Fierabras and the *Chanson de Roland*: An Intertextual diptych

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Paul Zumthor, analysing intertextuality in chansons de geste, suggests a concept of 'model' which is largely non-text-specific and includes more abstract echoes of a tradition.[1] For Dominique Boutet much of the intertextuality of chansons de geste is based on tradition or cliché and intertextuality is closely linked to the use, sometimes parodic, of stereotypes and standard structures while some texts stand out as being more text-specific in their references.[2] *Jehan de Lanson* is pronounced to be exceptional in the way it imitates specific texts: 'aucune autre chanson ne nous semble aller aussi loin dans cette pratique'.[3]

One of the texts most used by the author of *Jehan de Lanson* is *Fierabras*. In Boutet's words 'Jehan imite *Fierabras* et le montre'.[4] Specific references in *Jehan de Lanson* to the battle of Morimond and to Roland's quarrel with Charlemagne at the beginning of *Fierabras*, references which are otherwise gratuitous, are seen by Boutet as being there in order to draw attention to the intertext.[5] However, as Boutet points out, the reason that *Jehan de Lanson* seems to be peculiar in the way the intertext is used is perhaps because 'on manque d'études de détail sur ce point'.[6] We do have many studies which set out to show that one text is referring to another, but often the purpose of the study is to deal with the technical issue of relative dating, rather than the question of the literary use of the intertext. Indeed my own interest in the use of the *Chanson de Roland* in *Fierabras* originated in my attempts to establish a date for *Fierabras*.[7] Useful and important though such work is there is much more to be done. Reading a text with an awareness of the intertext, when there is one, can alter our whole perception of the text.[8] *Fierabras* is rich in its use of the intertext, not only as literary tradition, using stereotypes for which, in one sense, the whole genre is the intertext, the 'model' being the virtual intertext, but also with reference to specific texts.[9] The first part of my diptych is an analysis of how the *Fierabras* poet uses the material of one specific intertext, the *Chanson de Roland*.

Then, in the second part of the diptych I will look at what the use of the Roland material in *Fierabras* can tell us about the reception of the *Chanson de Roland* at the end of the twelfth century.

The narrative of *Fierabras* is not particularly complex. Oliver has been wounded in the battle before Morimond. Fierabras, who, it later transpires, is the son of the Saracen Emir Balan, challenges the French, calling for one of the peers to come out to fight him in single combat. Roland refuses to answer the challenge because Charlemagne had praised the prowess of the older men, who had come to the rescue of the younger knights in the preceding battle. The wounded Oliver responds to the challenge and, with the help of a sacred balm he takes from Fierabras which heals his wounds, defeats the noble Saracen, who is converted. A pagan ambush then takes Oliver prisoner with four other peers . They are taken to Balan at Aigremore and imprisoned. Later, Floripas, Fierabras' sister, tricks her father into giving them into her care. We learn that she has fallen in love with Gui de Bourgogne. Meanwhile the remaining peers have been sent by Charlemagne to Balan to ask for the release of the prisoners and the surrender of certain relics of Christ's passion which Balan holds. The peers, on the way, encounter messengers sent by Balan to Charlemagne, fight and defeat them. The peers trick their way across the bridge of Mautrible, which is guarded by a giant. On their arrival at Balan's stronghold of Aigremore they are imprisoned by Balan with their companions. The peers, egged on by Floripas, proceed to eject the pagans from their own castle. The pagans then besiege Aigremore. After several sorties the peers send Richard de Normandie to Charlemagne who returns to rescue the peers. Balan is defeated, refuses to be baptised, and is killed. Floripas is baptised and married to Gui, who will hold Balan's lands with Fierabras. The relics are divided among various churches and everyone, it is assumed, will live happily - but not happily ever after, for we are reminded that three years later Ganelon will betray the peers at Roncevaux.

This is, in essence, the story. The last reference to Roncevaux is not the only one. On two occasions, once at the beginning of the chanson (ll.292-96) and once at the end (ll.6207-15) we are told that the events related took place three years before Roncevaux, situating the events of the narrative in fictional time.[10]

These, and other references to what happened at Roncevaux also serve the same purpose as the references to *Fierabras* highlighted by Boutet in *Jehan de Lanson*; they make us aware of the text referred to, here the *Chanson de Roland*, as a conscious intertext. There are also other, less distinctive, parallels. Ogier is anxious for their reputation and keen that

no bad song be sung about them: "Gardés male canchons n'en soit de nous cantée" ("Let no bad song be sung about us"; 5351).[11] This may, however, be seen as a generic cliché, and no more significant than the fact that Fierabras offers his sister to Oliver (ll.1317-18) as, in MSS PTL of the *Rhymed Roland*, Pinabel offers his daughter to Tierri.[12]

Roland's famous line is reversed when uttered by Balan, the Saracen Emir: "Il ont tort et nous droit, François seront maté" ("They are wrong and we are right; the French will be defeated"; 5405). Compare the well-known lines from the Roland: "Paien unt tort e chrestïens unt dreit", ("The pagans are wrong and the Christians are right"; 1015)[13] and "Nos avum dreit, mais cist glutun unt tort"("We are right but these wretches are wrong"; 1212). Coming from a Saracen this has the power to disturb, but illustrates also the tendency to see the Saracens as mirror images of themselves.

