

A MEDIEVALIST
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

83

GEOFFREY WILSON

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LE GRAND D'AUSSY AND THE FABLIAUX OU CONTES

by

GEOFFREY WILSON



MARTINUS NIJHOFF – THE HAGUE – 1975

TO MY WIFE

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1975

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ISBN-13: 978-94-010-1372-7

e-ISBN-13: 978-94-010-1370-3

DOI: 10.1007/978-94-010-1370-3

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for this opportunity to offer my thanks publicly to Professor L. Gossman of the Johns Hopkins University. Through his pioneering study of La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, but more especially through the advice and guidance he so freely gave in correspondence, Professor Gossman has put me greatly in his debt.

An even greater debt is owed to Professor C. E. Pickford of the University of Hull whose inaugural lecture, *Changing attitudes towards medieval French literature*, first suggested this study in eighteenth-century medievalism and whose example has been a constant source of inspiration throughout its execution. Whatever merits this work may finally have are due entirely to my "premier maître." Its faults are solely mine.

INTRODUCTION

It is a common belief that in France the study of medieval literature as literature only began to gain recognition as a valid occupation for the scholar during the nineteenth century. It is well known that historians of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries looked to the literary productions of the Middle Ages for materials useful to their researches, but it is only recently that the remarkable frequency of this reference has been appreciated and that scholars have become aware of an unbroken tradition of what might best be described as historically oriented medievalism stretching from the sixteenth century to our own. The eighteenth century has drawn the greatest number of curious to this field, for it is evident that the surprisingly extensive researches undertaken then do much to explain the progress made a century later by the most celebrated generation of medievalists. Very slowly we are coming to see the value of the contribution made by little known scholars like La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, Etienne Barbazan and the Comte de Caylus.

This appreciation marks an advance, of course, but it must be said that the credit given falls far short of that which is due. The eighteenth century has been singled out for special praise because the volume and exactitude of researches then undertaken overshadow all that had gone before. Since the sixteenth century interest in the Middle Ages had been steadily increasing and more and more experience had been gained in the techniques of historical research. The eighteenth-century medievalist has learned by the mistakes of his predecessors, his projects became much more ambitious and his results were vastly superior. He is the strongest link in the chain of that tradition handed on by Fauchet, Pasquier and Duchesne, and he merits respect as such. But he remains only a link and scholars of a much later generation were to exploit the researches he pursued.

La Curne de Sainte-Palaye and his contemporaries are thus remembered for their industry and thoroughness but denied any real originality. And yet this is where their merit chiefly resides. That this should be much ignored is perhaps no disgrace when one considers how little work has so far been carried out in this relatively new field of eighteenth-century medievalism, where we are only now beginning to see beyond a veritable ocean of source materials. The truth is that while eighteenth-century scholars followed their predecessors in studying the literary productions of the Middle Ages principally for the light these shed upon the manners, customs, laws and institutions of the period, while they whole-heartedly embraced that tradition of historically oriented medievalism passed on by Fauchet and his fellows, they did in addition significantly enrich it and can be said to have begun a gradual process of redirection from within, preparing the ground for a new enlightened appreciation of medieval literature as literature. This process of redirection is best evidenced in Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Le Grand d'Aussy's *Fabliaux ou Contes*, the first successful attempt to render medieval French literature popular with a mass reading public made little short of two centuries ago.¹

The medievalists of eighteenth-century France fall roughly into three categories. Foremost amongst the scholars was La Curne de Sainte-Palaye. To his nineteenth-century successors he bequeathed a vast fund of copies and notices of medieval literary manuscripts which bears testimony to a lifetime of the most meticulous research. No one in the France of his day knew more about the literary productions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. But equally no one thought less of them as literature. Sainte-Palaye was first and foremost historian. He rarely gave more than a moment's thought to the artistic abilities of the "anciens rimeurs," never once thinking to set them against their eighteenth-century brethren. For him they simply did not bear comparison. They were worthy of recall and close study because in their works they mirrored the manners and customs of the society in which they had flourished. But Sainte-Palaye did go a little beyond Fauchet, insisting that contemporary historians treat these fictional sources with the deference hitherto reserved for chronicles and legal documents. Thus, in one way at least, he did contribute to the elevation of medieval

¹ *Fabliaux ou Contes du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle, traduits ou extraits d'après divers manuscrits du tems; avec des notes historiques et critiques, et les imitations qui ont été faites de ces Contes depuis leur origine jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris (Eugène Onfroy) 1779, 3 vols. in-8. A fourth volume, *Contes dévots, Fables et Romans anciens*, was added in 1781.

literature, although at the same time clearly consolidating the historical tradition.

