

JOHN L. GRIGSBY

The Relics' Rôle in the *Voyage de Charlemagne*

WHEN THE ANGEL descends to Charles, after he and the French have come to desperate straits because of their boasting, he warns the Emperor never again to mock men, but assures him that not one of the *gabs* will fail:

Ne gabez ja mes hume, ço cumandet Christus!
Va, si fas cumencer, ja ne t'en faldrat uns!
(vv.676-677)¹

Since the angel's appearance depends directly on the relics, which Charles has just had brought forth so that the French could revere them, scholars have felt justified in generalizing that the *gabs* are accomplished through divine aid. At first glance, one would have difficulty in refuting such a statement, especially when confronted with the stellar cast of critics who have made it. Léon Gautier exploded with Victorian anger at the very idea that God helped Olivier execute his boast: "Que dire du poète qui fait intervenir la puissance divine dans l'accomplissement du *gab* d'Olivier? . . . Qu'est-ce enfin que ce Dieu, descendant du ciel pour consacrer une telle obscénité et sanctionner de tels crimes?"² Bédier, too, seemed shocked at this application: "Quelle force et quelle vertu [les reliques] communiquent-elles aux héros de notre roman? Qu'on se rappelle le service qu'elles rendent à Olivier."³ Heinermann, intent on demonstrating that the poem mocked Louis VII and Aliénor, declared: "Gewiss ist es

¹*Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Paul Aebischer (Genève: Droz, 1965). This edition is cited hereafter and checked against Eduard Koschwitz's sixth edition, i.e., the unchanged fifth edition reprinted by Guslav Thureau (Leipzig, 1913) in *Altfl. Bibliothek*, 2; and against Guido Favati, ed. *Il "Voyage de Charlemagne,"* *Biblioteca degli "Studi mediolatini e volgari,"* 4 (Bologna: Palmaverde, 1965). I do not, however, accept Aebischer's rejection of v. 726.

²Léon Gautier, *Les Épopées françaises*, 2^e éd. rev., T. 3 (Paris, 1880), p. 314. Cf. G. Paris, "La Chanson du Pèlerinage de Charlemagne," *Romania*, 9 (1880), p. 15.

³*Les Légendes épiques*, 3^e éd. (Paris: Champion, 1929), IV, p. 154.

richtig, daß die Reliquien diese Ausführung [der *gabs*] ermöglichen."⁴ He considers the realization of Olivier's boast as earthy enough to be appreciated by the public: "Man denke an den *gab* des Olivier, der auch für die Zuhörer des 12. Jahrhunderts derb genug war" (p. 543). Walpole accurately reports the text when he recalls that the French "must have recourse to the relics. So they pray; and lo and behold, an angel brings them Christ's assurance that all will be well."⁵ Sturm, whose principal aim is to prove that Charles is concerned about his stature, remarks in passing that "Divine aid enables the French to meet the test set by Hugon."⁶ Aebischer specifies that the first use of the relics is to permit Olivier, Guillaume, and Bernard, *all three*, to perform their vows.⁷ Favati, too, puts all three *gabs* under the influence of the relics, since Charles obtains from God 'l'aiuto per il loro compimento."⁸ Coulet sins by understatement when he admits that the relics "ont même un rôle dans la scène des *gabs*,"⁹ but seems to restrict this rôle to Charles's regrets and prayers in their presence. Neuschäfer asserts that the relics never fail and are never placed in doubt,¹⁰ but he sounds a dissenting note by interpreting the lines cited above as divine providence's very first threat to withdraw support from epic heroes, even while promising to spare them from a nasty disgrace (p. 89). Horrent gauges God's intervention on a scale which will require our closer analysis below.

The relatively small quantity of narrative devoted to the relics once led utilitarian-minded critics to imagine the existence of lost poems or dismembered parts. Gaston Paris was convinced that the *Voyage* concealed

⁴Theodor Heinermann. "Zeit and Sinn der Karlsreise," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 56 (1936), p. 543.

⁵Ronald N. Walpole, "The *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*: Poem, Legend, and Problem," *Romance Philology*, 8, No. 3 (February 1955), p. 177.

⁶Sara Sturm, "The Stature of Charlemagne in the *Pèlerinage*," *Studies in Philology*, 71 (1974), p. 7.