The literary use of the Roland is perhaps most clearly seen in the depiction and narrative role of Ganelon. We are reminded on a number of occasions that Ganelon will be a traitor and at times both Ganelon and other members of his clan act in a despicable manner. *Fierabras* as we now have it can de divided into two sections; the first 1500 lines or so, to the end of the combat between Oliver and Fierabras, appear to have come from the older, now lost chanson, sometimes, inappropriately, called *Balan*, more appropriately Rome *perdue et reconquise*.[14] At the beginning of *Fierabras*, within the section which retains the matter from the lost *chanson*, Hardré and Ganelon urge Charlemagne to accept Oliver's offer to fight Fierabras, knowing that in his wounded state he is unlikely to win:

297"Sire, dist Guenelons, .i. poi nous entendés:
Vous nous avés en France .i. jugement donné,
Que ce que li doi jugent, puis k'i l'ont affremé,
Aler estuet le tierc, ensi l'ont créanté;
Nous jujon Olivier, si l'avons esgardé,
Qu'il fera la bataille au paien deffaé."
[*"My lord," said Ganelon, "Listen to me a moment; you gave a judgement in France that whatever two of us decide, provided they confirm it, then the third must go; this was approved. We judge Oliver and have decided that he will fight the infidel pagan."*]

The king, powerless, berates Ganelon. He goes on to say that if Oliver does not come back alive he will have Ganelon hanged or burned alive.

Ganelon, nevertheless, hopes Oliver will not come back alive:

315 Puis dist entre ses dens, coiement à celé:
"Ja Damedius ne plaice, le roi de majesté,
Qu'il puisse repairier, si ait le chief caupé."
[*Then he said between his teeth, secretly, in an aside, "May it not please God, the King of majesty, that he should return; may his head be cut off."*]

Charlemagne calls him a traitor (l.320). This is Ganelon as we expect him to behave. In the second part of the poem, however, after the combat scene, the character of Ganelon is developed. He is still the man who will later betray the peers – he is at one point referred to as referred to as 'Guenes li losengiers (l.4557). He still gives bad advice – when it will harm the peers. Before Richard de Normandie arrives back at Charlemagne's camp to ask for help Charlemagne is in such despair that he offers to give up his crown and Ganelon advises returning to France leaving the peers to their fate, rather as he advises a return to France in the *Chanson de Roland*:

4409 "Baron, dist l'emperere, quel conseil me donnés?
Perdu ai mes barons, moult en sui abosmés,
Moult en sui afoiblis et mes pris avillés;
Je vous rent la couronne dont je sui couronnés:
Jamais jour de ma vie n'en tenrai l'ireté."
Quant François l'entendirent, e les vous effraés.
Guenelon en a joie, qui qu'en soit adolés;
Il apela Karlon, tost fu araisonnés:
"Sire drois emperere, envers moi entendés,
Je vous donrai conseil par droite loiautés;
Faites oster vos loges et destendre vos trés,
Isnelement et tost soit cascus aprestés,
As muls et as soumiers soit li avoirs trousés.
Le matinet, à l'aube, au retour vous metés,
Que moult est li barnages travelliés et penés..."
[*"My lords", said the emperor, "What advice do you give me? I am in great distress. I have lost my barons. I am greatly weakened and my honour decreased by this. I give back to you the crown with which I was crowned. never again in my life will I hold this inheritance." When the French heard this, they were most alarmed. Ganelon was filled with joy, no matter who felt in*

despair. He called the king and immediately addressed the matter. "My rightful lord and emperor, listen to me; I give you advice in sincere loyalty. Take down your tents and strike camp. Let everyone at once get ready. Let your goods be strapped upon mules and pack-horses. In the morning, at dawn, set out for home, for the nobility are very tired and weary..."]

In the *Roland* the idea that the French have had enough of fighting is implied by Blancadrin when he says to Marsile that "En ceste tere ad asez osteiét" ("He has waged war long enough in this land"; l.35), but is nowhere made explicit. In *Fierabras* there follows a debate which ends in a brawl between Renier de Genes, father of Oliver and the family of Grifon d'Hautefeuille, including Ganelon. The poet reminds us that the whole of this family are traitors (ll.4455-59). This disagreement is resolved only through the intervention of Fierabras; then Charlemagne finally manages to reassert his authority and the family of Ganelon submit to Charlemagne. But the debate continues, with Grifon d'Hautefeuille, using arguments which echo the earlier words of Ganelon and again recall those of Ganelon in the *Chanson de Roland*, temporarily persuading Charlemagne to return to France:

4537 Dist Grifon d'Autefuelle: "Je ai le poil mellé,
Bien deveront mi dit estre cremu et redouté;
Je et Guenes mes fiex vous avons moult amé;
Ki que n'ait sa parole et son conseil loé,
Du retorner ariere a boin conseil donné.
Trop avons ore ici longuement conversé;
Trestous me deut li cors de mon hauberc porter;
François sont moult forment travillié et pené.
Mais ains c'aiés en Franche seul .xx. ans conversé,
Seront grant li enfant qui or sont novel né;
Moult seront grant li ost quant seront assamblé.
Lors porrons bien par force conquerre le regné,
Si vengerons Rollant, que tant avons amé,
Et les autre barons qui sont mort et finé."
Quant Karles l'entendi, s'a de pité plouré.
Là ont li traïtour Karlemaine encanté;
Le retourner ariere leur a acréanté.

[*Grifon d'Hautefeuille said, "I am going grey. My words should be respected and feared. My son Ganelon and I have loved you dearly. He who praised his word and advice to you to return*

despair. He called the king and immediately addressed the matter. "My rightful lord and emperor, listen to me; I give you advice in sincere loyalty. Take down your tents and strike camp. Let everyone at once get ready. Let your goods be strapped upon mules and pack-horses. In the morning, at dawn, set out for home, for the nobility are very tired and weary..."]

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[*Grifon d'Hautefeuille said, "I am going grey. My words should be respected and feared. My son Ganelon and I have loved you dearly. He who praised his word and advice to you to return*

home gave good advice. We have spent too long here. My body has worn my hauberk too much. The French are very tired and weary. By the time we have been in France for twenty years the children who are new-born now will have grown up; they will make a great army when they have gathered together. Then we will be able to conquer the kingdom through force and we will avenge Roland, whom we loved so much, and the other barons who are dead and gone." When Charlemagne heard this he cried with sorrow. There did the traitors bewitch Charlemagne. He agreed to turn back.]

