

Shared Guilt for the Ambush at Roncevaux

Robert Rois

rrois@pasadena.edu

In the oral epic we contemplate a prominent but compact framework within a vast landscape, a hut on a hill. The overall struggle between Christians and Saracens in *The Song of Roland* gives way to the attention we must bestow on the friction arising among heroes in the French camp, Charlemagne, Roland, and Ganelon. Within the poem the Christian-Saracen struggle is not explained in terms of worldly causality; several times, rather, one side is identified as good, and the other as evil. (1) There is a basic rivalry which is not the crucial dissension of the epic. As in *The Iliad*, where Achilles' rage is directed, not toward the Trojans, but against Agamemnon, the rivalry that drives the narrative in *The Song of Roland* is within the French camp. Guilt for the ambush at Roncevaux is shared by the three main protagonists. Ganelon is married to the King's widowed sister, Roland's mother. Before departing on the fateful Embassy to the enemy camp, Ganelon tells Charles: "Remember this: your sister is my wife" [312]. (2) Although she is not mentioned by name in the *Chanson*, as an absent figure of desire she becomes a structural principle that leads to conflict. The big fight breaks away into internal turmoil.

In our analysis we address first the dreams of Charlemagne, which reveal the pathetic plight of the King in terms of the choices he makes and those he fails to make. We then shall expose the poetic framework in terms of a quadrangular family relationship central to plot motivation in *The Song of Roland*. Both, the monarch's dreams and the family relations combine in the narrative of the poem to drive Ganelon into the role of scapegoat at the end.

Charlemagne's Dreams

The dreams play an important role in the plot. We find textual evidence of antagonism between Ganelon and Roland, yet the actual reason for Ganelon's betrayal in the *Chanson* is a difficult issue to address directly. Enmity toward Roland definitely translates into a breach of loyalty against the King. On the other hand, the dreams of Charlemagne show a glaring premonition in the text upon which the Emperor refuses to act. Roland himself is too bent on destruction of the enemy to cherish the idea of returning to France. The discord between the three main characters of the *Chanson* remains an issue to be resolved. We contend that their mutual enmity condemns the rearguard to destruction.

The dreams occur in two pairs, before the separation of the rearguard, and after the French host's revenge against Marsile. The crucial decisions: a) to separate from the vanguard, turned rearguard, and b) for the host to turn around and head for France, both shall prove fatal. Since neither decision had been made before the first dream sequence, the content of the dreams reveal their premonitory quality. Aware of the King's failure to act at a crucial moment in the plot, Erich Auerbach ascribes to Charles a somnambulistic paralysis.⁽³⁾ In the Emperor's first dream of the early sequence, the Count who named Roland to the guard is identified as the King's attacker, who breaks the spear in his grasp:

Clasped in his hands he holds the ash wood spear:
Count Ganelon wrenches it from his grasp,
With raging strength shatters and breaks the wood,
And sends the splinters flying against the sky.

.....
*Entre ses poinz teneit sa hanste fraisnine;
Guenes li quens l'ad sur lui saisie;
Par tel air l'at estrussee e brandie
Qu'envers le cel en volent les escicles. [720-723]*

Evidently Ganelon exerts a virulent hold on Charles. The imagery of the forceful grab which sends splinters flying is unforgettable.⁽⁴⁾ The physical attack is a clear affront to the King's safety and supreme authority. The crucial issue is the open identity of Ganelon as aggressor.

In the second dream of the first sequence Charlemagne dreams he is at home, where a beast bites his right arm.⁽⁵⁾

After that dream another vision came:
He was in France, in his chapel at Aix.
A vicious beast was biting his right arm.
Out of the forest he sees a leopard run,
And he himself it cruelly attacks.
From his great hill a boarhound rushes out
And comes to Charles, running with leaps and bounds,
Seizes the beast, biting off its right ear.

.....
*Aprés iceste altre avisiun sunjat,
Qu'il ert en France, a sa capele ad Ais.
El destre braz li morst uns vers si mals;
Devers Ardene vit venir uns leuparz,
Sun cors demenie mult fierement asalt.*

*D'enz de sale uns veltres avalat.
Qui vint a Carles lé galops e les salz;
La destre oreille al premer ver trenchat. [725-732]*

The forested Ardenne region is the land of Ganelon's relatives [2558]; but the dark woods also harbor the dreadful mystery of the unknown.⁽⁶⁾ Together, the contrast evokes the vicinity of home mingled with a sensation of dread. We tend to identify domesticated animals with the *good*, and exotic beasts with an enemy.⁽⁷⁾ Despite the apparent premonitory nature of this vision, Charles remains impervious to danger, and the ambush at Roncevaux unfolds in the narrative. The bear attacks the King's right arm, *destre braz*, and a leopard's lunge follows. According to Joseph Bédier: "the bear who bites Charlemagne's arm is Ganelon, the leopard is Pinabel, who shall affront the King as Ganelon's champion, the hound is Thierry, who shall face Pinabel on Charlemagne's behalf."⁽⁸⁾ The bear is definitely Ganelon, but the leopard could also represent Marsile; and the vicious dog is perhaps a figure of Roland, who heads a smaller contingent.⁽⁹⁾ Joseph Duggan remarks: "Critics have been divided over the meaning of Charlemagne's second dream, which some see as foreshadowing Roncevaux, others the Trial of Ganelon."⁽¹⁰⁾

The dreams may be taken to represent: 1) Ganelon's betrayal, 2) the battle at Roncevaux, 3) the Baligant encounter, and 4) the trial at the end, respectively.⁽¹¹⁾ Such symbolism seems sensible enough, except that the second dream also encloses possible reference to the trial by combat.⁽¹²⁾ Although the reference to Roncevaux is appealing, there is no reason to believe that adopting one interpretation over the other is misleading or contradictory, due to the ambiguous nature of actual dreams.⁽¹³⁾ We may consider neither interpretation for the second dream to be mutually exclusive of the other if we focus on the essential gist: the dream may forecast simultaneously an assault against the French forces at Roncevaux and against royal supremacy at Aix. In either case, we should agree that the nightmarish quality of the dreams is relevant to the moral question about filial sacrifice. The difference in interpretation simply points to the temporal span of the King's premonition regarding different assaults against royal authority in the narrative, early or late in the plot. Such an explanation does not resolve the controversy, but should establish contextual relevance despite the ambiguity.

The second pair of dream visions occurs after the ambush and obliteration of the rearguard; that is, after the King's Army wreaks havoc against the Saracen forces to avenge the loss of the rearguard, and just before confrontation with the forces of Baligant, the emir who brings Saracen reinforcements from abroad. In the King's second sequence of dream visions, we see an expansion of the threat to Charles. Reinforcements from abroad come to avenge Marsile. Baligant's forces become a great number of monstrous enemies attacking Charles' men:

With great dismay Charles sees his knights attacked
By vicious beasts—by leopards and by bears,
Serpents and vipers, dragons and devils too,
And there are griffons, thirty thousand and more,
All of them leaping, charging against the Franks.

