



INTRODUCTION

The Author

ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE practitioners of verse romance, tale, and lyric in Old French was also in his personal life among the most unusual. Philippe de Remi (ca. 1205/1210–65), unlike the majority of writers who were his contemporaries, was not a churchman, nor was he a layman who versified for a living. A good many short secular pieces, poems, and songs were of course produced in the Middle Ages by amateurs, particularly members of the nobility; but in the case of Philippe we encounter a very substantial body of work: the full-length romances *Le Roman de la Manekine* and *Jehan et Blonde*, eight (and perhaps nine) long poems on a variety of topics, and ten songs with their music. It is clear from his abundant exploitation of themes, situations, narrative formulas, motifs, and rhetorical devices, and his use of frequent close, even verbatim, quotation, that he had a keen interest in the work of earlier writers and especially Chrétien de Troyes. Yet he took the further and uncommon step of trying his own hand at composition, perhaps reading the results aloud to his family and friends, possibly engaging in it simply for the sheer joy of making, or for recreation from his practical tasks.

He was in fact a busy man, functioning in the world of smallholders in the Clermont area, north of Paris. His father, Pierre, had acted as leader of the Compiègne militia at the critical Battle of Bouvines, Flanders (1214), and no doubt earned the favor of King Philip II Augustus by so doing; the land he held in fief near the village of Remi(n), now Rémy, passed to his son and so also did some continuation of royal benevolence, for by the time his father died in 1239 and perhaps beginning two years earlier, Philippe held the important office of bailiff (chief administrative and judiciary officer) for the large region of the Gâtinais, south of Paris. In this post he served Count Robert of Artois, a brother of King Louis IX, until the Count's death in 1250; subsequently he functioned from time to time as legal advisor to the widowed Countess Mahaut. And he had other preoccupations: his own

lands (held of the Abbey of St. Denis) to see to, and if possible increase; his marriage and remarriage; his son and daughter by his first wife; and, by his second wife, another son, also named Philippe, known as Philippe de Beaumanoir, the jurist.

One can only conjecture whether Philippe the romancer and poet continued to write during intervals of his official and feudal duties or whether he largely put such activity behind him. By 1255 he was designated *chevaliers* and *sires de Biaumanoir* (*miles* and *dominus* in the Latin charters). He continued to rise in the world, and his social and legal being is well documented; his literary self can only be conjectured aside from his assertion at the beginning of *Manekine* that this was his first venture in verse composition.

Someone, presumably a family member, thought well enough of Philippe's authorial efforts to put the two romances and eight long miscellaneous poems together into what amounts to an anthology (Paris, BNF fr. 1588) copied in Arras in around 1300 and embellished with many miniatures; the manuscript also includes the *Roman du Hem* of Sarrasin, internally dated to 1278. Philippe's songs are preserved in a set of eleven (one by another lyricist), grouped together in a *chansonniier* (BNF fr. 24406) of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. One more work perhaps by him, a nonsense poem of one hundred verses titled “Les Resveries,” is in BNF fr. 837, a miscellany copied in the thirteenth century.

The Afterlife of the Narratives

The existence of only one copy might imply a narrow readership. Belying this is the fact that Philippe's romance *Manekine* may have been drawn on by Jehan Maillart in his *Roman du Comte d'Anjou* (1316) and most probably by the unknown authors of two fourteenth-century epics: *La Belle Hélène de Constantinople* and *Lion de Bourges*. It certainly furnished the plot of a Parisian miracle play of around 1371, *La Fille du roy de Hongrie*, and was put into French prose by Jehan Wauquelin in the mid-fifteenth century. (Wauquelin also prepared a *mise en prose* of *La Belle Hélène*.) If, as appears possible, *Manekine* was known to Nicholas Trevet and used by him in his Anglo-Norman prose tale of Constance (after 1334), then it is linked through him to Gower and to Chaucer. As for *Jehan et Blonde*, it may have contributed to one tale (number 193) in the Latin compilation *Gesta Romanorum* (late thirteenth or early fourteenth century); there are many close resemblances, but

