

more legible than at present. We have before us, then, a scale which will tell us when a manuscript has been transcribed in a manner *très soignée*: if there are no more than a score of negligencies in 650 lines, the copyist may rest content. What would classical scholars say of this standard?

RAYMOND WEEKS.

POSSIBLE TRACES OF HUON DE BORDEAUX IN THE  
ENGLISH BALLAD OF SIR ALDINGAR

THE first appearance of *Huon de Bordeaux* in England, so far as we know, is in Sir John Bouchier's translation of the French prose version of the fifteenth century. The unique copy of the supposed first edition of this translation is in the possession of the Earl of Cranford and Balcarros and bears the following on its title page: *The Boke of Duke Huon of Burdeux done into English by Sir John Bouchier, Lord Berners, and printed by Wynkyn de Worde about 1534 A. D.*<sup>1</sup>

To trace the influence of *Huon* through the literature of the sixteenth century in England is an intricate and bewildering undertaking. There is a very large amount of literary material of this period in England which contains Celtic fairy lore. *Huon of Bordeaux* contains Celtic fairy lore. How is one to determine which has its source directly in the British folk-lore and which is derived from the French adaptation of it? At any rate, in the English ballad *Sir Aldingar*, there are evidences that certain elements of the *Huon-Oberon* story had filtered down into popular narrative early enough to have become a well assimilated part of this ballad before the writing of it in Bishop Percy's *Ancient folio manuscript*. These evidences are best shown by a comparison of passages in the ballad with parallel ones in the original epic; but before considering these parallels it will be well to note that that part of the ballad with which we are concerned is characteristic of the *English* version alone, which version departs in this one particular from all the various known versions of the main theme. It will be clearer, perhaps, to dispose of this main theme of the ballad first. It is the

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by Early English Text Society. Extra Series, vols. 40-59.

very wide-spread one of the falsely-accused-wife, and appears in nearly every European language in diverse literary forms: *chanson de geste*, romance, chronicle and ballad. The interrelation of these various versions is, according to Professor Child, impossible to determine, and it is not pertinent to the present inquiry, as the theme which is common to them all has no connection with the *Huon-Oberon* story. The thing to be noted is that this ballad, while presenting a theme so very well known to the nations of western Europe, differs from all other presentations of that theme in this one point; namely, in the character of the champion of the falsely-accused-wife. In some versions there is no champion, in none but the English ballad version is there found this type of champion.

According to Professor Child our ballad represents a distinctly Germanic type of this theme and the ballads which appear in Grundtvig's collection, as also the Scottish one given in Professor Child's collection, also represent this type.

Looking then at these ballads, we have eight Danish, two of the Faroe Islands, one Icelandic, and one Norwegian, besides the English and Scottish ballads mentioned above. In all of these ballads the wife is allowed to put her innocence to the test of ordeal. In the two Faroe Island versions and the one Icelandic, the ordeal is of a hot iron, and so no champion appears. The eight Danish and the one Norwegian make the champion a man of the court or household who was formerly of the wife's father's retinue. The Scottish version makes him "Sir Hugh Le Blond out of the North." In some of the Danish versions the champion is of less than ordinary size, in one, "Least of Christian men," but in none of the ballads except the English and in none of the other forms of the story in any language is there any suggestion that the champion possesses *supernatural powers*. In this statement I am depending upon Professor Child.

It is just this point, the supernatural character, and the particular kind of supernatural character, possessed by the champion in our English ballad, with which this study is concerned. In the English Ballad the wife is queen and before her accusation she has had a dream:

- st. 19 "I dreamed a grype and a grimlie beast  
Had carryed my crowne away,  
My gorgett and my kirtle of golde,  
'And all my faire heade-geare.
- st. 20 How he wold haue werryed me with his tush,  
'And borne me into his nest,  
Saving there came a little hawk,  
Flying out of the east.
- st. 21 Saving there came a little hawke,  
Which men call a merlion;  
Untill the ground he stroke him downe,  
That dead he did fall downe."

And so when she is allowed forty days to find a champion, she sends one messenger into the east; and here I will give parallel passages from the ballad and the epic.

