although we could hardly argue that as the time of Becket's murder approached, it is entirely lacking in his poem. Nevertheless, the following passage, from Edward Grim's account, may serve to illustrate the difference in tone which most frequently prevails between the Latin biographies and the French poem:

" Simul etiam, qui ab olim martyrii flagrabat amore, implendi illud occasione, ut videbatur, adepta, ne differret ipse, vel penitus auferret sibi, si in ecdesiam fugeret, formidavit. Insistunt monachi, dicentes non decere ipsum vespertinis deesse laudibus, quae jam tunc celebrabantur in ecdesia. Mansit ille immobilis minoris reverentiae loco, felicem illam ac multis praeoptatam suspiriis, multa devotione quaesitam, consummationis suae horam exspectare deliberans,

ne, sicut dictum est, aedis sacrae reverentia et impios arceret a proposito et sanctum cordis sui desiderio defraudaret. Certus namque quod ab hac miseria migraret post martyrium, postquam ab exilio reversus est, multis audientibus dixisse fertur, "Habetis hic dilectum Deo ac vere sanctum martyrem Elfegum; alium vobis divina miseratio providebit; non morabitur." O sinceram et securam conscientiam pastoris boni! qui in gregis sui causa ac defensione nec propriam mortem differre voluit, cum valeret, nec vitare tortorem, ut pastoris sanguine satiata luporum rabies ovibus abstineret."

(Edward Grim, ch. 79, p. 434)

In contrast, Guernes simply tells us, apart from those details which we have already considered:

Pur c'atendi iluec, ne volt la mort guenchir.

Mais Deus le voleit faire en plus bel liu chair.

(Lines 5439-5440)

The monks struggle manfully, some pushing, some pulling, to force Becket into the cathedral itself. Guernes follows Grim in telling us that they overcame the difficulty of a locked door, and for once, Guernes' la a Deus fait vertuz^(Line 5452) is more striking than Grim's account of how the lock yielded in remarkable fashion. Becket is almost, according to Guernes, bundled into the main body of the cathedral. Whilst this is taking place, the four knights, accompanied by Hugh Mauclerc, enter the cathedral. Guernes tells us that they were followed by four other knights, but he is the

only biographer to give us this detail, and one must agree with M. Walberg here in thinking that the poet has made an error, possibly taking a second reference to the four knights who actually committed the murder as indicating a second group of men, when this evidently is highly improbable, especially as no further mention of them is to be found, even in Guernes' account. 93

In order to protect the archbishop, the monks lock the doors, hoping to check the threatening advance of Becket's adversaries. But he immediately orders that they should be opened again:

Contre els unt les uis clos des moines li alquant.
 "Ovrez, fait sainz Thomas, quis ala atendant;
 Par sainte obedi^uence, fait il, le vus comant.
 Lur voil lur laissez faire, ciu sunt e nun savant.
 Tant cum tendrez les uis, n'irai un pas avant.
 Nuls hum ne deit chastel ne farmeté ne tur
 Faire de la maisun Deu, le verai seigneur.
 Mais nus cleric, qui en sumes ministre e servitur,
 En devriun adès estre defendeur,
 Faire del cors escu contre le malfaitur."

(Lines 5476-5485)

Indeed, Guernes tells us, it is the archbishop himself who turns back to open the doors. At this juncture Guernes is following William of Canterbury's account much more closely than that of Edward Grim.⁹⁴ However, William does not have the

archbishop dismiss his clerks in the same way as the French poet. According to Guernes he simply sends them away to sing vespers.

(Line 5482)

Becket has been talking of La maisun Deu, as we have seen, and now, by contrast, he has la maisnie al Satan, the four knights, and Hugh Mauclerc, burst into the cathedral. When Reginald FitzUrse demands where the traitor to the king is to be found, Guernes tells us, Becket does not hear him, but when he calls out for the archbishop, Becket calmly turns to face him. FitzUrse immediately challenges Becket with the name of traitor, at which the exchanges become dramatically more heated and animated:

"Traïtres le rei estes, fait il; ca en vendrez!"
Car fors del saint mustier traïnier le quida.
Bien crei que sainz Thomas a cele feiz s'ira
De ço que cil Reinalz le detraist e buta;
Si ad enpainted Reinalt qu'ariere rehusa,
E l'acor del mantel hors des mains li sachá.
"Fui, malveis hum, d'ici! fait li sainz corunez.
Jo ne sui pas traïtres, n'en dei estre retez.
-Fuez! fait li Reinalz, quant se fu purpensez.
-Nel ferai, fait li sainz. Ici me troverez,
E vos granz felonies ici acumplirez."