It is only the arrival of Richard de Normandie, with news of the peers, which saves the day and prevents their return to France.

But if Ganelon wishes to harm the peers he does not, it seems, wish to harm the emperor. Not only does he not encourage Charlemagne in his offer to give up the crown but later he opposes his family when Charlemagne, on his way to rescue the peers, is trapped in the Saracen town of Mautrible. The traitors wish to leave him there and return to France to crown Grifon d'Hautefeille king. Ganelon, with the converted Fierabras, leads the attack to rescue the emperor.

Later Ganelon is chosen to go on a dangerous mission, taking a challenge to Balan, before the final 'showdown'. He goes alone, as he insists on going alone on his embassy in the Roland. As in the Roland Charlemagne asks his assembled council whom he can send, though this time he already has Ganelon in mind:

5433 "Baron, ce dist li rois, qui porrai envoier
A l'amirant d'Espaigne cest afaire noncier?
Il a en Guenelon moult vaillant chevalier,
Au prendre de Mautrible m'ot mervilleus mestier;
Se li envoierai sel volés otrier."
["*My lords", said the King, "Whom can I send to deal with the Emir of Spain over this business? Ganelon is a most valiant knight. He was of great service to me at the taking of Mautrible. I will send him if you are in agreement."*]

This is extremely close textually to the *Roland* where he asks "Seignurs barons, qui i enveieruns" (l.244) and "Seignurs barons, qui i purrons enveier" (l.252) but how else could he say this? The formulaic similarity is probably not in itself significant, though the change to the first person singular in *Fierabras* may signify a change in the

presentation of Charlemagne who is extremely autocratic in *Fierabras*.

Richard says Ganelon would be a good choice (ll.5438-41) and this time Ganelon agrees willingly. In both the *Roland* and *Fierabras* there follows after the nomination a short arming sequence, during which we are told, that Ganelon mounts his horse. The narrator praises Ganelon as he delivers his message faithfully: 'Guenes fu moult hardis, sages et enparlez' ('Ganelon was very bold, wise and eloquent'; 5467). In *Fierabras* Ganelon does not betray the trust reposed in him and escapes with a whole skin – just.

There are here definite parallels with the *Roland*, the urging upon Charlemagne to accept someone who has volunteered for a dangerous job, Ganelon's role as messenger – but it is the way the text differs form the *Roland* that is interesting. The poet has not simply inverted the character of Ganelon. Rather he insists on his future role as traitor, particularly in the closing lines of the chanson. The character Ganelon displays in *Fierabras* is, moreover, based on the Ganelon of the *Roland*. This is the Ganelon who 'would be noble is only he were loyal' (*Oxford Roland* l.3764), the Ganelon whom the Franks trust enough to send on an embassy, because he has given them no reason to do otherwise, the Ganelon who, before Roncevaux, has served Charlemagne in Spain for seven years loyally (*Oxford Roland* l. 3770). However the use of the *Roland* here is not straightforward. The Ganelon of the *Rhymed Roland* is less complex and darker than the Ganelon of the *Oxford Roland*.[15] As Leslie Brook has pointed out, in the first of two studies on Ganelon in the Rhymed versions of the *Roland*, 'by the late thirteenth century Ganelon would already be well-known as a stereotype for a traitor, so that although he becomes one only within the story in the minds of the readers he already is one.[16] In fact he would have been perceived in this way much earlier, certainly by the time the *Rhymed Roland* was elaborated, towards the end of the twelfth century In most texts Ganelon is defined as a traitor, even coupled with Judas, in, for example Ambroise's *Estoire de la Guerre sainte* and in MSS CV7 of the *Rhymed Roland* (C - ll.8060-62).[17] Of course in the Oxford text we also know that Ganelon 'la traïson fist' from his first appearance in the council scene (l.178). On the other hand Ganelon in the *Rhymed Roland* still retains some of the possibilities of Ganelon in the *Oxford Roland*. His role in the narrative requires that the French trust him, up to a point, although Brook's study suggests that in the *Rhymed Roland*, or at least in C and V7, which are the only MSS which contain the early part of the text, 'He (that is Ganelon) is known to be of uncertain loyalty, yet they are keen for him to go...'.[18] Ganelon still shows his potential in the scene at Saragossa – indeed some of the

changes enhance this – the changes made to the message given orally by Charlemagne reduce the possible charges of lying.[19] Also, although the rhymed text lacks Ganelon's speech at his trial, and the description of his bearing there, there is an elaborated early description of him:[20]

C 388 Guenes fu mout coroceus et irez.
De peus de martre est li cons afublez
Il se desflube, s'est en bliaut remez:
Gent ot lo cors, si fu mot bien molez,
Groses les flans et par espales lez,
Les braz ot gros et les poing bien quarez;
Vairs ot les els, si fu ben colorez
Por sa baute fu asez esgardez.
[*Ganelon was very angry and full of wrath. The count was attired in marten skins. He removed these, remaining in his tunic. His body was fine, well-formed. he was thickset, with broad shoulders, muscular arms and powerful fists. His eyes were bright and of a good colour. He was stared at on account of his handsomeness.*]