At the opposite end of the scale are those who can be said to stand outside his tradition, the "remanieurs," men like the Comte de Tressan and A. G. Contant d'Orville, who adapted the efforts of France's earliest poets to the tastes of their more enlightened age. Some, it is true, did strive for a certain degree of fidelity in their modern renderings, the Marquis de Paulmy, for example, originator of the *Bibliothèque des Romans*, whose purpose was to convey a concise and yet complete impression of the original. But Paulmy stands in almost complete isolation as one who had studied his sources well. Moreover, he was using the "anciens rimeurs" to acquaint a wide readership with medieval French society, not to gain a literary reputation for himself at their expense. His less scrupulous and more successful fellows cared little what remained of their sources, even, in extreme cases, inventing their own twelfth and thirteenth-century classics. It might at first appear that such works could serve only to lessen the status of medieval literature. And yet their value becomes clear when one considers that initially the mass of the eighteenth-century reading public had no other recourse. The learned few might turn to the scholarly papers read before the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, but the uninitiated would have continued for some time in total ignorance of a medieval literature had it not been for those most diverting publications of Tressan and his colleagues. Their contribution was to promote a wide interest in the efforts of France's earliest poets. By popularizing these pseudo-medieval texts they were in fact helping to create the atmosphere essential to a "serious" popularizer like Le Grand d'Aussy.

Le Grand stands somewhere between La Curne de Sainte-Palaye and Tressan. One might say that he is scholar turned "vulgarisateur." But this alone cannot explain his originality. There is nothing really new in Le Grand's belief that certain of the efforts of the "anciens rimeurs" remain valid as literature even when measured by the standards of his own day. The great scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries all had their especial favourites amongst the romances and the fabliaux, although it would never have occurred to them to publish these for their literary value. Even so, Le Grand was not the first to combine such an appreciation with the desire to popularize. This honour must go to Etienne Barbazan who in 1756 published a three-volume collection of *Fabliaux et Contes* intended for a mass public.²

² *Fabliaux et Contes des Poètes françois des XII, XIII, XIV et XVes siècles, tirés des meilleurs auteurs*, Paris (Vincent) and Amsterdam (Arkstée and Merkus) 1756, 3 vols.

The collection can be said to have failed, Barbazan, who presented his texts in the original old French, expecting far too much of the average, non-specialist reader. Le Grand's originality resides then in a combination of three essential elements, a belief in the enduring validity of some medieval literature as literature, a desire to render the delights this affords accessible to a wide reading public and an understanding of the very real limitations of that public. This distinguishes Le Grand from all other medievalists of his day.

It must not be thought that the *Fabliaux ou Contes* represents a departure from that traditional historical bias of the scholars. Le Grand was himself a scholar, a pupil of Sainte-Palaye, and he would end his career as Keeper of Manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale. He was not so far ahead of his time as to think a collection of "fabliaux ou contes" worthy of publication on literary merit alone. Indeed, he makes it abundantly clear in his compilation that to produce evidence of the artistic abilities of the "anciens rimeurs" was the least of three major aims envisaged here. In examining this work we have devoted a separate chapter to each of these aims, preserving Le Grand's own order of priority and, after an introductory biography, beginning therefore, in Chapter I, with his concern to establish the particular historical utility of this genre, "fabliaux ou contes," and through it to convey to his readers an accurate impression of life in medieval France. Chapter II considers a second defence of the "anciens rimeurs" on historical grounds, examining Le Grand's efforts to demonstrate the importance of their contribution to the "perfection" of French literature, to ensure that they finally receive the credit due to them as the authors of a European literary renaissance. It is only in Chapter III that we begin to consider Le Grand's desire to establish the enduring validity of certain medieval tales as literature. We could not have expected Le Grand to adopt any different order of priority and it would be improper for us to tamper with this ourselves. The *Fabliaux ou Contes* did not alter the course of medieval studies overnight, but it did contribute more than any comparable eighteenth-century work to what we have previously termed a gradual process of redirection from within.