(Lines 5515-5525)

Guernes does not follow Grim in telling us that Becket called FitzUrse "pander", but in many other respects he does

follow the Latin biography. When challenged to absolve those whom he had excommunicated, Becket was as steadfast as ever in his refusal to acquiesce, even though there can by this stage have been little doubt in his mind as to what the outcome of such a refusal was likely to be:

Fait il: "De voz manaces ne sui espoentez;
 Del martire suffrir sui del tut aprestez.
 Mais les miens en laissez aler, nes adesez,
 E faites de mei sul ço que faire en devez."
 N'ad les suens li bons pastre a la mort obliez.

(Lines 5536-5540)

Indeed it is evident from these words that Becket was now fully reconciled to the idea of his own martyrdom, and seemed to be welcoming it; his concern for the fate of his people is to be found also in Grim's account. Again Guernes makes the comparison between Becket and Christ on the Mount of Olives:

Einsi avint de Deu, quant il ala orer
 Desur Munt Olivete la nuit a l'avesprer,
 E cil li comencierent quil quistrent, a orier:
 "U est li Nazareus? - Ci me poez trover,
 Fist lur Deus, mais les miens en laissez tuz aler."

(Lines 5541-5545)

The effect of this comparison could hardly be lost on Guernes' audience. Guernes now develops an idea which, as M. E. Walberg points out, he may have found initially in

Edward Grim's account:⁹⁵

"Quorum exemplo et suffragiis crucifixus mundo et concupiscentiis ejus, tanta animi constantia ac si in carne non esset, quicquid carnifex inferebat, sustinuit ac superavit."

(Edward Grim, ch.80, p.436)

We may speculate whether this brief reference by the Latin writer inspired Guernes, but, in a passage which appears to be entirely his own work, Guernes pursues the theme of the archbishop as a saviour:

Car sainz Thomas s'esteit apuiez al piler
 Qui suffri mort en cruiz pur s'iglise estorer;
 Ne l'en poeit nuls huem esluignier ne oster.
 Mais ore en coveneit un sul a mort livrer,
 Al piler del mustier, pur le pueple salver.
 Car cil qui mielz deüssent saint' iglise tenses,
 La voldrent, e ses membres, del tut agraventer,
 Le piler e le chief qu'il sustint, aterrorer.
 Icel sanc de pechié covint par sanc laver,
 Pur relever le chief, le chief del chief doner.

(Lines 5551-5560)

Again, Guernes tells us, it is God's intervention which prevents the archbishop from being treated in a manner too humiliating. He was being protected by Edward Grim, when all other support had fled. Not unnaturally, Guernes follows Grim's own account here, but, typically, has Grim accost the knights before they actually attack him:

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

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

Esguardez u vus estes e quel sunt li feirié.

Main sur vostre arcevesque metez a grant pechie!"

(Lines 5571-5574)

Grim does not tell us the words he spoke to the knights, or indeed whether he addressed them at all, but Guernes makes him speak vehemently and dramatically in defence of his archbishop.

It is at this moment that Grim tells us in his account that Becket knew for certain that the time of his death had come:

"Cernens igitur martyr invictus horam imminere quae miserae mortalitati finem imponeret, paratam sibi et promissam a Domino coronam immortalitatis jam proximam fieri, inclinata in modum orantis cervice, junctis pariter et elevatis sursum manibus, Deo et sanctae Mariae et beato martyri Dionysio suam et ecclesiae causam commendavit."

(Edward Grim, ch.81, p.437)

Guernes follows this version quite closely, capturing the archbishop's air of piety and quiet calm as the knights approach and he resigns himself to death, commending himself and his church to heaven:

Or veit bien sainz Thomas sun martire en present.