then both works make use of widespread motifs. Philippe's romance may have provided material for two French prose compositions of the late fifteenth century. One is a tale included in the *Nouvelles de Sens*, where we meet the same story line of lowly squire and highborn damsel who fall in love; there is a separation (the boy promising to come back and the girl swearing to wed no one else), the prospect of her being married to another, the incognito hero's return in the company of the noble fiancé, a series of riddles explicated by the young lady's father, and at last the triumph of love. The second work is *Le Roman de Jehan de Paris*; here the rivals are the King of England (the official suitor) and the King of France (disguised as a rich merchant); the prize is the King of Spain's daughter, and some of the same riddles are brought out; but what tips the scales toward France is the stunning display of wealth by the putative Parisian bourgeois Jehan coupled with the Spanish princess's strong predilection for him.

If this short romance is indeed a partial retelling of *Jehan et Blonde*, it attests to its long afterlife: *Jehan de Paris* is preserved in two manuscript copies of the sixteenth century and also a printed text of around 1533, followed by five more editions by the end of that century. It was translated into Flemish in the seventeenth century and dramatized in Paris in the nineteenth; in this new guise it soon appeared in English translation.

The Narrative Works

The *Roman de la Manekine* (8,590 lines) draws on themes and situations common to several medieval genres and also found in history, legend, and folklore. Its point of departure is the obligation of a widowed king of Hungary, childless but for a daughter, to remarry in order to ensure a succession in the male line. Having gratified through a rash promise his dying wife's request not to remarry or, if forced for political reasons to do so, to wed only someone much like herself, he commands a worldwide search that ends in failure. Urged to wed his own daughter Joy (Joïe), and at last inclined to do so, he commands her obedience. Horrified, the pious girl mutilates herself so as to be disqualified for queenship. Her furious father condemns her to be burned for disobedience; but she is instead put to sea alone, in a sailless and rudderless boat, by the kindly seneschal and the jailer, who then stage a mock execution. Joy's voyage, spent in prayer, soon brings her to Scotland; here her beauty dazzles the young King and induces him to marry her, although she refuses to give her name or origin and so is nicknamed "Manekine" (the

maimed woman; see *Manekine*, n. 30). The young couple is happy together; but once his wife is pregnant the King opts to go tourneying in France, where he still is when his wife is delivered. The good news dispatched to him is altered by the spiteful Queen Mother and becomes an announcement of the birth of a monster; the King's reply, with its order to guard mother and child until his return, is in turn changed to a command to burn them forthwith. Again, compassionate hands put Joy and her baby into the same boat that had brought her to Scotland; again, a charade of burning is put on, and Joy, appealing to the Virgin, voyages in prayer and without harm. This second journey brings Joy to Rome, where she is met by well-meaning fishermen and then taken in by the wealthy and God-fearing Senator. She lives in his house for seven years while her husband, having learned the truth, frantically searches for her throughout the known world. At last, praying fervently, he is guided to Rome and to the Senator's house; here the spouses are reunited and the King rejoices in his long-lost son. Meanwhile, Joy's father, tardily repenting the supposed death of his daughter, also travels to Rome, to seek papal absolution. His public confession on Holy Thursday reunites the family; and the King of Scotland at last learns his wife's identity. After Joy's severed hand is discovered in a nearby fountain and brought into the church it is reattached by the Pope. The physical joining of hand to arm corresponds to the healing of the broken relationship of father and daughter. A heavenly voice directs all the principals to go to the fountain, to see, catch, and open a great fish that had swallowed the hand. This being done, they find in the fish a reliquary in which the hand had long been preserved. Joy, the person and the emotion, are restored to society. The heroine is declared to be heiress to two kingdoms; her father abdicates in favor of his son-in-law, and the three generations live out their lives in harmony and good works.