*Ballad*

- st. 28 'As he<sup>2</sup> rode then by one riuer side,  
There he mett with a little child  
He seemed noe more in a mans likenesse  
Then a child of four yeeres old  
.....
- st. 38 'A louelie child was hee;

*Huon*

- l. 26 Et d'Auberon, le noble chevalier;  
Ens son estant n'ot de grant que III piés.  
.....
- l. 3217 Li petis hons vint par la gaut ramé,  
Et fu tous teus que ja dire m'orrés:  
'Aussi biaux fu con solaus en esté,  
(here follows a long epic description).
- l. 3252 "Hé Dix!" dist Hues, "qui nous vient viseter?"  
.....
- l. 3414 "Dix ne fist homme de si grande biauté."  
.....
- l. 3422 "Que il n'ait mie plus de v ans pasé."

<sup>2</sup>"He" refers to messenger.

*Ballad*

st. 29 He askt the queenes messenger how far he rode;  
Loth he was him to tell;  
The little one was offended att him  
Bid him adew, farewell.

Oberon says:

l. 3265 "Vous conjur jou que vous me salués"  
Et li XIII sont en fuies tourné.  
Li petis hom en fu moult airés;

and he sends terrors in the shape of winds and torrents, but again

l. 3350 "Vous conjur jou qe vous me repondés,

and when Huon still refuses,

l. 3357 Li petis hom est tous seus demorés;  
Moult durement fu courciés et irés.

*Ballad*

st. 30 Said, "turn thou againe, thou messenger,  
Greete our queene well from me;  
When bale is att hyst, boote is att next;  
Helpe enough there may bee.

31 Bid our queene remember what she did dreame  
In her bed wheras she lay;  
She dreamed the grype and grimly beast  
Had carryed her crowne away;

32 Her gorgett and her kirtle of gold  
Alsoe her faire head-geere;  
He would haue werryed her with his tushe,  
And borne her into his nest.

33 Saing there came a little hawke,  
Men call him a merlyon;  
Untill the ground he did strike him downe,  
That dead he did ffall downe.

34 Bidd the queene be merry att her hart,  
Evermore light and glad;  
When bale is att hyst, boote is at next,  
Helpe enoughe there shalbe."

*Huon*

1. 3432 Es 'Auberons qui les a escriés:  
 "Signor, dist il, estes vous propensé?  
 Encor vous vien ge de Jhesu saluer;  
 De cank'il a et fait et estoré,  
 De sa vertu et de sa poosté,  
 Et de tel poir qe Jhesus m'a donné,  
 Vous conjur jou que vous me salués.  
 . . . . .
1. 3446 Hé! Hues sire, je te sai bien nommer,  
 Et si sai bien là où tu dois aler,  
 Et sai moult bien comment tu as ouvré.  
 T'a(s) mort Karlot, qui fix Karlemaine ert,  
 Et en bataille as Amauri tué,  
 Et sour chou t'a Karles desireté,  
 Et si t'estuet le mesaige porter  
 'Au roi Gaudise, outre la roge mer.  
 Mais jou te di, en fine verité,  
 Que sans mon cors n'i poras ja aler.  
 Parole à moi, je te ferai bonté,  
 Et t'aiderai ton mesaige à conter,  
 Et l'amiral t'aiderai à tuer.  
 Devant tes piés le te ferai ruer,  
 Et t'aiderai, se me puist Dix salver,  
 Que tu aras les blans gernons mellés,  
 Et de sa geule IIII dens maseliers,  
 Que tu déus à Karlon raporter.  
 Ramenrai toi en France à sauveté,  
 Et tous iciaus qe tu as à guier,  
 Se nel perdés par vostre malvaisté."

*Ballad*

- st. 37 Our queene was put in a tunne to burne,  
 She thought no thing but death;  
 The' were ware of the little one  
 Came ryding forth of the east.

'And the queen is saved and truth established.  
 The emperor says

*Huon*

- l. 10075 "Jamais, par Diu, jugieres n'en serés,  
Que par ma barbe qui me pent sour le nés,  
Ne mangerai jamais c'un seul disner  
S'arai Huon pendut et traîné.  
'Avois!" escrie, "le table me metés!"

Auberon says in Monmur.

- l. 10125 "Jou secorrai le jouene baceler.  
Jou i souhaide me table en son ostel  
Delés celi ù Kalles doit disner,  
Si soit plus haute II grans piés mesurés.  
Et sor le table soit mes hanas dorés,  
Mes cors d'yvoire et mes haubers safrés.  
Et s'i souhaide C<sup>m</sup> hommes armés;  
Se mestiers est, plus en vuel demander."

And Huon is saved and justice meted out.

It is to be noted that both in the ballad and in the epic the supernatural helper champions a falsely accused, innocent person against royal power made hostile through a traitor.

