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Inter textual Discourse in the William Cycle

The study of the antecedents of a given text has long been a pursuit of capital importance to literary scholarship, yet it has characteristically been carried out in terms of sources and influences not infrequently conceptualized on the basis of extra-literary considerations. Within the past decade, however, the concept of intertextuality has begun to provide a more strictly literary context for the elaboration of a poetics of transtextual relations. With only a few notable exceptions, intertextual studies have focused on modern works, leaving much to be explored in the realm of medieval literary discourse.¹ This is particularly true of the so-called "cyclical" narrative works. Although we classify epic texts according to major "gestes," recognize multiple "branches" as constituents of the *Roman de Renart*, and read the *Mort le roi Artu* as a conclusion to the larger "text" of the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian romances, we still need to scrutinize more closely the nature of intertextual coherence upon which the vitality of cyclical narrative depends. In this paper we wish to examine a variety of techniques that serve to create intertextual relations among five poems in the William cycle of Old French epics. Our results by no means represent an exhaustive assessment of intertextual features in this corpus. On the contrary, we offer them as evidence that the study of intertextuality in medieval cyclical works may indeed be a legitimate and worthwhile area of prolonged investigation.

Although its domain has long been recognized in literary study, intertextuality has only recently been identified as a critical concept within the framework of structuralist poetics. The extent of its conceptual field is currently in the process of elaboration, and in order to employ the term in this study, we must initially indicate what criteria

¹For exceptions see Paul Zumthor, "Le Carrefour des Rhétoriciens: Intertextualité et Rhétorique," *Poétique*, 27 (1976), 317-337, and P. Van Nuffel, "Rôle et fonctionnement du cliché dans le système intertextuel de l'épopée française médiévale," *Cahiers de l'Institut de Linguistique* (Université Catholique de Louvain), 3 (1975), 4-29.

we are using to identify features as specifically intertextual. Julia Kristeva, who introduced "intertextuality" into the critical lexicon, initially stated that "tout texte se construit comme une mosaïque de citations et [que] tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte."² Yet she has also postulated a broad zone of potential intertextual relations, whereby "le terme *d'intertextualité* désigne cette transposition d'un (ou de plusieurs) système(s) de signes en un autre."³ Consequently, as Laurent Jenny has recently pointed out with regard to this conceptualization, "le texte littéraire devient le lieu où fusionnent des systèmes de signes issus de pulsionnel et du social, et il va sans dire que toute lecture suppose une théorie achevée de sujet et de son rapport au social, ce qui de'passe en général l'ambition du poéticien."⁴ Without denying the potential value of the Kristevian notion of "text" as the confluential locus of a plurality of systems of signs, we concur with Jenny's view that "on aimerait avoir une approche à la fois plus naïve et plus concrète, qui n'oublie pas l'objet-texte dans sa matérialité,"⁵ and we thus wish to assert, both theoretically and for our immediate purposes in this study, the analytical priority of literary-discourse as the point of departure for the development of a poetics of intertextuality. Such a poetics is based on the assumption that a particular text relates to other texts and entails two corollary assumptions: (a) that an authorial intertextual competence is an integral part of the act of enunciation, and (b) that the act of reception likewise involves an intertextual competence. Cf. Jenny: "Hors de l'intertextualité, l'oeuvre littéraire serait tout simplement imperceptible, au même titre que la parole d'une langue encore inconnue."⁶ Likewise, Jonathan Culler comments that "a work can only be read in connection with or against other texts, which provide a grid through which it is read and structured by establishing expectations which enable one to pick out salient

² Julia Kristeva, *Semiotikè: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris, 1969), p. 146.

³ Julia Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris, 1974), p. 60.

⁴ Laurent Jenny, "La stratégie de la forme," *Poétique*, 27 (1976), p. 262.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

features and give them a structure."⁷ The high frequency of anaphoric and redundant features in the cyclical chansons de geste readily attests to an authorial intertextual competence the nature of which it is our objective to assess in this paper. As regards the intertextual competence of the receptor, we proceed with great caution, excluding from consideration dubious or trivial resemblances in favor of unmistakable, or "strong" intertextual relations. These latter we propose to consider according to three modalities set forth by Jenny: "Vis-à-vis des modèles archétypiques, l'oeuvre littéraire entre toujours dans un rapport de réalisation, de transformation, ou de transgression."⁸ Thus, our attention is directed to intertextual relations of reduplication, transformation, or transgression in an effort to provide a preliminary characterization of the intertextual mechanisms that contribute to the cyclical coherence of our corpus.