Ses mains joint a sun vis, a Damnedeu se rent.

Al martyr saint Denis, qui dulce France apent,

E as sainz de l'iglise se comande erramment,

La cause saint' iglise e la sue ensement.

(Lines 5576-5580)

There seems to be some confusion among the biographers as to who struck the first blow, and in what order the knights subsequently struck the wounded archbishop.⁹⁶ What is certain, however, is that once the first blow had been struck, glancing off the archbishop's head and wounding Edward Grim seriously in the arm, the swords rained down a succession of vicious blows under which Becket succumbed:

Quant ne porent le saint hors del mustier geter,
 Enz el chief de l'espee grant colp li vait duner,
 Si que de la corune le cupel en porta
 E la hure abati e granment entama.
 Sur l'espaule senestre l'espee li cula,
 Le mantel e les dras tresqu'al quir encisa,
 E le braz Eduvard pres tut en dous colpa.
 Dunc l'aveit a cel colp maistre Eduvarz guerpi.
 "Ferez, ferez!" fait il; mais idunc le ferì
 Danz Reinalz li fiz Urs, mais pas ne l'abati.
 Idunc le referi Willaumes de Traci,
 Que tut l'escervelad, e sainz Thomas chai.

(Lines 5584-5595)

Once the knights have finished their gruesome work, and Hugh Mauclerc, following them to the scene of Becket's death, had placed his foot on Becket's neck and poked with the end of his sword at Becket's brains, stating, Alum nus en ...
 (line 5635)
ja mais ne resurdrâ!, Guernes goes on to relate how the knights rushed out of the cathedral, shouting the king's name.

They proceeded to ransack the archbishop's palace, emptying his chests and stealing gold and silver vessels, taking his archbishop's robes and sixty of his books:

Les chambres saint Thomas e les maisuns roberent;
 N'il voldrent rien laissier, un e el en porterent.
 Les chevaux saint Thomas tuz ensemble en menerent;
 Ses hummes e ses clers, la u il les troverent,
 Pristrent od lur aveir, e sis enprisunerent.

(Lines 5676-5680)

Guernes now discusses, at some length, how God deals with the perpetrators of such crimes, and explains to his audience why they have apparently not been punished for their misdeeds. He summarises his thoughts on this matter, and they appear for the most part to be original, as no equivalent for them is to be found in any of his Latin sources, in the following way:

Mais la vengeance Deu n'est pas ainsi hastee,
 Qui somunt que la culpe seit encor amende.
 Deus ne volt ne desire que l'aneme seit dampnee.
 Ne la semaine n'est encore pas entree
 U la felunie ert e vengie e trovee.

(Lines 5716-5720)

We may see this as a piece of rationalisation on the part of the poet to explain to his audience why no retribution has been demanded of the knights, but to the medieval mind this is a perfectly acceptable interpretation of the events. It is an interpretation which Guernes emphasises, for he has

already advanced it at the opening of this passage on the period which followed immediately the archbishop's death:

Mais Deus, qui les mesfaiz, quant il bien volt, justise,
 Ne voleit pas souffrir que vengeance en fust prise
 Del saint martyr qui fu ocis en sainte iglise.

(Lines 5688-5690)

Guernes goes on to relate the actions of Robert and Randolph de Broc, and how the monks at Canterbury were terrified by the gross threats which they received. Guernes effectively contrasts the attitudes of the two parties, not surprisingly casting the de Broc family in the role of the darkest villains. In the course of their actions, the monks discover Becket's hair shirt hidden beneath his clothing, next to his skin. This lice-infested garment served to reinforce their belief in Becket's saintliness, and was a source of great wonder and awe, joy and sadness, and developing his theme from material found in Grim's account, Guernes gives an original interpretation of the effect of this discovery, and of its significance:

Car mult plus grief martyre suffri, tant cum fu vis,
 Que ne fist el mustier, la u il fu ocis;
 Car erramment transi e en joie fu mis;
 Mais cele grant vermine dunt il esteit purpris,
 Le quivra plusurs anz, e les nuiz e les dis.
 De lui furent li moine e mult dolent e lié:
 De co furent dolent quel virent detrenchié,
 Mais de sa vie furent, quant la sorent, haitié.

