

The Performance of Masculinity and Femininity

Gender Transgression in *The Sowdone of Babylone*

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Judith Butler has observed that “gender is an identity tenuously constructed in time... through a stylised repetition of acts”, and the performative nature of gender identities has often been highlighted.¹ The extent to which this may be addressed in a medieval context has, however, received less attention. In this paper I will highlight the value of studying the performance of gender roles in medieval culture. I will address the way that knights are described as masculine and ladies as feminine, how the former are feminised and the latter defeminised and what this might suggest within our understanding of medieval society. I will use *The Sowdone of Babylone* to discuss my hypothesis. My argument is that knights are constructed as masculine when they are in a heroic, knightly role, but they are emasculated when they are described as being in love or when they subscribe to non-Christian religions. Women are depicted as feminine when they perform the roles of daughter, mother, servant or wife, but when they move beyond these functions in order to aid knights, fight or promote Christianity their identity becomes more problematic. It is necessary to observe masculinity and femininity in action as performance as neither is a clearly definable entity. Gender is a cultural process, not a set model and is best described as a movement. It is not possible to map the complexities from some “fixed, unambiguous endpoint”.² “Gender, like time and space, is continually negotiated, continually in the act of becoming.... Gender performances mark not only private but also cultural constructs of power and powerlessness, frequently reveal individual and collective anxieties about identity boundaries, about the Other in terms of sex, status, race, and religion.”³ In order to understand “social identity” one must examine it in the light of “nature”, “culture”, the “soul” and “the possibilities of an individual’s

condition in its corporeal state.⁴ In the interaction between normal and other masculinities (normal and other feminities) there is “a space wherein subjectivity is rearticulated and reconfigured” and this reveals the anxieties in fifteenth-century society concerning what it means to be male (female).⁵

The *Sowdone of Babylone* is one of a group of Charlemagne romances which relates the deeds of Ferumbras, Floripas and the Twelve Peers. It survives in a single manuscript, Princeton University Library Ms. Garrett 140, dating from c.1450 and is of south-east-Midlands provenance, probably composed shortly prior to the transcription of the manuscript.⁶ Like most English Charlemagne romances it is most likely based on a French romance, though the original has not survived. The story it recounts is an abridgement of the action in the *Destruction of Rome* and *Fierabras*. *The Sowdone of Babylone* is considerably shorter than the existing French versions, omitting for instance the tension between the Twelve Peers, but developing the characterisation of the Saracens as cruel and barbaric.⁷ Furthermore, it is more sympathetic towards women than the other recensions, omitting the attempted rape of Floripas by Mapyn, her nakedness while being baptised and expanding her relationships with other characters.⁸ Margaret J. Ailes suggests that Floripas, “the beautiful Saracen princess, although conforming in every way to the ideals of beauty, is more important for her function in helping the Christian knights than as a heroine of romance.”⁹ I disagree with this assessment and suggest that the reason that the *Fierabras* story proved so popular in England, France and elsewhere,¹⁰ and the purpose behind *The Sowdone of Babylone* in particular is that the story allows the configurations of masculinity and femininity to be explored.¹¹

The Sowdone of Babylone starts off by highlighting certain qualities which are essential to knights and kings. Laban is said to be “worthy” (49), “kene” (120) and honourable (982), and Ferumbras is described as “doughty” (207). Likewise Roland is “worthy” (731) and Oliver “wighte” (733). Charlemagne sums up what it means to be a knight for the young men in his troops:

*For worthynesse wole not be hadde,
But it be ofte soughte,
Ner knighthode wole not ben hadde,
Tille it be dere boghte.
Therefore ye knightes, yonge of age,
Of oolde ye may now lere,
Howe ye shalle both hurle and rage
In felde with sheelde and spere.*

*And take ensample of the Twelfe Peris,
 Howe thai have proved her myght,
 And howe thai were both wight and fiers
 To wynnen honourys in righte.
 These hethen houndes we shal a-tame
 By God in magisté. (923–36)*

