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# The Generative Function of *Chant* and *Récit* in Old French Epic[1]

POETRY is A FORM OF POWER; epic poetry is the most forceful exponent of that power. This lesson, embodied in the ancient myths of poet-musicians like David and Orpheus—who are often coupled in medieval sources—was even written into the heavens where the constellation of the lyre gave cosmological validity to its claims. Music and language, poetry and truth were linked in a construct of human fabrication, but divine origin.

The power of poetry came from its ability to represent human history not as a series of acts within an indifferent universe, but as a series of events rendered extraordinary by the ability of a special caste of humans, the heroes, to infuse their actions with divine intention; the poetry provided the intimacy necessary for other humans to identify with the heroes. The celebration of epic was the commemoration of man's ability to reveal the divine order by embodying it in his life and acts.

From the beginning, poets and philosophers recognized two levels of expressivity in epic, involving two kinds of language: narration, or exposition of historic event, and celebration, or lyrical elaboration, a kind of commentary on the event. Narrative function and poetic elaboration were recognized as correlative functions in epic but never as equal partners in the business of epic production. Classical and neoclassical poetics could not accord them equal weight because it evaluated formal elements of literature according to whether they contributed to the serious, instructional purpose of art or to its necessary, but nevertheless accessory, pleasure principle. In this formulation, narration was rated on the utile end of the Horatian scale, while poetic figures were placed down at the dulce end. Responsibility for generating the work and its content lay with the narration.

That the lyrical elements of epic are not simply accessory ornaments has come to be increasingly recognized. Yet even recent terminology, coined to describe more accurately the oppositional rôle of narrative and lyric, reveals a residual hierarchical bias in favor of narration. Thus Eugene Vance's excellent insight into the biaxial function of narrative and lyric in

the Song of Roland was expressed as "narrative drive" and "lyrical retard," thereby semantically marking the elements in terms of positive and (potentially) negative polarities: narrative being equated with 'completion', and lyrical, with 'disjunction' or 'non-completion'.[2]

The terms chant and récit used by Rychner and subsequently by Zumthor, to take two prominent examples, offer some correction of the evaluative bias, since they denote autonomous kinds of expressive forms. For Zumthor, the chant is at once a performative element providing variation to the recited narrative,[3] and, at least embryonically, a generative element with structural importance. Given the fact that the essential elements of the récit are known to the audience, Zumthor argues that it is the chant that presents the narrative elements in unexpected ways so as to produce surprise and pleasure in the auditors as they hear known facts take on new and unforeseen inflections.[4] He also ascribes a more active rôle to the chant when he says that it generates the specificity of character necessary to raise a given figure from the level of character-type to that of un personnage. From this viewpoint, it is the rôle of chant in the Digby 23 version which is responsible for detaching the character of "Roland" from the context of the mythos to give him a literary life of his own, so that he appears in more than forty chansons de geste in the Middle Ages and continues to fascinate poets down into the Renaissance and beyond.[5]

Whatever the refinements of this revised view of lyric within the epic framework, it is clear that we still have to do with hierarchical polarities. In this case, they are: active vs. passive, unknown/exciting vs. known/tedious. Moreover, if we ask why it is that chant seems to be able to actuate the imprévisible, whereas récit cannot, the answer would appear to be based on the assumption that the elements of the récit are fixed, even closed to renewal, whereas the chant is infinitely renewable and variable. This implies that récit is bound to a preexistent expressive system whereas chant is not. I do not believe that Zumthor really believes this to be the case, and we certainly know that the lyrical elements in epic are just as bound to a preexisting expressive system as are the elements of the mythos. In fact, Zumthor himself has shown that the use of the laisse in the Digby 23 may be studied, in analogous form, in the Vie de Saint Alexis.

Without trying to privilege one of these expressive systems at the expense of the other, let us accept the fact that chant and récit are mutually dependent signifying systems which, between them, account for the main formal and intentional outline of the chanson de geste as we know it.

Furthermore, if we accept the biaxial model of Old French epic structure as it has recently been elaborated by a number of scholars, including myself, then Vance's identification of récit with a horizontal axis of meaning and of chant with a vertical axis of signification should be retained especially as this model will lead to a better understanding of the rôle of chant in establishing a narrative commentary within the text that complements and explains the récit, or main narrative.

There seems to be general agreement that the rôle of the récit lies in expressing the successive incidents and episodes associated with the plot of the historical event, as preserved and elaborated in the preexisting legend which the particular singer of a given version chooses to recount. With Roland Barthes, we may see this axis as a horizontal one of syntagmatic elaboration. The formulation does not preclude a plot structure of great complexity; it merely postulates that at this level all the elements concern the denotation of the specific legendary event. The thrust here will be centripetal, concerned with events, details, characters, setting, everything in short that contributes to the depiction of the story as real historic event.

This axis is not an abstract conception: it is a linguistic reality with a poetic expressive system clearly identifiable in any text. Since this paper is not concerned with analyzing this denotative system, let me say generally that the poetic language of this axis is the one most frequently analyzed in oral-formulaic studies.