.....
*En grant d'olor i viet ses chevalers.
Urs e leuparz les voelent puis manger,
Serpenz e quivres, dragun e averser;
Grifuns i ad, plus de trente millers:
N'en i ad cel a Franceis ne s'agiet.* [2541-2545]

Dragons, leopards, vipers, and bears attack the Franks. Threats multiply as a consequence of Ganelon's betrayal.

The King's reciprocal concern for the Army is heightened. Powerless, the sleeping monarch despairs in the nightmare as he regards his men: "The Franks who cry, 'Charlemagne, help us now!'" [2546] (14) This cry for help takes the place of the attack against the King that leaves him unarmed in the first dream of the earlier sequence, for in both cases the monarch's impotence is evident. The inability of the King to run to their aid intensifies the attack against Charles:

And overwhelmed by pity and by grief,
He starts out toward them, but something interferes:
A mighty lion springs at him from a wood,
Fearful to look at, raging and proud and bold;
He leaps, attacking the person of the king.
Grappling each other they wrestle violently:
But who will rise a victor, who will fall?

.....
*Li reis en ad e d'olor e pitet;
Aler i volt, mais il ad desturber:
Devers un gualt uns granz leons li vient,
Mult par ert pesmes e orguillus e fiers,
Sun cors meïsmes i asalt e requert
E prenent sei a braz ambedous por loiter;
Mais ço ne set liquels abat ne quels chiet.* [2547-2553]

The King wants to aid his men but is restrained by a lion. There is a threat against Charlemagne, and the King, unable to delegate his defense to anyone, must withstand the

personal attack against himself directly. This blow to the monarch's safety and authority is seen in the uncertain outcome of the ensuing struggle, for Charles' powerlessness reflects the vulnerability of his men in facing Baligant's forces. The expression for an indecisive victory which had provided closure for the second dream of the first sequence is repeated in altered form:

They don't know which side will win the fight.

.....

But who will rise a victor, who will fall?

.....

But he could not see which one of them would lose.

Il ne se vent liquels d'els la veintrat. [735]

.....

Mais ço ne set liquels abat ne quels chiet. [2553]

.....

Mais ço ne set liquels veint ne quels nun. [2567]

The adversative conjunction *mais*, "but," introduces a negative hypothesis; this formulaic expression caps both dreams of the second sequence. Noticing the subject of the main verb in line 735, *il* > modern French *ils*, we realize that it was the Army that pondered over the outcome while contemplating the fight. The phase of the attack against royal authority at that time was in the planning stages of a mishandled diplomatic tangle. After the first sequence of dream visions, we have the nomination of Roland triggering the actions heralded by the return of Ganelon from the enemy camp in the scene preceding description of the sleeping Charles. The action is still in an embryonic stage, and the ambush of Roland had not yet taken place. After the second dream sequence, however, Marsile is on the run, bleeding to death due to the injury inflicted by Roland [2574].⁽¹⁵⁾ Through bitter reminiscence of the *right arm* metaphor, the effects of Roland's death are again brought to the foreground, for Charles' vulnerability against Baligant is parallel to the danger his nephew faced in the ambush at Roncevaux. The king subconsciously suspects further trouble.

The second vision of this final dream sequence also sets the stage again, more along the lines of a diplomatic issue than as a strictly military encounter, reflecting the ambiguity we saw in the second dream of the earlier sequence:

Later that night he had another dream:

He was in Aix; on a dais he stood,

Holding a bear bound tight with double chains.

Thirty more bears came out of the Ardennes,
 Each of them speaking exactly like a man.
 They said to Charles, "Sire, give him back to us!
 It isn't right for you to keep him here;
 We cannot choose but bring our kinsman help."
 Out of the palace there came a hunting dog
 Who then attacked the largest of the bears;
 On the green grass apart from all the rest,
 While the king watched, they fought a dreadful fight.
 But he could not see which one of them would lose.

.....
*Aprés icel li vien un'altre avisiun,
 Qu'il ert en France, ad Ais, a un perrun,
 En dous chaeines si teneit un brohun.
 Devers Ardene veit venir .XXX. urs,
 Cascun parolet altresi cume hum.
 Diseient li: "Sire, rendez le nus!
 Il nen est dreiz que il seit mais od vos;
 Nostre parent devum estre a sucurs."
 De sun paleis uns veltres i acurt;
 Entre les altres asaillit le greignur
 Sur l'erbe verte, ultre ses cumpaignuns.
 La vit li reis si merveillus estur;
 Mais ço ne set liquels veint ne quels nun. [2555-2567]*

The second dream in both series of double visions is introduced in similar fashion by a formulaic expression, which sets the sleeping monarch at home [cf. 724-726; 2555-2556]. But the semiotic content of the vision suffers alterations that parallel the events at Ganelon's future trial. For instance, the bear that had bitten Charles' right arm is in chains, and from Ardenne thirty bears come to aid their relative. The benevolence of the King is in question because the thirty bears appear to be in quest of deliverance; but Charles' policy does not gain any benefit from liberal magnanimity. As previously mentioned, the earlier series of double visions had moved from Ganelon's treason in the first dream to suggestions in the second dream of the battle at Roncevaux, or Pinabel's challenge at Ganelon's trial and the subsequent duel. This later dream sequence unveils the King's inability to aid his men, who are attacked by countless foes, and the future assault against royal authority at Ganelon's trial. We go from a very cruel physical reality to the ideological ramifications foreseeable in the future as its result. The King's concern in both visions escalates due to worsening conditions; hence the implications lean toward a marked greater need for prevention. There must be an appropriate reaction to a crisis in order to quell future crises. The hunting dog charges on, engaging the biggest of the bears; and again the outcome

seems ambivalent [2567]. The single bear could represent Pinabel, but the focus on the thirty relatives turns our attention more toward the direct parliamentary challenge against the King's authority rather than to the trial by combat. The duel itself is not as much in the foreground as is the royal authority that is being contested and challenged. A careful reader notices that, while the first sequence of dream visions shows a crisis, which turns from the diplomatic inception of Ganelon's treason to military implementation of the ambush at Roncevaux, the second series progresses in symbolic representation from the suggestion for direct military confrontation toward reference to the need to arrive at judiciary adjudication; that is to say, from Baligant's confrontation and the Pinabel/Thierry duel we move on toward a need to achieve resolution for any ensuing legal friction occasioned by antagonism similar to the obstinacy displayed by the thirty relatives and the barons who favor Ganelon at court. Differentiation between friend and foe must be clearly established. (16) To end ambivalence in dispensation of justice, Ganelon's guarantors must be chastised by the court. At the trial Charles rises to the occasion because suffering strengthens the figure of the King. Consequently, the audience is drawn to a more mature Charlemagne.

