Book Reviews

André Burger. *Turold, poète de la fidélité. Essai d'explication de la Chanson de Roland,* Publs. Romanes et Françaises, 145. Geneva: Droz, 1977. Pp. 173.

Over the years, scholars have managed to keep abreast of the considerable output of specialized studies on the *Song of Roland* in a large measure thanks to the regular appearance of major new syntheses. Since World War II, the magisterial works of Horrent, Menéndez Pidal, Mandach, Lejeune and Stiennon, and Segre have been most helpful in this respect.[1]

More modest in scope and more elementary in approach, André Burger's new book will mainly interest undergraduate and beginning graduate students seeking an introduction to a complex subject. The text is relatively unencumbered, notes have been reduced to a minimum, and bold-faced captions set off each topic neatly.

In a preliminary chapter, Burger discusses briefly the manuscripts containing the French version and its translations. The Oxford copy is dated in the third quarter of the twelfth century (cf. Bédier, *Commentaires:* c. 1170) without any reference to Samaran's conclusion that 1130-1150 seems more likely,[2] or to the reopening of the debate by Short a few years ago.[3] The problem of the origins of the epic is disposed of by asserting that Bédier settled the matter in his *Légendes épiques.* Burger does, however, reject Bédier's view that there must have been some kind of collaboration between jongleur and clerk: "Depuis les travaux des Faral, des Curtius, des Viscardi, il ne fait plus aucun doute, du moins pour nous, que les chansons de geste aient été 1'oeuvre de clercs" (p. 7). He accepts Bédier's arguments in favor of the Bodleian manuscript but reaffirms his opinion that Knudson was right when he pointed out that the laisses describing Turpin's defeat of Abisme are not in their proper place in that copy.[4]

The first section of Burger's study deals with versification, the laisse, artistic repetition, and structure. The author's treatment of this important subject shows what great strides have been made ever since Rychner opened the way in 1955 with perceptive observations about the stunning effects Turoldus achieves with techniques evolved by the jongleurs.[5] For example, one has only to compare the clinical analyses in Jenkins (pp. xcviii-cxliv) and

Bédier *(Commentaires,* pp. 241-297) with Chapters 1-4 in the present work to conclude that modern scholars are slowly but surely discovering the mechanics of a very great art. Burger's indebtedness to Rychner is particularly evident in his discussion of the poem's *laisses similaires* and tripartite structure. However, his observations relative to consonance *(harmonie imitative,* pp. 27-29) and echoing phrasing *(la reprise verbale,* Chap. 3) are both original and discerning. According to Burger, Turoldus's use of echoing phrases may be his greatest innovation (p. 98).

The Swiss scholar believes that the reprise at vv. 703-704 and 2609-2611 that echoes the opening lines of the poem marks its three main divisions; he also notes ten roughly equal sections of 317-524 verses each. I have stated elsewhere that the many similar attempts at discovering symmetrical demarcations along a single story line all fail to take into account the poem's plainly parallel structure.[6] Burger does, however, recognize that unity is also achieved through chronology and topography.[7] A sketch (p. 54) of Turoldus's geography is much more helpful in pinpointing various developments in the story and in following Charlemagne's itinerary than the modern maps which often illustrate studies of the poem.

In Part 2, Burger provides information concerning Turoldus, the date of the poem, the period in which the author composed his epic, the poet's learning, the earlier Roland legend, and the author's knowledge of Spain.

Verse 4002 is translated as 'Ici prend fin la chronique (latine) que Turold explique (en français)'. The poem itself is dated between 1087 and 1095. The chapter on the world in which Turoldus lived emphasizes traditional historical concepts, but Duby's recent scholarship is also frequently cited.

