

Abstracts of Selected Papers

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Russell K. Bowman
Arizona State University:

The Image of the Knight in Didactic French Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries

The institution of chivalry as found in French literature has long been a subject of research, with the result that varying images of knights have been drawn. The epic image generally involves a noble knight who fights for God and his king or feudal lord; the knights of the romances of chivalry appeared as paragons of courtly virtues; and those portrayed by chroniclers maintained high levels of knightly virtues. The portrayal of the knight in didactic literature, however, has attracted little attention. I shall therefore cover nearly a century and a quarter in this genre—thirty-six works and titles in all—to show to what degree the decline of chivalry appears to have more extensive, and earlier, roots than previously believed.

Maureen Fries
SUNY at Fredonia:

Marriage In the Middle English Romance (Revised Abstract)

The popular Middle English romance, as opposed to the courtly, offers an interesting and detailed treatment of marriage. Males, as they did in life, largely arrange marriages for their own convenience, offering daughters and other females as incentives to prowess, to placate an enemy, to seal a peace. Often the woman does not object (*Melusine*, *Richard Coeur de Lion*); but in native English romances especially *she is* liable to object violently (*King Horn*, *Beves of Hampton*), usually because she is engaged in a previously contracted secret trothplight (which the Church recognized as binding until 1563). Secret trothplight became a morally acceptable substitute for courtly love; thus, as opposed to her French original, *Belisaunt* (heroine of *Amis and Amiloun*) makes *Amis* plight his troth before encouraging him to have sexual intercourse with her.

Amis (and he is by no means alone) pleads the difference between his and *Belisaunt's* rank in his futile attempt to avoid committing himself. Such difference (known as "disparagement" legally) was frowned upon by English Law from the time of the Magna Charta. Disparagement figures prominently in *Havelok the Dane*, and is the entire theme of *Paris and Vienne* and *The Squyr of Low Degree*; but in no romance is the heroine of lower rank, since she has no means of improving her status by her own efforts. While romance's preference for secret trothplight evidences some criticism of arranged marriage's depersonalization of the female, both arranged marriage and marriage according to degree are almost universally accepted without criticism.

In romances of married life, chastity and obedience are stressed in wives to a degree unknown to their French models, Benoît de St. Maure took Penelope's chastity for granted, but it is praised effusively in English Troy romances. The Innocent Persecuted Wife is ubiquitous: in Le Bone Florence, Emaré, Sir Tryamour, The Erle of Toulous, Octavian Imperator (as in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale), accused falsely of adultery and banished, she endures, survives, is vindicated-but in no case by her husband's efforts. Such marital chastity produces supernatural effects, of which perhaps the most striking is that of Florence in The Kyng of Tars, chastely devout although she does not love her husband, who procures not only his conversion but the simultaneous turning of his complexion from black to white. As long as she remains technically chaste, the heroine may encourage another man (The Erle of Toulous, The Knight of Courtesy). In the latter romance, the expurgation of courtly love from its French source blunts its point: the lady's refusal to eat again once she has unintentionally eaten the heart of her lover is a passionate act hard to comprehend in a woman who had met the man only twice and refused him intercourse.

Allied with chastity is obedience, which figures prominently in the handful of Middle English romances glorifying masculine ideals of friendship. In Amis and Amiloun the wife accepts the murder of her children, in Athelston her husband's angry kick which causes miscarriage, in Sir Amadace the partition of herself and her child into two-all to satisfy previous covenants contracted with sworn brothers. Women who behave in such a properly submissive manner are praised; women who do not (such as Amiloun's wife, who objects to his murder of an innocent man in a falsified judicial combat) are excoriated (in Amis and Amiloun to a degree totally unprecedented in its French original).

The ideal of the chaste, obedient wife which emerges from the popular Middle English romance is one desirable largely for men. Like its treatment of arranged marriage and marriage out of degree, and its substitution of secret trothplight for courtly love affairs, it illustrates the didactic, uncourtly, even unromantic preoccupations of the popular Middle English writers.