Carles li reis, nostre emperere magnes may have any number of symbolic connotations, as Uitti and others have shown, but it is first and foremost the positing of an historical actant; it is the subject of the other statements in the first six lines of laisse 1 and serves to launch the problem which the main narrative action will develop. The functionality of the récit, in Barthes's terms, is the "functionality of doing";[6] doing requires context, a set of containing units to which the doers will be related. This is why the level of narrative function involves métonymie relata, and why the Oxford text begins with the most complex metonymy of all, Carles li reis, which it then overdetermines by adding, nostre emperere magnes. All of the other actants and institutions in the poem will be functionally determined in opposition to or in correlation with the actant and institutions denoted in this line; indeed the text itself cannot be excluded from the network of métonymie relata actuated by it: Jean Bodel's late-twelfth-century generic and thematic definition of the matière de France reminds us of the reciprocal implicational relationship that was perceived to exist between "Carles

li reis" and "chanson de geste" both as concept and phenomenon.

But actantial "doing" also implies actantial "being"; a context of textualized actions raises the questions of actantial meaning: "Why do these characters do this?" "Who are they to perform these deeds?" and "What do they become in performing them?" In other words, the reciprocal implication of a functionality of actantial doing is, in Barthes's terms, "a functionality of actantial being."[7]

Now the question of the mode of existence of characters cannot be answered at the same narrative level as that devoted to denotation of the historical mythos: it requires introducing another level of signification devoted to representing a metaphysical epistemology. It is an evaluation, a glossing of deed, and, as such, cannot be postulated or ratified in a purely unilinear narrative. A succession of deeds may lead one to make certain conclusions about the doer, but to learn what these deeds tell us about the nature and quality of existence within his textualized universe requires introducing a level of vraisemblance within the narrative, a means for comparing the ethos revealed by the deeds with a metaphysical paradigm which extends beyond and, generally, controls his immediate context.[8]

For the eleventh century, the metaphysical system was a Christianity which predicated a divinely-created cosmos composed of a series of progressively perfected orders (and spaces) superimposed one upon the other. Early illustrations of the universe show these spaces to be vertically aligned with human space, the earth, situated midway between its alternatives, heaven and hell. The paradigm of being that linked heaven and earth through a hierarchical linguistic model was the Christ-figure; and the paradigmatic narrative, the Christ story. Christ as Logos could be regarded as a synecdoche of the divine and a metonymy of the human.

The Christian narrative, tirelessly replicated in the exemplary lives of the martyrs, provided a model for narrative in which doing and being are fused because the Doer is the Word, the matter at once of form and content, and therefore simultaneously metaphor and metonymy, syntagm and paradigm, competence and performance. In comparison to this, all other narratives were virtual at the paradigmatic level, waiting to be shaped to the significance of the archetypal paradigm that could be posited as a parallel metaphoric plot above them, just as the human story of Christ, in the perspective of the time, had vertically acceded to divine meaning via the text-event of the Resurrection and Ascension. In a logocentric world—and

we do not need the quaternary principle of Raoul Glaber's Historiae to remind us that in the eleventh century "Scripture" was the ultimate signified of any text—the significance of a textualized event, at least judging from extant works of the period, derived from the shaping of it to the archetypal paradigm.

This does not mean that univocity was the rule in narrative; far from it. It does mean that some way had to be devised for linking the syntagmatic narrative to the paradigmatic model of signification in order to show how the tale of human deeds paralleled that of divine revelation and therefore fulfilled the moral purpose which theorists since Aristotle have seen as the end or purpose of epic, the goal controlling the determination of Form and Matter.

All this helps to explain the existence of a vertical axis of signification in the Old French epic, an axis which could link the horizontal level of historical denotation to the paradigmatic level of anagogic connotation. But it also helps to explain why the vehicle of that vertical axis, the formal device which realized it in the text, could be actuated only by another kind of poetic language, a non-narrative form. That language had to be a system of expression that was not tied to linear exposition and ratification of events, that did not posit expectations in terms of the completion of the plot, but rather which, by tradition and convention, predicated worldly signifieds in terms of spiritual alterity.

In other words, a metaphoric language which regularly displaced a concrete signifier towards a figurative signifier which the literal meaning would not ordinarily evoke. This displacement would be suggested by a resemblance determined by the conventions of logocentric perception based upon the conviction, often repeated in eleventh-century texts, that the signification of objects and events in the world had to be determined by the predication of symbolic analogies.

Such a system of expressivity was ready to hand in the chant, a conventional system of lyrical elements based upon the hymn, the psalm, the liturgical chant, and even, nascently, in vernacular lyric forms. A fourteenth-century codification of troubadour poetics, the Leys d'amor, accords metaphor a position of signal importance in its taxonomy of the constituent elements of lyric poetry. For the Leys d'amor, Methafora is allegorically represented as the eldest daughter of na Tropus sor de na Sententia (Dame Trope, sister of Dame Sententia).[9] The primacy of meta-

phor, as the Leys d'amor does not fail to point out, comes from its prominent use in Scripture. In fact, almost all of the examples of metaphor cited have a religious connotation. For the Leys d'amor, allegory constitues an important constituent of metaphor.

All of this helps us to understand why the function of the lyrical interventions in the epic text will be to explain the action of historical denotation in terms of another set of texts, the Scripture. Chant, so considered, serves as a vehicle for linking one level of text with another for the purpose of determining the signification of the first level; it is thus at once sign and interprétant, a metaphoric system recasting the action at one level in terms of analogy with a paradigmatic model whose signification for the story is revealed by the chant.