Burger is convinced that Turoldus's learning is apparent when he mentions monastic chronicles (vv. 2095-2097, 3181), Virgil and Homer (v. 2616), and olive branches as symbols of peace (vv. 72-73). It should be noted, however, that Virgil and Homer are associated in the poem with the evil Emir Baligant. Also, olive branches symbolize humility as well.[8] To the biblical references alluded to by Burger, add *Dathan e Abirun* (v. 1215) which, incidentally, should be emended to read *Dathan e Habirun.*[9]

The author is known for his theory, first put forward in 1948/1949, that a poem in Latin hexameters antedating the *Song of Roland* was the common

source for the *Guide du pèlerin de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle* and the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle.*[10] Burger adds little to his earlier demonstration and he concedes that the author of the *Pseudo-Turpin*—whom he believes to be Aimeri Picaud[11]—was influenced by the *Song of Roland.*

The majority of scholars since Bédier are of the opinion that the poet had only a very superficial knowledge of Spain. Boissonnade felt the opposite, claiming that Turoldus had either visited the sites he describes or had benefitted from conversations with eyewitnesses to the Spanish Crusades.[12] Though he does not mention Boissonnade in this chapter, Burger makes essentially the same point, concluding that "Le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est que la *Chanson de Roland* est 1'oeuvre d'un clerc lettré qui a pris part à la reconquête de 1'Espagne, à la fin du XI^{e} siècle" (p. 107).

Up to this point—fully two-thirds of the book—Burger has been providing a kind of encyclopedia of the *Song of Roland,* that is, a reference work containing information specialists have usually been interested in, arranged by topic. The remaining third consists of Burger's personal interpretation of the poem. This is not a *lecture continue* of the type found in Horrent's monograph on the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* or Wathelet-Willem's study of the *Chanson de Guillaume.*[13] It is essentially an amplification of the author's two earlier studies,[14] the new material being short chapters (averaging 3 1/2 pages) entitled "Les quatre batailles," "La mort des héros," "La bataille de Baligant," and "Le plaid de Ganelon."

For Burger, the *Song of Roland* is essentially the story of the conflict between Roland and Ganelon, and the fundamental theme is fidelity, hence the title *Turold, poète de la fidélité.* Ganelon, a noble and loyal character, is goaded into action by his stepson's derisive laughter. He is blinded by jealousy and hatred, Roland by pride. The two differ mainly in that Ganelon refuses to acknowledge his sin (p. 141): "aux nobles barons de France qui se disposent à partir pour la guerre sainte, le poète adresse ce message toujours actuel: le service de Dieu exige la fidélité totale d'un coeur sans compromis, qui ne soit pas partagé par 1'orgueil, la jalousie, la haine. On ne peut servir sa vengeance d'abord et Dieu ensuite, son orgueil d'abord et Dieu ensuite" (p. 155).

Burger maintains that it is not clear in Turoldus's poem that Roland is victorious at Roncevaux. He translates *cunquerant* (v. 2363) as 'en train de

conquérir' and *cunquerrantment* (v. 2867) as 'à la manière d'un conquérant', and concludes: "il est évident qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une victoire, mais d'une mort glorieuse en pleine offensive" (p. 146). Rarely has the traitor been viewed more sympathetically, the hero more antipathetically.

Bédier set out to prove that it was an error to regard the *Song of Roland* as mere patchwork. In a relatively short section of his *Légendes épiques*, he succeeded in showing the unity of the poem. His achievement was all the more remarkable in that he also provided a brilliant interpretation of the epic's central theme identified as the Roland-Oliver opposition. Since then, most scholars have agreed with Bédier that Turoldus did not choose between the two or have argued that he favored either Roland or Oliver.

By putting forth the view that the poem hinges instead on the Roland-Ganelon conflict, Burger implies that Bédier's interpretation leaves much to be desired. On that point I quite agree with him.

In appendix, the author gives the text of the *Nota Emilianense*, the passages relative to Roncevaux in the *Guide du pèlerin*, two series of verses in Venice IV believed to have been omitted by the Oxford scribe (see Bédier, *Commentaires*, pp. 182-188: "Le cas de Margariz," and pp. 189-192: "Le cas de Gautier de 1'Hum"), and textual notes concerning vv. 286, 400, 536, 662, 765, 1103, 1444, 1723, 2489, 2900, 3277, and 3659. There is a bibliography of works cited.[15]

