

Patterns in the Presentation of Discourse in the *Charroi de Nîmes*

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The sobriety, not to say dreariness, of my title reflects the tedious attention which I am wont to accord to minutiae, but I trust you expect me to find some dazzling little gem therein, and I hope not to disappoint you. I will not claim to have known in advance that fastidious examination of any particular detail would lead to the discovery of beauties, but it is the case that the longer I work on the *Charroi* the more I find truly remarkable finesse in seemingly banal details.¹ Verses in which the narrator presents a character's speech are a case in point.

It must be over twenty years ago that I began paying attention to such verses, without any clear notion of where they might lead. It was simply that, speech being a rather banal and frequent component of narrative, I had encountered a large number of occurrences of various types and found in them food for thought. Following a fairly straightforward line of analysis, for example, we can recognize degrees of amplification. The zero degree of realization, that is direct quotation without any verb of speech introducing it, tends to correspond to an acceleration or intensification of the narrative such as the heating up of an argument. The more or less base form uses the verb *dire* in the third person, present or preterit, or, at a slightly greater degree of information, the verb *respondre*.

¹ Integral to the presentation of this paper was the projection of various displays from the computer screen. The conversion to print has required eliminating much of the variety of display, but I have not tried to take out the chatty tone which I used to cover up the clumsiness inevitable when one is trying to keep one eye on the written text, another on the audience, a third on the keyboard, and a fourth on the screen at the front of the room.

Other verbs of speech carry further semantic weight whether relevant or not to the narrative, and they are considerably less frequent.²

In the base degree of realization, the verb occurs in the first hemistich along with the subject, which can range in importance from verbal flexion to pronoun to noun. When this last is the case, the presentation of speech usually fills the entire hemistich. Since hemistich, verse, and *laisse* act as something of a set of reference points for measuring out the importance of elements of the story, the status of a full hemistich confers weight, so to speak, to any given element.

Being two syllables longer than a first hemistich, a second hemistich filled by a discourse presentation represents a slight amplification over the base degree of realization.

There is little need to pursue the point. The first set of examples illustrates increasing degrees of importance, a range of narrative rhythms affecting the speed of the narrative. In line 1064, responding to the question in line 1063, the zero degree of realization is the most compact; line 703 is the base type, with a slightly heavier version in line 428, where the subject of the verb is a noun occupying two full syllables as well as a posttonic one; the second-hemistich version in line 376 is a slightly amplified variety; and line 725 amplifies the detail to a full verse:

Si li demandent	quel avoir fetes treere	1063
Nos syglatons	et dras porpres et pailles	1064
Sire dist il	molt es buen chevalier	703
Et dit Guillelmes	sire Bertran beaus niés	428
Granz merciz sire	diënt li chevalier	376
Molt belement	le prist a aresnier	725

The effects in these different degrees of importance derive from allusion to the tradition, that is to say, from reference to the many occur-

² In “Fréquence lexicale et rythmes du vers épiques” I made a first attempt at pulling together some of the threads of the analysis which I had pursued in previous studies. In this regard, see also Whitehead (“La poésie épique”) and Zumthor (“Le vers comme unité d’expression”).

rences of speech presentation in many *chansons de geste*. It may well be that no other narrative detail is such a narrative constant, but that is another issue.

I had more or less pushed the question of presentation of speech not just to a back burner but completely off the stove when, working (“playing” would perhaps be a more accurate choice of word) on questions of lexical frequency (again, without any clearly defined purpose), I began collecting verbs of speech in my textbase of the three poems in the kernel William cycle: the *Couronnement de Louis*, the *Charroi de Nîmes*, and the *Prise d’Orange*. I began with a paper to the American-Canadian branch of the Société Rencesvals in which I collected a set of verbs of speech (“Mapping Echoes”). Two subsequent papers examined questions of frequency (“Fréquence et disponibilité lexicales” and “Whitehead’s ‘Elementary Old French’”).

When I submitted the abstract for this paper, I had in mind a small number of patterns which had been showing up in a different vein as I was working my way systematically through the *Charroi* in search of recurrent phrasing. The type *Looïs sire dist Guillelmes li... + adjective* runs through the first episode largely as the opening verse of a *laisse* in which William utters a reproach of one sort or another. The hemistich *Et dist Guillelmes* seems to concentrate in another scene. I will eventually come to the first of these patterns, but a funny thing happened on my way to this forum.