The narrator adds that spirit inspires men to proclaim themselves in manly fashion, while love causes them to listen and to seek honour (971–4). Fear could never be countenanced and is rarely attributed to Christian knights.¹² Both sides in this conflict fight according to the ideals of chivalry and the heroic male ethos. The Saracens and Christians boast and vow to conquer each other. For instance, Laban swears by Mahounde that he will make Charles fear him before he has done (799–802) and that he shall force Charles and the Twelve Peers to show him courtesy (807–14). It is possible to find a number of parallels between romances and tomb effegies in the way they distinguish knighthood as a different construction of masculinity to other male groups. Rachel Dressler argues that the production of armoured tomb effegies for knights was an attempt to construct an “idealised masculinity” based on “status, lineage and physical attributes”, emphasised through “the wearing of mail, the display of heraldic insignia and the foregrounding of the powerful male body”.¹³ Churchmen, like women, were depicted “swathed in heavy vestments” in which the features of the body were lost. The attire of knights, short mail hauberks, split-skirted surcoats and tight mail leggings allowed the sculptors to draw attention to the muscular bodies of the figures they were immortalising.¹⁴ Knights were trained to exercise self-control of their bodies, emotions and speech at all times and to display courage and loyalty.

However, this formulation of an ideal masculinity is problematised by the fact that Laban and his men are heathens. To this end they are described as “cursed” (747), and Laban heaps insults on the Christians, referring to them as “dogges” (956) and “hogges” (958). Several of the Muslim contingents are depicted as monstrous, vicious creatures who strive to kill Christians. There are two male giants, Agalofure and Estragot. The text does not specifically say that Estragot is a member of this grotesque race, but we can deduce that he is as his wife and children are giants. He is a hideous creature:

*With bores hede, blake and donne.
 For as a bore an hede hadde
 And a grete mace strong as stele.
 He smote Savaryz as he were madde,
 That dede to grounde he felle.
 This Astrogot of Ethiop,
 He was a kinge of grete strength;
 Ther was none such in Europe
 So stronge and so longe in length.
 I trowe he were a develes sone,
 Of Belsabubbis lyne.
 For ever he was thereto i-wone,
 To do Cristen men grete pyne. (347–59)*

Indeed, many Saracens are described as unusual in hue and they are frequently linked with the devil:

*Thre hundred thousand of Sarysns felle,
 Some bloo, some yolowe, some blake as More,
 Some horrible and stronge as devel of helle. (1004–6)*

Thus the Saracens who are tough, competent warriors are seen as horrific monsters, and their ability to fight is not interpreted solely in the light of chivalry or knightly prowess.

The masculinity of Muslims is further troubled, as it is suggested that some of their number are effeminate. Ferumbras, the noble Saracen prince, is a case in point. When confronted by the Romans he:

*... sprange out as a sparkil of glede.
 Of armes bright a sheelde he bare;
 A doughty man he was of dede. (205–7)*

At the same time he is a slightly effeminate figure with his “riche weede” (513) and a helmet:

*That wroght was of goode fyne stele
 With perlis pight, rubeis and saphire. (1157–8)*

The Christians are never described in *The Sowdone of Babylone* as wearing luxurious clothes; it is only Laban, Ferumbras and Floripas who do so. This alludes to the stereotyping of the Muslim strongholds as effeminate, exotic places where people indulge themselves in an extravagant fashion. Masculine ideas are used to distinguish Muslim from Christian men. This trend can be identified in numerous literary works, such as the Castilian ballads which highlight the feminine characteristics of the clothing worn by Muslim men. "Men's preferred mechanism for dealing with threats from male enemies has long been to strip them of their masculinity."¹⁵ Jewish and Muslim men tend to be depicted as effeminate in Western European writing and in some texts Jewish and Muslim women are masculinised.