Mais s'eussent sun cors tut nu a nu cergié,
 Des curgies l'eüssent trové tut devescié;
 Car en cel jur meesmes qu'il fu si decolpez,
 Eut esté saint Thomas treis feiz disciplinez.
 A grant honor fu dunc es crutes enterrez,
 Pur pour des Brokeis, que il ne fust trovez.
 Mais or est par le mund cremuz e honurez.
 Icil premiers martyres fu en amendement
 Des pechiés qu'il out fait jadis seculerment:
 Encontre les granz aises suffri le grant turment.
 E li secunz martyres fut en saintissement,
 Car par l'autre vint il a cest derainement.

(Lines 5811-5830)

This is an interesting passage for a number of reasons. Firstly, through the reaction of the monks, we see Becket already elevated in their minds to the status of a saint, and the implication is evidently there for the audience to react in the same way. This Guernes achieves without actually stating that Becket is a saint, but it is difficult not to interpret his lines with that meaning. The knowledge of the hairshirt, the scourgings, and the secrecy with which both were guarded, all go towards the composition of this picture. Secondly, the notion of the double 'martyrdom' reveals an interesting facet of Guernes' vision of the archbishop; although the picture of Becket secretly atoning for the sins of his earlier life may be intended as no more than a simple counterbalancing

metaphor to his later saintliness and piety, the line
 (Line 5827)
des pechie's qu'il out fait jadis seculerment, suggests that
 Guernes did not entirely condone certain aspects of Becket's
 conduct in earlier life. There was precious little
 intimation of this whilst Guernes was giving his account of
 that earlier part of Becket's life, and justification was
 found in almost every case for his actions throughout the
 course of Becket's life. Guernes is now perhaps, given
 the evidence of Becket's own atonement, and therefore implied
 consciousness of the criticism that might have been levelled
 at him, proving to his audience that if there were any case for
 Becket to answer, and he never actually admits that there is,
 these revelations after the archbishop's death are more than
 sufficient answer to such charges, and go further, proving
 indeed an unwarranted degree of sanctity and self-denial. The
 implication seems to be that in the light of this new evidence,
 no-one should have grounds for doubting that Becket is worthy
 of the title of martyr and saint.

It would be most surprising, given the atmosphere in
 Canterbury in the years following Becket's death, and bearing
 in mind its renewed status as a place of pilgrimage, if Guernes
 were to conclude his account of Thomas Becket without reference
 to the countless miracles which were claimed. He seems to
 take his lead here from Grim,⁹⁷ but after his introductory lines
 on God's love for his servant, the French poet contents himself
 with a faithful rendering into French of Grim's account, and

neither writer is exceptionally expansive on the subject:

Mult est bien saint Thomas de Deu nostre Seignur;
 E tuz li manz le veit, n'en querrum menteür.
 Ne fu unches oï des le siecle primur
 Que Deus a humme mort mustrast si grant amur;
 Mult granz miracles fait pur lui e nuit e jur.
 En terre est Deus od nus pur amur al martyr,
 E les morz fait revivre, mutz parler, surz oïr,
 Les contraiz redrescier, gutus, fevrus guarir,
 Ydropikes, leprus en sante restablir,
 Cius veer, en lur sens les desvez revenir.
 Pluisur rei le requierent en dreit pelerinage,
 Li prince, li barun, li duc od lur barnage,
 Genz d'aliens país, de mult divers language,
 Prelat, moine, reclus e maint en pounage;
 E ampolles reportent en signe del veage.

(Lines 5881-5895)

It is in the nature of miracles that each of us must believe them or not, and that without that belief, no degree of reasoning or argument can persuade those who do not believe to change their minds. Many of those who came to Canterbury at the time that Guernes was reciting his poem were already persuaded, as their very presence there attested. They perhaps were less in need of persuasion than any others. To attempt to convert those who doubted would almost certainly in most cases have proved a fruitless task. It must also be remembered that to the

converted, any attempt at rationalisation would have been tediously unnecessary. They had already seen, heard or accepted the evidence. The relation of Becket's life for others would be sufficient proof of Becket's sanctity.