Chapter IV of this study is devoted to the sources of the *Fabliaux ou Contes*. Only once does Le Grand rely upon the printed word, the remainder of his extracts being drawn from medieval manuscripts or, more frequently, from copies of these executed for, and annotated by, his friend and benefactor Sainte-Palaye. It is important for us to ap-

preciate the nature of the gulf existing between what Le Grand was working from and what was acceptable to the public he wished to reach. The problems he confronted in his efforts to bridge this gap and the solutions he found are the subject of Chapter V, where one of the more useful extracts, with which the author thought to serve all three of his primary ends, is examined in some detail. It is hoped that this will prove the justice of the distinctions awarded to Le Grand in the final chapter of this study.

If the plan of this work can be said to have evolved naturally from the subject-matter, then it was no less obvious from this that the enquiry should centre upon the first three volumes of the *Fabliaux ou Contes* and Le Grand's own defence of these, the *Observations sur les Troubadours*, which appeared as a supplement.³ The extracts of "contes dévots," fables and romances which Le Grand was to add to his collection were meant to complete the picture and we in turn have exploited them for the added light they shed upon their author. But it was with the first three volumes of his collection, the "fabliaux ou contes" proper, that Le Grand thought to realize his three primary objectives and these are our main concern. Equally, it must be said, we have limited ourselves to Le Grand's own very loose definition of the genre with which he was concerned. While the eighteenth century did make some effort to distinguish between the fabliaux and similar "contes à rire," Le Grand himself was not greatly interested in this distinction and a detailed examination of his understanding of the term "fabliau" could thus serve little useful purpose. Nevertheless, it has been thought worthwhile to include in this study a table showing the precise number of manuscripts preserving accepted fabliaux known to Le Grand and his predecessors.

Passing mention only has hitherto been made of Part I of this work. Since the purpose of this study is in part to "rehabilitate" Le Grand d'Aussy, it was thought that rather more should be known about his life, which is his work, than can be gleaned from the few comments which biographers and bibliographers have afforded him thus far. As founder of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal the Marquis de Paulmy draws the attention of Henry Martin in his history of that famous library,⁴ Henri Jacoubet made the Comte de Tressan the subject of a

³ Paris (Eugène Onfroy) 1781, 1 vol. in-8.

⁴ *Histoire de la Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal*, Paris (Plon) 1899.

⁵ *Le Comte de Tressan et les Origines du Genre Troubadour*, Paris (Imprimerie des Presses Universitaires de France) 1923.

study in 1923,⁵ and four years ago Dr. Lionel Gossman of the Johns Hopkins University published the first major work on *La Curne de Sainte-Palaye*.⁶ While it must be said that Dr. Gossman's book represents an enormous advance upon all previous studies in eighteenth-century medievalism, providing the present researcher with the ideal introduction to this area of study, yet it could not hope and indeed was not meant to cover this whole vast field. *Le Grand d'Aussy* remains in semi-oblivion.

We can perhaps never know what *Le Grand d'Aussy* looked like,⁷ but we can and should know much more of the life he led, of his ambitions and of his achievements. Given the number and value of these latter, it is nothing less than astonishing to discover that Alexandre Cioranescu should have deemed him unworthy of a separate entry in his *Bibliographie de la Littérature française du dix-huitième Siècle*.⁸ The greatest modern student of the fabliaux, Joseph Bédier, appears to have been unaware that a *Le Grand d'Aussy* ever existed.⁹ And yet the man must have had some merit when one considers that a scholar of Sir Walter Scott's calibre thought his *Fabliaux ou Contes* important enough to own two separate editions together with English translations.¹⁰ Perhaps the most significant move towards "rehabilitating" *Le Grand* has already been made with the reprinting of his collection.¹¹ It is hoped that the present study will complete the process.