To illustrate our distinction between what could be called dubious or "weak" resemblances between elements occurring in multiple texts as opposed to "strong" intertextual features, we might revert momentarily to the *geste du roi* and cite an episodic sequence from the *Chanson d'Aspremont* (vv. 5184-5475)⁹ which bears the unmistakable imprint of the Oxford *Chanson de Roland*. It will be recalled that the former poem is an account of Charlemagne's defeat of the Saracens, under the leadership of Agolant, in Calabria. During the battle between the army of Charlemagne and the Saracen forces led by Agolant's son, Aumont, the latter, who bears the sword, Durandal, is admonished by his companion Triamodès to sound his *olifant* so that it will be heard by his father in the city of Reggio, whence Agolant might bring the essential reinforcements. Adamantly declining because he does not wish to incur the reproach of cowardice before the Christians, Aumont draws Durandal "his good sword" and rushes into the *mêlée*. Much later, after the field is strewn with the bodies of Triamodes and a host of other Saracens, Balan severely reproaches Aumont for having earlier

⁷Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London, 1975), p. 139. Cf. Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris, 1970), pp. 16-17.

⁸Jenny, p. 257.

⁹*La Chanson d'Aspremont*, ed. Louis Brandin (Paris, 1921-22).

failed to sound the *olifant*. Now that it is virtually too late, Aumont emits a powerful blast of the horn, but Reggio is too remote, and the call goes unheeded by his father. Eventually, Roland seizes Durandal and kills Aumont, prior to the ultimate victory of the Christians. The intertextual relations between these episodes and the two quarrels of Roland and Olivier in the *Chanson de Roland* are immediately evident, and detailed scrutiny would reveal that the *Aspremont* also reduplicates phrases from its episodic counterparts in the *Roland*. Clearly, the "Christian" prototype has been transformed into a "pagan" context, not without the achievement of significant contrasts, notably that between Roland's successful eventual sounding of the *olifant* and the ineffectual blast by Aumont. Likewise, Aumont loses the magnificent sword to an adversary, Roland himself, whereas Roland, despite his mortal wounds, manages to retain it until his death. The intertextual dimension also creates in *Aspremont* the profound irony of Roland's conquest of Durandal at the culmination of a series of episodes which, in the chronology of the hero's biography, constitute a remarkably accurate prefiguration of the circumstances in the *Roland* that will culminate in his own last feats with the sword prior to his death. These elements of transformation and reduplication in the *Aspremont* exemplify the kind of "strong" intertextuality that we now wish to consider, at numerous levels including the episodic, in our corpus selected from the William cycle.

Of the major epic cycles, the greatest degree of intertextual coherence is found in the William cycle, Tuffrau, who has liberally adapted the cycle in his modernized *Légende de Guillaume*, comments that its component poems appear as "les chapitres épars d'une épopée continue."¹⁰ The possibility of such a reconstruction depends upon the general non-contradiction of poems within the cycle and their evident complementarity. Obviously, limitations of space preclude our assessment of intertextuality among all known poems in the cycle. We shall therefore offer a *sondage* of only five poems, the *Couronnement de Louis*, the *Charroi de Nîmes*, the *Prise d'Orange*, and the *Montage Guil-*

¹⁰Paul Tuffrau, *La légende de Guillaume d'Orange* (Paris, 1920), p. 8.

laume I and II.¹¹ The high degree of apparent cohesion of these poems is confirmed by their generally fixed order in the manuscript tradition. With the addition of the *Enfances Guillaume* they constitute the nuclear "biographie légendaire" of the central hero of the cycle.¹²

Indeed, it is precisely the heroic biography of Guillaume that constitutes one of the chief intertextual components in this selection of poems in the cycle. Normally, classification of epic texts by cycles has as one of its fundamental principles the prominence of a particular hero or of his ancestry or lineage. Frappier commented of our group of poems that "par sa seule présence l'énergique et pittoresque Guillaume impose une suffisante unité."¹³ Such a unifying "présence" has not been achieved by mere citations of name, lineage, and political affiliation from one poem to the next, however. It is therefore necessary to examine a hierarchy of invariable intertextual elements that contribute to the heroic identity of Guillaume as an actor, that is, as Greimas has indicated, as a morphemic discursive unity, "Guillaume," invested with the minimal semic features of "anthropomorphization," "animation," and "individuation."¹⁴ The latter category is particularly rich in elements that serve to maintain trans-textual coherence.

