Abstracts of Selected Papers

Ninth Conference on Medieval Studies
May 8, 9, 10, 1974
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Gerard J. Brault
The Pennsylvania State University:

Techniques of Character Portrayal in the Song of Roland

Nowhere is the distance between modern practice and the art of the Song of Roland greater than in the depiction of characters. It is often said that Turoldus' personages lack depth and that they tend to conform to stock types: the Companion, the Hero, the King, the Traitor. Much of the discussion concerning Roland gravitates about the notion of hybris, but it should be remembered that the use of Aristotelian views (cf. also anagnorisis 'recognition' and hamartia 'tragic flaw') to explain medieval epics can be as misleading as the application of critical notions developed during any other period. Distinct characterization such as we are accustomed to finding in modern literature is absent, for the most part, in Turoldus' poem. The present paper endeavors to show that the author conceived of his characters as being motivated by a central virtue or vice, each of these traits being associated or in conflict with corresponding qualities or faults. Characterization is strongly affected by rôle-playing, that is participation in a well-known stereotype, by point of view, and by reflections, that is indirect delineations of personality traits.

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Janice A. Chiville
Oberlin College:

Treatment of Time and Space in the Song of Roland and the Bayeux Tapestry

Despite the obvious difference in artistic media, the Song of Roland and the Bayeux Tapestry reveal analogous conceptions of time and space. Examination and comparison of compositional techniques in the two creations provides an insight into the two artists' common effort to overcome certain limitations of the literary and pictorial narratives to convey spatial and temporal concepts. On the one hand, the author of the Song of Roland overcomes what would otherwise be an essentially linear narrative movement in time by temporally retardative techniques such as that of the laisses similaires. Reiteration of an event or sequence of events delays the temporal progress of the narration, while also lending

importance to the reiterated moment. Additionally, the difficulty of a linear literary mode of expression to embrace in one moment the space or setting of an event is overcome to some extent by the framing, internal symmetry and focusing of certain laisses which should be read as 'images', not as a sequence of verse lines. On the other hand, the artist of the Bayeux Tapestry surmounts the confines of pictorial art to represent the passage of time by making use of sequential images, each of which must be taken as static in time and space, but the succession of which is dynamic. In this succession of images, there are, as in the Roland, techniques of framing, internal symmetry and focusing to arrest the observer's eye, as well as deliberate lack of such techniques to draw the observer's eye along the narrative so that the images are 'read'. The Tapestry also manifests an artistically interesting multiple use of the same pictorial space. When juxtaposed with the technique of the laisses similaires in the Song of Roland, such scenes as that of the siege of Dinan, where a single spatial representation—that of the castle of Dinan—serves as a backdrop for three temporally separate events, it is clear that the two artists were similarly interested in transcending the specific limitations of their respective media to convey concepts of time and space.

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Jean Strandness
Michigan State University:

The Transformation of Character in the Guillaume d'Orange Cycle

In the Couronnement de Louis the characterization of Guillaume is heroic. In the Charroi de Nîmes, which could be considered a sequel to the Couronnement de Louis, Guillaume's characterization becomes mimetic, i. e., psychologically complex, as his situation in the feudal world turns problematic: although Guillaume has served Louis for years, Louis does not acknowledge Guillaume's service by rewarding him a fief at a time when he is distributing land to many other vassals. Louis' lack of recognition precipitates an identity crisis in Guillaume, which is the focus of the first half of the Charroi de Nîmes. Happily, Guillaume finally resolves his dilemma: he will acquire a fief through conquests of Saracen lands. At this point in the chanson de geste, we see the characterization of Guillaume transform from mimetic to comic-heroic as the chanson de geste moves into the "charroi de Nîmes" episode proper.

The mimetic characterization of Guillaume in the first half of the Charroi de Nîmes has received insufficient notice. This paper compares Guillaume's heroic characterization in the Couronnement de Louis with his mimetic characterization in the Charroi de Nîmes.

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Hendrik VanderWerf
Eastman School of Music
University of Rochester:

Performance of Old French Epic or Narrative Poetry (Revised Abstract)

It is often assumed that the bulk of medieval poetry was intended to be heard rather than read. This raises some fascinating questions concerning the manner in which long epic poems were recited because the scant documentary evidence, including a few snatches of music pertaining directly to these epics, does not give us justification to go much beyond the vague general conclusion that at least some of this poetry was performed to a melody.