⁶ *Medievalism and the Ideologies of the Enlightenment. The World and Work of La Curne de Sainte-Palaye*, Baltimore (The Johns Hopkins Press) 1968.

⁷ All efforts to trace some portrait have been fruitless.

⁸ Paris (Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) 1969, 3 vols.

⁹ There is no mention of him in Bédier's *Les Fabliaux*, 6th edition, Paris (Champion) 1964.

¹⁰ Cf. Sir Walter Scott, *Catalogue of the Library at Abbotsford*, Edinburgh (T. Constable) 1838, pp. 40, 118, 185 and 187. Scott also makes reference to *Le Grand's* collection and to an English translation in his *Sir Tristrem: a Metrical Romance of the Thirteenth Century*, 4th edition, Edinburgh (A. Constable) 1819, pp. 306 and 361 respectively.

¹¹ Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1971. All credit for this is due to Professor C. E. Pickford who first brought the work to Slatkine's attention and suggested a reprint.

PART ONE

THE LIFE AND WORK OF LE GRAND D'AUSSY

A. THE EARLY YEARS: LE GRAND AND THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

Pierre-Charles Lévesque sets the tone for his “Notice historique sur Legrand d’Aussy” with the following remark:

C’est dans la médiocrité, souvent même dans l’indigence, qu’ont pris naissance la plupart des hommes qui se sont distingués dans les sciences, dans les lettres et dans les arts.¹

If this is true in the case of Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Le Grand, born in Amiens on June 3rd 1737 to parents of only moderate means, it certainly does not apply to a number of those with whom he was to rub shoulders in his researches on the Middle Ages and medieval literature. The Marquis de Paulmy² and the Comte de Tressan,³ for example, later to be editors of the *Bibliothèque universelle des Romans* upon which Le Grand would collaborate, were clearly of quite different origins:

De brillantes perspectives s’ouvrirent pour lui [Tressan] quand sa grand’tante, la duchesse de Ventador, gouvernante du Roi, le fit admettre parmi les jeunes nobles qui partageaient l’éducation de Louis XV.⁴

Nevertheless, if Le Grand did not come from the most wealthy of families, he was fortunate to have in his father, Pierre, an employee of the “fermes générales,” a man who recognized the importance of education and who was willing to make sacrifices in order that his three sons should not be deprived of this.

His efforts do not appear to have been in vain. Le Grand’s two younger brothers both entered the Church, Pierre-Théodore-Louis

¹ The “Notice” was published in the *Mémoires de l’Institut National des Sciences et Arts. Sciences morales et politiques*, vol. IV (Paris, Baudouin, 1802) pp. 84–95, and also prefaces Le Grand’s own *Vie d’Apollonius de Tyane*, published posthumously, Paris (L. Collin) 1807, 2 vols.

² Marc-Antoine-René du Voyer, marquis de Paulmy d’Argenson, 1712–1787.

³ Louis-Elisabeth de La Vergne, comte de Tressan, 1705–1785.

⁴ Henri Jacoubet, *Le Comte de Tressan et les origines du genre troubadour*, Paris (Presses Universitaires de France) 1923, p. 196.

Augustin dying curé of Beauchesne near Vendôme, Alexandre while serving the parish of Saint-Roch in the capital. Le Grand himself began his academic career at the Jesuit college of Saint-Nicolas in Amiens, entering the Society of Jesus novitiate on October 5th 1753. The Jesuits were a powerful force in the France of the day and particularly in the field of education. Nowhere might Le Grand have found better and more diversified instruction. There can be little doubt that the passion and talent for literature, for linguistic studies, for history, geography and even the natural sciences which Le Grand was later to show were first fired by his teachers at the Collège Saint-Nicolas which amongst its scholars could boast such names as Voiture, Du Cange, Gresset, Nicolas Sanson and Philippe Briet.⁵ Le Grand himself can have had no little success here. The Jesuits were in the habit of earmarking their most gifted students for the service of the Society and when Le Grand left Amiens it was to take the chair of rhetoric at their college in Caen.⁶ But he lacked the time to distinguish himself in his new post. The enemies of the Society were now beginning to make their influence felt and although they were not finally suppressed until 1773, a decree from the provincial capital of Rouen banished the Jesuits from Normandy more than a decade earlier in 1762. The college at Caen was vacated on July 1st in that year. This was a turning-point in Le Grand's life. He was now twenty-five years old.⁷