As for Philippe's second long narrative, *Jehan et Blonde* (6,262 lines), it belongs to another tradition and manner: that of the idyllic romance with a "realistic" tonality. It is a tale of young love and the overcoming of obstacles: the social disparity of the lovers; the haughtiness of the class-conscious but at last tenderhearted heroine; the challenges of absence; the appearance of a ridiculous but powerful rival for the damsel's hand; a nocturnal elopement and flight toward the sea; then a battle with the rival and his many supporters to escape capture, separation, and misery. But aided by a few loyal supporters (commoners all), John triumphs in the fight and escapes, wounded but not mortally so, as do his friends. The social and moral virtues of the hero, recognized by his beloved, are eventually acknowledged by her noble father, and spectacularly by the King of France; the runaway lovers are able

to marry, the hero is ennobled and knighted, and all is well in the end. The tale is spun out with elements that give a coloring of actuality. The hero comes from a knightly but numerous and indebted family and must make his way in the world, going off from France to England to seek a master. Employed by the Earl of Oxford, he exerts himself to behave acceptably through table service and French lessons for the Earl's beautiful daughter, Blonde, as well as through affability and general usefulness. Smitten by love, he becomes distracted thereby, to the point of cutting his own fingers while carving Blonde's meat; this affliction is doubled by unrequited love, which twice brings him near death before Blonde relents and comes to share his affection. She, however, well knows what her parents would make of such a *mésalliance* and grasps the risk of pregnancy, which would spoil everything; the lovers' consensual chastity, which prolongs their secret idyll for two years, contrasts with the carnal yet sterile passion of many medieval literary lovers. John leaves his beloved not for war, crusade, or tournament but on family business. Blonde, having made John promise to return and take her away in exactly a year, must outmaneuver her father, who plans to marry her off before the date the young people have set. Blonde's official suitor is oafish and slow-witted, no match for the returning John, who catches up with him incognito, teases him with riddles, and has to endure his rival's excruciating attempts at speaking French. The frequent humorous touches that are intermingled with courtly sentiments and decorum, the geographical accuracy of the several trips between Dammartin and Oxford, the long passages in Franglais, the representation of all classes and many occupations, the cordial relations between hero and commonality and especially between him and his devoted and resourceful attendant, Robin, the reiterated mention of money both as sign of status among the grandees and as reward for faithful service from those who work for a living—all these elements confer on this romance a patina of reality.

Philippe produced one more narrative, "Le Conte de fole larguesce" ("The Tale of Foolish Generosity"), a short story undergirded by a moral. Like his romances, this tale is composed in rhyming couplets, the verse form of preference for French narrative composition in the twelfth century and roughly the first half of the thirteenth. The "Conte" figures in the set of miscellaneous poems following the two romances in the same manuscript. That it is the third in the series probably has no chronological significance, for the eight poems are arranged in descending order of length. At 426 lines, this work, like the two longer narratives, draws on established literary traditions, primarily that of the fabliau: the small-town setting, the man who gets his

living from hard physical effort, his young and imprudent wife, the gossiping and grasping neighbors, the importance of money and of mental sharpness. But there is no wandering monk or lustful priest to corrupt and disrupt, nor is the husband verbally or physically abusive when he realizes that his merchandise of salt is being not sold but given away by his wife, who blames him for not bringing home larger quantities. Instead, he agrees to fetch more if she will lend a hand, and proposes that she accompany him on his next trip, some four leagues each way: it will be a pleasant change for her. So it is, outward bound; but carrying part of the load on the way back teaches her a painful lesson and makes her appreciate her man's hard work. Refusing his invitation to repeat the experience, she promises to blame him no more for the smallness of his loads and to demand a good price for the merchandise she sells. So she does, the neighbors proceed to pay, and the prospering couple are able to purchase a pair of horses and a cart and thereby to expand their retail business. This tale is enclosed between a cautionary prologue and epilogue, both of them warning against imprudence, contrasting foolish and wise generosity, stressing the appreciation of labor that leads to prosperity, and teaching the obligation to make wise and charitable use of one's goods, coming as they do from God. (The epilogue also warns against idleness, as does the prologue of *Jehan et Blonde*.)