Quadrangular Relationship

In her *Matriarchy, Patriarchy, and Imperial Security in Africa*, Marsha R. Robinson explains:

Many of the Celts, Cantabrians, Picts and Teutons had laws by which property, especially land, was inherited from one's mother and her brother. If a foreigner were to marry into such a family, say a soldier to a local woman, he could not inherit the land. It would be controlled by the bride and the bride's male kin. A foreign husband was indebted to his brother-in-law who controlled the center of wealth accumulation. A foreign soldier could not transfer his wife's inheritance to the empire that he served. Wealth remained within the bride's family. This is called matrilineal inheritance. (17)

Glorification of the nephew can be seen as one of the main features of a system which establishes matrilineal inheritance. W.O. Farnsworth in his study *Uncle and Nephew in the Old French Chansons de Geste* insists that in a primitive state of civilization matrilineal descent is important in tracing heritage. (18) Farnsworth argues that the matrilineal tracing of descent goes back to an earlier time, preceding the patriarchal trends prevalent in the Roman Empire: "The introduction of Christianity and of Roman influence among the tribes of the north must have been the most important factor in the transition to paternal authority." (19)

Nephew-right emerges from the earlier Teutonic tradition of kinship established through the maternal uncle. Farnsworth starts his study by explaining:

Our modern conception of the family as consisting of father, mother, children would at first thought seem to go back in an unbroken line to Roman laws, so that it is puzzling to discover that French literature of the Middle Ages, in its delineation of certain aspects of family life, shows markedly the influence of the earliest state of human society about which we have information. As a matter of fact the Old French *Chansons de Geste* show plainly that there existed in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, in the form of tradition at least, a survival of an earlier condition in which the family was based upon the matriarchal principle." (20)

The term *matriarchal* seems to be a misnomer since the inferior position of the medieval woman is apparent. (21) Yet the uncle-nephew relationship reveals the importance of matrilineal descent in the continuation of family tradition. For this reason Farnsworth considers the prevalence of nephew-right in the *Chansons de Geste* to have sentimental and not legal roots.(22) Survival of the belief in matrilineal inheritance is not based on female supremacy as such, but rather on the fact that in very ancient times the physiological basis for paternity was relatively unknown. (23) At the advent of civilization, an offspring was a sure possession of the woman, and, to be certain of preserving lineage, property and power were not transmitted from father to son, but from a man to his sister's son. The looser the bond between husband and wife, the closer the tie between a wife's brother to her as sister, and, hence, the closer a relative a maternal uncle could become to his nephew. The uncle-nephew relationship between Charlemagne and the hero leads the King to feel extreme responsibility for his safety. Before and after the ambush at Roncevaux, the attempt to justify his nephew's death torments Charlemagne.(24)

Roland's predicament affects the pathology of Charlemagne. Since Charles is reluctant to justify the loss of Roland, he avoids consciously viewing his dream visions as indicative of a need to restore order in the realm. Yet when Count Naimon begs for an explanation for the King's downcast demeanor, Charles discloses contents of the vision to his noble liege. A premonition of disaster is already evident to Charles in the first dream of the early sequence, as he soon thereafter discloses to Naimon:

'I can't keep silent the sorrow that I feel,
For Ganelon will be the doom of France.
Last night an angel sent me a warning dream:
I held a spear—he broke it in my grasp,
That count who named my nephew to the guard.'

.....
'*Si grant doel ai ne puis muer nel pleigne.
Par Guenelun serat destruite France.*

*Enoit m'avint un avisiun d'angele,
Que entre mes puinz me depeçout ma hanste;
Chi ad juget mis nés a reregarde!* [834-838]

The treason of Ganelon and death of Roland become the anguish of Charlemagne.

Any truce or delay in the fighting is temporary. We recall that the *Chanson* begins with the format "Assembly-Embassy/Assembly-Embassy." The Assembly at the Saracen camp brings out the need for a stratagem to send Charlemagne's Army back to France. The Assembly at the French camp results in a confrontation in which friction between Ganelon and Roland becomes obvious, stepfather to stepson. In her translation of *The Song of Roland* Patricia Terry remarks that in medieval society the *parrastre/fillastre* relationship was viewed unfavorably by both parties. (25) In the context of the Assembly, Roland recalls that previous efforts to reason with Marsile resulted in death for the ambassadors, Basan and Basile. Obeying precedent, Roland reasons as a warrior, "Finish the fight" [210], "To Saragossa lead on" [211], and "Avenge those men" [213]. (26) The language is appropriate for wartime. Roland wishes to advance onward and take over Saragossa. Charlemagne's Army should not turn back. Here is the main point of contention between the monarch and his nephew. Precedent belies the wisdom of sending another embassy to Marsile, or trusting his word in any way. Yet, understandably, Charlemagne's friction with his nephew is sheltered in the subconscious mind. The King does not adjudicate through the wisdom of precedent. As we have seen, only in a dream sequence can Charles face his guilt. After the perturbed monarch awakens from the first series of dream visions, he asks the leaders among his men who shall guard the narrow pass to cover his retreat. Ganelon tells the King to appoint Roland [743]. Subconsciously aware of intense risk, Charlemagne exclaims "Vile demon that you are!" [746]; (27) nevertheless, Roland stays behind. The King's unwitting trust of a seemingly treacherous enemy assigns to him the role of rival in relation to his own nephew.

Roland's leading role, urging war in the Assembly at the French camp following the Saracen Embassy, is similar to the aggressive Blancandrin's role in the enemy camp. Blancandrin is ready to sacrifice hostages, even his son, in order to advance a military goal [149]. Roland is always prepared to undertake personal risk in the service of a perennial vow to defend King and Country to the death. On the other hand, Ganelon, with resentment due to injured pride, presents an idiosyncratic distinction in heroic roles which has military implications in a warring society. The resentful Ganelon seizes the opportunity treason affords to become a figure central to plot development during the Embassy at Marsile's camp.

As surrogate father figure to Roland, and as King of France, Charlemagne must safeguard posterity, whatever sacrifice this longing may entail. The readiness to implement filial sacrifice links Ganelon and the Saracens, for they have decided to intentionally send their

sons, and a portion of their wealth, as guarantors for a truce based on a false oath, all in order to get Charlemagne to turn back and leave Roland exposed to treacherous attack [40-45]. Leaving behind the rearguard involves a difficult personal decision for the King; yet assigning duty to Roland as head of the rearguard is a move justifiable in terms of military strategy. Charles ponders over who shall take the vanguard duty once Roland is in the rear guard: “And in the vanguard—who’ll have the leader’s place?” [748] (28) Since Roland’s forces ride point on the war trail, the frontward flank switches roles in order to provide protection for retreat. Charlemagne’s column, on the other hand, turns around in formation while the Army simply shifts course, now headed by Ogier of Denmark [749]. The change in direction of the Carolingian host, their *about face*, dramatizes the separation. (29) The irreplaceable young hero remains facing the enemy willingly in order to protect the monarch. Indirectly, and however reluctantly at the conscious level, Charles compromises his nephew’s safety.