and later we are told that 'Guenellons fu cortois et enparlez' ('Ganelon was courtly and eloquent'; 654) – though 'enparlez', the very term used in *Fierabras*, like 'sage', need not be a positive attribute. Moreover, near the end of the text: 'D'armes porter resanble ben baron' ('In carrying arms he seemed noble'; 7697), while Ganelon himself still asserts that he has served Charlemagne loyally: "Car mot vos suel et servir et amer" ("For I have served and loved you well"; 7623). The blackening of Ganelon in the rhymed text is not then complete, partly because it sometimes follows the older text so closely. Nonetheless it remains surprising that it is the older part of *Fierabras*, which could not have known the *Rhymed Roland*, at least not in the form it has come down to us, which presents the more stereotyped depiction of Ganelon, while in the developed text we have a Ganelon who, while not perhaps very far from the Ganelon of the *Rhymed Roland* is closer to the character Brook describes as the 'almost tragic figure of O'.[21] Perhaps, if we are to follow Segré's division of the evolution of the Roland tradition into three stages – a possibly somewhat simplistic notion but with some usefulness – we may assume the version known to the *Fierabras* poet would come in the middle stage the first rhymed version which transposes fairly closely much of the assonanced text into rhyming laisses [22] or that he drew on more than one element of the *Roland* tradition, in the depiction of

Ganelon's character, challenging audience expectations without being simply parodic.

The use made of the depiction of Roland is equally subtle – not that the character of Roland in *Fierabras* is subtle – far from it. The poet gives us a hot-headed Roland, only too willing to quarrel with anyone, including Charlemagne. The very first scene in the Christian camp shows Roland drawing his sword on Charlemagne, prevented from striking him by Ogier, then going off to sulk Achilles like in his tent, leaving the wounded Oliver to pick up the challenge thrown by the Saracen Fierabras. Oliver is clearly the heroic knight here. Later, going with the other peers to bear Charlemagne's message to Balan, Roland endangers the mission. Naimon has used all his diplomatic skill to allow the embassy to cross the bridge of Mautrible; Roland then risks all by pushing a Saracen into the river Flagot. There is throughout the text considerable tension between the seasoned warriors and the young knights and this is partly brought out in the tension which exists between Naimon and Roland. After the incident at Mautrible Naimon and Roland quarrel over who should be first to deliver Charlemagne's message to Balan:

2563 "Signeur, ce dist dus Namles, li briés me soit donnés;
Je parlerai premiers et vous m'escouterés."
"Mais je vaurai parler, ce dist Rollans li bers."
Et respondi dus Namles: Que dis tu forsenés?
Ocire nous feroies ains que jours fust passés."
[*"My lords", said Duke Naimon, "Let me have the letters. I will speak first and you will listen to me". "But I wanted to speak", said the noble Roland. And Duke Naimon replied, "What are you saying, you lunatic; you will have us all killed before the end of the day".*]

We are reminded of Oliver's protestations in the *Roland* that Roland would not make a good messenger:

256 "Nu[n] ferez certes", dist li quens Oliver,
Vostre curages est mult pesmes e fiers,"
[*"You certainly will not," said Count Oliver, "Your temperament is most hostile and fierce".*]

Who could doubt this who had heard the tale of *Fierabras*. In the depiction of both these characters there is a definite drawing upon the

Chanson de Roland, yet the characters are not depicted in the stereotypical way we might expect. Audience expectations are challenged.

Expectations are challenged in a different way when the exploitation of the *Roland* is actual parody, when a whole scene is parodied, to comic effect. Early in the *Roland* we have the famous council scene, when Naimon, Roland, Oliver and Turpin in turn volunteer to take Charlemagne's message to Marsile; Charlemagne turns down their offers because he cannot risk sending them on so dangerous a mission. In *Fierabras* a similar scene is enacted. A messenger is needed to go to Balan with Charlemagne's request, or rather demand, that the five imprisoned peers be released and the relics of the passion returned. Charlemagne calls for Roland and orders him to go. Roland replies, not with the heroic bravado we might expect, but with what amounts to a refusal:

2276 "Sire, ce dist Rollans, merci, pour amour Dé!
Bien sai, se je i vois, jamais ne me venrés."
[*"My lord", said Roland, "Have pity, for the love of God. I know that if I go, you will never see me again".*]

Is this really Roland speaking? Roland, the great hero who is always to be found in the place of greatest danger? Naimon then pleads on Roland's behalf, his words echoing those used by Roland himself:

2278 "Sire, ce dist dus Namles, merci, pour amour Dé!
Rollans est vostre niés et de vo sereur nés:
Se vous l'i envoiés, jamais ne le venrés."
[*"My lord", said Duke Naimon, "Have pity, for the love of God. Roland is your nephew, born of your sister. If you send him, you will never see him again."*]

Charlemagne's reply is uncompromising: "Avoec irés..." ("You will go too..."; 2281) – he says to Naimon. Naimon must go too. In a neat reversal of the *Roland* scene the remaining peers now stand up in turn to protest, and to each Charlemagne gives the same reply: "Avoec irés... / Or i serés vous .ii. / troi / .iiii. / .v." ("Now there will be two / three / four / five of you...") until six of the seven peers still at the court are designated for the embassy. The scenario parodies that of the *Roland* with its heroic offers to go in the place of the person who has nominated himself for the dangerous mission. Here, instead of heroic offers to be

vetoed by Charlemagne we have the uncompromising "Avoec irés". The humour lies not only in the way our expectations are frustrated and turned upside down, but also in the clever use of parallelism which underlines this. Each section, dedicated to a single peer, echoes the previous lines.[23] The seventh peer, Gui de Bourgogne, who shares the honours of the poem with Oliver, has rather different treatment. He does not join in the general chorus of protestation but is called forward by Charlemagne after the other six peers have been appointed and ordered to go with them, but even he then protests with the by now familiar formula:

2320 "Sire, ce dist quens Guis, afoler me volés;
Bien sai se je i vois jamais ne me venrés."
[*"My lord", said Count Gui, "You want to have me killed. I know that if I go you will never see me again".*]

Thus a clever use of formulae,[24] the 'building bricks' of the genre, and of parallelism, a basic element of epic discourse, uses the audiences horizon of expectation, built up by exposure to the tradition, in a parody of the greatest chanson of all. The horizons are not destroyed, but challenged, and it is only clearly-defined audience expectation which allows the parody to work.