The tale and the two romances show a family resemblance. They are the work of a man morally and socially conservative, integrated into the institutional structures of his time and place. Proverbs and proverbial-sounding aphorisms bestrew his stories, as do pious formulas and actions and (in *Manekine*) some lengthy prayers. Beyond these conventions lie real charity and kindness: of the characters toward each other (with a few wicked exceptions) and of the author toward his characters, at whom he often smiles indulgently. Philippe was well versed in the secular literature of narrative and lyric generally available to a reading layperson; in his romances there are passages that suggest inspiration from the *De amore* of Andreas Capellanus and perhaps the *Roman de la Rose* of Guillaume de Lorris (the lengthy definition of love and its effects in *Manekine*, the allegory of Love's assault and triumph in *Jehan et Blonde*), and from a whole catalogue of writers for the protracted descriptions of feminine beauty in both romances. Philippe's debts to Chrétien de Troyes are particularly noticeable in the areas of motifs and verbal expression; he even on occasion resorts to direct quotation. On the other hand, and unlike many of his contemporaries, Philippe opted not to follow his famous predecessor in exploiting the vogue for Arthurian characters, situations, and atmosphere. There is in fact none of the Celtic Otherworld

in his narratives. Their supernatural elements are entirely Christian and orthodox, demonstrating the workings of Providence, God's and the Virgin's protection, the eventual recompense of true believers, and the extension of divine pardon to sinners who repent. Faith and steadfastness rewarded is one of the dominating themes in *Manekine*. *Jehan et Blonde* focuses more strongly on fidelity in human love and on the recognition by human agents of social and moral virtues. The interplay of psychological forces not only between the lovers but also between Blonde's father and her suitor, and later between him and his disobedient but loving daughter and her new husband, is observed with much sympathetic care. And the wedding night of the eloping pair, united at last, manages to be long and highly erotic while avoiding any sort of specificity or obscenity—no mean feat.

Along with psychological concerns Philippe demonstrates a considerable flair for the dramatic: the big scene enacted in full sight of a crowd. In *Manekine* there are two "executions" by royal decree; in both cases the royal will is frustrated in a charade of burning the heroine alive, but the throngs first of Hungarian and later of Scottish spectators are ignorant of this and react with violent expressions of grief and indignation against the party held responsible. The scene in which the King of Hungary makes public confession, he and Joy recognize each other, her husband at last learns her identity, and her newly found hand is reattached to her arm is played out in St. Peter's Basilica on Holy Thursday before (seemingly) the entire citizenry of Rome. That this healing was effectuated by God is declared in the hearing of all by a voice from Heaven, explaining how the hand was preserved and brought to Rome. (The healing of the innocent sufferer, along with the three voyages guided by unseen hands in response to fervent prayer, brings a hagiographical quality to the romance.) All the Romans rejoice at these signs of God's favor; the Pope proclaims a miracle; there is general festivity on that day and even more on Easter. The reunion of the family, and Joy's restoration to her heritage, are lengthily celebrated in Armenia, Hungary, and Scotland; the orderly passage of dominion confers a political dimension on the apotheosis of heroine and hero.

