

## Abstracts of Selected Papers

Northeast Modern Language Association  
April 4-5, 1975  
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### The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle and the Song of Roland: A Reevaluation

The anonymous Historia Karoli Magni, composed about 1130, purports to be Archbishop Turpin's narrative of Charlemagne's ill-fated expedition into Spain. Medieval clerks evidently considered this version of the Roland legend to be more reliable than that found in Turol-dus' epic. The Latin chronicle doubtless also appealed to them because, eschewing poetic ambiguity, it told all and, more important, it explained all. Since the Renaissance, scholars have seen through the Pseudo-Turpin's historical pretence and, today, the prose work is generally held to be nothing more than a pious and tedious imitation of the Song of Roland.

Matters of historicity and style are proper concerns of the literary critic but, in the present instance, a fundamental question deserves even greater attention: did the author of the Pseudo-Turpin give us a faithful interpretation of the Song of Roland or did he misunderstand or, worse, betray Turol-dus? Our contention is that the Latin chronicler had a remarkable grasp of the central meaning of Turol-dus' poem which he imparted in a different mode, amplifying and clarifying such themes as: the superiority of the Christian religion, messianism, psychomachia, and dying in battle against the Infidel as martyrdom. Turol-dus had a greater talent for exposition and rhetoric than his fellow clerk. His use of parallelism, for instance, is often subtle but always skillful whereas the Latin chronicler is heavy-handed in this regard. Yet the Pseudo-Turpin is an outstanding, perhaps even the premier example of exegetical interpretation of medieval secular literature—not a very good label, incidentally, for the Song of Roland. Finally, it is important to note that Conrad's German adaptation, written about 1170, interprets the Roland along similar lines.

Modern critics have been put off by the Pseudo-Turpin's little homilies but above all, perhaps, by the fact that it takes a very different view of Turol-dus' epic from those which they have propounded. However, the chances are that the poet's contemporary was more attuned to the Roland's meaning than we can ever hope to be.

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Miguel Garci-Gómez  
Duke University:

¡Dios, que buen vassalo! ¡Si oviesse buen señor!,  
revised

Could the Cid be a good vassal without having a good king? Was Alfonso considered a bad king by the people of Burgos? The problems, evidently insoluble, arising from these questions can be avoided by interpreting buen señor not as referring to the king, but to an hombre bueno, expression used from the Middle Ages to our days to designate the arbiter who helped to reconcile two parties at variance. The people of Burgos, then, were asking God that the good vassal (proscribed by his king) might find a mediator (able to arrange for his reconciliation). The buen señor was Minaya.

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### Other Meetings

The conference on "Literature and the Occult" at the University of Texas at Arlington (April 3-5, 1975) had major speeches by Joseph Campbell, "Myth, Literature, and the Occult," and Wayne Shumaker, "The Uses of the Occult in Literature." Medieval papers dealt with "The Role of the Occult and the Supernatural in Old English Poetry," by Raymond P. Tripp, University of Denver; "Murder at a Gallop: The 'Second Merseburg Charm,'" by Lynn L. Remly, John Carroll University; "Cundrie 'La Surziere' and Medieval Aesthetics of Perception," by Rosemarie Thee Morewedge, SUNY at Binghamton; and "Numerology and Alchemy in Gottfried's Tristan," by Julian Wasserman, Rice University. André Winandy, Southern Methodist University, member of the Société Rencesvals, presented a paper on "Steps into Confusion: The Fifth Book of Rabelais."

The 1975 Sewanee Medieval Colloquium at The University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee (April 9 - 12, 1975) included papers by: Eugène Vinaver (Visiting Professor, U. of Victoria) on "Medieval Poetry and the Moderns," with Response by Denys Hay (University of Edinburgh); David Louis Gassman (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton) on "Translatio Studii: Twelfth and Thirteenth Century Attempts at an Explanation of Mediaeval Cultural and Intellectual Life," with Response by Robert Brentano (University of California at Berkeley). A session chaired by Harry F. Williams (Florida State University), member of the Société Rencesvals, was devoted to "Sir Gawain of Rome" with Response by Vladimir Rossman (Columbia University), also a member of the Société Rencesvals.