I have been working with the textbase of these three poems for a number of years, and, in addition to accumulating a rather depressing list of the typos I had found in it, I was also accumulating thoughts on ways in which it could be better organized. In the spring of 2001, I took advantage of the time a sabbatical provides, and I overhauled the textbase. One of the improvements I have been undertaking is a systematization of the indexing. Not wanting to put you to sleep just yet, I pass quickly over an endless string of tedious technical details and restrict myself to one aspect of this tidying up.

The program, the *UseBase* component of *Tact*,³ provides a query language for specifying search criteria, and it provides a mechanism for recording both the results (called an AGroup@ in the program) and the criteria of the search (the Query). Linking group to query is such a useful way of indexing the information I find in the textbase that I have taken to referring to the pairing as GQs (groups-queries) as a way of indicating the fundamental relation between these two functions of the program. Again, I refrain from a good deal of tedious explanation, but I have put in the Appendix those GQs which I use in this paper.

I have been working at rationalizing the names of GQs and the kinds of queries. An example (the significance of which I do not claim to grasp) is the set of sixteen second hemistichs in which one character accuses another of talking like a fool (see Appendix, "2"parler•folie). The display of all sixteen shows that there are a number of phrases which recur word for word, the most used being the five occurrences of *de neant* ("2•v"parler•d•nea). Others, like "2•d•folie"parlez, occur only twice, and one of those occurrences is in the *Couronnement*. The set of all sixteen, as we could have guessed, shows that most are in the *Prise* (3 in *CL*, 1 in *CN*), where the detail is something of a leit motiv.

"2"parler•folie

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CL XXXII 1405	Respont li quens ☞ de folie >parlez De traïson ☞ ne fui
CL XLII 1806	Voir dist Aliaumes ☞ vos >parlez en pardon Il nel
CL LVIII 2424	Respont li quens ☞ vos >parlez folement Quant Looÿs
CN XL 998	Et dist Bertran ☞ por neant en >parlez Ge ne sai tant ☞ ne
PO XIX 591	Dist Arragon ☞ de folie >parlez Or manderaï ☞ en
PO XXIX 910	Oncle Guillelmes ☞ vos >parlez de neant Par amistiez
PO XXXIII 1033	Oncle Guillelmes ☞ vos >parlez en pardon Que par
PO XXXIV 1057	Oncle Guillelmes ☞ vos >parlez de folaige Que par

³ Developed at the University of Toronto by John Bradley with the assistance of Lidio Presutti and Michael Stairs under the direction of Ian Lancashire (see Lancashire et al, *Using TACT with Electronic Texts*).

PO XXXV 1083	Et dist Guillelmes vos >parlez de neant Assez avrons
PO XLIII 1337	Oncle Guillelmes vos >parlez de neant Mandez
PO XLVII 1417	Si m'aïst Dex vos >parlés de granz beffes Que
PO XLVIII 1426	Oncle Guillelmes vos >parlez de neant Ne vos
PO LIV 1553	putage Dist Guélin vos >parlez par folage Vos et mes
PO LIX 1763	Dist Gilebert vos >parlez de folie Qu'ele ne
PO LX 1770	Dist Gilebert vos >parlez de neant Ne la
PO LX 1790	Dist Gileberz vos >parlez folement Ge nel

Two observations. First, I would like to point out the play of variation against a base form (in this case the five occurrences of *de neant*), a matter of the musicality of language. This point is one of the funny things that have distracted me from my original purpose. Second, this particular motif is important in the *Prise*: do the occurrences in the other two poems derive from an assembler's desire to emphasize the unity of the three poems? No answer is possible without examination of many other poems for similar hemistichs, but the question arises, along with an accompanying doubt whether it is worth checking up on.⁴

Now, the point on which I am working rises out of two patterns (one of which I have mentioned) that I noticed while working my way through the *Charroi* before I began overhauling the textbase. The first appears thirteen times, eleven of them in the first verse of a *laisse*:

Sire Guillelmes	dist Looÿs le ber	/I/, 73
Sire Guillelmes	dist li rois Looÿs	IV/, 106
Sire Guillelmes	dit Looÿs le ber	XI/, 278
Sire Guillelmes	dist Looÿs li frans	XII/, 294
Sire Guillelmes	dit Looÿs li prouz	XIII/, 300
Sire Guillelmes	Looÿs li respont	305
Sire Guillelmes	dit li rois Looÿs	XIV/, 315
Sire Guillelmes	dit Looÿs le fier	XV/, 328

⁴ The skewing of this set of statistics brings us back to Milman Parry's exclusion from his count of repeated hemistichs those repetitions which are made for effect ("Studies in the Epic Technique," pp. 80-83).