Jehan et Blonde depicts no miracle; but it too is charged with drama. For two years the protagonists risk detection, denunciation, and the ruin of their hopes, and John returns incognito on the very eve of Blonde's arranged marriage. To their elopement there are obstacles aplenty, the danger increasing as they approach the Channel. A high point is the nightlong battle on Dover Beach, during which, against heavy odds, John manages to protect his beloved, strike down his rival, take the rival's armor and

warhorse, and with two companions and twenty mariners rout the increasingly few and disheartened men-at-arms opposing him. Blonde, captured by the enemy but then rescued by John, is both spectator and cheerleader, urging him on with stirring words. The whole episode, with its preliminaries and the concluding escape to the waiting ship, takes up about one-sixth of the narrative and contains details recalling the *Chanson de Roland*. John's courage and prowess have been demonstrated to all the survivors; news of his exploit reaches and impresses the King of France and, through his agency, Blonde's father, the Earl of Oxford. The lovers have realized a goal long striven for; and to their private happiness is coupled public recognition: John is created Count of Dammartin (thus equaling Blonde's father in rank) and his social ascension is marked splendidly by the arrival at Dammartin of the Earl of Oxford and his retinue and by the King and Queen of France, the King to perform and the others to witness the promotion to knighthood of John and his brothers. The entire population of Dammartin, some thousands, turns out for the occasion. Having achieved happiness for themselves, the protagonists become the instruments of well-being for their families, their loyal servants, and the inhabitants of two counties, one English and the other French.

Philippe's predilection for communal action, for psychological truth, and for daily life rather than the marvelous (except for divine intervention, in *Manekine*), marks him as a man with an independent streak at a period when the exploitation, expansion, and prosification of Arthurian romances was very much alive and well received. This independence, and the eclectic nature of the materials on which Philippe did draw, may well be ascribed to his status as an amateur who read widely but wrote to please himself and entertain his small circle of friends and kin.

On Translating Philippe de Remi

Philippe's narrative oeuvre, while well known to students of Old French literature, merits a wider readership than it has hitherto obtained. Here it is moved from French verse into English prose and accompanied by notes, a glossary, and an index of proper names, in a presentation meant to be useful to those interested in medieval romance and tale but who do not read Old French, or not easily.

The present translation is intended to stand by itself, while yet being propped by additional material explaining contemporary institutions,

customs, objects, place-names, and frames of reference. To *Manekine* and *Jehan et Blonde* I have added the “Conte de fole larguesce”; it is the only other narrative work of this author and, I think, deserves inclusion.

The Manuscript

Putting these texts into modern English is both facilitated and hindered by the fact that they are preserved in a unique copy (BNF fr. 1588) made by two scribes (of whom the first broke off about one-seventh of the way through the first romance). Both copyists were reasonably conscientious; both made mistakes in, for example, spelling and agreement and sense, which in the absence of other manuscripts not every reader would brand as errors and not every error-suspecting reader would attempt to correct in the same way. They also (as was common with medieval scribes) added dialectal touches that, as the rhymes suggest, were not so strongly marked in the case of the author and of the authorial model(s) they had before them. Contributing to the challenge first to editors and then to translators is the physical deterioration of the surviving copy. This is particularly notable in the first several folios, so that a degree of conjecture is indicated in deciphering a fair number of words and lines. Such problems (which of course affect any translation) are indicated in the notes.

Editions

The works of Philippe de Remi in BNF fr. 1588 have been edited, severally, partially, and in toto, over the past 170 years. Francisque Michel brought out an edition of *Manekine* alone in 1840, and in 1858 Leroux de Lincy published one of *Jehan et Blonde*. Henri-Louis Bordier made available in 1869 a richly documented study of Philippe’s family as well as a partial edition, interspersed with summaries, of both romances; he included a full presentation of all the independent poems in the manuscript. For more than a century the edition of reference was that of Herman Suchier in two volumes (1884–85), providing a complete text of the two romances and the eight long poems, accompanied by a wide-ranging exploration of both the literary past and the afterlife of the romances and by a detailed linguistic study. The songs, in a separate manuscript (BNF fr. 24006), were only slightly later identified as belonging to the same author; the texts thereof were printed by Alfred

Jeanroy in 1897 and by me in 2001. (The lyrics along with their music were brought out by Hans Tischler in 1997.) A set of independent verses, the “Resveries” (BNF fr. 837), perhaps by Philippe, figures in my 1999–2001 presentation of his works. This last comprises an edition and line-by-line English version of the two romances, an edition of the rest of his oeuvre, copious critical apparatus, and contributions by Alison Stones and Roger Middleton, all in two volumes.