I. Individualization

Individualization of Guillaume is constituted and relayed by a variety of distinctive personal features, the recurrence of which is a

¹¹Editions cited are as follows: *Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. Ernest Langlois (2nd ed., Paris, 1966); *Le Charroi de Nîmes* ed. J.-L. Perrier (Paris, 1963); *La Prise d'Orange*, ed. Claude R gnier (Paris, 1972); *Les deux r dactions en vers du Montage Guillaume*, ed. Wilhelm Cloetta (Paris, I, 1906, II, 1911).

¹²Jean Frappier groups these poems on the criterion of the centrality of Guillaume. To complete the "biographie l gendaire" they are supplemented by the "trilogy" *Chanson de Guillaume*, *Aliscans*, and *Chevalerie Vivien*: "Certes Guillaume n'est nullement rel gu  au second plan dans cette trilogie; pourtant il y est concurrenc  de pr s, sinon  clips  quelquefois, par Vivien ou m me par le personnage h ro -comique de Rainouart." See *Les Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d'Orange*, II (Paris, 1967), pp. 8-9.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁴A. J. Greimas, "La Structure des actants du r cit" in *Du Sens* (Paris, 1970), pp. 255-56.

readily identifiable source of cyclical coherence. A brief catalog must suffice:

1) Guillaume's physical attributes include exceptional stature and strength. He is recognized by other personages within the poems by his *poings*, his *visage*, and his *stature*, as well as by his unmistakable nose, as in *the Montage II*:

Uns frans borjois a le conte esgardé,
Bien le conut, quant il l'ot avisé,
Au grant corsage, as puins gros et quarrés
Et a la boce qu'il ot enson le nés.

(vv. 1050-1053)

While the *Moniage* repeatedly emphasizes Guillaume's great stature (a miracle is required to enlarge a humble dwelling for his habitation in *Mon. II*, *laisse XCIV*) and, disguised, he characterizes himself in response to Orable's inquiry as having "Et gros les poinz et merveilleuse brace" (*PO*, v. 726), it is his nose which almost reveals his identity despite his disguise in the *Charroi*: as Otran closely observes the presumed merchant in his court,

Si a veü la boce sor le nés.
Lors li remembre de Guillelme au cort nés,
Fill Aymeri de Nerbone sor mer.

(*CN*, vv. 1209-1211)

2) These physical attributes are incorporated in the epithets which frequently accompany the name of the hero: he is the *marchis au fier vis*, *Fierabracc*, *Guillaume au cort nez*. The last of these reflects a specific episode in the cycle, Guillaume's combat with Corsolt in the *Couronnement de Louis*, which resulted in the mutilation of his nose. The epithet is coined by Guillaume himself after the battle, in response to his nephew's anxious query:

"Oncles," fait il, "estes sains et haitiez?"
- "Oie," fait il, "la merci Deu del ciel,
Mais que mon nes ai un pou acorcié;
Bien sai mes nons en sera alongiez."

Li cuens meïsmes s'est iluec baptisiez:
"Des ore mais, qui mei aime et tient chier,
Trestuit m'apelent, Franceis et Berruier,
Conte Guillelme al Cort Nrs le guerrier."
(CL, vv. 1157-1164)¹⁵

3) These consistent physical traits may be complemented by characteristic acts or gestures. In the *Couronnement* Guillaume fells Arneïs d'Orléans with a powerful blow of his hand to the neck. In the *Charroi* he has two victims, the traitor Aymon and the pagan Harpin, felled in each case in identical fashion and cast linguistically in a near-identical mould. In these episodes it is not only heroic strength but righteous anger that is exemplified.¹⁶ Interestingly, in the *Prise* both the gesture and the attendant wrath are attributed to Guillaume's nephew Guielins, to the hero's evident delight. Finally, in both versions of the *Moniage* occur accounts, one abridged and one graphically expanded, of a similar blow which slays the leader of an attacking band of thieves (see Appendix).

4) Acts or gestures recurring within a poem may be cast in epic formulae reduplicated in other poems. Alan Press's recent study of the formula "s'en a un ris gité" demonstrates that its status differs from that of the conventional epic cliché by providing Guillaume's laugh as an identifying trait, one which is even acknowledged in the *Prise d'Orange*: "Connoistront vos," he is warned, "a la boce et au rire" (v. 338). In both the *Couronnement*, where it occurs three times, and in the *Charroi*, with six occurrences, the laugh formula is applied exclusively to the hero. While Press notes that in the *Prise d'Orange* the utilization

¹⁵ For a discussion of Guillaume's nose see Frappier, *Les Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d'Orange*, I, pp. 89-94. The *Chanson de Guillaume* uses instead the epithet "au courb nez," and Frappier suggests that Guillaume's own account of its deformity in the *Charroi*, w. 145-49, represents an attempt by the trouvère "de concilier la tradition ancienne du nez courbe et la tradition récente du nez racourci" (p. 92).