This intricate family romance appears to revolve around a secret rivalry. An image of wife, sister, and mother emerges as structural principle. The text of *Gui de Bourgogne*, another medieval *chanson de geste*, mentions Dame Gile, identified as duchess and Charles’ sister.(30) Farnsworth collects two passages from *Gui de Bourgogne* in Appendix A of his book.(31) Dame Gile is identified twice as sister of Charlemagne, wife of Ganelon, and mother of Roland:

And the king Gui immediately summoned dame Gile:
 She was the sister of Charlemagne, king of Saint Denis,
 And wife of Ganelon, whose body God damned,
 And was mother of Roland of the courageous heart.

*Et li rois Guis tantost fait mander dame Gile:
 Cele ert suer Karlemaine, le roi de Saint Denise,
 Et fame Ganelon, qui le cors Dieu maudie,
 Et ert mere Rollant à la chiere hardie.* [1589-1592]

.....

It’s Gile the duchess, honored with a gentle heart,
 Who is sister of Charlemagne, the strong crowned king,
 And wife of Ganelon, the astute peer,
 And she is mother of Roland, the renowned knight.

*C’est Gile la duchoise, au gent cors onoré,
 Qui suer rest Karlemaine, le fort roi keroné,
 Et fame Ganelon, le compaignon hardré,
 Et est mere Rollant, le chevalier menbré.* [2920-2923] (32)

Dame Gile's son, and the King's nephew, is appropriately a Count, yet Ganelon, her second husband, is not a Duke, as was Roland's late father, Milon d'Anglers, Duke of Brittany, never mentioned in the *Chanson*.⁽³³⁾ She is not in the story because relationships take precedence over actual names in the *chansons de geste*.⁽³⁴⁾ We know that the rivalry between stepfather and stepson exists. Charlemagne's dreams are a point of reference for an unconscious rivalry toward his nephew which he cannot express. The emperor feels guilt but does nothing. He must support Roland and oppose Ganelon, yet he treats both in a symmetrical fashion. Roland suggests Ganelon go on the Embassy to the enemy camp, and Ganelon nominates Roland for the rearguard; they both suffer death as a result of their actions within the quadrangular relationship. Charlemagne fails to reconcile the two characters. We sense the impossibility for Charles, Ganelon, and Roland to display a proper relationship to each other due to an uncontrollable hidden jealousy.

The importance of the Duchess, absent from the text, was probably better known to the *jongleur's* medieval audience than it is to the modern reader of the *Chanson*. To recapture the original experience of the tale we resort to extrinsic literary analysis; we dare pose her relevance as a structural principle in *The Song of Roland* to achieve a greater psychological insight into plot motivation. In the mechanics of mimetic desire the subject is torn between two passions: a) love for the object, and b) hate for the rival. Girard remarks about mimetic desire that: "Our first task is to define the rival's position within the system to which he belongs, in relation to both subject and object. The rival desires the same object as the subject, and to assert the primacy of the rival can lead to only one conclusion." ⁽³⁵⁾ Since subjects concentrate on each other, desire becomes displaced; eventually the object of desire is lost in the squabble. Charlemagne loves Roland but does not protect him as he should. The ensuing violence caused by conflicting desire is a shared guilt. In *The Song of Roland* enmity eventually converges against Ganelon, stepfather to Roland and husband of Charles' sister. The unmentioned Dame Gile becomes a place holder in the quadrangular scene of mimetic desire.

Charles must champion political ideals of reciprocal brotherhood. Unquestionably, the personal realm extends into the public arena when commanding an army. The final conversion of Bramimonde, Marsile's wife, pleases the King, who finally rests peacefully [3989-3992]. The womanizing tendencies of the historic Charlemagne are recorded. Charles had eighteen children with eight of his ten wives or concubines (four wives, six concubines).⁽³⁶⁾ Farnsworth remarks that a scandalous legend arose after the death of the historic Charlemagne, attributing incestuous intercourse between the King and his sister, before her marriage to Milon, and the birth of Roland soon thereafter. ⁽³⁷⁾ Farnsworth refers to the *Histoire Poétique* by Gaston Paris.⁽³⁸⁾ In this text the author mentions how in the *Karlamagnus-Saga* Egidius, while celebrating Holy Mass, is said to have had an apparition by Saint Gabriel, who gave the priest a letter; in the letter the priest was ordered to marry the King's sister to Milon d'Anglers. The priest complies and the King confers upon Milon the Duchy of Brittany. The son born seven months after the marriage was believed to

have been begotten by Charles.(39) Further on Paris quotes from a XIVth century poem, *Tristan de Nanteuil*, where a sin attributed to Charlemagne is considered too grave to mention. (40) Farnsworth also remarks that the despicable legend eventually became too distant from reality to be true, citing the last page of the Italian chronicle *Li Reali di Francia*: “it was commonly held that Roland was son of Charles, which was contrary to reality; the king loved him for his virtue and because he saw him courageous of body and soul.” (41) Apparently, we may surmise that in the course of history the closeness of Charles to Roland had to be explained beyond the context of nephew-right. Although the paternity issue remains an exaggeration, the King’s closeness to his sister is an aspect of the legend we may preserve without compromise. Robinson proffers an explanation for this exaggeration:

William Farnsworth pressed for indigenous matriarchy in Western Europe. He did so in his study of the French *Chansons de Geste*. . . . His search was possibly influenced by nineteenth century hegemonic identification with the ancient Roman Empire. . . . The Roman father-son model has been implanted to the point that Charlemagne is recast as the incestuous father of Roland, whose mother was either Gile or Bert, both sisters of Charlemagne. Farnsworth sees an imposed heroic connection with patriarchal incest. Farnsworth writes almost at the same time that Freud consigns a daughter’s claims of parental rape to hysteria. In Farnsworth’s writings, incest seems to be a heroic prize for converting to patriarchy. (42)

Farnsworth’s critic concedes that the Roman patriarchal system “diminished in strength as the Empire weakened.” (43) She seems sympathetic to Farnsworth’s suggestion that there is a “hegemonic shift in the poems toward the end of the time period” (XIth to XIIIth centuries). (44) Both writers agree that “European matriarchal values survived in literature like *Beowulf* and the *Chansons de Geste*.” (45) Farnsworth also refers in passing to *Beowulf*, and mentions the fact that King Hygelac was the hero’s maternal uncle. (46) We may grant validity to the arguments expressed by both writers if we acknowledge that: a) the oral epic goes back to an earlier, more primitive age, and that b) comments on the decaying tradition should be updated since they reveal outmoded anthropological views. The central argument can be applied to our *Chanson* thusly: a) desire for Gile means matrilineal descent prevails; whereas b) pushing incest toward the paternity issue means the patriarchal perspective prevails. Assuming Charles’ closeness to Gile is enough for our argument. We acknowledge that Robinson could be right in asserting that Farnsworth goes too far by suggesting incest, since such a notion goes beyond the native oral tradition prevalent in the Middle Ages, and makes ancient Teutonic custom subservient, through Freudian theory, to a “re-invigorated Roman empire,” pervasive before the XIth and after the XIIIth century, what she calls *Rome 2*. (47)