His remarkably rapid canonisation reflects a popular belief in his place among the saints. Even so, we may consider it as rather surprising that Guernes should place such little

emphasis on a line such as les morz revivre, mutz parler, surz oin, (Line 5887)

almost as if he is reporting the beliefs held by the majority, who could not be mistaken. Little attempt is made to justify these claims, but as we have seen, for those who wished to believe in them, the most effective evidence was to be found at Canterbury, and the atmosphere there counted for more than any amount of persuasion. We may still conclude that Guernes' account, however, succeeds in maintaining a greater degree of detachment than we might have anticipated, even allowing for his protestations of historical accuracy, and for the extent to which he has succeeded in justifying these claims throughout his poem.

It is interesting and perhaps significant that Guernes attaches so much importance to the pilgrimage of Henry II to Canterbury in the summer of 1174. Even when we bear in mind certain circumstances - the fact that Becket had been canonised by March 1173, and both developments were still fresh in the minds of Guernes' audience - we may deduce that Guernes considers it important because it marks the acknowledgment on the part of the king of the validity of Becket's case, or at

least, it can be interpreted in that light. It can be shown to give greater credence and value to Becket's life, the stand which he took, and his death. Indeed, the efficacy of Henry's pilgrimage and penitence at Becket's tomb seemed to emphasise the point, for thereafter Henry, bitterly involved with a rebellion, suddenly and almost incredibly gained the upper hand in the struggle, and this message could hardly be lost on supporters and detractors alike in the question of Becket's sanctity. That Henry's motives were largely dictated by political considerations⁹⁸ would scarcely occur to those avidly committed to Becket's cause during his lifetime, and it must have seemed a potent piece of proof of Becket's sanctity to more than biographers such as Guernes and those who came to Canterbury on pilgrimages and to hear such biographies. The involvement of such a formidable opponent of Becket during his struggle with the king as Gilbert Foliot could only serve to heighten the esteem and reverence in which Becket was now held. For all that, Guernes' account still reads as one written by a firm believer in the justice and justification of the saint's cause, rather than by one who believed passionately that his canonisation itself was the sole reason to revere him, or that his canonisation rendered all other considerations in the debate meaningless. Had either of these two possibilities applied to Guernes' case, he would surely have spent much more time and given far greater emphasis to the miracles than is in fact the case.

Perhaps we can gain a clearer picture of Guernes' concept of Becket if we consider the lines which occur a little before he goes on to add his account of King Henry's pilgrimage to Canterbury. In these lines the poet draws a comparison between Thomas Becket and the first Saint Thomas, and discusses the role which he sees each as playing in the history of the Church:

Li sainz martyrs dunt vus l'estorie oï avez,
 La nuit de saint Thomas, devant Noël, fu nez,
 Quant um chantout les vespres; après vespres, levez;
 E après saint Thomas fu Thomas apelez.
 Quant um chantout les vespres, el halt ciel fu portez.
 Li parreins fu ocis e gist en Orient,
 Car saint' iglise esteit idunc en creissement.
 Cist fu ocis el Nort, e garde l'Occident,
 Pur s'iglise qui ert tut' en dechaement.
 Noël e Jursalem unt parti igalment.
 Pur la terrestre iglise furent andui ocis;
 Le celestiel regne unt par lur mort conquis.
 E al servise Deu unt tuz les cinc sens mis,
 E tuz les cinc degrez unt muntez e purpris.
 Tut le mund de dous parz unt en lur garde pris.