Mireille Guillet-Rydell
California State University:

Variantes sur la quête nuptiale dans l'épopée et le roman français
du XII^e siècle et du début du XIII^e

La quête de l'épouse, l'un des traits constants de toute littérature, s'affirme d'une manière très nette et avec des divergences notoires dans les épopées et romans français de la fin du douzième siècle.

Une sélection s'impose. Afin d'illustrer le thème dans ses caractéristiques les plus saillantes, nous avons donc choisi trois épopées (Aiol, Aimery de Narbonne, La Prise d'Orange) et trois romans (Glignois, Partonopeus de Blois, Yvain).

Dans l'épopée, le héros fortement déterminé, part à la recherche de l'épouse et obtient sa main après avoir surmonté d'innombrables obstacles forcés. Néanmoins ses activités amoureuses sont subordonnées à ses activités patriotiques et religieuses. Quant à la réaction des héroïnes, elle diffère sensiblement suivant les épopées.

Dans le roman courtois, l'attitude des jeunes gens envers une telle poursuite change radicalement. Sous l'effet de plusieurs influences (Croisades, Eléanore d'Aquitaine, Cours d'amour), la femme acquiert dans la société une importance de plus en plus considérable. C'est elle qui dorénavant domine la quête en imposant au chevalier multiples épreuves avant de daigner l'accepter pour époux. Dieu et la patrie passent au second rang et le soupirant est totalement soumis aux volontés de sa "Dompna."

Par conséquent la quête nuptiale, thème littéraire fondamental, contribue, grâce à ses variantes, à faire ressortir, du point de vue narratif et psychologique, un bouleversement intéressant de certaines valeurs dans la société et la littérature de cette époque.

Constance B. Heatt

University of Western Ontario:

Karlamagnús saga and the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle

The Old Norse saga "King Agulandus," which is Part IV of the Karlamagnús saga, is based on two sources. One of these is the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle (PT). There are two distinct versions, A and B; while it is evident that B is a fundamental re-working of A, determining the precise relationship of B to A is complicated by difficulties in identifying the exact sources of PT material. All recent scholarship on the subject has identified the version of PT on which the saga was originally based as belonging to the "C" group of "longer" PT mss., although it has been admitted that considerable contamination must have entered in at various stages.

The theory that the saga derives from such a "C" text is attractive because of the special connection of that group with England, whence, apparently, the sources of most parts of the saga derive: but there is no trace in the saga of the earmarks of later English PT versions. In fact, detailed comparison of the saga text(s) with the identifiable characteristics of the "C" group now make it look very dubious that this belief has any foundation at all. It must be concluded that the saga derives from a hybrid version of PT remarkably close to that of Codex Calixtinus—perhaps because that is just such a hybrid text. No more precise identification of the source is possible in the present state of Pseudo-Turpin scholarship.

James R. Nichols

Rice University:

An Introduction to the Comic Perspective in the
Old French Guillaume Cycle
(Paper not, presented)

The Old French Epic has traditionally been seen, and rightly so, as a genre typified by the heroic and grandiose. However, other modalities of creation and expression exist within the overall framework; specifically, the comic. In some of the chansons de geste centered around Guillaume d'Orange the comic vein is not only highly successful, but also highly functional in serving as a foil to the more heroic aspects. It, therefore, seems interesting and worthwhile to attempt to pin down some of the humor exhibited in the Guillaume

cycle and to try to determine how it functions within the Epic. Many of the main characters, including Guillaume himself, are not only heroes, but also astute clowns. In my paper I propose to have a closer look at this less investigated side of one of the greatest medieval achievements, the Epic.

Angela Nuccitelli
Purdue University:

Structural Devices: The Question of Analogues

The purpose of this study is to analyse two late-eleventh century works, the Song of Roland and the Bayeux Tapestry, by means of a structural device (that is, a scheme by which the parts of the two narratives may have been constructed). In analysing this device, we will see if it has an analogous function in the two works in question.