In history and in the poem Charles' virility is eminent. In our *Chanson*, after the execution of Ganelon, Charlemagne is eager to bring baptism to Marsile's wife, Bramimonde; she becomes the new Julianna [3978-3987]. As final symbolism of the epic poem, the sacramental rebirth of Bramimonde through baptism serves as consolation for the death of Aude, Roland's betrothed. The Christian conversion of Marsile's widow leaves us with the feeling of successful ritual. In dramatic terms, the power of the Saracens against Charlemagne has been barely enough to retain Saragossa; they lose in the end to a superior force, whose advantage is not just military but cultural as well, and which persistently wages war, albeit handicapped by an assault against royal authority at home. The Christian doctrine of regeneration through death and resurrection never aggrandizes Charles' forces much beyond the goal of future self-righteous struggle, as seen in the ending, when St. Gabriel assigns a new mission to the tired King [3993-3998]. Resolution of the authority crisis is geared toward prevention of future loss in the realm. The Christian spirit identifies with Christ's sacrifice by not losing hope in the long run, for His death brought redemption. In the literary context, we are left with the feeling that the war is far from over; through the open ending, our sympathy for Charlemagne is extended beyond the text. Moreover, although Charles may seem an invader, he is claiming back lands which were not originally "heathen." The present must link the past and the future because the welfare of the realm is at stake.

Ganelon as Scapegoat

Extra-textual motivation for Ganelon's treason, central to the plot in *Roland*, may ensue from his precarious position in a patriarchy as estranged second husband to our hero's mother and the Emperor's widowed sister. His treachery leads to Roland's martyrdom. Like the Biblical Judas, the villain becomes a crucial figure in a Christian plot. Once we rise in comprehension beyond the overt confrontation of Christians against Saracens in *The Song of Roland* we should focus on the internal antagonism prevalent within the family unit which heads the French camp. Unlike Sigmund Freud's *Oedipus complex*, the real father does not serve as model here; nevertheless, every relation in this patriarchy has paternal and filial coloring.(48)

In the narrative Ganelon absorbs all the blame. At his trial, in his defense, the famed traitor attempts to assign to Roland complete responsibility for the risky plight he found himself in at the enemy camp:

'His nephew Roland, hating me in his heart,
Had me condemned to torment and sure death:
I was to bring Charles' message to Marsile -
I had the wit and wisdom to survive.
I faced Count Roland and challenged him aloud,

And Oliver, and all the other peers.
Charlemagne heard me, so did these noble lords:
I am avenged, but not by treachery.'

.....
'Rollant sis niés me coillit en haür,
Si me jugat a mort e a dulur.
Message fui al rei Marsiliün;
Par mun saveir vinc jo a guarisun.
Jo desfiai Rollant le poigneor,
E Oliver e tuiz lur cumpaignun;
Carles l'oïd e si noble baron.
Venget m'en sui, mais n'i ad traïsun.' [3771-3778]

Paramount in the Count's remarks is Roland's relationship to the King. Since Charles' nephew had nominated him as emissary on the Embassy, Ganelon is resentful enough to assign ill will to his stepson. Yet it was not all Roland's doing. The verb *jugat* [3772] denotes in meaning the nomination of someone for specific duties. Both protagonists are rivals. Even if Ganelon's resentment should account for personal vengeance, it could not justify rationally, nevertheless, military high treason. Blind to consequences, Ganelon never mentions the twenty thousand dead at Roncevaux beside Roland. Ganelon assumes that, since there was a boast in the presence of the King [326], vengeance through treason should explain, and even justify, the great dishonor of suffering a challenge to his own paternal authority. The dreadful plot unravels itself within the family circle.

Blame against Ganelon pours on irremissibly. At the traitor's trial, Pinabel's intercession already indirectly suggests the execution to follow. The champion addresses the ill-fated Count:

'If any Frenchman decides that you should hang,
The Emperor Charles must have that judgment tried:
My sword shall prove these accusations lies.'

'N'i ad Frances ki vos juget a pendre,
U l'emperere les noz dous cors en assemble,
Al brant d'hacer que jo ne l'en desmente.' [3789-3791]

The term *juget*, as Pinabel uses it, can only mean to convict or condemn. There *should not* arise anyone brave enough to condemn Ganelon to be hung; yet, although the challenge is in the form of negative understatement, the unabashed suggestion is boastfully put forward that death would be forthcoming to whoever steps up in support of a stance against

Ganelon. Pinabel, as champion, strikes great impact at court. The barons fear him: "They speak more softly because of Pinabel" [3797]. (49) Ganelon's ally fearlessly proclaims that: a) since Roland's death is absolute, b) no remedy can bring him back, and c) hence Ganelon should be acquitted [3803-3804]. Such faulty logic fails to take into account that the tragedy at Roncevaux was horrendous, hence no legal nor rational excuse as such is available for having caused it. The assertion constitutes an insult to the memory of the martyred Roland. Ganelon and his party have made a poor use of precedent in the course of the story. Even his earlier suggestion that the French send the Embassy to Marsile had not followed the proper use of precedent [222-227]; Roland is the one who recalls the ill-fated Basan and Basile [207-209]. Now the judges [3799-3804] and the barons [3807-3810] are the ones who insist at trial that Ganelon be acquitted. For them the loss of Ganelon could be insurmountable [3811-3813]. They suggest that his execution could equal Roland's sacrifice. Evidently, the challenge to Charlemagne's authority at court has reached its highest point.

Since the drive for *glory* pervades practice of the heroic code, the obvious need for transparent loyalty acquires ethical value. To forsake the need for basic loyalty destroys the social fiber; for this reason courage remains subservient to social norm. Once bound by his position in the patriarchy, Ganelon's resentment could not be stopped, nor its effects avoided. In the epic plot, which includes motivation, courage attains fearlessness. After all, Ganelon is competing with Roland, who sets a high bar for courage. Yet, Ganelon's assertion at his trial that he lost status through Roland's nomination of him as ambassador to the Saracen camp, a risky assignment, does not justify treason [3757-3760]. To view vengeance as restitution for breach of honor means to confuse civil with criminal liability. Ganelon overstepped his role, blinded by passion generated through mimetic rivalry.

Corruption in the realm can only be resolved if there is a perfect hero. When all fails, the exception to the rule gains distinction. No one answers the challenge of Pinabel except for Thierry: "They all approve; no one will disagree/ But Geoffroy's brother, the chevalier Thierry" [3805-3806]. (50) As brother to the Duke of Anjou, Charles' standard bearer, Thierry defends Roland's memory and protects the King's sovereignty when he strikes down Pinabel. The outcome of a trial by combat represents God's decision; therefore, the Army does not hesitate to sentence Ganelon and the thirty relatives who had provided surety to the King during the duel [3852]:

The Frenchmen shout, 'A holy miracle!
Justice demands that Ganelon must die,
With all the kinsmen who came and took his side.'