Earlier Translations

Translations of the romances into modern French and into English in fact go back to the 1980s: Christiane Marchello-Nizia (*La Manekine*, 1980) and Irene Gnarra (*Philippe de Remi's La Manekine*, 1988) put *Manekine* into, respectively, modern French prose and an English line-by-line version facing the original; as for *Jehan et Blonde*, Sylvie Lécuyer published a modern French prose reworking (*Philippe de Remi, le Roman de Jehan et Blonde*, 1987). English versions of *Manekine* and *Jehan et Blonde* (now independent of the Old French originals, revised, and written out as prose) are offered here. “Le Conte de fole larguesce” (one of the eight long poems and the only narrative among them) is included as well, and so is made available in English for the first time. (To my knowledge, the “Conte” has not indeed previously been put into any modern language.)

This Translation, Again

This Englishing of Philippe’s three narrative works reflects a number of challenges that any translator must grapple with, even when dealing with near-contemporary texts. Complicating the task is the fact that Philippe was born some eight centuries ago, and born into a world whose structures and institutions are to us exotic if not totally unfamiliar. Monarchy, the feudal system, land tenure, inheritance laws, authority both within the family and in society at large, social categories, manners and morals, fighting techniques and equipment, the influence of the Church with its rites and clergy, all underlie the fiction produced in the Middle Ages. These matters are here designated by English equivalents, if any, and explicated in the Notes.

The narrative works offered here share other traits of medieval storytelling: inconsistency in verb tenses, a confusing abundance of pronouns where more nouns and names would be helpful, parenthetical remarks by the narrator, narrative markers (for example, “I shall leave ... and turn to ...”), and the like. Further complicating the translator’s task is the fact that Philippe, like most of the romancers of the twelfth century and his part of the thirteenth, wrote in verse, specifically in octosyllabic couplets. This is a useful phenomenon for editors trying to produce a correct text and being guided by meter and rhyme (errors in either furnishing a clue that a line may be corrupt). It can, though, make life a burden for translators, who must choose between reproducing fillers and tautologies and prolixities in the original (“without delay” “joy and delight,” “pain and suffering,” “here the story relates,” and so on, as well as long and perhaps overlong expansions of a theme, or emotion, or description, or situation) and getting on with the job. In spite of Philippe’s disclaimer at the end of his initial paragraph, he does indeed on occasion stretch out his lines—not to lie (how could we tell?) but to achieve the requisite count of syllables and to reach for a rhyme. Certain colors of rhetoric are also not likely to gratify modern taste. In the version facing my 1999–2001 edition I conscientiously reproduced such material, as an aid to the comprehension of the original; here I have taken the liberty of abridging some repetitions, on occasion substituting proper names for pronouns, and moving all the narration (but not of course the speeches) into the past tense.

Another matter arising is the question of register. All three narratives have an oral quality; it is most pronounced in the prologues and epilogues, but within these works as well we are reminded from time to time of the presence of the narrator. Philippe draws on the conventions of orality: these are tales being told *now*, by someone reciting preexisting accounts, who is well acquainted with the true stories, and who considers them worth his retelling and our hearing. He also on occasion acts as commentator. The narrator is both outside the fictions and inside them, and he has his own voice and authority.

This body of work brings before us a large cast of characters drawn from multiple social strata. They all express themselves in standard thirteenth-century French (except for the ridiculous Earl of Gloucester in *Jehan et Blonde*); yet in the original Old French there is clear stylistic contrast between the speech of royalty and court society on the one hand and of fishermen and salt vendors on the other.