This approach of using "structural analogues" contains several methodological problems, such as the definition of terms and their application from one discipline (such as literature) to another (such as art). In our analysis of the epic poem and the Tapestry, we have the added problem of two works with separate historical developments (the many theories about the development of the Roland, and the tradition of manuscript illumination behind the Tapestry). It must be emphasized, therefore, that the question of analogues can be studied only approximately, and that conclusions from such a study must be tentative.

There are very few studies which specifically compare the two works, and those that do usually emphasize the feudal ethos behind the actions (betrayal of feudal allegiance and subsequent punishment of the traitor). However, art critics often refer to the Tapestry in terms of a written work of literature, especially as a chanson de geste, a "song of deeds," and as an epic drama. As a parallel to this visual epic, the Song of Roland, a chanson de geste, has been described as a "series of pictures."

Erich Auerbach has applied a linguistic term, "parataxis," or the juxtaposition of lines without the use of conjunctions, to the structure of the Roland. I believe it is possible to extend this term and apply another structural device, the "type-scene," to both the Roland and the Tapestry. A "type-scene" has been defined by Donald K. Fry as: "A recurring stereotyped presentation of conventional details used to describe a certain narrative event, requiring neither verbatim repetition nor a specific formula content." This definition can be applied nearly entirely to the "council scenes" of the Roland, with the exception of certain formulas which are repeated in a nearly-verbatim fashion. There are five such council scenes in the Roland, which present several stereotyped details. Such scenes are narrated in a series of laissez, or stanzas. An analogue to this "type-scene" can be seen in the Bayeux Tapestry's council scenes, in which Edward, Harold, Count Guy Ponthieu, or William are seen seated on very similar thrones, gesturing in a stereotyped fashion. Such recurring details are always presented in the same way, although the specific situations or "content" of the scenes may be different (the noble may be giving an order, asking advice, or receiving a message).

These "type-scenes" appear to have structural importance in both the Roland and the Bayeux Tapestry: each council scene is a prelude to an important episode resulting from the decisions made in the council scene or from the

orders issuing from it. This episodic importance may have served to alert the viewer of the Tapestry or the audience of the Roland that a new episode was about to take place.

Patricia Harris Stablein
Northwestern University:

The Fragmented Image of War in the Poetry of Bertran de Born
and in the Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise

In both the poetry of Bertran de Born and the Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise, war is often expressed in images where objects battle rather than people. Splinters and weapons flying and crashing through the air create a dehumanized, mechanical hell in La Chanson. There is the atmosphere of surreal horror that is found in the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch where strange robots proliferate. An object has no human pity, no morality—only destructive force. These images are reinforced by the descriptions of their dehumanizing effect on man (the lopped off heads and limbs, for example). In contrast with these scenes of object war are the very human debates and discussions which occur in the combat interludes. The emphasis on the mass of objects in the images also reflects another theme: the communal heroism of the Provençal people, especially the Toulousains.

These fragmented images have a much different moral and aesthetic function in the work of Bertran de Born. The objects flying through the air, colliding and piercing, suggest energy and excitement instead of surrealistic horror. For Bertran, their moral value is positive because they represent a creative life energy. The images present the explosion of life which occurs in war according to Bertran. The confusion of elements is the rich multiplicity of human experience. The possession of objects, their stability, is morally wrong in Bertran's eyes. That is old age, that is boredom and suffocation. Youth and moral goodness are only to be found in the explosion of war. As in the Antonioni film, "Zabriskie Point," freedom is the destruction of the stultifying object.

Announcement

The Medieval Institute of Western Michigan University will sponsor the Ninth Conference on Medieval Studies on May 8, 9, and 10, 1974, at Kalamazoo, to be followed this year by the Annual Meeting of the Mediaeval Academy of America, on May 10 and 11, 1974. The deadline for submitting abstracts of proposed papers (twenty minute limit) for the Conference on Medieval Studies is November 1, 1973. For further details, write George H. Demetrakopoulos, Assistant Director, The Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001.