.....

*Escrient Franc: 'Deus i ad fait vertut!
Asez est dreit que Guenes seit pendut*

E si parent, ki plaidet unt pur lui.’ [3931-3933]

The King asks for an official verdict and the Army reiterates the sentence, for the thirty barons have become the enemies of Charlemagne. He had addressed the barons saying: “You are traitors, every one!” [3814] (51) Justice against noblemen is dispensed by the King backed by the community at large, for the former acts on behalf of the latter and vice-versa.

The roles of Charles, as a mother’s brother, and Roland, as a sister’s son, delineate thematic concerns that take us to the conclusion of the martial struggle. Roland as child stayed at the maternal uncle’s fold. The hero, while dying at Roncevaux, recalls in his last breath the King who brought him up since infancy, “who raised him in his house” [2380]. (52) The adolescent warrior received Durendal, his indestructible sword, directly from Charles, possibly in the knighthood ceremony, “The king himself presented it to me” [1121]. (53) The sentimental bond of nephew right becomes a way to seek stability in the realm. Farnsworth explains:

Since motherhood is in any state of society the strongest of all ties, little wonder that the mother’s clan assumed such importance in the life of the children, when Exogamy was so generally rendered necessary on account of the strict laws of Totemism. In primitive tribes of today members of the same totem are forbidden to intermarry, the children are of the same clan as the mother, and thus the practice of tracing descent through the mother’s totem is a natural outgrowth of marriage outside the clan. It is not surprising to find a hint of this practice of marrying outside the clan surviving in mediaeval literature. (54)

The individual may depend on being part of a family system in order to safeguard his true lineage through the mother’s clan. (55) In the *Chanson*, feudal solidarity is expressed through numerous kin. Allied to avenge dishonor, Ganelon’s thirty relatives bond in his defense and meet their doom. Nephew right is not the only form of allegiance, although it emerges as most central to epic plot and true heroic prowess in *The Song of Roland*.

The praise for the warrior spirit takes on symbolic as well as semantic turns. Thierry is the exceptional knight, and the early phrase at the beginning of the poem, *Fors Sarraguce*, “Except for Saragossa” [6], parallels *Fors sul Tierri*, “But for Thierry” [3806], with metrical stress in the first two measures of the line. The familiar ring reminds us of the credit that goes to Charlemagne as conqueror, for instead of the defiant city on a hilltop, the exceptional soldier stands high above the rest as the King’s champion. We have a clear sense now of who is in charge and the superior worth of Charlemagne is achieved by further emphasis on the concept of restriction and exception. Charles orders the executioner: “If one escapes, you’re dead and put to shame” [3955]. (56) This command, framed in

hypothetical syntax, recalls the *jongleur's* statement about Charles's previous edict against infidels who refuse conversion: "If there are any who still resist King Charles,/ He has them hanged, or killed by fire or sword" [3669-3670]. (57) The warrior king has support of his clan. And the heroic code at the end of the *Chanson* promotes loyalty through fear of the consequences ensuing from treason. Twice the *jongleur* reminds the reader:

So one man's evil draws others in its wake.

.....

Let no man's treason give comfort to his pride.

Ki hume traïst sei ocit e altroi. [3959]

Hom ki traïst alter, nen est dreiz qu'il s'en vant. [3974]

Not simple deterrence, execution is the condition precedent to an established order.

To achieve a proper interpretation for the *Chanson* the reader should be alerted to the way in which the narrative sacrifices Ganelon at the end. Charlemagne asks for a verdict at the final trial: "Give me your judgment concerning Ganelon" [3751]. (58) Apparently, collective resonance of persecution is a measure intended to restore political differentiation. (59) With Ganelon as scapegoat, Charles' guilt stays in the realm of bad dreams, while the great hero attains martyrdom by refusing to blow the oliphant in time. The fact that Ganelon is characterized early on in the narrative as traitor shows that the *jongleur* was reciting a tale everyone knew beforehand as part of an epic oral tradition; before the Embassy to the enemy camp, the villain appears in central stage, "Ganelon came by whom they were betrayed" [178]. (60) Regardless of oral legend, what sparks the actual event of Ganelon's betrayal in the *Chanson* is Roland's nomination of his stepfather for a deadly mission. (61) Here is the sole textual motivation for treason in *The Song of Roland*. Ganelon immediately in the text puts forth the oath: "If God should grant that I come home again,/ I won't forget—and you'll face such a feud/ That it will last as long as you're alive" [289-291]. (62) His public persona seems tarnished beyond repair. Suffering from a breach of honor, he turns into a deadly enemy. The Count seeks "a little trick to play" [300]. (63) Although Ganelon's involvement in the plot is sly and non-heroic, Roland is overtly responsible for placing his stepfather in an estranged position.

Ganelon's relationship to Charles and Roland allows us to cast further light on the rationale for treason. Through warped logic, the hero's stepfather hopes to return safely home from the Embassy with two problems in the patriarchy resolved: a) Roland is removed as obstacle to patrimonial inheritance for Baldwin, Ganelon's son and the hero's half-brother; and b) the Count avoids feeling shame over a failed paternal role. Before his departure to the Saracen camp as Charles's emissary, Ganelon names Baldwin as his sole heir, should he die on the risky mission [313-315]. Charles answers with the famous line: "You have too soft a heart."

'Trop avez tender coer.' [317]

Roland retains his role as heir through matrilineal descent after his death. Taking up the warrior role to avenge his slain nephew, Charles faces his monster double in the encounter with Baligant. The execution of Ganelon, after the trial by combat between the victorious Thierry and Pinabel, establishes the King's dominance with the image of Roland looming overhead. Roland, Charles, and Thierry are morally victorious. Roland's exceptional heroism, Charlemagne's willing trust despite warning visions, and Ganelon's treason reveal a shared guilt. In the epic context we sense a drive toward patriarchal supremacy and attainment of glory. Not only at Roncevaux [2415], but also during Pinabel's confrontation at the end, the Army weeps for Roland [3870-3871]. These are parallel sentiments of grief expressed in the ambiguous symbolism evident in the second dream of the first sequence. In *The Song of Roland*, the retreating Army represents an absence of participation in military violence at a crucial moment in the plot. The Frankish host displays a weak role. The Army must share the blame for not being at Roncevaux to aid the rearguard.

We find a strange counterpoint to Christian guilt in the Saracen destruction of their idols [2587-2588]. Bramimonde goes as far as to accuse the pagan gods of treason: "We are betrayed, abandoned by our gods" [2600].⁽⁶⁴⁾ Abandoning faith in her gods is a positive sign, since the conversion of Marsile's wife represents the acting out of unconditional surrender. Besides overcoming Saracen forces, Charles emerges triumphant in mimetic rivalry against Marsile, with Bramimonde as object of desire. Repeatedly, a shared object of desire affects relations among multiple characters, both friends and foes, in the *Chanson*.