In practice, chant and récit alternate within the poem with great ease, thanks to the special nature of the laisse, the strophic unit of the chanson de geste. Borrowed from vernacular hagiography, as Zumthor and others have pointed out, the laisse had a specific musical value but also the virtue of variable length, a versatility which made it particularly well-suited for epic exploitation. One has only to compare samples of the laisse to the fixed strophic forms of other early vernacular works, such as the Clermont-Ferrand Passion, to ascertain how much more satisfactory the laisse is for actuating both chant and récit. At the same time, the full measure of achievement in integrating the two expressive systems into a coherent work may be better comprehended if one compares the Roland, for example, to the mixed prose and lyric form of the Old Irish or Old Norse Sagas. The intercalated poetic units contribute much to these texts, but they do not function as equivalent elements in generating signification.

One of the characteristics of the laisse which made it so suitable for bimodal expression was its musical design. Rychner, following Jacques Chailley, called attention to the fact that the laisse, as a unit in the song, had a musical reality which could be seen especially "in the timbre of intonation and in the timbre of conclusion; in the body of the laisse, the timbre of intonation, normally repetitive, could alternate with a timbre of development."[10]

Inherent in the musical design of the laisse, shifts of inflection conveyed signals about the function of the lines accompanying them. These inflections, in fact, were codified according to function: intonation, development, conclusion. It requires little imagination to extend this concept to

include that of marking shifts from récit to chant and vice versa, or at least to assume that the inflected timbre-shifters could be used in that way. We shall have a chance to explore the variable and inflected nature of the laisse further when we examine some specific examples.

Before undertaking any specific analyses, we should note that while chant and récit share many elements of epic diction, there is a basic opposition or tension between the two, an opposition linked to the semiosis of space and time which is central to the expressive function of each axis. We have seen that the basic function of récit is a mimesis of the mythos, the legend perceived as historic event. Even when the temporal mode of the récit is the present, it is understood as an historical present, which is really the past brought forward.

Spatially, récit represents the place of the legend; for the Roland, that is Roncevaux, the Spanish March, France, and Aix-la-Chapelle. Spatially and temporally, récit is bound to a tight convention of referentiality; its nature as sign is univocity. This does not mean that it cannot be complex, that it cannot shift focus or multiply details. All of these are normal functions of mimesis, serving to represent the reality of the story being depicted. As Riffaterre has argued in his Semiotics *of* Poetry, that represented reality will generally be complex and the text will reflect the variation and multiplicity of meaning in that reality.[11] The characteristic of récit as sign is not simplicity, but rather limitation of focus. Everything at this level will have as its referent the meaning of the mythos as historical event.

This significance of the mythos, that is the "something else" it stands for, will be conveyed by the chant which is thus polysemous. Rather than denotation, the chant will activate connotation; instead of mimesis, it will actuate such oblique techniques of displaced reference as analogy and symbolic interpretation. It does so by what Riffaterre calls "semantic indirection … by displacing, distorting, or creating meaning."[12]

> Displacing, when the sign shifts from one meaning to another, when one word "stands for" another, as happens with metaphor and metonymy. Distorting when there is ambiguity or contradiction. Creating, when textual space serves as a principle of organization for making signs out of linguistic items that may not be meaningful otherwise (for instance, symmetry, rhyme, or semantic equivalences between positional homologues in a stanza).[13]

On the temporal level, for example, chant challenges the meaning of time predicated by the récit, where event-time and audience-time are

equated with the flux of human history. It deflects this mimesis of experiential time towards the eternity of soteriology where the time segmentation of reality no longer equates with the narrative sequence of event. In soteriology, narrative sequence may indeed depict the different stages of an event such as the Crucifixion without implying the passing of that event; in fact, the usual narration of the Crucifixion, whether in art or literature, will stress just the opposite, i.e., its permanence.

In the Clermont-Ferrand Passion, to take but one example, this is accomplished by lyrical interventions of the narrator. During the Crucifixion narration, there are three such interventions: the first when Christ reaches Golgotha and disrobes; the second, after the exchange between the good thief, the bad thief, and Christ; the third, following the Deposition and Entombment.

In the dialectic of narrative and temporal sequence applied to human history, time and change are indeed synonymous, as Saint Augustine argues (Confessions, Bk. 11). But in divine revelation, the succession of events stands beyond temporal sequence and, consequently, change. Closure does not imply passing away. In the Old French epic, the récit strives to recreate the temporal sequence of the narrative/historical event—the time of doing—while the chant strives to evoke the timelessness of the principal heroes by placing them in a context of immediacy where "pastness" and "futurity"—the limitations of human existence—are suspended or annihilated. To accomplish this, the chant must work to analogize the time of being of the heroes with that of sacred models, notably Christ and the Apostles.