⁷*Les l'ersions norroises du "Voyage de Charlemagne en Orient": Leurs Sources*. Bibl. de la Fac. de Phil. et Lettres de l'Univ. de Liège. 140 (Paris: Soc. d'Éd. "Les Belles Lettres", 1956), p. 164.

⁸Favati. p. 50. Hereafter, previously cited works will be indicated, when clarity permits, by page number in text.

⁹Jules Coulet. *Études sur l'ancien poème français du Voyage de Charlemagne en Orient*, Publ. de la Soc. pour l'Étude des langues romanes, 19 (Montpellier, 1907). p. 267.

¹⁰Hans-Jörg Neuschäfer, "*Le Voyage de Charlemagne en Orient* als Parodie der Chanson de Geste," *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*, 10(1959), p. 90.

enough clues to explain away their regretted absence not only from the single extant manuscript of the French poem, but also from all prose versions and foreign translations.¹¹ Nineteenth-century scholarship betrayed a unique symbiosis of positivist practicality and romantic imagination, so that when literary links were missing, documents were conjured up. Thus Morf posited an entire stemma of vanished poems, all christened with imaginary titles (*Le Voeu*, *Miran*), to explain the traditions behind the *Voyage*.¹² The venerable reliance on Latin chronicles was perhaps more a hindrance than a help in understanding the rôle of the relics, for their function in such propaganda as the *Chronicon* Benedicti and the *Descriptio* are—or at least seem to be—designed to publicize and honor the relics of Saint Andrew's Abbey at Mount Soracte and the Church at Saint Denis.¹³ With constant recourse to material, external, evidence, it was inevitable that Bédier would announce that "*La Chanson du Pèlerinage* est essentiellement un récit de translation de reliques" (p. 154), and thereby obscure for decades the search for a literary function in the sacred objects. In his footsteps, Schürr believed that the *Voyage* glorified them,¹⁴ while Bates pointed to direct documentary evidence that "relics were pouring into France during the end of the 11th and first years of the 12th centuries."¹⁵ Bates almost agreed with Bédier that, because of the similar joyful tone in the accounts by Gregory of Tours, Flodoardus, Hildebert of Le Mans, and others, the *Voyage* could indeed be a celebration of the relics

¹¹Romania 9(1880), p. 35.

¹²"Étude sur la date, le caractère et l'origine de la chanson du *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*," *Romania*, 13 (1884), pp. 213 ff.

¹³Il "*Chronicon*" di Benedetto, monaco di S. Andrea del Soratte, ed. Giuseppe Zucchetti (Roma: Istituto storico italiano, 1920), pp. 111-116. In his edition of the *Descriptio*, Ferdinand Castets records a descriptive title based on the *explicit* of the Montpellier MS: *Relatio quomodo Karolus Magnus a Constantinopoli Aquisgranum attulerit clavum et coronam Domini, et qualiter haec eadem Karolus Calvus intulerit in Ecclesiam Sancti Areopagitae Dionysii, ac de institutione Indicti et visione huius Karoli utque corpus eiusdem Karoli in praefatum Ecclesiam translatum sit* in "Iter Hierosolymitanum," *Revue des Langues romanes*, 36 (1892), p. 439; cf. pp. 425f. and 474.

¹⁴Friedrich Schürr, *Das Altfranzösische Epos* (München, 1926), p. 165.

¹⁵Robert C. Bates, "Le *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*: A Baroque Epic" in *Studies by Members of the French Department of Yale University*, Decennial Volume, ed. Albert Feuillerat (New Haven, 1941), pp. 1-47, cf. esp. pp. 9f, n. 13. Bates cites evidence of relics coming to Cadouin in 1098, the Abbey of Redon (Brittany) in 1101, Paris and Saint Denis in 1109, Cluny in 1112, Clairvaux in 1119, and even Switzerland in 1125, dates which may aid in the temporal genesis of the poem but help little in its interpretation.