B. THE APPRENTICESHIP

While Le Grand may well have been introduced to medieval studies at the Collège Saint-Nicolas in Amiens, it is probably correct to say that his real initiation into this field came only with his move to Paris. For it was here that he became involved with researches being undertaken for the *Glossaire de l'ancienne langue française* projected by La Curne de Sainte-Palaye⁸ and collaborated on the *Bibliothèque universelle des Romans*, first directed by the Marquis de Paulmy and later by the Comte de Tressan, and on the *Mélanges tirés d'une grande Bibliothèque*, co-edited

⁵ On the Collège Saint-Nicolas, cf. P. Delattre, *Les Etablissements des Jésuites en France depuis quatre siècles*, vol. I (Enghien, Institut supérieur de théologie and Wetteren, Imprimerie de Meester frères, 1949) cols. 180–202.

⁶ The noted scientist Pierre Simon Laplace was amongst his students. François Mézeray, Pierre Daniel Huet and Voltaire attended the college. Cf. Delattre, *op. cit.*, vol. I, cols. 991–1007.

⁷ Since he was so young when his career with the Jesuits ended, it would seem unlikely that Le Grand was ever ordained.

⁸ Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, 1697–1781.

by Paulmy and A. G. Constant d'Orville. With his scholarly background Le Grand seemed well suited to this new-found employment.⁹ More important, he was serving under some of the most distinguished masters of his day, engaged upon significant projects of differing substance which reveal to some extent not only the scale but also the range of the work undertaken at this time on the Middle Ages and medieval literature. It is certainly to this apprenticeship that we must look to find both the inspiration behind Le Grand's own work on the fabliaux and the experience which ensured its success.

In the first place there was the detailed study of Old French demanded by the *Glossaire*, intended as an aid to the proper understanding of medieval texts and documents.¹⁰ The idea of a comprehensive dictionary of Old French had originally been that of Camille Falconet,¹¹ but it was Sainte-Palaye, a member of Falconet's circle, who undertook the work and, in the *Projet d'un glossaire françois*, emphasized its purpose.¹² It was not to be an end in itself then, but the means to an end. Others had tried to reduce the distance separating the eighteenth century from the Middle Ages with dictionaries and glossaries of Old French, but none could match the meticulous zeal of Sainte-Palaye whose researches into vocabulary, using innumerable manuscripts in several different countries, stretched to thirty-one volumes in-folio. Le Grand's participation in these researches was obviously to stand him in excellent stead for the handling of the enormous volume of manuscript material basic to his own work.

The experience gained elsewhere was hardly less valuable. The purpose of the *Bibliothèque universelle des Romans*¹³ and of the *Mélanges tirés d'une grande Bibliothèque*,¹⁴ an attempt, amongst other things, to popularize the literature of the Middle Ages by making not inconsiderable sections of it readily accessible to a wide reading public, is clearly akin

⁹ Rentré dans le monde, il s'y tint étranger, et ne connut, au milieu de la capitale, que des savants et de vieux livres. (P.-C. L'évesque, "Notice historique.")

¹⁰ *Dictionnaire historique de l'ancien langage françois, ou Glossaire de la langue françoise depuis son origine jusqu'au siècle de Louis XIV*, Niort (L. Favre) 1875-1882, 10 vols.

¹¹ Falconet put forward the idea in a paper entitled "Sur nos premiers traducteurs françois, avec un Essay de bibliothèque françoise" which he read before the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres on January 28th 1727. Cf. L. Gossman, *Medievalism and the Ideologies of the Enlightenment. The World and Work of La Curne de Sainte-Palaye*, Baltimore (Johns Hopkins) 1968, pp. 163-168. Cf. also Gossman's article "Old French scholarship in the eighteenth century: the 'Glossary' of La Curne de Sainte-Palaye," in *French Studies*, vol. XII (1958) pp. 346-358.