The same may be said of spatial opposition within the chanson de geste. While the geography of the epics may sometimes be weak, it was at least cultivated at the level of récit with enough verisimilitude to have enabled scholars to talk concretely about the geography of the chansons, and even to reconstruct maps of the battlefields and movements of the armies. Chant deflects this mimetic concept towards an ideal in which locus is less a dimension of experiential reality than of symbolic signification. Much as Charlemagne conceived Aix-la-Chapelle as a locus of imperial and sacred concepts—Roma secunda, Hieroslyma nova—the poetics of place actuated by the chant signify locus as site, as anagogic space transfigured by the revelation of divinity in the midst of human activity. As with religious sites, space in the epic, and particularly in the Roland, as I have shown elsewhere, is consecrated less by doing, than by its status as witness to a

transfiguration.[14]

Let us now attempt to see how chant and récit actually function within the text of the Oxford Roland. Two examples of bimodal laisses, 25 and 61, and two consecutive laisses of predominately chant, 56 and 57, turn out to be of crucial importance for recognizing an important technique of narrative presentation. In both laisses 25 and 61, the chant elements serve as a conclusion to the laisse, and in both instances they are distinguished from the preceding lines of récit by the fact that they interrupt the sequential development of the récit to pose questions regarding the significance of the actions witnessed in the preceding scenes. In short, these chant elements are reflexive rather than transitive signs, soliciting us to focus on the whole context of the passage in which they appear and, beyond that, to the larger structure of the poem.

Instead of continuing the step-by-step development of action, the chant elements do three specific things to make us aware of the work as an event in process: (1) they predicate the expectation of a significance beyond that of the immediate passage; (2) they create an emotional valence in the audience, as opposed to providing a simple mimesis of emotion in the actants; (3) they postulate an image—or cause us to do so—of the section or work as a whole.

In each case, the chant turns our attention back onto the scene that has just been played out, forcing a recognition of a pattern in a specific group of the preceding laisses. In the case of the chant in laisse 25, we recognize the action contained in the preceding eleven laisses, 14-24, as belonging to a significant narrative unit; at the same time, the chant explicitly creates the expectation that subsequent narrative action will complete the pattern just witnessed.

In the case of the chant in laisse 61, we are forced to recognize a pattern in the previous four laisses, 58-60, and, in so doing, to recognize—with the help of intratextual references in the sequence—the similarity of the action to that of the earlier sequence in 14-25. This, in turn, actuates a conscious recognition of the later sequence, 58-61, as a partial fulfillment of the expectation aroused by the chant in laisse 25.

Laisses 56 and 57, which recount the first of the emperor's visions, stand between the introductory sequence of laisses 14-25, and the final act of the treasonous machinations, laisses 58-61. In the first sequence, the principal

Frankish actants are introduced for the first time in a pattern of associative and dissociative groupings whose dynamics set the treason of Ganelon in motion. They also identify the pair, Roland and Oliver, and the triad, Roland-Oliver-Turpin, in a context of resolved dispute; later, at Roncevaux, the debate of Roland and Oliver, Turpin's intervention to resolve it, and the final combat of this triad, will all contribute to the anagogic connotation of the story. At the introductory stage of laisses 14-25, however, these associative groupings in a context of fraternal debate remain virtual; they are posed, but not activated.

The chant of laisses 56 and 57, coming after the earlier scenes and just prior to the last stage of the treason preparation, begins to activate some of the expectations aroused by the earlier scene. Like the smaller chant elements in laisses 25 and 61, the chant in 56 and 57 stands out disjunctively from the context surrounding it. The chant in these two laisses performs the same three functions described above. In addition, it recasts the action metaphorically in a symbolic language. By means of figurative imagery, it provides a miniature, an illumination of the events to come (the battle of Roncevaux) as a fatal eventuality of the discord whose machinations will only be complete in the passage that succeeds the dream (laisses 58-62).

This flash-forward demonstrates that chant has the privilege of postulating events out of their logical order without affecting the sequential development of the narrative. The rôle of chant very often is to provide sudden insight into the larger significance of a long narrative in order to increase the emotional involvement of the audience in the events under development. In this case, for instance, the text cleverly suspends the vision half-way between resolution and enigma: Ganelon does break Charlemagne's spear, but the battle between Charlemagne, the mastiff from his palace and the wild bear and leopard not only remain unresolved, but a specific choral response in free indirect style (which postulates a real-life setting for the dream) expresses the doubts of the putative Frankish spectators as to the outcome of the combat:

> Dient Franceis que grant bataille i ad,
> Il ne sevent liquels d'els la veintrat.
> (Brault edition, vv. 734-35)

These two laisses stand outside of the narrative development of the section to provide a recapitulative insight, an intuitive understanding of everything that has transpired and of the consequences for the future. It is

important that this intuitive grasp of past and future come just before the final act of the pre-Roncevaux machinations because only then will the enormity of Ganelon's treason be comprehended. That we are dealing with a question of textual intentionality in the siting and function of these two laisses must be concluded from the fact that Charlemagne himself is made to draw attention to the event in three different ways: in the vision of laisses 56 and 57; in the chant lamentation of laisse 61; and in a discourse recapitulation of the angelic vision in laisse 67.

Before looking more closely at these chant elements, let us look briefly at Diagram I, which represents the grouping of narrative sequences which the chant displays. I do not mean to suggest that we would be unaware of the events recounted in the sequences if it were not for the chant, but only that the chant crystallises our awareness of them as units, as significant narrative groupings. The diagram does not plot the primary reading but rather the retroreading which the chant encourages by turning our attention back to the sequences. Under conditions of orality, the retroreading as such would not be possible; however, the general grouping of events in the manner indicated by the diagram would be possible in the conscious memory because, as we shall see, the narrative structuring is sufficiently overdetermined for the patterning to be recognized even on momentary reflection.