Turning elsewhere for additional information, we find in the major collections of Old French lyric poetry from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the so-called chansonniers of the trouvères, some relatively short narrative poems; furthermore, some "lyric" songs were inserted into long narrative ones. (Most of these poems were published by Karl Bartsch in Romanzen und Pastourellen.) In many songs in these two groups we encounter characteristics typical for the poetic technique of epic poetry side by side with elements of versification found normally in lyric poetry; furthermore, a fair number of them have been preserved with music and it is remarkable that in some instances we notice formal characteristics that are unusual for the trouvère repertory in general but which fit remarkably well in the epic tradition. Understandably, one must be cautious in drawing from these relatively short songs conclusions concerning the performance practice of the large epics. But at least in some areas, most notably form and melodic meter, we can find some indications favoring or opposing theories which over the last century have been proposed concerning the manner in which the chanson de geste was performed.

The author admits to having many more questions than opinions concerning the performance of epic or narrative poetry. The question uppermost on his mind is the following: are there direct connections between any of the narrative songs and a long narrative poem as there is some convincing relation between some of the medieval German epics, preserved without music, and some German songs of somewhat more recent date but preserved with music?

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Michael Magnotta
York University:

The Relationship between the Cantar de Mío Cid, the Primera Crónica General and the Cronica de Veinte Reyes: A Critical and Historical Essay (1779-1972)

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, medieval chroniclers, in order to write the General History of Spain, used, among other sources, heroic poems such as the ancient Poema del Cid of the twelfth century and its later versions ("refundiciones") because they saw in such epic poetry a rich source of historical or pseudo-historical information. In fact, Alfonso X and his team, as well as the author of the Crónica de Veinte Reyes, give us, in their historical section dealing with the period of Alfonso VI and the Cid, a prose-version of the cidian Epic. During the process of "prosification," medieval chroniclers left intact poetic passages of the Poema, remnants of its versification and assonance. This immediately caught the attention of the first investigators of the Poema (Tomas Antonio Sanchez and Rafaël Floranes) who, at the end of the eighteenth century, proposed the first theories on the relationship between the poetic narration and the historical account of the Cid. Since that time, many scholars of the Cantar have used the comparative method to propose valuable corrections to the existing manuscript of the Cantar de Mio Cid, to clarify obscure passages of the Poema, and to resolve many other controversial issues. The objective of this essay is to provide a detailed historical and bibliographical account of the studies written on this problematic issue of the Poema from 1779 to 1972, and to examine critical currents and tendencies (historical and cultural phenomena) which distinguish clearly the cidian criticism of the last three centuries (eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth), indicating their methods, theories, and solutions to this aspect of the Cantar and pointing out the most valuable studies of the Poema and the chronicles. This critical and historical review aims to do three things: (a) stimulate research on the Poema itself by calling attention to the earlier history of issues which now seem to have been resolved satisfactorily; (scholars may find that some arguments and theories no longer generally accepted are worth re-examining in the light of new evidence or new analytical techniques); (b) save future scholars a great deal of time and effort by guiding them to the work they must take into account; (c) illustrate clearly the extent to which the theories and arguments one had thought of as originating in the late nineteenth century (the time of Menéndez y Pelayo and Menéndez Pidal) in fact go back, in many controversial issues of the Cantar, to the first discussions of the Poema del Cid some two hundred years ago. The final remarks of this essay present a new possible hypothesis which could very well explain not only the similarities and differences between the epic account of the Poema and that of

the Chronicles of Spain (the Primera Crónica General, the Crónica de Veinte Reyes), but also the discrepancies that separate and distinguish one chronicle from another with respect to the historical version of the cidian Epic.

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John W. Davis
University of Wisconsin Center—Fox Valley:

The Gabbing Game
(Revised Abstract)

Heroic boasting is a conventional ritual in bellicose epics; usually it takes place prior to a confrontation with an adversary, and its purpose may be to threaten the adversary, to encourage one's fellows (cf. Roland, v. 2143) or to bind oneself as if by a vow to perform heroic deeds (cf. the festal boasting Charlemagne remembers, vv. 2860-7 of the Roland). When Ganelon imputes gabant to Roland in the Chanson de Roland, he accuses him of idle heroic boasting. The idle boasting he has in mind, however, is quite different from the gabbing game we find in the Pèlerinage de Charlemagne. Although the gabbing game may have a butt—a common adversary, not present and not to be confronted whom it suits the participants to ridicule—the main object of the game is to outboast one's fellows. It is very like a liars' congress, each lie affording pleasure in itself, but each liar striving valiantly to win acclaim as the most outrageous liar of them all. The gabbing game is not a ritual; it has no serious object beyond itself—at least on the conscious level. Subconsciously, however, it may serve, as in the Pèlerinage, to relieve the anguish of impotency as the ancient rituals of mutual insult and rivalling self-praise provided competitive noblemen a surrogate form of combat when they lacked the opportunity or ability to display such manly qualities as they would attribute to themselves.