One would assume then that once Ferumbras is converted that he would lose these unmasculine characteristics and become fully masculinised. This is not the case, though, as once converted Ferumbras' identity becomes more problematic not less. He always had the potential for leading a virtuous life.¹⁶ Early on when he encounters the Pope on the field of battle and recognises that his opponent is an ecclesiastical figure he says:

*"Fye, preest, God gyfe the sorowe!
 What doist thou armede in the feelde,
 That sholdest saie thi matyns on morowe?
 What doist thou with spere and shelde?
 I hoped thou hadist ben an emperoure,
 Or a cheftayne of this ooste here,
 Or some worthy conqueroure.
 Go home and kepe thy qwere!
 Shame it were to me certayne
 To sle the in this bataile:
 Therefore turne the home agayn!" (559–69)*

Upon losing his combat with Oliver Ferumbras declares that all his gods are false and that he will convert to Christianity. Once he is baptised his Saracen identity is erased and his name changed to Floreyne (1480). Steven Kruger notes how in the King of Tars romances and in some versions of the Saint Christopher story the Saracen sultan and Christopher are transformed into white European types when they convert to Christianity.¹⁷ The poet of *The Sowdone of Babylone* rounds off this section of the narrative by saying:

*Nought for Ferumbras
 Alle his life cleped was he,
 And aftirwarde in somme place,
 Floreyne of Rome cité.
 God for him many myracles shewed,
 So holy a man he bycame,
 That witnessith both lerned and lewede:
 The fame of him so ranne. (1483–90)*

All the interesting details of his life have been recounted and the rest of his existence is dismissed in a few lines. Instead of being incorporated into Christian society and playing a major role aiding the French endeavour Ferumbras is consigned to the periphery. Moreover, like many historical converts it is implied that he became a holy man rather than marrying a Christian lady and having a family. There is considerable evidence which documents how converts were never treated as equal to other Christians and that they were prevented from forming familial and conjugal relationships within European Christian society leaving them with little option but to join the Church. Conversion of Jewish or Muslim men frequently resulted in “gender trouble”: instead of providing a means of escaping their feminised position and gaining masculine qualities, conversion renders them more ambiguous.¹⁸ Most of the references to Ferumbras in the following lines are allusions to how Laban thinks that he has been captured, a circumstance of which Floripas takes full advantage. That is until line 2983 when Ganleyne’s treachery has left Charles in great danger in the city. Ferumbras now has to rescue the French king from the Saracen hoards. When the French victory is complete the kingdom of Spain is not left in Ferumbras’ hands, whose it was by rights of lineage, but is divided between him and Gy (3195–8). Furthermore, Charles carries off all the treasure he has acquired and plundered to Paris.

The performance of femininity in the poem is just as complicated as that of masculinity. The only women mentioned are Saracen in origin and this causes tremendous difficulties. Jacqueline de Weever describes how in Old French romances and *chansons de geste* written in the period 1150–1300 seventeen of the twenty-one Muslim princesses are portrayed as white French heroines and that all seventeen of them betray their fathers and countries, and marry a French knight.¹⁹ Foreign women are dangerous, so their identity must be erased in order to incorporate them into the framework of the test. Hence Saracen women are presented generally as

white, while black Saracen women are usually seen as monstrous and violent. We can assume that Floripas is white as she offers Roland one her maidens, a lady as white as a swan (2749). This is the second time she has offered the Peers pleasure with her damsels (see lines 2085–7). Roland declines as although these ladies resemble French beauties they are nevertheless heathens and it would be an unpardonable sin. Floripas' power over the French knights is based not on warrior or leadership skills, but on her carnality. We are always aware of her attractiveness and desirability. Initially, we learn that Floripas is fair (124) and we see her obeying her father as any good courtly lady should. Louise Mirrer describes how medieval courtesy books emphasised how upper-class females should be perfectly modest in both word and action and how even in the domestic setting they owed their husband complete obedience. The "powerful ranges of behaviour" were the preserve of men alone, who were supposed to protect the fairer sex.²⁰ Yet even at this stage Floripas' obedience is not wholehearted. Lukefere²¹ has asked Laban for her hand in marriage if he succeeds in capturing Charles and the Twelve Peers, and Laban acquiesces. Floripas responds:

*... "Sire, noon haste,
He hath note done as he hath saide.
I trowe he speketh these wordes in waste;
He wole make bute an easy brayde.
Whan he bryngith home Charles the Kinge
And the Twelfe Dosipers alle,
I graunte to be his derlynge
What so evere therof byfalle." (244–51)*

The last line of this speech is ominous as later on we learn that she has plans which involve one of the Twelve Peers. Floripas' power, like Dido and Camille's in the *Roman d'Eneas*, is based on her sexuality not on "political and military leadership".