¹⁶ See Frappier: in the later poems "ces passages imitent presque textuellement les vers du *Couronnement*, non point par manque d'invention, mais en vertu d'un procédé signalétique; il importait de caractériser davantage Guillaume en fixant le style de sa justice sommaire et implacable" (I, p. 96).

of the formula is "diffused and generalized," breaking down "both in its verbal structure and in its subject-references,"¹⁷ we may add to his examples that of the *Moniage II* where it is reduplicated with reference to the hero (vv. 5716, 5957).

The apparent "ressemblance du héros à lui-même" observed by Frappier¹⁸ in these poems owes much to characterization by epithet and to the use of epic formulas, which are two techniques generally associated with epic narrative. In this light Jenny's comments on the relation of intertextuality to the degree of *codage* of a text or texts bear further exploration with regard to the epic as genre.¹⁹ "N'est-ce pas," he asks, "un type de formes déterminé qui suscite l'intertextualité? Et on pourrait par exemple faire l'hypothèse que ce sont les textes les plus strictement ou outrancièrement codés qui donnent matière à la 'redite'."²⁰ Clearly, the intertextual depiction of Guillaume relies heavily on a descriptive code whose epithetic and formulaic indices are attributable to the norms of epic composition. The high frequency of redundant indices applied to Guillaume de-emphasizes the notion of cyclic "evolution" or "transformation" of character, creating instead an effect of permanent, rather than developmental, individualization,

5) In addition, in the varying circumstances of individual poems Guillaume's conduct is marked by the inclusion of motifs that contribute to a "typical" pattern of heroic action that transcends the individual text.²¹

¹⁷A. R. Press, "The Formula 's'en a un ris gité' in the *Charroi de Nîmes*" *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 12 (1976), p. 19.

¹⁸Frappier, II, p. 30.

¹⁹For a statistical analysis of a variety of formulae in the William cycle, see D. McMillan, "Notes sur quelques clichés formulaires dans les chansons de geste de Guillaume d'Orange," in *Mélanges Delbouille*, II (Gembloux, 1964), pp. 477-91.

²⁰Jenny, p. 260.

²¹Frappier notes "la fréquence de motifs secondaires ou clichés, dont il serait utile et intéressant de suivre les variations d'une oeuvre à l'autre, et d'établir un répertoire complet" (I, p. 106). Among these themes and motifs he includes the "ville assiégée," the "panorama épique," the "héros arrêtés devant la porte fermée d'une ville où ils sont impatients d'entrer," the "compagnonnage de l'homme et du cheval" (pp. 111-12).

i. The motif of interrupted hunting which repeatedly underscores Guillaume's self-sacrifice in aid of the crown in the *Couronnement* (vv. 113-114, and in almost identical phrasing in vv. 2223-2225 and 2655-2659) is repeated in the *Charroi*.²² In the opening passages of the two sequences it is incorporated into analogous narrative sequences: in both, Guillaume returns from the hunt to be met with his nephew Bertran's report of an injustice witnessed in the palace, an announcement which precipitates his angry entry into the court.²³ In the *Couronnement* he learns that Arneis is attempting to usurp the crown; in the *Charroi* Bertran reveals bitterly that in Guillaume's absence Louis has forgotten them in distributing lands to his barons. The second scene also recalls the first thematically: in his opposition to Arneis, Guillaume had become the protector of Louis, and it is his consequent service that is unrewarded in the distribution of fiefs, as he forcefully reminds the king. The suggestion that Guillaume prefers the rustic pleasures and relative isolation of the forest to the life of the court is reflected once again in the *Moniage*, in which he is reluctantly drawn from his hermitage for a final defense of the crown.

ii. Lengthy prayers are pronounced by the hero in the *Couronnement*, the *Prise*, and the *Moniage*. In the first two of these texts these are clearly of the type "du plus grand péril," uttered by the hero who, in a moment of mortal peril, invokes Biblical heroes triumphant over adversity and the forces of evil.²⁴ In the *Couronnement* Guillaume

²²David P. Schenck has discussed the "isotopies de la guerre et de la nature" in the creation of the myth of Guillaume in several poems of the cycle. See his "Le Mythe, la sémiotique et le cycle de Guillaume," in *Charlemagne et l'Épopée romane: Actes du VII^e Congrès International de la Société Rencesvah*, ed. Madeleine Tyssens and Claude Thiry (Paris, 1978), pp. 373-381.