(Lines 5856-5870)

Although this comparison undoubtedly contains that element of rationalisation which has always been popular with biographers, in the appraisal of saints' lives, we should note that Guernes argues ~~and indeed~~ emphasises that Becket not only died for

the Church but also lived for it, and that if by his death, like his namesake, he earned his place in heaven by the manner of his death, he also, by his care and concern and the devotion of his life al servise Deu,^(Line 5868) did faithful service to the cause of the Church during his lifetime. If, as we saw in earlier chapters, Guernes did not see the early part of Becket's life, specifically that time before his consecration, as a model of piety or saintliness, we should hardly be surprised that in the closing section of his poem such early rashness or faults as Becket may then have committed are overlooked or glossed by such comments as fu en amendement^(Lines 5826-5827) des pechiés qu'il out fait jadis seculerment. The relative restraint with which the poet concludes his work is more remarkable than such inconsistencies in a work of this length, and if in the last analysis Becket's youthful misdemeanours are happily overlooked, Guernes does at least in drawing his poem to the conclusion which we would doubtless anticipate, give the evidence a chance to speak for itself.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. For the full text and William's account of the early disagreements, see William of Canterbury, chs. 11-13, pp.12-14 .
2. See above, chapter one, p.44 .
3. For the full text, see Grim, ch.23, p.374 .
4. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.lxxi and p.232 .
5. See above, chapter one, p.47ff .
6. For the full accounts, see Guernes' poem, lines 771-826; Grim, chs. 24-25, pp.374-376; William of Canterbury, ch.11, pp.12-13 .
7. For the full accounts of the Council of Clarendon in the two Latin authors here, see Grim, chs. 28-31, pp.379-383; William of Canterbury, chs. 14-17, pp.14-23 .
8. Guernes interprets Grim, and perhaps also William of Canterbury, to mean that King Henry had the customs written down only after Becket's agreement, and this is certainly the probable meaning of Grim, although Henry may have had them prepared in advance, unknown to the archbishop.
9. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.238 .
10. See William of Canterbury, ch.16, pp.17-18. The chapter is too long to be quoted in full here .
11. See Grim, ch.33, p.385 .
12. See William of Canterbury, ch.19, pp.25-29 .
13. See William of Canterbury, ch.20, pp.29-30 .
14. See above, chapter one, pp.56-57 .

15. See William FitzStephen, Vita Sancti Thomae Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi et Martyris, ch.39, p.50, in ed.J.C.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, seven volumes, (Rolls series, London, 1875-1885), volume III. In the following pages, unless otherwise stated, references to this work will be to this edition; chapter and page references where appropriate will be given directly after the quotation, in the following form: (FitzStephen, ch.39, p.50).
16. See FitzStephen, ch.38, pp.49-50; and ch.48, p.59.
17. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas .
18. See FitzStephen, ch.42, pp.53-54 .
19. Walberg, in La Vie de Saint Thomas, pp.246-249 and pp.lxxvii, and in an article entitled Sur l'authenticité de deux passages de la Vie de Saint Thomas le Martyr, in Neuphilologische Mitteilungen (Helsingfors), volume 20, 1919, pp.64-76, discusses the problems of lines 1746-1755 and 1781-1805, which are of doubtful authenticity. He accepts them finally, suggesting tentatively that they may originally have been intended as emendations by the author. He concludes by saying that such an unpolished juxtaposition of material drawn from his two main written sources as is to be found in these two instances is untypical, almost unworthy, of Guernes .
20. For FitzStephen's account of the whole of the Council of Northampton, see FitzStephen, chs.38-61, pp.49-70 .
21. Cf. St.Matthew, ch.22, vv.1-14 .
22. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, pp.251-252 .
23. For the whole of this passage, see lines 2171-2185.

24. Walberg expresses doubts as to whether this passage, even if authentic, is part of the original draft of the poem. He feels that it may be a later addition; see Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.lxxxii and pp.257-258 .
25. See above, for example, the beginning of chapter four .
26. See above, chapter one, p.55 and p.p.59-60.
27. See Grim, ch.28, p.380; William of Canterbury, ch.17, pp.18-23 William is so close to the original Latin of the Constitutions as we have it that we cannot tell which Guernes had in front of him when he translated them into French. (Cf. ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume V, epistola xlv, pp.71-79 .
28. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, pp.259-263 .
29. For the full text of the Constitutions of Clarendon, see appendix .
30. For the text of these constitutions, see William of Canterbury, ch.45, pp.53-55, and ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume VII epistola dxcix, pp.147-151. Walberg, in La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.lxxxii, concludes that Guernes had a copy of the letter before him .
31. See FitzStephen, ch.82, p.86, and Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.264 .
32. For Guernes' account of Saint Peter's Pence, see lines 2666-2667 and 2726-2745 .
33. See above, chapter one, pp.71-75. .
34. For the text of this letter, see ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume V, epistola ccv, pp.408-413.