Floripas is accomplished and has a girdle with magical powers, which she uses to protect the Twelve Peers from thirst and hunger when they are besieged in the tower (2303–6). Those who relied on a form of power outside the official power-scheme of society were accused of sorcery by the emperor and the church. Deviance from the norm led to accusations of magic; it was a way of demonising the other. Many different types of texts discussed magic and its many forms in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

and all of them denounced it. Later a few writers defended some forms as legitimate sources of knowledge but they failed to overcome the scholastic and patristic condemnation of it in all its manifestations. Magic was condemned by the scholars of all disciplines.²² It is on the borders of knowledge, influenced by the traditions and motifs of travel writing, an instance of strangeness. Strangeness is usually envisaged as perilous and contact with it is both undesirable and taboo. Floripas' knowledge of sorcery highlights the strange and marvellous nature of her homeland which poses such a threat to Christian Western Europe.

She is more, though, than a powerful physical presence with access to sorcery; she is a ferocious lady who stops at nothing to get her way. She tricks Laban into imprisoning the French knights and then surreptitiously she provides them with nourishment.²³ Maragounde, her governess, is dismayed at this blatant treachery and remonstrates with her. Floripas soon eliminates this impediment to her schemes:

*Floriþe bythought hir on a gyle
And cleped Maragaounde anoon right
To the wyndowe to come a while
And se ther a wonder syght:
"Loke oute," she saide, "and see aferre
The porpais pley as thay were wode."
Maragounde lokede oute; Floriþe come nere
And shofed hire oute into the flode.
"Go there," she said; "the devel the spede!
My consail shaltowe never biwray..." (1571–80)*

She still has the jailer to contend with and in due course she kills him by knocking out his brains. Having savagely murdered him she goes to her father and pretends that the jailer was false and that she was acting on Laban's behalf. Laban compiles with her request to supervise the prisoners herself. Although her behaviour is excused because she is aiding the Christians, it is still difficult to ignore the condemnations of her by Maragounde, the jailer and Laban who find her dishonesty, disobedience and deviousness totally abhorrent. Laban denounces her as the:

*... stronge hore, God gife the sorowe.
Thou venomous serpente....
That cursed bene of kynde. (2223–8)*

Laban's intense hatred of his daughter after she betrays him is emphasised in *The Sowdon of Babylon*.²⁴

Although Floripas violently removes obstacles to her plans and she and her maidens defend the tower in the skirmish between the Saracens and the Peers (2547-8), warrior women on the whole are envisaged as monstrous. The giantess Barrok resembles a figure of death with her scythe:

*And mewe adown as thikke as shepe in folde
That came byforne hir bydene.
This Barrok was a geaunesse,
And wife she was to Astragote.
She did the Cristen grete distresse;
She felled downe alle that she smote.
There durst no man hire sithe abyde;
She grenned like a develle of helle. (2941-8)*

King Charles silences her permanently with an arrow from a crossbow. Left uncontrolled dangerous females would disrupt the order of the universe. In accepting male roles they neglect motherhood and thus destroy mankind. The separate roles that nature has created for men and women must be maintained. If women do not accept their true functions in society it challenges divine order.²⁵ This is certainly true of Barrok as she leaves behind two seven-month-old sons. They die as they cannot survive without their mother's milk and there is nothing anyone can do to save them (3020-38).

The Sowdone of Babylone moves between Laban in his tower, the chambers of Floripas, the battlefield, the military camps of the French, the city of Rome and various cities under attack. The battlefield and the camps are constructed as masculine spaces in which knights can display their prowess. The scenes involving Rome and other cities are episodes of conflict where warriors can display their skills. Women are merely the passive victims of violence. Laban's tower is the site of luxury and great riches where one would expect a slightly effeminate non-Christian male to reside. We never see him taking part in battle. He simply orders his minions to carry out offensive and defensive manoeuvres. Once in the domestic chambers of Floripas it is clear that we are in a feminine space. The French knights are vulnerable. Roland, Oliver and Neymes beg Gy to concede to Floripas' request that he marry her as they recognise that they are in dire

straits and they cannot afford to antagonise her (1903-24). Thus the French knights are unmasked in Floripas' chambers where she is in the dominant position and their fear is revealed, an unmanly circumstance. Gy is temporarily emasculated by her love as he agrees to her desires. However, once she has gained his consent she grants him total mastery:

... *"My love and my lorde,
Myn herte, my body, my goode is thyn."* (1928-9)

She counsels Gy and his companions on the best time to attack Laban and provides them with armour. It is up to them, though, to win the castle through boldness (1940-50). She merely provides them with the means.