We marvel that a primitive scheme of suppressed desire should permanently influence our epic genre and extend into a cultural norm for sacrificial ritual. To impose his socially acquired patriarchal ties, heedless of military bondage, Ganelon goes to the enemy, and pays with his life for Roland's death. Kinsmen through matrilineal descent, Charles and Roland do not succumb to such lack of differentiation, mindful of their allegiance to a matrilineal patrimony.

Our conceptual analysis discloses a crisis caused by rivalry originating in an absent figure of sister, wife, and mother extrinsic to the text. Charlemagne, Ganelon, and Roland are tormented by the need to protect posterity and end war; yet we perceive that in plot development they are responsible for the escalation of violence. All three heroes share guilt for the ambush at Roncevaux; yet, irrespective of consequences, battles rage on and war is not over. In *The Song of Roland* the treason of Ganelon, the death of Roland, and the dreams of Charlemagne reveal a quadrangular family drama of epic proportion due to the tortured pathology of embittered heroes.

Works Cited

- Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2003. Print.
- Braet, Herman. "Le second rêve de Charlemagne dans la *Chanson de Roland*." Belgium: Blandijnberg. 1969. 5-19. Print. *Romanica Gardensia* 12.
- Bowra, C.M. *Heroic Poetry*. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd. 1952. Print.
- Duggan, Joseph. "The Generation of the Episode of Baligant: Charlemagne's Dream and The Normans at Mantzikert." *Romance Philology* 30. (1976-1977): 59-82. Print.
- Farnsworth, William Oliver. *Uncle and Nephew in the Old French Chansons de Geste, A Study in the Survival of Matriarchy*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1913. Print.
- Gamba, Bartolommeo. *Li Reali di Francia*. Venice: Tipografia di Alvisopoli. 1821. Print.
- Girard, René. *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. 1986. Print.
- Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. 1979. Print.
- Guessard, M.F. and Michelant, H. *Les Anciens Poètes de la France*. (1859) Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, Ltd. 1966. Print.
- La Chanson de Roland*. Ed. Joseph Bédier. Paris: L'edition d'Art H. Piazza. 1968. Vol. II. Print.
- La Chanson de Roland*. Ed. T.A. Atkinson Jenkins. Boston: D.C. Heath and Company. 1924. Print.
- La Chanson de Roland*. Ed. Gérard Moignet. Paris: Bibliothèque Bordas. 1969. Print.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*. Trans. Claire Jacobson & Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1963. Print.
- Owen, D.D.R. "Charlemagne's Dreams, Baligant and Turolodus." *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 87. (1971): 197-208. Print.
- Paris, Gaston. *Histoire Poétique de Charlemagne*. (1905) Genève: Slatkine Reprints. 1974. Print.

Robinson, Marsha R. *Matriarchy, Patriarchy, and Imperial Security in Africa*. Maryland: Lexington Books. 2012. Print.

Semple, Benjamin M. "Recognizing Roland: The Response of the Medieval Audience to the Dreams of Charlemagne in the *Song of Roland*." In *Dreams in French Literature: The Persistent Voice*. Ed. Tom Conner. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi 1995. Print.

Steinmeyer, Karl-Josef. *Untersuchungen zur allegorischen Bedeutung der Träume im altfranzösischen Roladslid*. München: Max Hueber Verlag. 1963. Print.

The Nibelungenlied. Trans. Cyril Edwards. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2010. Print.

The Song of Roland. Trans. Patricia Terry. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1979. Print.

Van Emden, W.G. "Another Look at Charlemagne's Dreams in the *Chanson de Roland*." *French Studies* 27. (July 1974): 257-270. Print.

Whitehead, Frederick. "Charlemagne's Second Dream." *Olifant. A Publication of the Société Rencesvals. American-Canadian Branch* 3. March (1976): 189-195. Print.

Notes

1. "Pagans are wrong, the Christian cause is right." *Paien unt tort e chrestiens unt dreit* [1015]. And again: "'Their cause is evil, and we are in the right.'" *'Nos avum dreit, mais cist glutun unt tort'* [1212]. Translations into English are from the Patricia Terry translation, which I have modified slightly, in order to suit context, twice, (cf. lines 735, 2567). Terry 41, 48. Quotes in the original French are from the Gérard Moignet edition. Moignet 92, 104. ([back](#))

2. *Ensurquetut si ai jo vostre soer*. [312] ([back](#))

3. Auerbach 101. ([back](#))

4. Flying splinters from lances held by knights is a repeated motif during violent jousting in *The Nibelungenlied*. Edwards 121, 125, 170. ([back](#))

5. The bear who bites Charlemagne's right arm is identified as Ganelon due to the furs he wears. He rises at the Assembly, "Casting aside his cloak of marten furs." *De sun col getet ses grandes pels de martre* [281]. First mention of the right arm metaphor occurs at the Embassy in the Saracen camp, where Ganelon proclaims that, through attack, the French could lose "the Emperor's right arm." *Dunc perdreit Carles le destre braz del cors*[597]. In this same speech at the enemy camp Ganelon equates the loss to future stability for both

sides, since the Army would then return to France, leaving Marsile to reign calmly over Saragossa: “‘All of his Empire would be restored to peace.’” *‘Tere Major remendreit en repos.’* [600] Thus, the treason seems erroneously motivated by a quest for peace. Such naïve ignorance adds charm to Ganelon’s role as villain. ([back](#))

6. “From Ardenne, *Devers Ardenne*, carries . . . a specific sense: in poetic terms because Ardenne is, in the poetry of the Middle Ages, the forest of marvels; and in terms of geography because it extended up to Vesdre, three or four leagues to the south of Aix-la Chapelle.” Bédier 108. Translation mine. ([back](#))

7. Benjamin M. Semple says: “While they (scholars) debate over the figures represented by the leopard—is it Marsile? Pinabel?—or over the figures symbolized by the greyhound—is it Roland? Thierry?—they instinctively sense that the greyhound is a *good* figure and the leopard is a *bad* one. I know of no scholar who has suggested that the leopard is Roland or Thierry, or that the greyhound is Ganelon or Marsile.” Semple 29. ([back](#))

8. Bédier 107. Translation mine. ([back](#))

9. C. M. Bowra mentions how the beast and the leopard may represent Marsile and Baligant, adding: “there is no need to be too precise about this.” Bowra 296. Excessive precision could be misleading. W. G. Emden comments on the view Karl-Josef Steinmeyer presents in his book on the dreams of Charlemagne. Steinmeyer 40-41. “Steinmeyer makes much of the argument that, while Ganelon’s trial is foretold twice according to the traditional view, the battle of Roncevaux receives no mention if *laisse LVII* is held to be the trial.” Van Emden 262. T. Atkinson Jenkins, in his edition of the *Chanson*, also explains the second dream as symbolic of the battle at Roncevaux. Jenkins 60. ([back](#))

