



Ganelon, Treason, and the Chanson De Roland

Emanuel J. Mickel

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This work probes the question of Ganelon's treason within the context of medieval law and the epic poem. Since the beginning of studies on the medieval epic tradition, scholars have debated what to make of Ganelon's role in the epic and his defense at the trial. To what extent would a medieval audience sympathize with Ganelon's trial defense? Does the conflict revolving around Ganelon and his family reflect tension between the crown and the nobility, between a new sense of Roman law and kingship and an older tradition of custom and baronial authority? This book explores each stage of Ganelon's treason and trial to determine what can be learned by a careful study of the issues and procedures of the trial in the light of medieval practice. Thus the study frequently ranges beyond the confines of the poem to discuss such broad subjects as the nature of the duel, medieval proofs, the nature and punishment of treason, and the gradually changing role of the family and the state in governance and in the legal process. An understanding of the issues in Ganelon's trial illuminates many questions pertaining to the Roland, medieval composition, and the medieval period.

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