(*ibid.*). The poem's relationship to—and even dependence on—legends recorded in Latin is probable, but not assured. Coulet wondered why, however, if the *Voyage* aimed at honoring Saint Denis, the poet departed, on two important matters, from the *Descriptio*: (1) The Latin version presents for the first time in the legend a military expedition, rather than a peaceful pilgrimage (p. 193). (2) It retains Constantinople as the abode of the relics (p. 248 f.). Coulet suggests that once Saint Denis Abbey preferred Jerusalem to Constantinople as the source of its relics, the framework of the story left a void. Freed from dependence on the legend that placed Charles's acquisition of the relics in Constantinople, the poet filled the gap with his own imagination: "Suivant son propos déclaré dès le début, il a bien voulu faire du Voyage à Constantinople et de la scène des *gabs* le véritable sujet de son poème" (p. 326). Walpole takes the reaction a step further, and sees the French poem as "violent" (p. 182), a profanation of "all that is sanctified in the *Descriptio's* sanctimonious fraud" (p. 183). Heinermann (though chronologically earlier than Walpole) departed radically from the notion that the *Voyage* was inspired by ecclesiastical worries; he concluded that the poem neither mocked nor glorified the relics (p. 544). Yet Heinermann, too, sought catalysts outside the text, for by his insistence that the *Voyage* satirized Louis VII, he merely substituted political for religious incentives. Scheludko objected overtly to Bédier's contention that the essence of the poem lay in the transfer of the relics: "Das ist wohl ein Irrtum, der Bédier von seiner Pèlerinage-Theorie diktiert wurde."¹⁶ Scheludko's attack was based on the slim portion of the text devoted to the sacred souvenirs: he held that the poet was pursuing a purely artistic, literary goal, free of tendentiousness. Scheludko, however, replaced historico-religious reliances with fairytale myths where the Christian objects in this "Abenteuerroman" (*ibid.*) merely stand in for supernatural, pagan helpers (p. 318). In sum, the relics tend to sidetrack critics from the internal esthetics of this tightly constructed poem whose richness has not yet failed to yield treasures for those who approach it. Let us investigate what the relics do within the poem, as opposed to what the poem may or may not have done in its historical setting, or what in the text's environment may have prodded the author. Answers to such questions may flow from our inquiry.

Charles obtains the relics in Jerusalem in exchange for absolutely

¹⁶D. Scheludko. "Zur Komposition der Karlsreise," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 53 (1933), p. 317.

nothing, indeed for having blundered into a sacred place. He behaves like a country bumpkin, or a tired tourist, in the magnificent church where walls are covered with fine mosaic images.¹⁷ True to his egotistic conduct toward his wife back at Saint Denis, he steps around, or brazenly removes, the barriers closing off the Holy Seat where Christ presided over the Last Supper (vv. 115-120). The key lines are 117: "La trezime est enmi, ben seëlee e close"; and 120: "Li emperere s'asist, un petit se reposit." The astounded Jew, who impresses the equally naïve patriarch, is the link to Charles's unearned prestige in the Holy Land. No miracle is wrought here, nor glorious military conquest, only inappropriate behavior, for which a Perceval would surely have been chastised,¹⁸ as is Charles by the patriarch:

«Unques mais nen osat hoem en cest muster entrer,
Si ne li comandai u ne li oi ruvet!»
(vv. 149-150)

The Jerusalem leader, it is true, awards Charles the tag "magnus" (if we can believe the editors, for the MS lacks the compliment), but not because he has had the gall to barge into sacred places, rather for the Jew's conversion and the emperor's boastful reply, which appropriately includes the real reason for his journey to the Orient:

«Sire, jo ai nun Karle, si sui de France nez.
Duze reis ai cunquis par force e par barnez:
Li trezime vois querre, dunt ai oï parler.»
(vv. 151-153)

Only as an afterthought does he mention worshipping the Cross and Holy Sepulchre (vv. 154f.). Boasting is invariably rewarded in this story. Charles responds to the patriarch's flattery with a casual "cin cenz merciz" and adds, as if pricked by conscience, "de Deu" (v. 159). Then a further idea appears to come to mind capriciously on the spur of the moment: Since the patriarch has been so impressed for so little, why not go a bit further? "A half thousand thanks, he exclaims, and oh, by the way, give me, please, [he orders], some of your holy relics so that I can take them back to France

¹⁷Heinermann observes that they should have been, in all probability, mosaic (p. 529).