The section of the poem dominated by Floripas begins at line 1491 when Roland and Oliver are captured. When Mapyne steals her magic girdle she is dismayed as she no longer has any way of assisting the French knights. She despairs and is comforted by Roland and told not to be fearful (2355-90). We hear no more of Floripas until the concluding part of the narrative, where she greets her captured father.²⁶ The episodes which she orchestrates are framed by Ferumbras' combat with Oliver and the Twelve Peers' battles against Laban and his men. Thus her role in the poem is contained by the prowess of men. Similarly, at the end of the work she is silenced completely through marriage to Gy:

*Dame Florip was baptysed than
And her maydyns alle
And to Sire Gye i-maryed.* (3191-3)

After this she is alluded to as Gy's "wife"; she is no longer a free agent, a force with which to be reckoned. The kingdom of Spain is divided between her husband and her brother; she is not given any political or leadership role. Parallels to this situation can be found, for instance, in the *Roman d'Eneas* where the episodes involving Camille and Dido, and the potential perils they represent, "are carefully delimited, even bracketed off from the imperial narrative, which is the first sign of their containment".²⁷ Floripas' betrayal of her family, religion and country, together with her welcoming of Christianity justifies the Christian conquest. "The presumed 'right' of Christians to Muslim Spain, played out in the stereotype of the Muslim woman who invites, legitimates, and satisfies Christian desire."²⁸ Furthermore, the Saracen realm of Spain was generally depicted as female

awaiting the control of the conquering “virile” Christians. Knightly masculinity is typically proved through physical and verbal aggression, the silencing of others. Louise Mirrer notes how combats and military conflicts are often described using sexual metaphors and how “Muslim leaders are shamed through Christian appropriation of their daughters.... Christianity dramatically surfaces in the texts as the more ‘muscular’, ‘manly’, or potent faith.”²⁹ Laban is incapable of controlling his own daughter who tricks and betrays him, leaving him discharging invective against her. In contrast to this Gy and his companions receive her help and ultimately silence her and provide her with the acceptable and limited role of wife.

Despite worshipping a pantheon of gods (Jupiter 2254, Mahounde, Apolyne, Ascarot, Alcaron 2761–2 and Termagounte 2177) the Saracens receive absolutely nothing in the way of succour from divine sources. Laban and his people are reduced to moaning and complaining as the French trounce them. On one memorable occasion Laban is so annoyed that he wants to burn all the gods,³⁰ but his advisors and priests cajole him to relent and appease them (2477–54). The Saracen gods are impotent golden idols (678) who fail to honour the prayers of their followers and help them defeat the French. It is the God of the Christians who is powerful and capable of changing the tide of battle (911–8). Therefore the Christian God is a masculine divinity who can protect his followers as men were supposed to protect their womenfolk, while the Saracen gods are ineffectual and feminine, incapable of defending their followers.

Inspired by her love for Gy Floripas recognises the truth of Christianity and wishes to convert unlike Laban (1881–1902). She leads her maidens down this route and they are baptised along with her at the end of the poem. Saracen and Jewish women are often presented as less obdurate and more inclined to recognise the veracity of Christianity, a reversal of the way the Church fathers reveal the truths of Christian faith.³¹ This contrasts with the attitude of her father, who refuses to the bitter end to perceive the fundamental truths of Christianity. Charles orders the captured Sowdon to be baptised, but Laban foils his endeavours:

*He smote the bisshope with a bronde
And gaf him an evel bronte.
He spitted in the water clere
And cryed oute on hem alle
And defied alle that Criten were. (3165–9)*

He calls upon Mahounde and Sathan to destroy them all including his own son and daughter. He is then executed for his intransigence.