¹² *Projet d'un glossaire françois*, Paris (H.-L. Guérin and L.-F. Delatour) 1756.

¹³ Paris, 1775-1789, 112 vols. A Reprint of this work, in 28 volumes in-4, has recently been issued by *Statkine Reprints*, Geneva, 1970.

¹⁴ Paris, 1779-1788, 39 vols.

to that of the *Glossaire*. Indeed, La Curne de Sainte-Palaye had himself expressed the desire to see the compilation of "une bibliothèque générale & complète de tous nos anciens Romans de Chevalerie."¹⁵ Nevertheless, the task in hand was of a different order, affording Le Grand an invaluable insight not only into the question of general approach, but also into the practical difficulties of presenting medieval literature, in particular here the romances, to the eighteenth-century reading public, into the merits of the summary or extract in modern translation as a solution to the problems posed. For, concerned as they were with varying priorities, Le Grand's employers were by no means all at one over this question of method. This meant, of course, that before embarking upon similar work himself, Le Grand was well aware not only of the difficulties he would have to face, but also of the possibilities that lay open to him.

Le Grand was indebted to his employers in one other important respect, perhaps the most important of all. His participation in the researches of Paulmy and Sainte-Palaye gave him access to two of the richest privately owned collections of the day. Paulmy's in particular was of startling proportions. Many of the thousands of volumes it comprised bear notes in the collector's own hand or dictated by him.¹⁶ But Sainte-Palaye's own library was no mean one, particularly his collection of manuscripts and copies of manuscripts, a considerable number of the latter either made or annotated by Sainte-Palaye himself. Le Grand makes it clear that without these he would have had neither the inspiration nor the necessary source material to embark upon the collection of *Fabliaux ou Contes*:

Je dois à M. de Sainte-Palaye les premiers matériaux avec lesquels j'ai commencé cet Ouvrage, & qui m'en ont même inspiré le projet.¹⁷

¹⁵ "Mémoire concernant la lecture des anciens Romans de Chevalerie" read before the Académie des Inscriptions on December 13th 1743 and published in the Académie's *Mémoires*, vol. XVII, pp. 787-799.

¹⁶ Le Grand more than once testifies to the size and value of Paulmy's collection: "... une bibliothèque immense, dont la formation seule suffirait pour faire une réputation à tout autre que lui, et dont pourrait se glorifier en Europe plus d'un Souverain." (*Ms. Paris, Arsenal 6588*, fol. 77ro.)

The collection forms the nucleus of what is now the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal where the Marquis took up residence in 1767. Cf. Henry Martin, *Catalogue des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal*, vol. VIII, *Histoire de la Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal*, Paris (Plon) 1899. A marginal note to an extract prepared for the *Bibliothèque universelle des Romans* shows just how well Le Grand knew Paulmy's library: "M. le Mis. de Paulmi, a, si je ne me trompe, cette seconde partie du Roman, sous le nom du Comte de Ponthieu, dans les ms. de Barbazan qui sont entre la fenêtre et la cheminée." (*Ms. Paris, Arsenal 6608*, fol. 7ro.)

¹⁷ *Fabliaux ou Contes* (1779) vol. I, preface, p. lxxxix.

Before becoming engaged upon the *Bibliothèque universelle des Romans* Le Grand had, in 1770, been nominated Secrétaire de la Direction des Etudes at the Ecole Militaire and a little later had been charged to complete the education of the son of a "fermier général." Yet teaching is no longer his first love. It seems his association with Sainte-Palaye has confirmed him as a medievalist and he is soon collaborating with Paulmy. Before long he is preoccupied with collecting and translating the fabliaux, although not, as he will later claim, with a view to publishing:

Heureux et content dans mon obscurité, je me flattois de pouvoir cultiver en paix les lettres, qui, toute ma vie, avoient fait mes délices; mais, dans le système de bonheur que je m'étois formé à moi-même, ma première loi avoit été de ne jamais écrire. Je craignois de risquer mon repos et ma tranquillité sur ces mers remplies d'écueils, couvertes d'ennemis, et sans cesse infestées de pirates.¹⁸

Written as they are in retrospect, when Le Grand had become only too well acquainted with the inherent "risks" of a literary career, we may well have good reason to doubt the sincerity of these lines. Nevertheless, he sees fit to relate the turn of events which, as he would have us believe, was to force his reluctant hand.¹⁹

C. THE *FABLIAUX* OU *CONTES*

It appears that Le Grand found himself one day in the company of a group of people whose conversation had turned to the subject of the Middle Ages:

... et l'on en parloit avec ce mépris insultant qu'ont inspiré mal à-propos quelques-uns de nos historiens.