¹⁸One thinks not only of Perceval's blunders in Chrétien's romance where he egotistically and naïvely barges into the first tent he encounters, then assaults the young damsel therein, but also the vanity which inspires him to take the Perilous Seat in the *Didot-Perceval*. See William Roach ed., *Le Roman de Perceval* (Genève: Droz, 1959), vv. 635-833, and by the same editor, *The Didot Perceval* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1941), p. 149.

that I wish to decorate" (vv. 159-161). The last word in that citation is "enluminer," which editors are wont to translate as 'honorer', or 'verherrlichen', but which normally means simply 'illuminer', 'éclairer', or 'rendre la vue à'. Vanity, not, as Horrent claims, "pieuse jubilation,"¹⁹ moves this "pilgrim." Heinermann (p. 523) contends that this scene is not to be taken seriously, for listeners would not have flocked to the interior of Saint Denis to worship relics responsible for the realization of the *gabs*. But most critics stress the quantity of holy objects which the Emperor receives.

Bates hyperbolized that Charles "is given incredible quantities of the most priceless relics" (p. 10), while Horrent maintains that "il est normal qu'un pareil souverain reçoive des reliques en abondance, d'autant que son prototype historique en était grand collectionneur et que bien des églises s'honoraient, à tort ou à raison, d'avoir bénéficié de ses pieuses libéralités."²⁰ Neuschäfer (p. 89) considers the list so long that the accumulation of one holy memento after another reminds him of Rabelais's techniques for laughter, but this comment brings us a bit prematurely to their function when we should tarry longer over the simple notion of quantity. Paris and Scheludko are correct in their perception that these objects occupy a relatively small portion of the text, but only if we compare the share to, say, the *gab* scene, which dominates the poem from v. 415 to v. 801 (from which the relics are not entirely absent). The presentation and the list fill some thirty alexandrines, vv. 160-190, which in this short poem of only 870 lines must be considered an important quantity, for this storyteller is capable of compressing a good deal of narrative action into very short passages. Does he not squeeze the initial conflict into the first 57 lines, reduce the climax, the contest of statures between the two monarchs, to one *laisse* (vv. 802-815), and relate the final resolution in only 12 lines (vv. 858-870)? Obviously what has caused modern readers to hesitate over the enumeration is, in this rapidly moving narrative, an inordinate delay, the focus on what might be compared to a laundry list, a catalog, or a telephone book. This shift in style surely inspired such reactions as "incredible quantities" and "reliques en abondance," for few scholars have paused long enough to make a precise inventory. Let us

¹⁹Jules Horrent, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne, essai d'explication littéraire avec des notes de critique textuelle*, Bibl. de la Faculté de Phil. et Lettres de l'Univ. de Liège, 158 (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1961), p. 39.

²⁰"Du Voyage de Charlemagne selon l'édition de Guido Favati," *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 12 (1969), p. 166.

itemize:

1. Saint Simeon's arm (v. 163)
2. Saint Lazarus's head (v. 164)
3. Saint Stephen's blood (v. 165)
4. Christ's shroud (v. 170)
5. A nail from the Cross (v. 175)
6. The Crown of Thorns (v. 176)
7. The Chalice blessed by Christ (v. 177)
8. The silver plate [from the last Supper] (vv. 178-179)
9. The knife [from the Last Supper] (v. 180)
10. Saint Peter's beard (v. 181)
11. Saint Peter's hair: "des chevols de sun chef" (v. 181)
12. Holy Mary's milk with which she nursed Jesus (v. 187)
13. A piece of Mary's holy chemise (v. 189).²¹

Favati and Aebischer count the hirsute remains of St. Peter as a single relic, but the former admits the possibility of splitting hairs, so to speak, in order to distinguish two objects,²² while the latter reports that both the Welsh version and the *Karlamagnús saga* (Branch VIII) add another relic: a slipper that the Jews removed from the Virgin's foot.²³ One may not be as confident as Aebischer that the Anglo-Norman text is incomplete, because the very vacillation between twelve and thirteen relics has fascinating hermeneutic potential, as we shall see later on. For the moment, we shall leave in limbo the possibilities of numerological interpretations, some of which are doubtless already obvious to the reader.