In the Pèlerinage, Charlemagne and his peers arrive in Constantinople unarmed and, therefore, unable to respond with force to the emperor Hugon's apparently insolent hospitality. Moreover, their unilateral disarmament prevents them from plundering the riches of the city as they would like to do. In order to relieve the tensions of impotent vengefulness and hopeless avarice, they play the gabbing game, making Hugon the butt of a number of boasts. Hugon, however, violates the secrecy of the ludic society. Having heard himself ridiculed (in a spy's report), Hugon transmutes the play into ritual by commanding the peers to perform their boasts on pain of death for failure. He is a spoil-sport who shatters the play world of the gabbing game by denying its temporal and spatial boundaries.

Medieval Consortium
October, 1973
University of Pittsburgh

Dorothy S. McCoy
Point Park College:

North-Central France: Twelfth Century Commercial Development and Modes of Literary Transmission

Arras and the Fair cities of Champagne provided, in the twelfth century and earlier, a natural pathway and a ground for development of stories of all kinds. The stories, some originating in eleventh century history like the tale of Robert the Devil, and some already absorbed into legend like the tales of Arthur, moved with the times along this most popular of routes.

Holmes and Klenke argue skillfully for the proposal that Chrétien de Troyes adapted his Arthurian material from Norman-English and Welsh sources rather than from ancient stories of the continental Celts. But the existence and activity of the Breton minstrels whom Marie de France mentions as sources cannot be easily dismissed. Many oral sources were directly accessible even inside the walls of Troyes and of the other cities of the Fair route. The attested presence of bankers and traders from north and south, the intermingling of Jewish and Christian scholars and merchants, the mobile educators and preachers like Abelard and St.Bernard, Breton traders, mercenaries, and crusaders passing through, as well as local landlords, singers, tradesmen and fairguards, and not least, counts who were military and political leaders in the great world which linked Brittany, Normandy, Anjou, England, Italy, Navarre, and the Near East with Champagne—all provide extensive opportunities for transmission and influence.

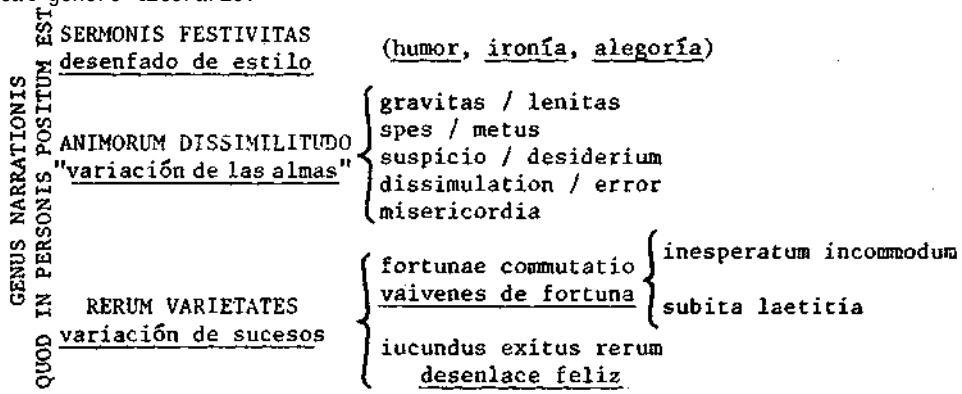
It is premature, however carefully evidence is derived from specific links such as illustrations in church ornamentation of Arthurian figures, to suppose that we are much closer than R.S. Loomis was to defining the passage of Arthurian matter in its early stages. The twelfth century allegorical sculptures of Winlogee and the conflicting knights at Modena in Italy force us to consider an eleventh-century pre-Norman transmission of the material and its possible development into an allegorical mode by the Bretons themselves.