10. Duggan 79. ([back](#))

11. Van Emden 260. ([back](#))

12. Whitehead 189. Owen 201. Braet 12-13. Herman Braet says: “More often than not, however, both interpretations seem possible to maintain, and the text can be read in two levels.” Braet 15. Translation mine. ([back](#))

13. Semple 27-29. ([back](#))

14. *E Franceis crient: ‘Carlemagne, aidez!’*[2546] ([back](#))

15. “Marsile’s right hand was cut completely off.” *La destre main ad perdue trestute.* [2574] ([back](#))

16. In his *Violence and the Sacred*, René Girard remarks how failure to differentiate leads to

lack of social order. Violence 124-125, 146, 245. ([back](#))

17. Robinson 24. ([back](#))

18. Farnsworth 1, 157-158, 198, 212, 229, 239. ([back](#))

19. Farnsworth 243. ([back](#))

20. Farnsworth 1. ([back](#))

21. Farnsworth 243. ([back](#))

22. Farnsworth 244. ([back](#))

23. Farnsworth 1. ([back](#))

24. If the maternal uncle has the cultural importance Claude Lévi-Strauss assigns to the relationship in his *Structural Anthropology* (32, 39-41, 322), then the patriarchal competition between Charles and Ganelon could escalate to a higher level. Ganelon's role as stepfather of the hero becomes subordinate to the position held by Roland's maternal uncle, the King of France. The monarch may have an immeasurably greater responsibility for the safety of his nephew. ([back](#))

25. "Ganelon is indeed Roland's stepfather, but the word used here, *parrastre*, [277] is an insulting one; similarly *fillastre* in line 743." Terry 14. ([back](#))

26. '*Faites la guerre*,' [210]; '*Metez le sege*,' [211]; '*Si vengez*.' [213] ([back](#))

27. '*Vos estes vifs diables*.' [746] ([back](#))

28. '*E ki serat devant mei en l'ansgarde?*' [748] A few lines before, the King had asked who would be at the rearguard, and Ganelon had nominated Roland for the fateful post [742-743]. Charles appoints Roland, "While in his eyes unwilling tears appear." *Ne poet muer que des oilz ne plurt*. [773] ([back](#))

29. As the old vanguard turns rear guard, with simultaneous selection of a new vanguard, the *jongleur* exclaims sententiously: "You have no baron who will dispute that now." *N'avez baron ki jamais la remut*. [779] ([back](#))

30. Farnsworth 213. ([back](#))

31. Farnsworth 244. ([back](#))

32. Guessard 49, 89. Translations are mine. In this charming *chanson de geste*, Charles has

been away for twenty seven years, so back in France the sons of veterans away fighting with Charlemagne want a new king at home. They elect Gui de Bourgogne, son of Sanson de Bourgogne, and one of Charles' nephews. Blindly loyal to Charlemagne, and aware of his new role as king, he orders the thousands of men he can muster to go with him to aid Charles. The women complain that Charles took their husbands, now they cannot lose their sons too, so the ladies go along. Gui's sworn duty is to conquer lands for Charles, and to meet up with him at *Luiserne*, where Charlemagne awaits patiently the fall of the city he has had under siege for four years. Meanwhile, Gui conquers *Casaude*. He also conquers *Montorgueil*, on his way to aid Charles. Eventually, after further conquests, Gui meets up with Charles. He offers the King his sword, helps him win over *Luiserne*, and draws as fief for himself Spain. The sons are finally allowed to greet their parents. Bertrand and his father, Duke Naimon, hug and kiss, as do Gui and Sanson. The ladies are overjoyed. Dame Gile comes forward first, followed by Aude [4000-4001]. The epic closes as Charles grants eight days of rest to his troops so they can be with their families. Roland gets together with Aude. Charles insists that all the ladies go back to France as he and his Army, now swollen with provisions and reinforcements, make their way to Roncevaux. ([back](#))

33. Farnsworth 201, 244. Paris 378. ([back](#))

34. Farnsworth 163. ([back](#))

35. Violence 145. ([back](#))

36. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlemagne#Appearance> ([back](#))

37. Farnsworth 213. ([back](#))

38. Farnsworth 214. ([back](#))

39. Paris 378. ([back](#))

40. Paris 381-382. ([back](#))

41. Gamba 479. Translation mine. ([back](#))

42. Robinson 38. ([back](#))

43. Robinson 31. ([back](#))

44. Robinson 38. ([back](#))

45. Robinson 22. ([back](#))

46. Farnsworth 219. [\(back\)](#)
47. Robinson 24. [\(back\)](#)
48. Girard mentions how feelings of “imitation, admiration, and veneration” may change, through the mimetic nature of desire, into the negative sentiments of “despair, guilt, and resentment.” Violence 182, 188. [\(back\)](#)
49. *Pur Pinabel se cuntient plus quei.* [3797] [\(back\)](#)
50. *Nen ad celei nel grant e otreit,/ Fors sul Tierri, le frere dam Geifreit.* [3805-3806] [\(back\)](#)
51. *Ço dist li reis: ‘Vos estes mi felun.’* [3814] [\(back\)](#)
52. *De Carlemagne, sun seignor, kil nurrit* [2380]. Farnsworth 44. [\(back\)](#)
53. *‘Ma bonne espee, que li reis me dunat’* [1121]. Farnsworth 48,54. [\(back\)](#)
54. Farnsworth 240-241. [\(back\)](#)
55. Farnsworth 242. [\(back\)](#)
56. *‘Se uns escapet, morz ies e cunfunduz’* [3955]. [\(back\)](#)
57. *S’or i ad cel qui Carle cuntredie,/ Il le fait prendre o ardeir ou ocire* [3669-3670]. [\(back\)](#)
58. *‘De Guenelun car me jugez le dreit!’* [3751] [\(back\)](#)
59. Scapegoat 12. [\(back\)](#)
60. *Guenes i vint, ki la traïsun fist.* [178] [\(back\)](#)
61. “‘I name,’ says Roland, ‘Stepfather Ganelon.’” *Ço dist Rollant: ‘Ço ert Guenes, mis parastre.’* [277] [\(back\)](#)
62. *‘Se Deus ço dunet que jo de la repaire/ Jo t’en muvra un si grant contraire/ Ki durerat a trestut tun edage’*[289-291]. Terry wonders: “Just why Ganelon so hates Roland is not known to us; it may have been to the poet’s contemporaries. . . . A heroic stepson might well inspire a particularly virulent jealousy, all the more acute in that it would have to be, in the case of Charlemagne’s nephew, quite well concealed.” Terry 11, 14. [\(back\)](#)
63. *‘Einz i frai un poi de legerie.’*[300] [\(back\)](#)

64. "*Li nostre deu i unt fait felonie.*" [2600] [\(back\)](#)