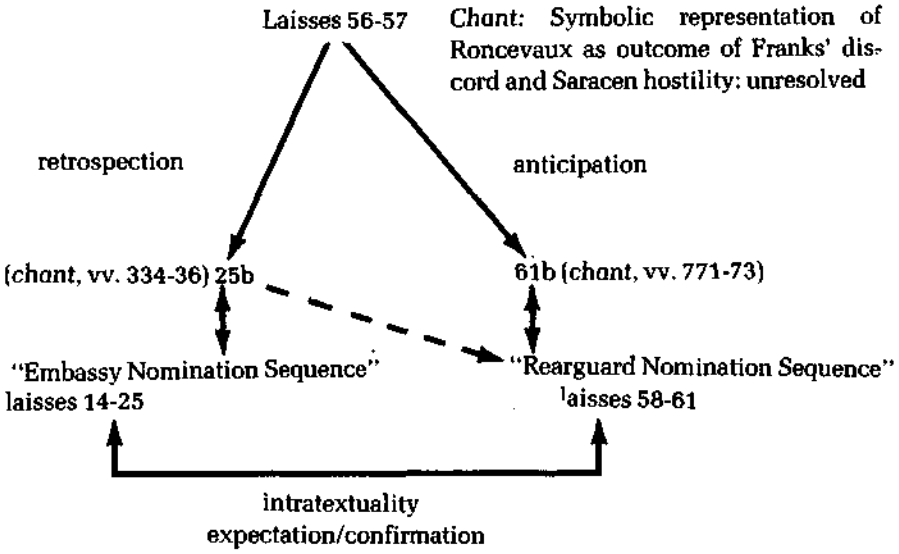


Diagram I

In each instance, the chant serves as a sign and an interprétant of the sequence in which it occurs, although it is obvious that the more elaborate metaphorical predication of the chant in laisses 56 and 57 (which we shall have occasion to discuss in terms of Pelc's theory of metaphor) performs this function in a more extensive way than the shorter chant elements of laisses 25 and 61.

Diagram II demonstrates the elaborate sequential structuring of the first sequence which make possible the expectations and significance activated by the chant. Without this careful distributive structuration, the three chant elements would not be able to realize the attained level of signification.

Now, if we examine the chant elements in turn, following Diagram II, we may better understand the system of chant and récit in the narrative of the Roland. In the first place, it is evident that récit is characterized by sequentiality, while chant is distinguished by periodicity. Whereas the récit develops in a sequence of laisse units, as illustrated by Diagram II, the chant appears abruptly, and the linkage to the preceding matter is often achieved more by apposition than by logical connection. The periodicity of chant, as opposed to the sequentiality of récit, is a necessary condition for the indirection requisite for producing connotative significance. Some means of signaling the shift from the mimesis of the récit to the indirect expression of the chant is required, after all, and while abrupt transition may seem crude, it is effective and not disruptive if the audience expects a regular, although not predictable shift in mode.

While so abrupt a modal shifter as simple disjunction may appear crude to us, this was the normal pattern for bimodal expression in the liturgical music from which Jacques Chailley argues that the epic laisse evolved. Paul Evans's recent book on The Early Trope Repertory *of Saint Martial de* Limoges (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) devotes considerable space to showing how the tropes were intercalated in a surrounding chant. Although the case of trope and chant is not exactly parallel to chant and récit in the epic, inasmuch as the trope was created for and inserted into a pre-existing chant, this practice does testify to the trend towards bimodal textuality in which one element elaborated and commented on another. In any case, given the fact that the epic use of the chant/trope system is an adaptation, the parallelism would naturally not be exact, although the techniques could be similar.

Chanson de Roland (Oxford MS.)
Récit Predication *of Narrative* Function, Laisses 14-26