Of course that is not all that is going on in this scene. As Wolfgang van Emden has pointed out the scene reflects badly on the 'capricious and tyrannical Emperor'.[25] Moreover the risk to the lives of the imprisoned peers adds an element of intense drama.[26] I should also point out here that Dominque Boutet sees no parody in this scene at all.[27] My interpretation of this as humour, and in particular as parodic humour, is based partly on the presence of other, less subtle forms of humour in the text.[28] The most obvious way in which this is expressed is through sexual innuendo or repartee. Floripas, Fierabras' sister, is the vehicle for this.[29] We first find such exchanges shortly after Floripas appears on the scene. Hearing the lamentations of the five peers imprisoned by her father Floripas comes to their rescue, killing the gaoler in order to gain access to them. Looking into their dungeon by the light of the candle she calls to them and a spirited exchange follows. Oliver responds to her call with proud words, demanding arms to kill the Saracens. Floripas does not hesitate to put him down. Berart then takes Oliver's place and addresses Floripas:

2122 "Dame, ce dist Berars, cil qui bien set canter
Note moult volentiers; por sen doel oublier."
[*"My lady", said Berart, "He who knows how to sing makes*

music most readily to forget his pain".]

To which Floripas replies:

2124 "Par mon cief, dist la bele, moult savés bien gaber;
Je ne sai cui vous estes, car ne vous puis viser;
Mais je quit c'as pucieles sivés moult bien juer,
En cambre sous cortine baisier et acoler."
[*"By my head," said the lovely lady, "You do know how to joke. I do not know who you are. I cannot see you properly. But I think that you know how to play with the girls and to kiss and cuddle under the covers in the bedchamber".*]

Guillermez' reply to this is less brash. Apparently enjoying himself at his companion's expense, he retorts that Floripas understands the matter well. Berart has no equal "Juqu'en Jherusalem".

Berart himself makes a similar comment. Echoing Floripas' words earlier in the text he shouts, during a sortie, to Roland and the other peers:

3281 "Or penst cil du bien faire qui vorra dosnoie[r]
En chambre sous courtines acoler et baisier."
[*"Let him do well who want to make love, to kiss and cuddle under the covers in the bedchamber".*]

which apparently encourages them to kill even more pagans. There is a reference here, too, to the idea implicit in courtoisie that a knight's prowess is dependent on his lady, a crude echo of the more courtly ideal of being inspired by the contemplation of the reward of winning a lady's favour. This is foreign to the ideals of the chanson de geste. Oliver may threaten to refuse to let Roland marry his sister, but this has more to do with the relationship between the two men than that between Roland and Aude; the thought of Aude is not necessary to inspire Roland to great deeds.

The *Fierabras* poet also allows himself to enjoy Floripas' baptism at the end of the poem. At this supposedly very solemn and serious occasion we are given a detailed description of her naked beauty.[30] It is stressed that she undresses 'voiant tout le barné' (l.5999) and the reaction of the barons to her nakedness is described:

6003 A mains de nos barons est li talens mués.
L'empereres méismes en a .i. ris jeté;

Pour tant s'il ot le poil et canu et mellé,
Si éust il mout tost son courage atorné.
[*Feelings were stirred for many of our barons. The emperor himself laughed; even though his hair was white and grizzled, yet was his desire easily stirred.*]

There is some incongruity here at two levels, that of situation, the reaction, not fitting the solemnity of the occasion, and that of language, with the expression 'en a .i. ris geté'. This formula in the Guillaume cycle is normally attached to Guillaume himself, particularly in the *Couronnement Louis* and the *Charroi de Nimes*, where it is an identifying feature.[31] Given the wealth of intertextual reference in Fierabras, there could well be here an evocation of the heroic Guillaume who responded with scorn or mockery to divers situations. There is incongruity in the use of a formula normally associated with a scorn born of superiority being applied to the response of an elderly emperor to the sight of a naked girl – again we see the use of intertextual reference for humorous effect. The focus in *Fierabras* is on Charlemagne in particular, and above all, on his age, which makes his reaction appear more ludicrous. We have a similar account of Naimon's reaction on first seeing Floripas:

2750 "Hé Diex, ce dist dus Namles, biaus rois de maïsté,
Qui vit si bele dame ains mais en nul regné?
Moult l'aroit bien Jhesu véu et espiré,
Qui ele en son courage averoit bien amé."
[*"By God", said duke Naimon, "Fine King of majesty! Whoever saw such a beautiful lady anwhere! Jesus would have looked at her for she would have loved him well".*]

A response for which he is mocked by the younger Roland:

2754 .... "onques mais n'oï tel;
Trop par avés ce poil et kanu et mellé;
Quel .L. dyble vous font d'amours parler?"
[*"I never heard such a thing. You are too white haired and grizzled. What 50 devils make you speak of love?"*]

Critics have seen some elements of humour in *Fierabras* before. Philippe Ménard, in his seminal study of humour in the roman courtois analyses the scene where Balan refuses to be baptised and in his anger turns red (l.5938) and spits in the font, before trying to lift bodily the officiating

bishop, put him into the font and finally striking him.[32] Yet these reactions may be no more than the externalisation of internal feelings, the normal *chanson de geste* technique for showing how a character feels. There may be, as Ménard claims, some grim humour in Balan breaking a stick in anger (l.5486), but Balan's attempted baptism seems more grim than humorous. For Ménard the humour lies in the mocking of Balan and his extreme, and therefore perhaps, ludicrous behaviour. Paul Bancourt also analyses the same scene and perceives an element of humour here, describing the scene as 'tragi-comique'.[33] Bancourt's interpretation of the scene as an inversion of the conventions of hagiography, is more convincing than that of Ménard and depends on a creative use of intertextual reference. Bancourt does not use the word 'parody' in his analysis of the use of motifs from the *Passions* but that is essentially how he sees it, describing the scene as 'Une scène colorée où se mêlent le tragique et le bouffon'.[34]