The celebration of the Christian religion is led by the Pope, God's representative on earth. He absolves all the men who fight to defend Rome against the Saracen hoards (477). The Pope represents a different form of masculinity to that of the knights. He is a spiritual warrior, a wise man and not capable of knightly prowess. It is not his place to fight as we learnt earlier in Ferumbras' remonstrance with him. For his part the Pope was only too happy to leave the field of battle and return to Rome. However, it is he, a man, who reveals the truths of Christianity to his flock and is the spiritual leader of his people.

One can deduce from this discussion that individual identity was the site of cultural anxieties in medieval society. As a result the constructions of masculinity and femininity were continually renegotiated. They were affected by chivalry, religion, racial differences, physicality and social expectations. Configurations of masculinity and femininity pervaded every aspect of society, acting as prisms through which space, violence, emotions, behaviour and power were perceived. Women and men from other ethnic groups were considered to be perilous by the dominant male coterie and distinctions between them were blurred. Thus "other" men were either feminised or constructed as monsters, and dangerous (foreign) women's identities were either erased or configured as masculine and disruptive to divine order. This conflict in the representation of gender and what it meant to be male or female was never satisfactorily resolved. Ultimately, females and "other" men presented a threat to dominant males (Christian knights and priests), which could never be eliminated and could at best be contained, highlighting the insecurities present in the identities of the dominant male groupings.

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Notes

- ¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York 1990, p. 148.
- ² Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler, *Becoming and Unbecoming. Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler. New York and London 1997, p. xi.
- ³ Cohen and Wheeler 1997, p. xiii.
- ⁴ Michael Uebel, *On Becoming-Male. Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler. New York and London 1997, p. 371.
- ⁵ Uebel 1997, p. 378.
- ⁶ Stephen Frederick Lappert, *The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babylone: A Critical Edition*. University of Pennsylvania Unpublished PhD. Thesis 1975, pp. 10–14, 19. See further Gaston Paris, *Review of Über Sprache und Quellen des mittellenglischen Heldengedichts vom Sowdon of Babylon*. *Romania* 10/ 1879, p. 479.
- ⁷ Margaret J. Ailes, *A Comparative Study of the Medieval French and Middle English Texts of the Fierbras Legend*. Reading University Unpublished PhD. Thesis 1989, pp. 645, 672. See further H.M. Smyser, *The Sowdon of Babylon and its Author*. *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 13/ 1931, pp. 217–218; H. M. Smyser, *Studies in the English Charlemagne Romances*. Harvard University Unpublished PhD. Thesis 1931, p. 67; Lappert 1975, pp. 17–18; and Emil Hausknecht, *Zur Fierbras Dichtung in England*. *Anglia* 7/1884, pp. 160–164. Louis Brandin, *Le Manuscrit de Hanovre de la Destruction de Rome et Fierbras*. *Romania* 28/1899, pp. 489–507 and G. Gröber, *Review of Über Sprache und Quellen des mittellenglischen Heldengedichts vom Sowdon of Babylon by Emil Hausknecht*. *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 4/1873, pp. 1–48 discuss manuscripts of the *Destruction of Rome*. Joseph Bédier, *La Composition de la Chanson de Fierbras*. *Romania*, 17/1888, pp. 22–51 and André de Mandach, *Naissance et Développement de la Chanson de geste en Europe V: La Geste de Fierbras, Le Jeu du Réel et l'Invraisemblable*. Genève 1987, *passim* look at sources of the Ferumbras story; H. Ritter, *Review of Jean Bagnyon le Premier des Littératures Laudois*. *Romania* 12/1881, p. 634 considers its popularity and Ailes 1989, *passim* considers the development of the English and French romances of the tale, providing a critique of theories proposed by earlier scholars (270–350 focus on the *Sowdone of Babylone*).
- ⁸ Ailes 1989, pp. 287, 447, 708–709.
- ⁹ Ailes 1989, p. 790.
- ¹⁰ Lappert 1975, p. 22 notes that there are more than twenty manuscripts in seven different languages containing this story, including three English verse redactions (*The Sowdone of Babylone*, *Sir Ferumbras* and *Firumbras*, the latter two close to the French Vulgate version), Caxton's prose text, and three extant and one lost Anglo-Norman recensions.
- ¹¹ G.A. Knott, *The Historical Sources of 'Fierabras'*. *Modern Language Review* 52/1957, p. 509 concludes that "there is too much pure invention in *Fierabras*; and its date of composition is too far removed from the historical events from which it derives, for any semblance of historical accuracy to be preserved." One can infer from this that the narrative was valued for something other than its historical content.
- ¹² Andrew Taylor, *Chivalric Conversation and the Denial of Male Fear. Conflicted Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West*, ed. Jacqueline Murray. New York and London 1999, p. 174.
- ¹³ Rachel Dressler, *Steel Corpse: Imaging the Knight in Death. Conflicted Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West*, ed. Jacqueline Murray. New York and London 1999, p. 135
- ¹⁴ See Dressler 1999, pp. 152–153.
- ¹⁵ Louise Mirrer, *Women, Jews, and Muslims in the Texts of Reconquest Castile*. Ann Arbor 1996, p. 80.
- ¹⁶ Ailes 1989, p. 694 notes how the other recensions of the story describe how Ferumbras kills the monk who shows him where the relics are, an incident which is omitted in this poem.