Kentucky Foreign Language Conference
April 25-27, 1974
University of Kentucky
Lexington, Kentucky

Miguel Garci-Gómez
Duke University:

La Rétorica clásica y el cantar III de Mio Cid

Durante la Edad Media gozó de ininterrumpido favor en las escuelas la Rhetorica ad Herennium, atribuida por muchos a Cicerón. Al tratar de los géneros narratives pone de relieve dicho tratado un genus narrationis quod in personis positum est (1.8.13), expresión que ha sido traducida al español como novela psicológica (H. Lausberg, Manual de retórico literaria [Madrid, 1967], vol. 3, p. 456). Por otros caminos que los retóricos, no ha faltado quien ha hablado del Cantar III como "novela psicológica" (U. Leo, en NRFH, XIII [1959], 291-304). He aquí en cuadro esquemático las cualidades que la Rhetorica ad Herennium preceptuaba para tal género literario:



Un análisis estilístico-estructural del Cantar III revela que es novela psicológica en cuanto que se adecua a las normas retóricas. Hay en él un desenfado en el estilo que lo diferencia y aleja de los otros dos cantares; juego es vocablo exclusive del tercero, para caracterizar la actitud nueva en los personajes, de retintín y sonrisas socarronas. Hay ironía en antífrasis, caricaturas, sarcasmos, carientismo; ironía dramática e ironía del destino. El episodio del león es de carácter alegórico. En cuanto a los personajes, la "variación de las almas," en frase de Dámaso Alonso, logra un relieve particular al ser proyectada sobre un ambiente de conflictos de los unos con los otros, de cada uno

consigio mismo antes y despúes de la Afrenta. Hay una gran variedad en la acción hasta poder lograr la técnica madura de la peripecia dramática, con un desenlace doblemente feliz: las segundas nupcias (gracias al deus ex machina, los Infantes de Navarra y Aragón) y el triunfo de la justicia (justicia poética, que premia a los buenos y castiga a los malos). ¿Arte juglaresco el del Cantar III de Mio Cid? Arte retórico, obra estupenda de un juglar, si se quiere, pero "docto y altísimo poeta," como admitió Menéndez Pidal (Castilla. La Tradición, el idioma [Madrid, 1966], p. 91).

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Franklin M. Waltman
S.U.N.Y. College, Cortland:

Cantar de Mio Cid: Literary Analysis by Computer

There has existed a polemic among critics as to whether one poet is responsible for the composition of the Cantar de Mio Cid or whether there may have been two poets involved. The paper describes a program entitled Computer Language Analysis System developed by Professor George A. Borden at the Pennsylvania State University. Adapting the program to my needs, a concordance was obtained for the poem as well as statistical data in an attempt to resolve this polemic.

A study of formulaic expressions, synonyms and verb tenses was undertaken to determine if there exists any great difference. The concordance shows there are at least 26 formulas, accounting for more than 300 formulaic expressions. The study of synonyms also shows that there is no great disparity in the three parts of the poem. The study of verb tenses was also done with the concordance. The study was limited to the future, imperfect and conditional tenses of the dialogue portion of the poem. No great differences were found.

Examples of the statistical data show that there are 29,261 words in the C M C with an average word length of 4.36. Since each line was processed on a separate card, the data shows that the average number of words for each verse is 7.82. Since each verse is not a complete sentence, this enables one to compare verse length with verbal segments if the user chooses to run separate parts individually.

The program also provides for a bar graph which shows the rank/frequency distribution of words in the text. Words of three and five letters are predominant with no word having more than 14 letters. Sentence length statistics also show that sentences with eight words are the most abundant in the poem.

For words with a large number of appearances a listing of words in decreasing frequency of occurrence was obtained. This listing can also be altered and placed in increasing frequency of occurrence. The words are printed in alphabetical order within each level. The entire listing shows that there are 2,520 words which occurred one time in the

poem for 55.9 percent of the types and 8.6 percent of the tokens (each different word is a type while each occurrence of each word is a token).

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Medieval Epic Bibliography

The University of Manitoba has awarded John R. Allen a grant of $1,500, to begin work on the compilation of an annotated bibliography of research on the medieval romance epic during the past twenty years. This bibliography will be put into machine-readable form, to facilitate subsequent printing and to enable yearly updates to be integrated automatically with the original compilation. Persons who might wish to participate in this project are urged to contact John R. Allen, Department of Romance Languages, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.