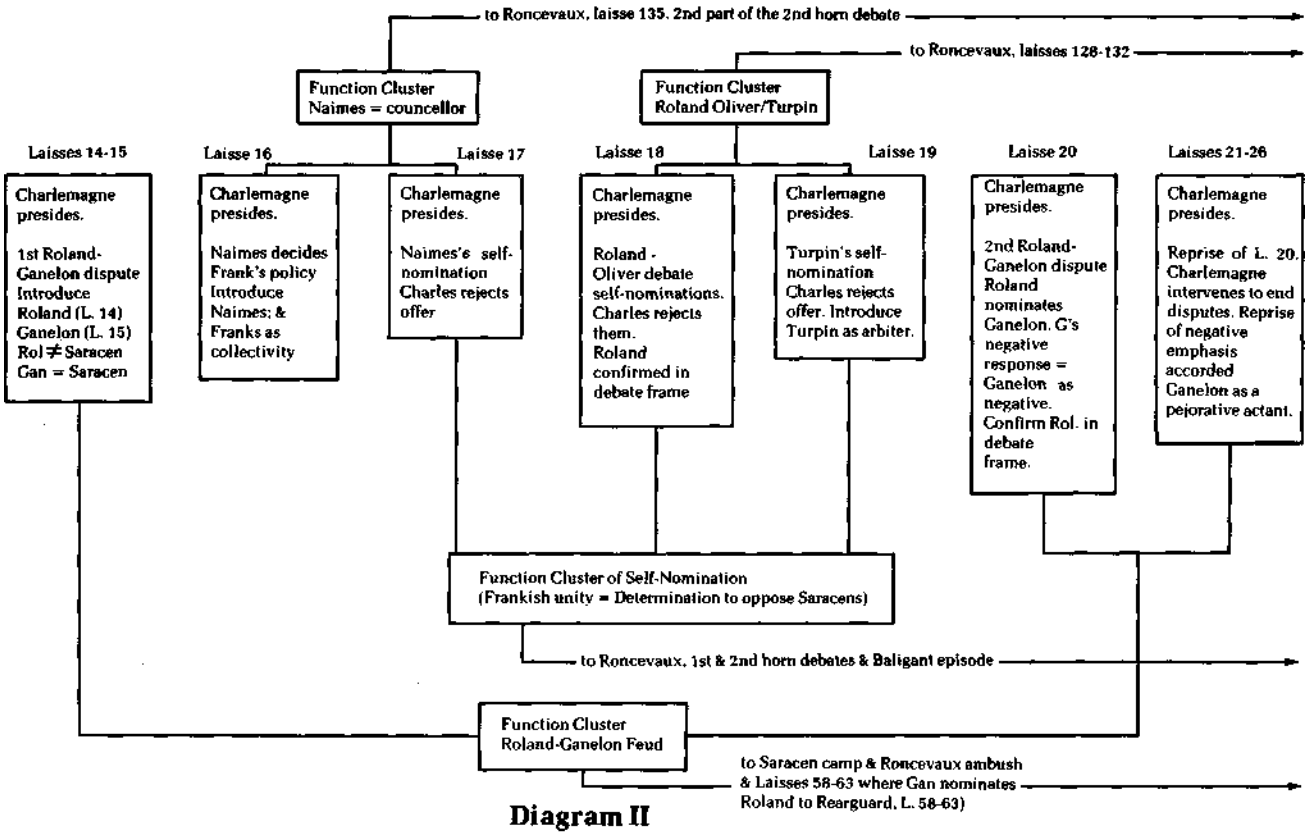


**Diagram II**

Without going into the rather complex systems identified by Evans in his useful book, let me simply note that one of the earliest techniques for relating trope to chant was to insert the trope "at a logical break in the chant."[15] The trope, as a comment on the chant, was a rupture of the chant continuity, but also a development of the signification of the chant, since the tropes were "never intended to stand by themselves," and were written for the specific chant passage in which they were inserted.

While it is true that, later on, tropes were characterized by elaborate melismas which set them off from the neumatic progression of the chants, initially, such musical differentiation was not the case. In other words, in the late eleventh century, the period that concerns us, "trope and chant were composed in the same general melodic idiom,"[16] with only the disjunction between the expressivity of the two texts signaling the modal shift.

This is precisely what we find in the majority of the cases where chant intervenes in the récit of the Oxford Roland. In both laisses 25 and 61, the disjunction between the expected timbre of conclusion for the laisse and the actual conclusion signals the shift from one mode to the other.

Disjunction serves very well for a bimodal laisse where the chant element will be linked by assonance to the preceding lines of récit and therefore clearly identified as belonging to the laisse. In the case of laisses composed entirely of chant, which by their very nature will interrupt the sequential development of the récit, some means of connecting them with the récit was needed. Laisses 55 and 58 demonstrate how this can be done by using one-line chant-elements for the conclusion of the récit-laisse following it. In laisse 55, the timbre of conclusion is elegiac, thereby according with the emotional tone of the two chant laisses. The chant intonation of laisse 58, which picks up the récit-séquence where it left off in laisse 55, uses a lyric element from the alba, thereby making a transition from the nocturnal setting of the visions to the realistic daytime setting accompanying the reprise of the récit.

This technique for joining independent chant laisses to the surrounding récit also has analogues in the techniques for relating trope to chant. Evans terms it the principle of "unison pitch connection"[17] whereby the beginning and end of the trope is made to coincide with the pitch of the chant where it breaks off and picks up again on either side of the trope.

The above helps us to understand how bimodal expression can be accommodated within and between laisses, but it does not explain how chant laisses, such as 56 and 57, function to create meaning. Looking again at Diagram II and the text of these laisses, we see that they come between and affect the meaning of two récit sequences: the chant stands above the récit in some way, since it extends the meaning of the sequences without advancing the narrative in purely literal terms.

Jerzy Pelc has shown that metaphor derives its peculiar competence to make meaning from our awareness that a novel metaphor contains three readings that take place simultaneously when we hear or read the metaphor. We may not consciously work out these three readings, especially as they are often conflated when the utterance is experienced, but we are conscious of confronting an expression that has multiple meanings and requires extra attention to comprehend.

Pelc characterizes metaphor as having a tension between a threefold set of semantic markings which provide an awareness that the utterance may be read or interpreted in three ways: literally, figuratively, or as a paraphrase. "These three meanings take place simultaneously, and it is the tacit awareness of all of them together that in part explains the aesthetic 'twist' of apt metaphors."[18]

Applying this theory to the laisses in question, we see that the ordinary or literal reading is the one that would lead us to read them as "straight" récit. To do so implies a narrative paradox because in the literal narrative Charlemagne and Ganelon do not fight over ashen lances; in fact they do not fight at all literally. By the same token, Charlemagne is not at Aix-la-Chapelle, nor is he likely, within the "realistic" narrative language of the poem, to find himself suddenly attacked by a bear and a leopard, or defended by a hunting dog. While this literal reading would never be carried through in practice, our sub-conscious awareness of it provides a comparison of the language of the chant with that of récit, thereby signaling a distinction between them. The paradoxical, literal reading marks the chant as "non-récit."