¹⁷ Steven F. Kruger, Conversion and Medieval Sexual, Religious, and Racial Categories. *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, eds. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken and James A. Schultz. Minneapolis 1997, pp. 164–165.

¹⁸ Kruger 1997, p. 28. See in addition Allan Harris Cutler and Helen Elmquist Cutler, *The Jew as Ally of the Muslim: Medieval Roots of Anti-Semitism*. Notre Dame, Indiana 1986, pp. 183–248 on how Muslims and Jews are not assimilated after into society conversion to Christianity.

¹⁹ Jacqueline de Weever, *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Women in Medieval French Epic*. New York and London 1998, p. 5. See in addition F.M. Warren, The Enamoured Moslem Princess in Oderic Vital and the French Epic. *PMLA* 29/ 1914, pp. 341–358.

²⁰ Mirrer 1996, p. 84

²¹ Gerald Herman, Some Functions of Saracen Names in Old French Epic. *Romance Notes* 11/1969, pp. 429–430 notes how certain “biblico-classical” names noted for their “universal disreputability” were attributed to Muslims in order to inspire revulsion of these characters in the minds of the readers/ listeners. This is certainly true of “Lukeferre”.

²² Edward Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law*. Pennsylvania 1975, p. 117. See in addition Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt*. Brighton 1975, passim.

²³ Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*. New York and London 1977, p. 161 and M. Bancourt, *Les Musulmans dans les Chansons de Geste du Cycle du Roi, Vol. II*. Aix de Provenance 1982, pp. 691–727 provide detailed accounts of the conventional liberation of captive Christian knights by Muslim princesses. Ailes 1989, pp. 466–739 discusses how there is more emphasis on the emotions and motivation of Saracen characters in *The Sowdone of Babylone* than in corresponding French texts.

²⁴ Ailes 1989, p. 679.

²⁵ See Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam*. Chicago and London 1993.

²⁶ Ailes 1989, p. 707 describes how in the other versions of the story at this point Floripas rails against her father and urges the French to execute him. However, in the *Sowdone of Babylone* she has been contained and effectively silenced by the flowers of French chivalric masculinity.

²⁷ Christopher Baswell, Men in the *Roman d'Eneas*: The Construction of Empire. *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees. Minneapolis 1994, p. 149.

²⁸ Mirrer 1996, p. 53.

²⁹ Louise Mirrer, Representing ‘Other’ Men: Muslims, Jews, and Masculine Ideals in Medieval Castilian Epic and Ballad. *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees. Minneapolis 1994, p. 172.

³⁰ Lappert 1975, p. 423 points out that Laban's desire to burn his gods is unique to the *Sowdon of Babylon*.

³¹ See further Steven F. Kruger, Becoming Christian, becoming Male? *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler. New York and London 1997, pp. 25–26.