Walpole too thought there were elements of humour in *Fierabras*, but he was not impressed by this. He declared that one could 'almost mark the chronological progress in epic poetry by the degradation of the forms of humour and their passage at times into the more strident, interested and cheaper forms of comedy' and concluded that '*Fierabras* is a good example of the decadence of which I have been speaking; it is a mixture of epic ingredients to which the author has given little of himself, if, indeed, he had anything to give'.[35]

One could perhaps justify such censure if the only humour in *Fierabras* were to be found in the unsubtle sexual innuendo but this excursus into such forms of humour in *Fierabras* has been with the intention of supporting my interpretation of the use of the *Roland* material as being, sometimes, both parodic and humorous. This more subtle use of humour suggests skill on the part of the poet and a high degree of consciousness of the tradition – while I have focused on the use of the *Roland* the extant version of *Fierabras* shows evidence of knowing a number of *chansons de geste*. The humour of the court scene depends on an awareness of the council scene in the *Roland* while in the challenging of audience expectations other uses of *Roland* material may have been more startling than funny.

The other half of the diptych concerns what all this can tell us about the understanding of the *Roland* at the end of the twelfth century? The use of other texts to help in interpreting an older text which has been used in some way is now a well-tried practice.[36]

If we read the use of the *Roland* material in *Fierabras* as subverting audience expectations, then the assumption is being made that audiences

expect Roland to be heroic and Ganelon to be treacherous. It suggests that many of the listeners would take a position on Ganelon similar to that taken in modern terms by critics like Robert Cook – Ganelon can do no right – and that Roland would be seen as the archetypal hero. Our experience of medieval texts largely support this. I have already referred to the coupling of Ganelon with Judas and in most texts, including, again Ambroise's *Estoire*, *Roland*, and other *chansons de geste*, Roland and the peers are held up as examples of heroes. David Hook in a recent study of 'Roland in the Medieval Spanish Epic' refers to Roland's role as an 'exemplar of heroic endeavour', in the *Poema de Fernán González*, and later to the French epic heroes as 'models of warrior endeavour'.[37] However, as van Emden shows in his study, not all *chanson de geste* writers portray Roland in this was way and in their portrayal of Roland we can see an implicit condemnation of the protagonist of the *Chanson de Roland*.[38]

The latter part of *Fierabras* was added around the end of the twelfth century. Van Emden, who is concerned with the reception of the *Oxford Roland* concentrates largely, though not exclusively, on the first section, the older part of the poem, which must have drawn on a version similar to the *Oxford Roland*. Here Roland quarrels with Charlemagne then allows Oliver to take up the dangerous challenge. As van Emden puts it 'the author's view of Roland is clear and suggests a judgment as to the role of Charlemagne's nephew in the earlier poem'.[39] This conclusion can only be reached because the *Fierabras* poet has not simply shocked, not simply gone against audience expectations – he has done so by using certain implications inherent in the *Chanson de Roland* itself. The portrayal of Roland is quite consistent throughout the extant text of *Fierabras*. In the depiction of Roland in the later section of *Fierabras*, his conflicts with Naimon over the Saracen pushed into the river and over the delivery of the message at Aigremore develop the character of the first section. The continuator has picked up where the lost *chanson* left off. Roland is no coward, however; he leads the peers out in their sorties and fights bravely. But he is not the hero of the text. The hero of the first section is Oliver and in making Oliver his hero the poet implies that it was possible at the very least to suggest that Oliver is as worthy a knight as Roland, if not more worthy; there may even lie behind this some suggestion of a contemporary debate between partisans of Roland and of Oliver. He may be suggesting what we would today call a resistant reading of the *Chanson de Roland*, not taking the obvious line, but it is worth pointing out that he is not the only medieval writer to do so. Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube suggests a similar comparison between Oliver

and Roland in *Girart de Vienne*.[40] We have no date for the lost version of *Fierabras*, but it must have predated *Girart de Vienne* which drew upon it – the character developments of the extant *Fierabras* (which shows other evidence of knowing *Girart de Vienne*) could also, of course draw upon the depiction of characters in *Girart* as well as in *Roland*. If such a reading of the *Roland* was possible in the twelfth century, perhaps we should not be surprised that critics cannot agree over Ganelon or Roland today. As Karen Pratt expresses it in the Preface to a collection of essays on Roland and Charlemagne 'it was perhaps the enigmatic, ambiguous nature of the hero of the *Chanson de Roland* that gave rise to such a variety of treatments by medieval and early modern authors and which still provokes strong critical debate today'.[41] Any suggestion that this is a tired, worn-out debate, may reflect more on our lack of stamina than on the text itself.