The second or metaphoric reading, still using Pelc's theory, makes us aware that we have to do with "poetic" language that must be read differently from literal language. To achieve this reading requires "the suppression of all semantic features of the individual lexical items which are

ordinarily in contradiction."[19] It is at this level, for example, that "hanste fraisnine" must be understood in symbolic terms, and that the animal images must be read not as literal references to wild beasts, but in terms of the extended connotations 'dangerous', 'threatening', 'savage', ungoverned by human rules of socialization, and so on.

This metaphoric reading must be guided by principles of selection in choosing those semantic elements to be maintained and those to be rejected. It is at this level that the chant turns us back to the previous context. To know instinctively that hanste *fraisnine* must be identified with a human agent of protection for Charlemagne and France presupposes recollection of the contexts in which Roland, Oliver, and Turpin were valorized as protective agents and of the contexts in which Ganelon was cast in a rôle that threatened them. These are precisely the associative and dissociative groupings predicated in the sequence in which the Frankish heroes were introduced in laisses 14-25, and, in a more intense way still, in the sequence at Marsile's camp when Ganelon repeatedly insists on the need for Roland's death. The audience's competence for correctly reading these metaphoric laisses has thus been attained by the experience of the previous narrative. The metaphoric reading of laisses 56 and 57 actuates a review of the previous narrative sequences which provide the competence for reading them correctly, or at least for reading them in a satisfactory manner.

The metaphor itself plays a rôle in determining which of the previous passages will be helpful in providing the correct meaning. The metaphoric laisses are also narratives, even if they are narratives of indirection in comparison with the mimetic narrative of récit. This metaphoric narrative posits a situation which is more like some of the previous sequences than others, or rather it is more like the outcome which some of the previous sequences have led us to expect. The metaphoric narrative is a logical completion of the expectations aroused by sequences like laisses 14-25. When we read the metaphoric narrative, we identify it with those scenes that created the expectations we find realized in the metaphoric image. The result is that those scenes are given greater weight in our memory of the narrative than others because they associate with the metaphoric narrative.

This parallel between metaphor and certain of the previous sequences receives even greater explicitness in the third level of reading identified by Pelc's scheme, in which "the metaphor consists of a tacit recognition of the ordinary linguistic form which is semantically equivalent to the actual metaphoric reading. Normally, if uttered, this would involve an extensive,

sometimes tortuous paraphrase."[20] In our case, the ordinary linguistic form which would be semantically equivalent to the metaphoric reading would be those récit sequences which create the pattern of opposition which allows us, in the metaphor, to equate Ganelon with the hostile forces threatening Roland, the Franks, and Charlemagne. Similarly, it is those passages of *récit* which permit us to identify the lance with Roland (or the rear guard), the savage beasts with the Saracens, and so on. But it is also the paraphrase reading which leads us to interpret the chant as an image summarizing the whole trajectory of the story from the beginning to the impending battle. This paraphrase reading crystallises the expectations formulated in our consciousness by the previous narrative. It confirms the anticipated trajectory by predicating a "vision of things to come," a vision which, within the religious and poetic conventions of the period, must be equated with "truth." We now know that the pattern of discord and hostility will be confirmed by coming events. We know this, as Charlemagne "knows" it, not as a literal fact, but as a faith predication, i.e., we feel it without being able to confirm it in fact.

This brings us to the last aspect of metaphoric meaning which these laisses convey, their status as textual intentionality. The anthropologist, Hoyt Alverson, has recently argued that:

> there is another equally important aspect to metaphor that cannot be accounted for in terms of Pelc's threefold structure. Metaphor is unique among linguistic forms in containing as an explicit part of its semantic structure an assertion of the intentional standpoint from which the reference of the metaphor is to be viewed. In other words, metaphor appeals to us because it is an invitation to adopt an affective or other standpoint in regard to the reference of the metaphor. The power of this appeal lies in the fact that it is embedded in the semantic structure of the metaphor and is not uttered as a separate proposition. If we assume that all objects of experience are apprehended from some standpoint—that consciousness is consciousness of something for me as well as consciousness of the thing itself—then metaphor has the unique ability to represent the intentionality of consciousness in its very structure.[21]

Translated into terms of textual intentionality, this proposition may be used to argue that laisses 56 and 57 occur where they do because they have something to tell us about the larger significance of the actantial relationships and their equation to a system of values. Furthermore, it would seem to be important that the larger issues be raised prior to the final act of the

treasonous machinations leading to Roncevaux. Selecting only one of the intentional elements by way of example, it may be argued that the laisses make an explicit value judgment on Ganelon. As Diagram II illustrated, the negative valorisation of Ganelon begins from the moment he is introduced. In the récit sequence, however, the negative associations are implicit, requiring the kind of retroreading illustrated by the diagram to spell out. We cannot miss them in the récit, but they are subordinate to the narrative action. In the chant, the negative image of Ganelon is the narrative. Even without the overdetermined association of him with the savage beasts, we could not escape the evaluation conveyed by the image of him wresting the lance from Charlemagne and breaking it.