²³Alfred Adler observes that "il n'est pas surprenant que les deux situations commencent d'une manière tout à fait analogue... Dans les deux cas, il vient à temps pour protéger le royaume contre l'influence de *mauvais conseillers*." "A retrospective description constituting an essential structural and conceptual order in propos du *Charroi de Nîmes*" *Mélanges Frappier*, I (Genève, 1970), p. 12.

²⁴On the "prière du plus grand péril" see Frappier, II, pp. 131-40; J. Garel, "La prière du plus grand péril," *Mélanges Le Gentil* (Paris, 1973), pp. 311-18; and Jacques De Caluwé, "La 'prière épique' dans les plus anciennes chansons de geste françaises," *Olifant*, 4 (1976), 4-20.

twice offers detailed, lengthy prayers during his combat with the gigantic Saracen, Corsolt (vv. 695-789; 976-1029); in the *Prise* he prays in this manner no fewer than four times (vv. 499-509; 541-544; 783-790; 804-817) before gaining safe entry to the Saracen palace in Orange. In the *Moniage* II, on many occasions he offers brief prayers for divine aid in combat, but the single, effective example of a long oration is pronounced to obtain the miraculous restoration of his wounded horse (vv. 1681-1704), where it again resumes the form of the "prière du plus grand péril."

iii. In the *Charroi*, the *Prise* and the *Moniage* the hero carries out an elaborate ruse of his own devising to achieve a particularly dangerous objective. In both the *Charroi* and the *Prise* he disguises himself as a merchant in order to gain entry to the enemy city, Nîmes or Orange; in the *Moniage*, directed by his treacherous abbot to submit to attack without resistance unless an attempt is made to rob him of his *braies*, he adorns that garment with an ostentatiously valuable belt. In these episodes Guillaume not only succeeds in his ruse but plays the part with evident relish, with what Frappier termed "le goût inné de la ruse,"²⁵ which is a component of his *characteristic gaillardise*. In the *Charroi* this ability to feign successfully sets the stage for a particularly effective instance of self-conscious intertextual transgression. The king Otran, his suspicions aroused concerning the loquacious merchant "Tiacre" in his court, demands to know the reason for his visitor's "boce sur le nés" which reminds him of his enemy Guillaume, and Guillaume immediately invents the explanation that the deformity was incurred as punishment for his youthful thievery (vv. 1231-1244). Otran is satisfied by the explanation; for the listener, however, whose trans-textual competence enables him to recognize the falsehood, it is a source of humor in complicity with the audacious Guillaume.

II. Animation

The elementary individualization of Guillaume achieved by iterative epithets, formulae and motifs constitutes his status as an *actor* in the Greimasian sense of a discursive morphemic entity. While this indivi-

²⁵Frappier, II, p. 167.

dualization is maintained by discontinuous paradigmatic descriptive features, his *animation* creates a linear, syntagmatic continuum in which he is an *actant*, a semantic unity in the *récit*. His invariable actantial status as "subject-hero" in all of the poems contrasts with the variety of *rôles* he assumes as well as with his flexible status with regard to the category of actor. Greimas draws a useful distinction between actors and rôles: "Le contenu sémantique minimal du rôle est... identique à celui de l'acteur à l'exception toutefois du sème d'individuation qu'il ne comporte pas: le rôle est une entité figurative animée, mais anonyme et sociale; l'acteur, en retour, est un individu intégrant et assumant un ou plusieurs rôles."²⁶ Guillaume's heroic versatility is heightened by the plurality of actorial rôles he assumes in our corpus: knight, hunter, warrior, merchant (disguised), Saracen (again disguised), monk, hermit, pilgrim, etc. Far from diminishing the intertextual unity of his actantial status as subject-hero, however, the majority of these rôles may be regarded as constituents of a secondary typology, or in other words, as subsets of either of two primary rôles in the corpus as a whole: *Adjuvant* (protector of the kingdom of Louis, albeit often reluctant and generally unrewarded, and/or protector of the Christian Empire) and *Conqueror* (of Nîmes, Orange, and other territories occupied by the Saracens):

Adjuvant	Conqueror
knight	knight
warrior	warrior
pilgrim	merchant
	Saracen

Of the remaining rôles in this inventory, that of hunter is a unifying element linking the *Couronnement* and the *Charroi*, while those of monk and hermit in the *Moniage* are the logical consequence of Guillaume's consciousness in earlier poems of the sinful nature of his violence and aggression mobilized in defense of Louis's heritage (e.g. *Charroi* v. 70; *Couronnement*, vv. 124-29, etc.). While the rôle of conqueror is in the foreground of the *Charroi* and the *Prise*, it is to some extent apparent in the *Couronnement* (victory over Corsolt) and in the *Moniage* (defeat of

²⁶Greimas, *Du Sens*, pp. 253-56.