It is not just the character of Roland which is presented in *Fierabras* however. I have spent as much time on my analysis of Ganelon as on the analysis of Roland. It seems to me that the two need to be taken together, in both texts. On an ontological level Ganelon certainly represents evil in the *Chanson de Roland*, and, like Judas, as the 'enemy within' is more dangerous than those who are direct opponents. Yet on another level, a more human level, the Ganelon of *Fierabras*, or at least of the later part of *Fierabras*, is not far from the man glimpsed behind the traitor of the *Chanson de Roland*. As I said earlier, the *Fierabras* poet, writing a poem supposedly set three years before Roncevaux, has, for the depiction of Ganelon drawn on indications within the *Roland*. For Ganelon's role in the *Roland* to be credible, one must assume a Ganelon whom the French thought they could trust. We must in the end believe Ganelon's claim, in his trial, that he had served Charlemagne faithfully, up to the time when he quarrels with Roland, otherwise the French would not have approved the choice of Ganelon as messenger in the first place. In *Fierabras* Ganelon hates the peers already, but supports Charlemagne. If the *Roland* poet presents a hero who is less than perfect, he also presents a traitor, who could have been noble; this is the situation exploited by the *Fierabras* poet in his presentation of these men. The poet responsible for *Fierabras*, as distinct from the lost *Rome perdue*, has inherited the hot-blooded Roland from his predecessor and creates a Ganelon to go with him, transforming the stereotyped Ganelon of the older section of the poem into a much more interesting and complex character.

I would like to conclude by returning briefly to *Fierabras*. My reading of the text suggests both an awareness of topoi of the genre and the deliberate use of a specific text. To appreciate what the poet is doing in

terms the humour aroused and the drama evoked it must be read with the conscious intertext of the *Chanson de Roland* in mind. *Fierabras* draws upon many topoi of the genre – for example the *belle sarrasine* in love with a Christian knight and the by then fully formed clan of traitors, and uses a number of *chansons de geste*, but it also tells us something about the reception of the *Roland* in the way it privileges the *Roland* over other texts. It is the battle of Roncevaux which is used to fix *Fierabras* in the chronology of the tradition –suggesting that it is not just modern critics who see the *Roland* as the most important *chanson de geste* of all. It seems to have occupied a special place in the minds of medieval writers too. It may also be significant, however, and here the medieval reception of the text differs from ours, that it is the *Rhymed Roland* which our later poet drew upon. I am saying nothing new in suggesting that the Middle ages differed from us on this point,[42] but it should not be ignored in any consideration of the reception of the *Roland* and its use as an intertext.

NOTES

[1] Paul Zumthor expounds his concept of 'modèle' in 'Intertextualité et mouvance', *Littérature* 46 (1981): 8-16; see also Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, Paris, Seuil, 1972, 75-81. On the concept of intertext and intertextuality see also Michael Riffaterre, *Littérature* 41 (1981): 4 -7; the whole of this issue of *Littérature* is dedicated to intertextuality.

[2] Dominique Boutet, *La Chanson de geste: Forme et signification d'une écriture épique au moyen âge*, Paris, PUF, 1993, pp. 131-58. Boutet also examines the issue of stereotypes and intertextuality in his study of *Jehan de Lanson, Jehan de Lanson, technique et esthétique de la chanson de geste au XIII*[e] *siècle*, Paris, Presses de l'école normale supérieure, 1988; see especially pp. 171-77.

[3] Boutet, *La Chanson de geste*, 157; *Jehan de Lanson*, ed. John Vernon Myers, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1965.

[4] Boutet, *La Chanson de geste*, p. 156.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 156-57.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

[7] *Fierabras* knows the *Rhymed Roland* rather than the older Oxford text; this was extremely useful in dating the text and tied in with other literary, linguistic and contextual evidence to suggest a date at the very end of the twelfth century or even into the beginning of the thirteenth. See M.J. Ailes, 'The Date of Fierabras,' Olifant, 19 (1994-95): 245-71.

[8] E.g. *Otinel*, a rather uninspiring text of the early thirteenth century, becomes much more interesting when it is read as a re-writing of *Fierabras*, re-establishing the norms which are undermined in *Fierabras* itself, M. J. Ailes

'Chivalry and Conversion: The Chivalrous Saracen in the Old French Epics *Fierabras* and *Otinel*', *Al Masaq* 9 (1996-97): 1-21.

[9] See Boutet, *La Chanson de geste*, 132 on the concept of 'modèles virtuels'.

[10] Details from these references are closer to the *Rhymed Roland* than the Oxford *Roland.*, notably the location of the death of Pinabel at Loon rather than at Aix as in the Oxford *Roland.* Textual echoes suggest a link with CV7 or P; Ailes, 'The Date of *Fierabras*', pp. 249-50.

[11] *Fierabras*, ed. A. Kroeber and G. Servois, Paris, 1860; the translations are my own.

[12] Sarah Kay, *The Chansons de geste in the Age of Romance*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995, in her discussion of the woman as gift concentrates on the Saracen princess story. The woman as gift is a concept with a number of different manifestations in the genre as a whole; the woman may be offered as an inducement, as in the *Rhymed Roland* and *Fierabras*, as a sign of friendship, as when Roland says he will take Aude if Oliver will give her to him in *Girart de Vienne* (ed. W.G. van Emden, Paris, Société des anciens textes français, 1977, l.5943) and may be unfulfilled, as when Charlemagne does not fulfil his promise to give the widowed Duchess of Burgundy to Girart (*Girart de Vienne*, ll.1246-476).

[13] *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. F. Whitehead, revised with a new introduction, bibliography and notes by T. D. Hemming, Bristol, Bristol Classical Texts, 1993.

[14] *Balan* is an inappropriate title for the lost chanson because the character Balan probably did not figure in it; see M. J. Ailes 'A Comparative Study of the Old French and Middle English Verse Texts of the *Fierabras* Legend', Reading University PhD, 1989, pp. 26-38, especially p. 34.

[15] Leslie C. Brook, 'Ganelon's path to treachery in the Rhymed Versions of the *Chanson de Roland*', *The Troubadours and the Epic: Essays in memory of W. Mary Hackett*, ed. L. M. Paterson and S. B. Gaunt, Warwick, University of Warwick, 1987, 169-89; *idem* 'La Traîtrise et la vengeance: Ganelon dans les versions rimées de la *Chanson de Roland*', *Actes du XIe Congrès International de la Société Rencesvals*, Barcelona, 1990, 87-101; see also Simon Gaunt, *Gender and genre in Medieval French Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 29; On Ganelon in the older assonanced text see Marianne J. Ailes, *The Song of Roland – On Absolute and Relative Values*, Lampeter, Edwin Mellen, 2001, pp. 49-69.