The value of the metaphoric intentionality lies in its explicitness: we are confronted with an unambiguous image conveying the threat Ganelon poses, just one laisse away from the moment when he will nominate Roland to command the rear guard. In a context of orality, this kind of explicitness is very important.

We may also assume that the evaluation at this point is meant for the audience and not for Charlemagne. The concluding line of each laisse specifically calls attention to the fact that the Emperor does not react to the vision by repeating the line:

Carles se dort, qu'il ne s'esveillet mie.

Later, he will recount the vision to Naimes (laisse 67), and still later, in the second horn episode, this vision will enable Charlemagne and Naimes to make the obvious connection between the ambush and Ganelon's embassy. Laisse 61 will also point to the vision as part of the explanation for Charlemagne's grief at the end of the rear guard nomination sequence. In the immediate context of laisses 55 and 56, however, the textual intentionality is aimed at the audience's consciousness.

Although the preceding analysis of the chant in these laisses did not deal specifically with the more discrete elements in 25 and 61, enough has been said to indicate how they, and the whole system of chant, function to make us aware of the segmentation of récit into narrative units. The periodic intervention of chant elements calls our attention to the narrative layering of the text, whereby one passage creates associative or dissociative groupings which will then be re-employed in roughly the same way at a subsequent moment in the narrative. Intratextual references, like the discourse

evocations by Roland in laisses 60 and 61 of the events of laisse 25, are used to link such homologous scenes. Chant elements make us aware of the intratextual references and of the homology of the scenes. Thanks to the consciousness of the narrative process fostered by the chant, we recognize later scenes as the predicated realization of earlier ones, thereby acquiring a consciousness of narrative complexity. Romanesque narrative proceeds by a system of incremental repetitions based upon a pattern of associative groupings predicated early in a text and then regularly repeated with variations.

While the chant serves to call attention to this textual process, it also, as we saw in the case of laisses 56 and 57, contributes to the "troping" of the narrative, to the infusion of it with a significance that is greater than that which could ever be achieved by the récit alone. One of the principal means for achieving significance lies in the potential which chant has for bringing intertextuality into the narrative. Space does not permit our exploring this important device; suffice it to say that it operates very much as the trope works in liturgical chants of the period, or as we saw the metaphoric laisses function. Either by direct reference, but more often by paraphrase, the chant evokes a text from Scripture which is then related to the narrative as the figurative language of the metaphor was related to the récit.

Although this paper has only been able to touch upon the essentials of a fascinating and complex problem, it demonstrates, I hope, how rich an understanding of the narrative system of epic may be attained if we reconsider our approach to the problem of chant and récit. Instead of looking for typological examples of lyric within the epic, we need to accept the chant as an integral part of the generative process and to analyze it accordingly.

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enabled me to complete the original Conference paper and this one. Finally, I would like to thank Patricia Harris Stäblein for inviting me to present this paper in her seminar, "The Semiology of Medieval Song," at the annual Modern Language Association meeting, held on December 30,1978.

[2]Eugene Vance, Reading the Song *of Roland* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), pp. 44-45.

[3]I am grateful to Professor F. R. P. Akehurst of the University of Minnesota for his observations regarding the rôle of chant in Zumthor's work as communicated in his comments on my paper at the "Semiology of Medieval Song" seminar.

[4]"Ce qui, d'instant en instant au cours du déroulement de la mélopée, se promet aux auditeurs, c'est moins la découverte d'une action (connue dans ses grandes lignes, dès le début du récit, sinon même avant qu'il ne commence), que la surprise et la joie provoquées par les agencements imprévisibles du chant: les retours, les alternances et les entrelacements divers des trois timbres mélodiques dont, selon toute apparence, disposait le chanteur. La phrase musicale s'identifie avec le vers, toute variation du chant entraîne une variation de la laisse." Essai de poétique médiévale (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 323-324. Cf. also, "Le mouvement narratif est périodiquement interrompu, dans les chansons anciennes surtout, par l'intervention d'éléments qui constituent des types entés sur le récit et qui fonctionnèrent peut-être, d une certaine époque, comme des indices de la nature particulière de ce discours." Ibid., p. 327.

[s]Ibid., p. 325.

[6]Image/Music/Text (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 93.

[7]Ibid., p. 93.

[8]These concepts are developed at greater length in the model I have proposed for medieval lyric and narrative texts in "A Poetics of Historicism? Recent Trends in Medieval Literary Study," Medievalia et Humanistica 8 (1977), 77-101, particularly, pages 95-99. This model was modified for the Charlemagne legend in "Signs of Royal Beauty Bright," *Olifant* 4 (October 1976) 1, pp. 21-47.

[9]Las Flors del Gay Saber, edited by Gatien-Arnoult (Paris and Toulouse, c. 1845), III, p. 194 ff.

[10]Jean Rychner, La Chanson de geste: Essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs (Geneva: Droz; Paris: Minard, 1955), p. 69.

[11]Michael Riffaterre, Semiotics *of Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 2.

[12]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[13]Ibid., p. 2.

[14]In my study, "Roncevaux and the Poetics of Place," op. cit., n. 1.

[15]Evans, p. 89.

[16]Ibid., p. 88.

[17]Ibid., p. 91.

[18]Quoted by Hoyt S. Alverson, Mind in the Heart of Darkness (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978), p. 199.

[19]Ibid.,p. 199.

[20]Ibid., p. 199.

[21]Ibid., p. 199.