Ysoré). Inasmuch as Guillaume's rôle as conqueror in all of the poems is directed against the Saracens, it, too, is tributary to his chief rôle as the adjuvant of monarchy and Christendom. It is this archetypal rôle which establishes the fundamental intertextual continuity of Guillaume's animation.²⁷

III. Guillaume d'Orange, *personnage spéculaire*

Our concept of Guillaume as a *personnage spéculaire* in the cyclical system of intertextual coherence is akin to the type of *intratextual personnage* described by Philippe Hamon as a *personnage-anaphore*:

"Ici une référence au système propre de l'oeuvre est seule indispensable. Ces personnages tissent dans l'énoncé du réseau *d'appels* et de *rappels* à des segments d'énoncés disjoints et de longueur variable (un syntagme, un mot, une paraphrase. . .); éléments à fonction essentiellement organisatrice et cohésive, ils sont en quelque sorte les signes mnémotechniques du lecteur; personnages de prédicateurs, personnages doués de mémoire, personnages qui sèment ou interprètent des indices, etc. Le rêve prémonitoire, la scène d'aveu ou de confidence, la prédiction, le souvenir, le flashback, la citation des ancêtres, la lucidité, le projet, la fixation de programme sont les attributs ou les figures privilégiées de ce type de personnage. Par eux, l'oeuvre se cite elle-même et se construit comme tautologique."²⁸

In the most elementary intertextual sense, the morpheme "Guillaume" would, in Hamon's view, be a "discontinuous signifier (a certain number of marks) referring to a discontinuous signified (the 'sens' or the 'valeur' of the personage)."²⁹ However, as Hamon adds, the semantic value of the character is not defined *a priori* as is the linguistic morpheme but is rather "une *construction* qui s'effectue progressivement. . . le temps d'une aventure fictive," or as Todorov has said, "une forme vide que

²⁷Cf. Frappier's discussion of the "thèmes essentiels qui caractérisent l'esprit général du cycle," I, pp. 106-11.

²⁸Philippe Hamon, "Pour un statut sémiologique du personnage," in *Poétique du récit* (Paris, 1977), p. 123.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 125.

viennent remplir les différents prédicats (verbes ou attributs)."³⁰ At the intratextual level, the progressive construction of the *personnage-anaphore* generates discontinuous semantic values that enhance the retrospective and the prospective unity of the text. If Guillaume could in certain major respects be analyzed in any one of the works in our sampling as a *personnage-anaphore*,³¹ he is *a fortiori* a *personnage spéculaire* within this corpus to the extent that he repeatedly becomes a mnemotechnic sign for the receptor and serves as the locus of retrospective and prospective intertextual unity by which one might in fact say that "le cycle se cite lui-même."

When the intratextual reflexive value of Guillaume is assimilated to the multi-textual cyclic dimension, anaphoric elements of his semantic fictive status in some instances become reflexive in a manner akin to the often-discussed technique of modern fiction known as *mise en abyme*. In a recent study of the *mise en abyme* in literary texts, Lucien Dällenbach provides a working definition of the concept: "Est mise en abyme tout miroir interne, réfléchissant l'ensemble du récit par reduplication simple, répétée, ou spéculaire," and he designates the text which embodies this phenomenon as a *récit spéculaire*.³² By the same token, when considered from an intertextual, cyclical perspective, the heroic figure of Guillaume becomes the locus of retrospectively and prospectively reflexive elements that enable us to identify him as a cyclical *personnage spéculaire*. We shall discuss briefly a few of the more salient types of specular segments:

i. The prologues of the *Charroi*, the *Prise*, and the *Moniage I* and II are all reductive narrative accounts of earlier events that occur in

³⁰Tzvetan Todorov, *La Grammaire du Décameron* (The Hague and Paris, 1969), p. 28.

³¹Stephen Nichols has observed in the *Chanson de Guillaume* a "pattern of retrospective description constituting an essential structural and conceptual order in the work;" see "The Rhetoric of Recapitulation in the *Chanson de Guillaume*," *Studies in Honor of Tatiana Fotitch* (Washington, 1972), pp. 79-92.

