

Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne

Members of the Société Rencesvals will be interested to know that a translation of the Pèlerinage de Charlemagne into English is currently being written by one of our members. In advance of its publication in complete form we are happy to present this extract.

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The First Laisse of Charlemagne's Pilgrimage

Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople was composed in dodecasyllabic lines arranged in the familiar assonanced laissez of the chansons de geste. In the Anglo-Norman of the text which survives, the caesura most often falls between the sixth and seventh syllables, although sometimes it occurs after the fifth, other times after the seventh syllable in the line. The lines are generally end-stopped, but occasionally the sense runs on from line to line as in ll. 34-34. In the following translated laisse I have attempted to imitate as much as possible the formal characteristics of the Anglo-Norman original. However, the caesura falls more erratically in the English, partly because I have tried to avoid the sing-songiness the dodecasyllabic line is prone to in English. My model and inspiration is Dorothy Sayers' classic translation of the Chanson de Roland. I am hopeful that others will find a poetic translation of the Pèlerinage, when it is complete, a useful companion to Sayers' Roland.

- Through the portal of Saint-Denis stepped Charles one day:
As he crossed his forehead, his crown he replaced
And gird on his sword-of gold was the pummel made.
Dukes, lords, and knights were there-the barons in his train.
- 5 The emperor looked across to the queen, his mate;
 Her splendid crown she wore attractively arranged.
 Leading her by the hand beneath the olive's shade
 And speaking with her openly, he dared to say,
 "Have you seen under heaven any man, my dame,
- 10 Whose sword and crown so well befit, his flank and pate?
 Yet other cities will I conquer with this blade!"
 She answered foolishly since she was not yet sage:
 "It may be, emperor, your charm you overrate;
 There's one I know who marches with statelier grace
- 15 When he wears his crown among the knights in his train.

Whenever he dons it, it credits his high estate."
 When Charles heard these words, he became quite outraged—
 Because the Franks had overheard, he was dismayed:
 "Well, my lady, where is this king? . . . Come on, now say!
 20 We'll wear our crowns together in a promenade.
 There your friends and counsellors shall aggregate,
 And my good court of knights I'll summon to that place —
 If the Franks all tell me so, I'll concede your claim,
 But if you've lied to me, then dearly must you pay:
 25 I'll sever your saucy head with my sword's steel blade!"
 "Emperor," she exclaimed, "don't fly into a rage!
 His money, goods, and gold make for a fine display,
 But he's neither such a valiant knight nor so brave
 In the pitch of battle or chase after the fray."
 30 When the queen perceived that Charles was still irate,
 She would fall to his feet so abashed she became:
 "Have mercy, my king, for the love of God," she prayed.
 "I'm still your wife, although I may at times play games.
 My good will toward you, if you want, I'll vindicate
 35 Through the oath I swear, the ordeal I'll undertake:
 From the highest tower in Paris I engage
 To let me fall down all the way—in plight of faith—
 Proof that nothing was said or thought to give you shame."
 "Do naught," Charles replied, "but tell me that king's name!"
 40 "Emperor," she stuttered, "his name somehow escapes"
 "You'll tell me now," said Charles then, "or by my pate
 I'll have this haughty head cut from you straight away!"

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Chanson de Roland Bibliography

Professor Joseph J. Duggan, Department of Comparative Literature, University of California at Berkeley 94720, is assembling a bibliography of studies on the *Chanson de Roland* which have appeared since 1955. He would particularly welcome hearing about articles or books published during 1973, which are in press, or which have not been mentioned in the standard bibliographies.