35. See, for Ahaz, Chronicles, 28; for Uzziah, Chronicles, 26; For David and Nathan; II Samuel, 11 and 12 .
36. For the text of the letter "Expectans expectavi" in its entirety, see ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume V, pp.269-278, epistola cliii. For Guernes' translation, see lines 2851-3040 .
37. ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume V, p.275 .
38. ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume V, p.279. For the full text of the letter, see pp.278-282. For Guernes' translation see lines 3047-3180 .
39. For the two letters in question, see ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume V, epistola ccv, pp.408-413, and epistola cxxiv, pp.512-520. For Guernes' translations see lines 3186-3320, and lines 3326-3565 .
40. Becket had addressed similar arguments to the English clergy as a whole, in the letter "Fraternitatis vestrae scriptum" (see ed. Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume V, epistola ccxxxiii, pp.490-512). This may possibly be one reason why Guernes supposes the letter of the clergy to be the work of Foliot himself .
41. See for example H.Delehaye, The Legends of the Saints, translated by Donald Attwater (London, 1962) especially chapter three, for an account of this .
42. See Grim, chs.62-67, pp.412-419. In Guernes' poem the account of Becket at Pontigny and at Sens is contained in lines 3610-3980 .
43. Guernes later repeats this vision, with slight variations, at lines 3861-3890; the second account contains more detail, and

mentions Gilbert Foliot and the Bishop of Chichester as being partly responsible. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.lxxxiv; also Abbott, St. Thomas of Canterbury: his Death and Miracles, volume two, pp.277-285, and Brown, The Development of the Legend of Thomas Becket, pp.99-102.

44. For a discussion of this passage, see Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, pp.lxxxiii-lxxxiv.
45. For the full text here, see lines 3890-3980; for Grim's account, see Grim, ch.66, pp.417-418.
46. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.lxxxv. For the letter in question, see ed. Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume V, epistola lxxxv, pp.161-162.
47. See FitzStephen, ch.95, p.98.
48. Inaccuracies are in fact more demonstrable in this part of Guernes' account than is usually the case.
49. See Louis Halphen, Les Entrevues des Rois Louis VII et Henri II durant l'exil de Thomas Becket en France, in Mélanges d'Histoire offerts à M. Charles Bémont par ses amis et ses élèves, (Paris 1913), pp.151-162, and reproduced in Louis Halphen, A travers l'Histoire du Moyen Âge, Paris 1950, pp.256-265. Page references given here are to this later edition; here p.263. The source produced in confirmation of Guernes' evidence here is Hugh of Poitiers, Historia Vizelicensis monasterii, in Histoire de France, volume XII, p.334.
50. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.lxxxvi, and Halphen, Les Entrevues des Rois Louis VII et Henri II durant l'exil de Thomas Becket en France, p.263, where the meeting is tentatively identified,

although without any suggestion as to locality, with one mentioned by Robert of Torigni. (see ed.R.Howlett, Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I, four volumes, (Rolls Series, London, 1884-1890) volume IV, p.224ff; this was also mentioned by Becket himself in a letter (see ed. Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume V, epistola clxxxiv, p.360. Étienne, La Vie Saint Thomas le Martir, p.89 is unable to find any source here, as is the case for the whole of this section, in the table of sources which he has drawn up.

51. Halphen, Les Entrevues des rois Louis VII et Henri II durant l'exil de Thomas Becket en France, pp.263-264 .
52. Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas Becket, p.lxxxvi and pp.277-278.
53. Robertson, Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury: a biography, p.205
54. Brown, The Development of the Legend of Thomas Becket, p.105 .
55. See ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume VI, pp.245-266 .
56. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.lxxxvi and pp.277-278, where a tentative solution, based on a misinterpretation of John of Salisbury's letters, is offered (see ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume VI, p.509ff).
57. See Herbert of Bosham, Vita Sancti Thomae, Archiepiscopi et Martyris, in ed.J.C.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume III, pp.409-410 .
58. Guernes states that this incident took place at Chartres. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.278. Guernes must be following oral sources here; Chartres would have been a striking place for a vision .