³² Lucien Dällenbach, *Le Récit spéculaire: essai sur la mise en abyme* (Paris, 1977), pp. 51-52.

other works of the cycle.³³ Moreover, the *Charroi* and the *Prise* refer to future events beyond the limits of the text in which these references occur: the prologue to the *Charroi* includes an abbreviated mention of the conquest of Orange and Guillaume's marriage to Guiborc; that of the *Prise* alludes to the final, religious phase of his life. Similarly, the epilogues of the *Couronnement* and of the *Prise* digest forthcoming events:

En grant barnage fu Looïs entrez:
Quant il fu riches Guillelme n'en sot gré.
(*CL*, vv. 2694-2695)

Li cuens Guillelmes ot espousé la dame;
Puis estut il tiex .xxx. ans en Oreng
C'onques un jor n'i estut sanz chalenge.
(*PO*, vv. 1886-1888)³⁴

That these introductions and conclusions may have been later additions conceived as necessary transitions between two *chansons*, as students of the manuscript tradition have suggested, is entirely consistent with the wealth of evidence that each poem coheres with the greater cycle. Indeed, these instances of past events or future-in-the-past events with regard to the narrative present represent moments when the synoptic anteriority of the cycle becomes coordinated with the events of a given poem. This type of *mise en abyme* also provides the listener with a means of quickly locating the *chanson* with respect to the chronology of the cycle.

ii. A more subtle type of specular narrative occurs in *Moniage I*, as Guillaume, returning with the fish he has been instructed by the abbot to purchase, instructs his *vallés* to sing and thus elicits an account

³³In addition, Frappier notes of the *Couronnement* prologue that "il n'invente pas le personnage de Guillaume. Il le reçoit de la tradition... Le vers 8 ne rappelle-t-il pas que le héros a soutenu des combats acharnés contre les Sarrasins . . . ? Il faut voir là une référence à une ou des chansons connues du trouvère et de son public, à la primitive *Prise d'Orange* peut-être, ou plutôt à la *Chanson de Guillaume*" (II, p. 162).

³⁴The epilogue of the *Prise* has occasioned much conjecture concerning a lost poem or poems recounting the *Siège d'Orange*; see Frappier, II, pp. 267-73.

of his own exploits in the *Prise d'Orange*:

Li vallés l'ot, prist soi a escrier,
Bien hautement commença a chanter:
"Volés oïr de dant Tibaut l'Escler,
Et de Guillaume, le marcis au cort nés,
Si com il prist Orengé la chité,
Et prist Orable a moillier et a per.
Et Glorïete, le palais principer?"

(vv. 444-450)³⁵

This passage is particularly interesting because it is a *mise en abyme* both of an earlier portion of the cycle and, virtually, of the act of enunciation itself: a *jongleur* singing the *Moniage I* would be singing about Guillaume's singer singing about Guillaume, whence an unusually striking dramatization of the ontology of oral narrative.

iii. In the two preceding considerations of reflexive narrative, specularity is established by the narrator's third-person evocations of disparate events in the heroic biography of Guillaume. These instances where the hero's reflexivity at a given moment in the cycle is mediated by a narrative voice other than that of the subject-hero contrast with those passages in which the latter himself assumes the rôle of narrator, creating what Dällenbach has termed a "méta-récit réflexif," a "segment textuel supporté par un narrateur interne auquel auteur ou narrateur cèdent temporairement la place, dégageant ainsi leur responsabilité de meneurs du récit."³⁶ Among the effects achieved by such a procedure may be the introduction of a "récit personnel dans une fiction écrite à la troisième personne," as in the autobiographical *cartre* written by Saint Alexis (cf. Dällenbach, p. 71). In the William cycle, the "méta-récit réflexif" enables Guillaume to recall earlier phases of his heroic career with greater immediacy and more intense affective expression. The best-known examples are found in the opening *laissez* of the *Charroi*, where Guillaume legitimizes his wrath, stemming from Louis's failure to reward him with a fief, by his impassioned narration of past

³⁵ In the *Moniage II* the content of the song is not specified; it is simply a "vieille histoire" (*Laisse XXIV*).

³⁶ Dällenbach, p. 71.

episodes in which his service to the king has been crucial. The majority of these are detailed recapitulations of episodes in the *Couronnement de Louis* (CN vv. 131-277). These autobiographical accounts, through their corroboration of events narrated in the third person in the *Couronnement*, reinforce the listener's sense of cyclical continuity. Paradoxically, it is at these moments that Guillaume achieves his greatest degree of apparent autonomy as a *personnage spéculaire*, through whom the intangibility of the cycle takes shape in the materiality of the text.