Now as to the possibility of the author, or perhaps more properly, the authors of the ballad having heard the *Huon-Oberon* story. The epic passages quoted above are from the text of Guessard and Grandmaison<sup>3</sup> and so are probably separated from the ballad by several literary versions. How many we cannot tell nor does it particularly matter, for, as I have indicated, the early French texts conform substantially to that of the Tours manuscript in characterization and episode up to the point where the Tours manuscript ends and Lord Berner's work is a faithful translation of the early French prose version. It is probable that it was through this translation that the influence reached the ballad; altho it is possible that some parts of the story may have reached England at an earlier period and in a way of which this ballad would furnish the only record. It would seem that a play or a song would have been more likely to reach the ballad-makers than such a work as Lord Berner's, but I have found no such song and the earliest play of which there

<sup>3</sup> Paris, 1860.

appears to be any record is in 1593. This I find in Greg's edition of Henslow's Diary, Vol. II, p. 158:

[8<sup>v</sup> hewen of (burdoche, of burdockes) Performed by Sussex men, as an old play, 28 (27) Dec. 1593 and 3 & 11 Jan. 1593/4]

How much earlier the "old play" may have been we can only guess. It is generally supposed that this play was from Lord Berner's translation, but it may have been a direct translation of *Le Mystère de Huon de Bordeaux* (1557). So far as I have been able to learn this is all that can be stated as to the possible sources of influence from *Huon de Bordeaux* on our ballad, so that my argument must rest positively upon the obvious similarity in the passages quoted and, on the negative side, on the absence of any evidence of other influence than the Huon in producing so marked a difference between this ballad and all its nearest of kin. None of the fifteenth, sixteenth or seventeenth century English writings, so far as I know, present this type of supernatural character, altho there are many, especially from 1590 on, presenting other attributes of the fairy prince or *roi sauvage*, some without the name Oberon, some others (and these must be so far dependent upon the *Huon*) with the name of Oberon.

There is one exception to this last statement, in a black letter tract reprinted by Halliwell in his *Fairy Mythology and Oberon's Vision* and entitled *Robin Goodfellow his mad pranks and merry jests, full of honest mirth and is a fit medicine for melancholy*. In this tract Robin Goodfellow is represented as being the son of Oberon and receiving a scroll from him which gives fatherly counsel in verse, two lines of which are

But love thou those that honest be  
'And help them in necessity.

This tract was published in London in 1628 and undoubtedly owes a part of its material to *Huon of Bordeaux*, but these two lines could hardly have influenced the ballad and the rest of the tract has absolutely nothing in common with any part of *Sir Al-dingar*.

And moreover this trait of loving truth and hating lies seems to have belonged to certain classes of supernatural beings quite inde-

pendently of literary influence. For example, it is told in Giraldus Cambrensis of two little men who invited a boy to their beautiful underground country where he was royally entertained at many different times, but when the boy, yielding to his mother's entreaties, took home a golden ball, he was spat upon by two of the dwarfs and could never after find his way to their enchanted land. And it was said of them, "There were no oaths among them, for they detested nothing so much as lies."

The ballad must antedate the writing of the "ancient folio MS.," which Furnival places at 1650. Whether the elements in the ballad which I have indicated as being derived from *Huon of Bordeaux* could have been assimilated during the years between the publication of Lord Berner's translation in 1534 and the writing of this MS. in 1650 I leave to wiser heads than mine. But that the Oberon spirit, as one feels it in the epic, is also present in the ballad, I think no one can deny; and if the inspiration of the "little one" really came from *Huon of Bordeaux*, it must, I think, considering what we know of Ballad production, represent the earliest influence, which we know, of this epic in England.

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#### TWO LATELY-DISCOVERED LETTERS OF FOSCOLO

IN a recent number of the *Fanfulla della Domenica* (March 27, 1910), Professor Eugenia Levi, of the *R. Istituto superiore di Magistero*, Florence, deals with two letters of Foscolo that came to light not long ago in London. Having traced them to Boston, and obtained copies from the dealer by whom they had been acquired, Professor Levi, in the above-mentioned paper, after summarizing the shorter, less important letter, which is in English, publishes, with biographical and literary notes, the longer and highly interesting one (addressed to Lord Holland), according to her copy.

The latter, as results from comparing the published version with the original letter, is in many places incorrect: the punctuation being frequently altered, and words interpolated, omitted, changed and disfigured. Although in some instances the sense of the garbled