Sire Guillelmes	dist Looÿs oiez	380
Sire Guillelmes	dit Looÿs le ber	XVI/, 404
Sire Guillelmes	dit li rois entendez	XXII/, 512
Sire Guillelmes	dist li rois frans guerriers	XXIII/, 538
Sire Guillelmes	dist Looÿs li frans	XXIV/, 580

The second occurs eight times, five of them in *laisse*-initial position:

Looÿs frere	dit Guillelmes le ber	/I/, 64
Looÿs sire	dit Guillelmes li fers	III/, 94
Looÿs sire	dist Guillelmes le ber	/V/, 133
Looÿs rois	dit Guillelmes li sages	VI/, 153
Looÿs sire	dit Guillelmes li prouz	VII/, 182
Looÿs sire	Guillelme a respondu	IX/, 256
Looÿs sire	dit Guillelmes le fort	XIX/, 490
Looÿs sire	dit Guillelmes le fier	/XXVI/, 753

Clearly, these two sets are markers in the long dialogue which covers most of the first episode of the poem. The pattern is quite striking:

Vocative in the first hemistich, comprising two base forms (*Sire Guillelmes*, *Looÿs sire*) and two minor variations (*frere* and *rois* substituted for *sire*) to one of them;

in the second hemistich the verb *dire* in initial position, the the speaker in middle position, and an apposition in final position.⁵

⁵ As befits the second hemistich, there is a fair range of variations, the most important of which is the occurrence of *respondre* once in each set entailing a change in word order.

Nine of the thirteen occurrences of the first set introduce or lead to the offer of a fief or the recognition that Louis is unable to come up with a satisfactory offer: I, XIII (305), XIV, XV (both occurrences), XVI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV.

The occurrences in XII and XIII (300) echo each other and launch the series of offers in XIII-XV. In IV and XI Louis is maintaining, against the obvious, that William's claims are unjustified. Here, too, we have a base type with variations playing around it: these verses introduce an offer of a fief or a rejection of the necessity of offering one.

In the second set, the occurrence in *laisse* V opens William's narration of a first service he has performed for the king, that of VI opens the second service, and that of VII opens the fourth service. (The third service takes a variant form.) *Laisse* IX sums up the services as an ensemble, and the occurrence in *laisse* I introduces a comparison between the military services which William *has* rendered and *effete* ones which he *has not* rendered. Five of the eight introduce a service.

In *laisse* III, William evokes a compensation offered by Gaifier de Police, and XIX is the first of three parallel *laises* in which he waxes lyrical about the fiefs in Spain for which he has asked. Two occurrences are associated with the counterpart of service, that is to say, recompense.

In *laisse* XXVI, the only other occurrence in the set, 753 occurs after William has punished wicked old Aymon; he turns toward Louis and reminds him not to listen to *losengiers* and returns once more to his intention of conquering new lands in the name of the king, something of a compensation and service rolled into one. I concede that I am forcing the point somewhat here, but it does seem like one last reminder of the rather important theme of service and compensation.

In other words, these seemingly banal presentations of speech appear to be part of a poetic pattern in the story and are not just marking the two speakers in an argument. They mark the two themes which the two speakers develop: Louis stumbles through one misguided offer after another, and William reproaches him his failure to reward faithful service.

Since first noticing these two sets, I have encountered other possible sets as well (such as *Et dist Guillelmes*), but time ran out before I arrived here in front of you. For having the textbase raised the possibility of sub-

jecting this hypothesis to something of a control, seeing what other formulations of speech presentation occur when William and Louis open their mouths. The other patterns still await examination, and I have had time only for William.

First of all, I collected the mentions of William—not all, but those in which a noun designates him, leaving aside pronouns and verb endings: the name *Guillelme*, the nickname *Fierebrace*, and the noun *cuens*. (I thought of *marchis* somewhat later, but, seeing that none of the 27 occurrences occurs in conjunction with a verb of speech, I have left them out for the time being.⁶) Of course, a good many of the 702 occurrences (°r•guillaume) are redundant, occurring in phrases like *li cuens Guillelmes* or *Guillelme Fierebrace*. Consequently I created a second GQ to restrict hits to the main word in such phrases (°r•guillaume°), hitting 593 occurrences. I then gritted my teeth and sorted out the 429 occurrences (including one typo which I have still not eliminated!) in which the noun is subject of a verb (°r•guillaume°suj), after which I was home free.