Our survey of a few of the intertextual features in selected major poems of the William cycle would seem to emphasize the notion that intertextuality is almost entirely a *conservative* element in the *chanson de geste*. We are reminded of Paul Zumthor's insistence on the remarkable *inertia* of traditions which underlies the very concept of intertextuality. Depending upon the type of culture in which it occurs, this inertia may be regarded as a positive or as a negative value. If the former situation obtains, traditions are integratively maintained and remanifested, while the latter situation leads to their expulsion. Zumthor: "Dans une culture globalement classable sous le type intégratif, l'intertextualité fonctionne comme un procès de désambiguation, impliquant la conviction que des vérités spécifiques sont possibles; dans une culture de type exilique, le fonctionnement s'inverse (procès de 'mensonge': aucune vérité spécifique n'est concevable)."³⁷ Already Zumthor finds in the Grands Rhétoriciens of the fifteenth century the unmistakable symptoms of a shift from the conservative to the transgressive type of intertextuality. In our corpus, on the contrary, intertextuality is almost wholly the product of a positive inertia, one which, in terms of Jenny's typology, relies for its vitality on reduplication and transformation. At the same time, *our sondage* of intertextual elements in the William cycle brings into focus the larger issue of "what makes cyclical narrative cyclical?" It is obvious that the cycle nowhere exists as an entity in the same sense that any given poem from a cycle may be said to exist as a "textual" entity. Rather, the texts in the cycle are discrete entities which somehow participate in the nebulous totality of the cycle. Yet by virtue of intertextuality—and here we are reminded of

³⁷Paul Zumthor, "Le Carrefour des Rhétoriciens," p. 336.

the paradox of the hermeneutic circle—the whole is contained in the part no less than the part is assimilated to the whole, and the life of the cycle stems from its continuous rebirth into the life of the individual *chanson*.

To characterize the relation of cycle to text, we might recall a fundamental Chomskian opposition whose terms seem particularly pertinent to the nature of epic narrative: the virtuality of the cycle lies in the *competence* of the *jongleur*, or the ensemble of possibilities for narration presented by the cycle, whereas the text is the result of a *performance*, or a particularized, concrete realization of certain possibilities presented by the cyclical ensemble. Yet the listener's decoding of elements of the cycle encoded in the text by the *jongleur* depends on another kind of competence: whereas that of the *jongleur* relates cycle to text, that of the listener relates text to text, and it is this intertextual competence generated in the receptor by an ensemble of poems that creates a public whose conservative "horizon of expectations" coincides with that of its oral narrator. Whence, in the William cycle, the closed, inertial, conservative nature of intertextuality.

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Appendix

Couronnement de Louis

(*Arneis d'Orléans*):

Le poing senestre li a meslé el chief,
Halce le destre, enz el col li assiet:
L'os de la gole li a par mi brisié;
Mort le trebuche a la terre a ses piez.

(vv. 130-133)

Charroi de Nimes

(*Aymon*):

Il passe avant quant il fu rebracié,
Le poing senestre li a mellé el chief,
Hauce le destre, enz el col li asiet,

L'os de la gueule li a par mi froissié;
Mort le trebuche devant lui a ses piez.

(vv. 742-746)

Moniage I

Hauce le poing, si vait ferir le maistre;
Tel cop li done devant en son visage,
L'os de la goule en deux moitiés li quasse,
Mort le trebuce a terre.

(vv. 596-599)

Moniage II

Quant vit Gondrain devant lui aprocier,
Qui si l'a hui blasmé et avillié,
Hauce le poing, qu'il n'ot mie legier,
Par mautalent ens el col li assiet.
Fort ot les bras et le corage fier,
Par tel äi li a un cop paiét
Que il li a tout le caon froissié,
Ront le les ners, brise le hanepier
Et les deus iex li fait voler del cief,
Que devant lui l'a jus mort trebucié.

(vv. 1506-1515)

Charroi de Nimes

(Harpin):

Le poing senestre li a el chief mellé,
Vers lui le tire, si l'avoit encliné,
Hauce le destre, que gros ot et quarré,
Par tel äir li dona un cop tel,
L'os de la gueule li a par mi froé,
Que a ses piez l'a mort acraventé.

(vv. 1373-1378)

Prise d'Orange

Guïelins l'ot, le sens cuide changier,
Les denz rechine, s'a les eulz reoillié;
Et passe avant quant se fu rebracié,
Le poing senestre li a mellé el chief,
Hauce le destre, enz el col li asiet,
L'os de la gueule li a par mi brisié,
Mort le trébuche devant lui a ses piez.
Voit le Guillelmes, s'en est joianz et liez.

(vv. 1600-1607)