59. See Genesis, chs. 40 and 41.
60. See William of Canterbury, ch.67, pp.73-75.
61. See ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume VI, pp.506-513.
62. See William of Canterbury, ch.68, p.75.
63. See also William of Canterbury, ch.67, p.75.
64. See ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume VII., pp.326-336.
65. See ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume VII, pp.326-336.
66. See ed.W.Stubbs, Chronica Rogeri de Hoveden, in four volumes, (Rolls Series, London, 1868-1871), volume II, pp.10-11.
67. See William of Canterbury, chs. 77-78, pp.84-85.
68. See Grim, ch.70, p.422.
69. Cf. ed. Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume VII, p.400.
70. See above, chapter one, pp.74-75.
71. See William of Canterbury, ch.7, p.97; Grim, ch.71, p.424; see also Becket's letter to the pope, ed.Robertson, Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume VII, p.401ff.
72. See William of Canterbury, liber secundus, ch.1, p.87.
73. See William of Canterbury, ch.2, p.88, and ch.6, p.95.
74. See above, chapter one, p.75.
75. See William of Canterbury, ch.7, pp.96-98, and ch.8, pp.99-101; Grim, ch.71, pp.422-426.
76. See William of Canterbury, ch.7, p.99, and chs.11 and 12, pp.105-111, for his treatment of this whole episode.

77. See William of Canterbury, ch.11, p.107
78. As Walberg points out in La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.292, Guernes' personal views contain echoes, sometimes quite strong, of the Bible, which would obviously be more strikingly familiar to his audience than would obscure points of Canon Law.
79. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, pp.lxxxix-xc and p.293.
80. See William of Canterbury, ch.16, pp.112-114 .
81. See Grim, chs. 71-73, pp.425-428 .
82. Although Guernes has not made it perfectly clear, Becket had in fact gone to Southwark in the hope of seeing the young king, but was disappointed in this wish .
83. See, for example, Brown, The Development of the Legend of Thomas Becket .
84. The name of Robert de Broc does not appear in Grim's account; Guernes could have found it in William of Canterbury's account, or possibly in that of Benedict of Canterbury, see Benedict of Canterbury, Passio Sancti Thomae Cantuariensis, auctore Benedicto Petriburgensi abbate, in ed.J.C.Robertson, in Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, volume II, Fragmentum I, p.7. In the following pages, unless otherwise stated, references to this work will be to this edition; fragment and page references where appropriate will be given directly after the quotation, in the following form; (Benedict of Canterbury, Fragmentum I, p.7).
85. See William of Canterbury, ch.10, p.105.
86. See William of Canterbury, ch.31, p.123 .
87. We shall discuss in greater detail in the following two chapters

the divergences between the second version and the surviving fragments of the first draft which we also considered in chapters two and three. For the moment we should bear in mind that Guernes goes much further towards exculpating King Henry in the first version. As we find little difference between the treatment of Thomas Becket in the two versions and appreciable differences in the treatment of King Henry, we shall consider such differences at greater length in the next chapter.

88. See William of Canterbury, chs. 32 and 33, pp.124-126; Grim, ch.75, pp.428-430.
89. See lines 256-257, and above, chapter four.
90. See William of Canterbury, ch.39, p.131; see also ch.42, pp.51-52.
91. As Walberg points out in La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.xciii, Edward Grim does not mention Robert de Broc, whereas the other two biographers, like Guernes, make him instrumental at this point.
92. See William of Canterbury, ch.39, p.131; Benedict of Canterbury, Fragmentum II, p.12, and Fragmentum X, pp.17-18.
93. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.xlii.
94. See William of Canterbury, chs. 40-41, pp.131-133.
95. See Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, p.xciv.
96. For a discussion of this issue, see Walberg, La Vie de Saint Thomas, pp.xcv-xcvi.
97. See Grim, ch.88, pp.442-443.
98. For an account of this period, see Warren, Henry II, pp.518-555.