Well, not quite. Looking for verbs of speech in the same verse as William used as subject produces double hits in lines like *Respont li quens si com vos commande* (CL 1395). Still, it took just a little work to arrive at the 151 occurrences in the three poems of William's opening his mouth to speak (°guill•parle). (You may be getting an inkling by now of why I have not had time to track down the occurrences of speech presentation for Louis.)

Looking at those occurrences in the order in which they appear in the texts, we will skip over the *Couronnement* (at the beginning of which a series of *dit / dist* and *respont* show the story line unfolding) and limit ourselves to the *Charroi* (52 occurrences). Various things show up as we scroll through: a preponderance of *dit, dist*, and forms of *respondre*; a

⁶ Not quite. Checking once again in the week before the conference, I found that in CL 1650 *Li quens Guillelmes au cort nes li marchis* is subject of the verb *apeler* in 1651, an amplification of speech presentation to two verses. There is another round of checking, very probably rather tedious, to be performed for speech presentations amplified to greater than a single verse.

fair number of instances in which *Guillelmes* follows *dit* or *dist*; and, most important for the question at hand, even the blur of shapes on the screen shows you that there are a variety of formulations in which the narrator presents William's speech.⁷ In other words, the set of eight verses (five of them in initial position of the *laisse*) that I brought to your attention stand in opposition to various other formulations of the narrative detail. The association which I suggested between the theme of service-recompense and this formulation does seem to hold.

Restricting ourselves to the 22 occurrences in the second hemistich (°guill•parle•2), we see a little less clutter and a bit more order.

°guill•parle•2; when pm cn
September 30, 2001.

CN I 60	quar seez Non ferai sire ☞ >dit Guillelmes le ber Mes un
CN I 64	serez escoutez Looÿs frere ☞ >dit Guillelmes le ber Ne
CN III 94	ne me demente Looÿs sire ☞ >dit Guillelmes li fers Ne me
CN V 115	je honiz Gentill mesniee ☞ >dit Guillelmes le ber
CN V 133	li estor chanpel Looÿs sire ☞ >dist Guillelmes le ber Dont
CN VI 153	conquesté Looÿs rois ☞ >dit Guillelmes li sages
CN VII 182	voz terres Looÿs sire ☞ >dit Guillelmes li prouz Dont
CN XIII 311	ferai sire ☞ Guillelmes li >respont Del gentil conte
CN XIV 322	Non ferai sire ☞ Guillelmes >respondi Del gentil conte
CN XV 396	Non feré sire ☞ Guillelmes >respondié Ge nel feroie
CN XVIII 448	porpensé Quiex seroit il ☞ >dit Guillelmes le ber Et dit
CN XVIII 467	quar seez Non ferai sire ☞ >dit li quens naturez Mes un
CN XIX 490	un ris gité Looÿs sire ☞ >dit Guillelmes le fort Por
CN XXII 531	porter Non ferai sire ☞ >dit Guillelmes le ber Que ja

⁷ Here I ask the reader's indulgence and imagination, for the blur of lines scrolling up or down on the screen actually conveys information. Closely occurring similar phrases like lines 133, 153, and 182 printed here stand out, looking like columns separated by blank spaces.

CN XXIII 543	Non ferai sire ☞ Guillelmes >respondié Ge nel feroie
CN XXIV 593	conmant Granz merciz sire ☞ >dit li quens ore entent Li
CN XXVI 705	denier Qui dit ce donques ☞ >dit Guillelmes le fier Sire
CN XXVI 729	merciz sire ☞ Guillelmes >respondié Ge ai assez
CN XXVI 753	mes un denier Looÿs sire ☞ >dit Guillelmes le fier Ne
CN XXXIV 902	Guillelmes ☞ li conmença a >dire Diva vilain ☞ par la
CN XLVII 1176	de ses homes ☞ a li quens >apelé Est va encore ☞ toz
CN LVIII 1457	Li quens Guillelmes ☞ s'>escria a esfort .c. dahez

There are indeed other patterns in this set, some of which I believe I have managed to situate and others not yet, but time has not allowed me to put together an adequate presentation of them. Still, I have shown you today two more little gems in what is becoming quite a large set of little, seemingly insignificant details in a pattern of remarkably intricate composition. The set of thirteen discourse presentations does indeed seem to mark the beginning of passages in which Louis makes an offer to William, and that of eight, passages in which William reproaches him the lack of recompense for loyal service. The *Charroi* is a masterpiece.