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[1]Jules Horrent, *La Chanson de Roland dans les littératures française et espagnole au moyen âge*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de 1'Université de Liège, 120 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961); Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *La Chanson de Roland et la tradition épique des Francs*, trans. Irénée-Marcel Cluzel, 2nd ed. (Paris: Picard, 1960); André de Mandach, *Naissance et developpement de la chanson de geste en Europe*, Vol. I, *La Geste de Charlemagne et de Roland*, Publs. Romanes et Françaises, 69 (Geneva: Droz, and Paris: Minard, 1961); Rita Lejeune and Jacques Stiennon, *La Légende de Roland dans l'art du moyen âge*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Brussels: Arcade, 1967); *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. Cesare Segre, Documenti di filologia, 16 (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1971). Cf. Jean Dufournet, *Cours sur la Chanson de Roland*, Les Cours de Sorbonne (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1972); Joseph J. Duggan, *A Guide to Studies on the Chanson de Roland*, Research Bibliographies and Checklists, 15 (London: Grant & Cutler, 1976).

[2]Joseph Bédier, *La Chanson de Roland commentée* (1927; rpt. Paris: Piazza, 1968), p. 66; *La Chanson de Roland, reproduction phototypique du Manuscrit Digby 23 de la Bodleian Library d'Oxford,* ed. Comte Alexandre de Laborde, étude historique et paléographique de M. Ch. Samaran (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1933), p. 30.

[3]Ian Short, "The Oxford Manuscript of the *Chanson de Roland:* A Paleographical Note," *Romania* 94 (1973), 221-231 (c. 1170); cf. Robert Marichal, *Annuaire 1969-1970 de l'École pratique des hautes études, IV*e *section: Sciences historiques et philologiques, Extrait des rapports sur les conférences: Paléographie latine et française* (Paris, 1970) ("plus proche de 1125 que de 1150" [p. 367]); Félix Lecoy reviews the latter work in *Romania* 92 (1971), 141, and accepts its findings; Charles Samaran, "Sur la date approximative du *Roland* d'Oxford," *Romania* 94 (1973), 523-527 (1130-1150).

[4]Charles A. Knudson, "Études sur la composition de *la Chanson de Roland" Romania* 63 (1937), 48-92; André Burger, "La *cune du manuscrit O de la Chanson de Roland* et la fin de la deuxième bataille," *Studia Neophilologica* 27 (1955), 3-12.

[5]Jean Rychner, *La Chanson de geste. Essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs,* Publs. Romanes et Françaises, 53 (Geneva: Droz, and Lille: Giard, 1955).

[6]Gerard J. Brault, "Structure et sens de *la Chanson de Roland," French Review* 45, Special Issue No. 3 (1971), 1-12.

[7]Burger, pp. 49-52, proposes a seven-day "scénario temporel." Cf. Roberta A. Kunkle, "Time in the *Song of Roland," Romance Notes* 13 (1972), 550-555.

[8]I discuss this concept in my paper "Les dessins du *Ruolantes Liet* et 1'interprétation de *la Chanson de Roland,"* forthcoming in the proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of the Société Rencesvals held at Liège, Belgium, 29 August-4 September 1976.

[9]*La Chanson de Roland, reproduction phototypique,* p. 38.

[10]André Burger, "La légende de Roncevaux avant *la Chanson de Roland," Romania* 70 (1948/1949), 433-473.

[11]This is the traditional identification. Burger does not mention Mandach's view that the author may have been a certain Pierre d'Andouque *(Naissance,* pp. 60-73).

[12]Prosper Boissonnade, *Du Nouveau sur la Chanson de Roland. La genèse historique, le cadre géographique, le milieu, les personnages, la date et l'auteur du poème* (Paris: Champion, 1923), pp. 69-152.

[13]Jules Horrent, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne. Essai d'explication littéraire avec des notes de critique textuelle,* Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de 1'Université de Liège, 120 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1951); Jeanne Wathelet-Willem, *Recherches sur la Chanson de Guillaume. Études accompagnées d'une édition, 2* vols., Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de 1'Université de Liège, 210. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1975).

[14]André *Burger, "Les deux scènes du cor dans la Chanson de Roland," La Technique littéraire des chansons de geste. Actes du Colloque de Liège (septembre 1957),* Bibliothèque de la Faculté de philosophie et lettres de 1'Université de Liège, 150 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1959), pp. 105-126; idem, "Le rire de Roland," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 3 (1960), 2-11.

[15]There are nine photographs of Roncevaux and surrounding area between pp. 104 and 105.