[16] 'Ganelon's path to treachery', p. 170.

[17] Ambroise, *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*, ed. M. J. Ailes, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming l. 1385, or ed. Gaston Paris, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1897, l.1388. *Les Textes de la Chanson de Roland*, ed. Raoul Mortier, vol 4 (Chateauroux MS), Paris: La Geste francor, 1943; vol 5 (V7), Paris: La Geste francor, 1942.

[18] Brook, 'Ganelon's path to treachery', p. 173.

[19] Brook, 'Ganelon's path to treachery', p. 180; cf. Philip E. Bennett, 'Ganelon's False Message: A Critical False Persepective', *Reading around the Epic; A*

Festschrift in honour of Professor Wolfgang van Emden, ed. Marianne Ailes, Philip E. Bennett and Karen Pratt, London, King's College London Medieval Studies, XIV, 1998, 149-69.

[20] Ed. Mortier - all quotations are from the Chateauroux MS.

[21] Brook, 'Ganelon's path to treachery', p. 187.

[22] Cesare Segré, *La tradizione della "Chanson de Roland"*, Milan and Naples, Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1974. Segré's stemma is criticised by W.G. van Emden, 'Some Remarks on the Cambridge Manuscript of the *Rhymed Roland*', *The Editor and the Text: In Honour of Anthony J. Holden*, ed. Philip E. Bennett and Graham A. Runnals, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1990, 58-69. Ailes, 'The Date of Fierabras', p. 250, suggests that of the extant manuscripts of the *Rhymed Roland*, manuscript *C* is the closest to the references contained in *Fierabras*.

[23] M. Le Person, 'Le Rire et le sourire dans *La Destruction de Rome* et *Fierabras*', *Miscellanea Mediaevalia: mélanges offertes à Philippe Ménard*, ed. J. Claude Faucon, Alain Labbé, Danielle Quéruel, 2 vols, Paris, Champion, 1998, 897-915, includes this scene under the section 'Le comique de situation', (p.907) emphasising the importance of repetition for the comic effect. He does not address the question of parody.

[24] On formulae as an element of parodic humour see Anne E. Cobby, *Ambivalent Conventions: Formula and parody in Old French*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1995.

[25] Wolfgang G. van Emden 'The Reception of the Roland in some Old French Epics' in *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe: Essays on the Reception and Transformation of a Legend*, edited by Karen Pratt, London, Kings College London Medieval Studies, XII, 1-30 (10).

[26] Boutet, *Jehan de Lanson*, p. 166.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 165-66.

[28] On the methodological difficulties involved in the perception of humour in medieval texts see P. Ménard, *Le Rire et le sourire dans le roman courtois*, Geneva, 1969, especially pp. 11-17; see also Phillipa Hardman, 'Scholars Re-telling Romances', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 18 (1992), 81-102.

[29] On Floripas see Hans Erich Keller, 'Le Belle sarrasine dans *Fierabras* et ses dérivés', *Charlemagne in the North: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of the Société Rencesvals, Edinburgh 4th-11th August 1991*, ed. Philip E. Bennett, Anne Elizabeth Cobby and Graham A. Runnalls, Edinburgh: Société Rencesvals British Branch, 1993, 299-307. On the humour of sensual provocation see Le Person, 'Le Rire et le sourire', pp. 901-2.

[30] This scene is cited as an example of 'rire grivois' by Ménard, *Le Rire*, 34; see also Le Person 'Le Rire et le sourire', p. 901.

[31] A.R. Press, 'The Formula "S'en a un ris gité', in the *Charroi de Nimes*', *FMLS*, 12 (1976), 17-25 , 19; see also *Idem*, '"S'en a un ris gité" in the *Charroi de Nimes*: A further Note', *FMLS*, 14 (1978), 42-46; Ménard, *Le Rire*, pp. 31-72.

[32] Ménard, *Le Rire*, p. 80.

[33] Paul Bancourt, *Les Musulmans dans les chansons de geste du cycle du roi*, 2

vols, Aix-en-Provence, Aix University Press, 1982, p. 540.
[34] Ibid., p. 542.
[35] R.N. Walpole, 'Humor and People in Twelfth-century France, *Romance Philology*, 11 (1958), 210-25 (p. 218).
[36] Karen Pratt, 'Reading Epic through Romance: The *Roland* and the *Roman de Thèbes*', in *Reading around the Epic*, 101-27; Wolfgang van Emden 'La Réception du personnage de Roland dans quelques oeuvres plus ou moins épiques des 12e, 13e et 14e siècles', in *Aspects de l'épopée romane: mentalité, idéologies, intertextualités*, ed. Hans van Dijk and Willem Noomen Gröningen, Egbert Forsten, 1995, 353-62; van Emden, 'The Reception of the Roland', *passim*.
[37] David Hook 'Roland in the Medieval Spanish Epic', in *Roland and Charlemagne*, pp.83-103, (p. 85 and p. 87).
[38] van Emden, 'The Reception of the *Roland*', espec. pp. 9-12 and 15-17.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[40] Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube, *Girart de Vienne* ed. W.G. van Emden, Paris, Société des Anciens textes Français, 1977; see also van Emden, 'The reception of the *Roland*', pp. 15-17.
[41] Pratt, *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe*, vii.
[42] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, 25 'There is little evidence that the *Roland* as it survives in the Oxford MS was widely known in the Middle Ages. The modern obsession with the Oxford *Roland* has without doubt produced a misapprehension of the genre. The legend of Roncevaux, however, was immensely popular'.