**Appendix: GQs Used in this Paper
(Organized into Hierarchies)**

Items prefixed with @ refer to groups, as opposed to word forms which occur in the text. The remarks enclosed in asterisked parentheses indicate in very abbreviated form the span within which co-occurrences must occur: (*0 h*) means within the same hemistich, (*-2 +1*) means within the two preceding words and the one following word. The various dots and codes would require of my reader more patience than I have a right to ask. I have, however, posted a relatively brief explanation at:

<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~heineman/chdg/uses.htm>.

“2”parler·folie: @parler & (@°d·fol, beffes, pardon, neant) (*0 h*)

parler: parl.*, parolent

°d·fol: fol, folement, @ °ds·folie

°ds·folie: folie, @folage, @foletez, foloiment

folage: folai*ge

foletez: foletez*

“2·v”parlez·d·nea: vos | >parlez | de | neant

“2·d·folie”parlez: de | folie | >parlez

°r·guillaume: @guillaume, @cuens·guillelmes, fierebrace

guillaume: guillaume, guillelmes*, giuillelmes

cuens·guillelmes: @cuens·l -(@cuens·aymeri, @cuens·bertran,
@cuens·autres)

cuens·l: @cuens·f, @conte·comte

cuens·f: [cq]uens

conte·comte: conte -@conte·account

conte·account: ne | sai | >conte | (noncier, tenir)

cuens·aymeri: @cuens·l | @aymeri, le | gentil | >conte

aymeri: aymeris*

cuens·bertran: @cuens·l | @bertran, bertran | le | >conte, cele
| tonne | que | li | >quens | dut | mener, (cuens; when pm po;
when v 1663)

bertran: bertrans*

cuens·autres: @cuens·l | (foucon, gillebert), (del | >gentil, li,
xiii) | >conte, ne | li | >cuens | del | troton, ne | >cuens, un |
>conte, morz | est | li | >quens, le | >conte | a | guillelme | apaïé

°r-guillaume: @cuens·guillelmes ~ (fierebrace, @guillaume), fierebrace
~ @guillaume, @guillaume (*-2 +1*)

°r-guillaume·suj: @ r-guillaume - (conte, guillaume, guillelm., (conte,
la) | >fierebrace, (he | >gentix, merci | >frans) | >quens,
@°r-guillaume·voc, @°r-guillaume·pred

°r-guillaume·pred: (((ai | >ge, j | >ai) | >non), ge | >sui, m | >ape-
lent) | >guillelmes, tu | >guillelmes | iés, es | tu ||| >guillelmes

°r-guillaume·voc: (oncles*, ahi, diva, merci, par | >dieu, bertran) |
>guillelmes, @°1·sire·guillaume, guillelmes | quar | seez, es | tu |
lassus | >guillelmes

°1·sire·guillaume sire | >@guillaume; when h 1

°°guill·parle·2: @°°guill·parle; when h 2

°°guill·parle: @°°vb·discours - (@commander, @demander, dis,
dites, parlez) & @°r-guillaume·suj - (sai | ge | bien | >dire, avrai |
>dit, qui | >dit | ce) (*0 v*)

°°vb·discours: @apeler, @araisnier, @commander, @demander,
@dire, @escrier, @huchier, @noncier, @parler, @respondre,
semoing, sermona, @°2·metre·a·reson, @faire·discours

apeler: apel.*

araisnier: araisoné, areson.*, aresn.*

commander: @comant·commander, @comment·commander,
co[mn]m*and.* -commandement

comant·commander: en | li | >comant, te | >commant

comment·commander: a | maufê | le | >comment
 demander: demand.*, demant
 dire: @di·dire, die, dïent, dies, dir.*, di[sz], disant, disoit,
 dist, dit[es]*
 di·dire: di -@di·jour
 di·jour: le | tierz | >di
 escrier: escri[aei].*
 huchier: hui*chier
 noncier: noncier*
 parler: parl.*, parolent
 répondre: respon.*
 2·metre·a·reson: reson & @metre (*0 h*)
 metre: met.*, mis[es]*, mist, meis
 faire·discours: (fet, fait) | (il, l[ei] | cortois | portier, aymes | le
 | viell)

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