Provoked by such injustice, he immediately leapt to the defence of the "siècles d'ignorance" in an effort to enlighten his misguided companions:

Je pris la liberté de dire que, pour le style, le goût, la critique, pour tout ce qui tient à l'art, il ne falloit point le chercher dans les ouvrages de ce temps; mais que si l'on vouloit se contenter d'esprit et d'imagination, on pourroit, à

¹⁸ *Fabliaux ou Contes*, third edition (1829) vol. II, *Observations sur les Troubadours*, p. 4. Le Grand appears to have held the post of private tutor for some considerable time. A letter from the Marquis de Paulmy dated June 5th 1779 is addressed to him "Chez M. De la Borde, Fermier Général, Place du Carrousel." (*Ms. Paris, Arsenal 6588*, fol. 77 vo.)

¹⁹ *Observations sur les Troubadours*, pp. 4-6. All references to the *Observations*, which did appear separately, are to that version appearing in the third edition of the *Fabliaux ou Contes* (1829) Vol. II, pp. 1-166.

une certaine époque, en trouver chez nos vieux poètes; et j'ajoutai qu'il nous restoit d'eux, en ce genre, des choses fort agréables qui méritoient d'être connues.

Evidence to support this claim was requested and three or four days later Le Grand returned with a translation of some of the fabliaux he had come to know through Sainte-Palaye, together with a copy of the originals. The reaction, as he had foreseen, was a favourable one, but in removing a prejudice Le Grand had apparently kindled the curiosity of his hostess:

La maîtresse de la maison m'en demanda quelques autres. j'y consentis, sans prévoir où alloit m'engager ma complaisance; mais quand elle en eut en main un certain nombre, elle exigea de moi que j'en publiasse le recueil, et, en cas de refus, me menaça de publier elle-même, sous mon nom, ceux qu'elle possédoit, malgré l'état d'imperfection où nécessairement ils étoient encore.²⁰

Thus obliged, he says, to take the publication of the collection upon himself, he nevertheless hoped to retain something of the peace and tranquillity he had formerly enjoyed by remaining anonymous. He was soon to realize the futility of this desire. Not only was it his duty to express his gratitude to those who were of service to him in his researches, but critics exposed him when denouncing certain of the opinions put forward in the collection. He regretfully decided to name himself in the fourth volume:

... quoique tout ceci détruisît pour jamais le système de vie qui m'avoit rendu heureux. . . .

However great Le Grand's alleged initial reluctance to put pen to paper, his first literary effort, the three volumes of *Fabliaux ou Contes* which appeared in 1779,²¹ the year following that which had seen the death of both Rousseau and Voltaire, was enthusiastically received by a number of contemporary critics:

Le goût & l'érudition, Monsieur, paroissent avoir également présidé à la rédaction de cet ouvrage, le plus complet de tous ceux qu'on nous a donnés

²⁰ A remark made in the introduction to the section "Fabliaux" in the *Bibliothèque universelle des Romans* for February 1777 makes it clear that Le Grand had begun to work seriously towards publication by this date: "Nous ne pouvons, dans un article consacré aux Romans de Chevalerie, parler des autres Fabliaux, qui, d'ailleurs, doivent faire l'objet d'un Recueil que l'illustre Académicien (La Curne de Sainte-Palaye) fait composer sous ses yeux." (p. 87.)

²¹ *Fabliaux ou Contes du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle, traduits ou extraits d'après divers manuscrits du tems; avec des notes historiques & critiques, & les imitations qui ont été faites de ces Contes depuis leur origine jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris (Eugène Onfroy) 3 vols. in-8. Except where otherwise stated, all references to the *Fabliaux ou Contes* shall be to this first edition.