Horrent denied that the relics "a plentet" (v. 162) aim at comic effect: "Il [le poète] ne les entasse pas dans un pêle-mêle risible,"²⁴ while Aebischer considers them part of a "bric-à-brac épique . . . perfectionné et utilisé . . . dans un dessein comique."²⁵ Both Neuschäfer (p. 89) and Favati (p. 56) note, however, that immediately after these objects come into Charles's possession, they begin to produce miracles right and left without any edifying purpose, as if they, like Charles (v. 183), were bursting with

²¹The last relic is described in the text as "de la sainte chemise," where the proto-partitive suggests my translation "a piece of."

²²Favati, p. 52, n. 83.

²³Aebischer, *Versions norroises*, p. 163.

²⁴Horrent, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, p. 42.

²⁵*Versions norroises*, p. 170.

joy, as if they were incontinent:²⁶ On the spot they restore a paralytic who had not budged in seven years (vv. 191-195). A bit later, after being appropriately encased in a golden ark, they open fords and cure the lame, the blind, the deaf:

Les reliques sunt forz; granz vertuz i fait Deus,
Qu'il ne venent a ewe, n'en partissent les guet,
Ne n'encuntrent aveogle, ne seit reluminet;
Les cuntrez i redrescent e les muz funt parler.
(vv. 255-258)

By "illuminating" the blind, they have quickly shown their obedience to Charles's very words (cf. v. 161). By breaching rivers, they assure the French of a safe journey home by land or sea and prove with alacrity their power over water. There can be no doubt that the relics announce the second, the larger, and the major portion of the poem, the Constantinople adventure, and that their function is internal and literary. They do indeed play a rôle in the *gab* scene, as Coulet concedes, but not with a blanket force which will bring to reality all the boasts. Horrent is thoroughly justified in scolding those numerous, hurried critics who assume that God through the relics helps Olivier to seduce the Emperor's daughter or to carry out his awesome sexual prowess.²⁷ The French knight has no need of divine aid nor is given any, since nowhere during the realization of his *gab* are the relics or God mentioned. We need but contrast the poet's account of Olivier's bedtime encounter with the blatant formulaic announcements of God's intervention when the sacred objects were wreaking miracles right and left from Jerusalem to Constantinople: twice at their transfer into Charles's possession: "Les reliques sunt forz, Deus i fait grant vertuz" (v. 192); "Deus i a fait vertut" (v. 196), and for good measure, again en route (v. 255), in all cases strictly linked to wonder-making. Surely the poet's silence during Olivier's night of joy and erotic might is a patent sign that neither God nor the relics participated directly or indirectly. Thus the angel's announcement (v. 677) that no *gab* would fail takes on a different meaning, since it becomes a prediction rather than a promise.

Guillaume, who accomplishes the second *gab* required by Hugon,

²⁶Aebischer's adverb "incontinent" (ed. p. 14) inspired, I admit, my choice of the adjective to characterize the action of the relics, an action both immediate and exaggeratedly abundant.

²⁷Horrent. *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, p. 100. n. 3.

was known for his strength. In both the *Couronnement de Louis* and the *Charroi de Nîmes* did he not kill his enemies with a powerful blow to the jaw or by tossing them out of sight?²⁸ His arms and fists were deadly and uncommon weapons. To perform his boast, he had to throw a ball, which normally thirty men could not lift, through the palace wall with enough power to blast off some forty yards. Guillaume makes no sign of the Cross, offers no prayers, but takes off his robes, seeks out the heavy missile and picks it up with his own muscles: "A une main la levat, si la trait par vertud" (v. 748). The destruction of the promised forty yards of the fortress curtain, however, involves a push from on high:

Ne fu mie par force, mes par la Deu vertud,
Pur amur Carlemaine quis i out acundüit.²⁹
(vv. 751-752)

The execution of the *gab* results from a collaboration between God and Guillaume, and God joins in only for Charlemagne's sake (v. 752). Horrent recognizes that the human performer is God's instrument, hence that God acts indirectly.³⁰ It is obvious that the poet has embarked on a dramatic gradation of heavenly intervention. While Olivier was able to achieve his goal on his own, Guillaume needed support to complete, though not to begin, his feat. Finally, the last, the crucial *gab* will necessitate God's solo performance. The "trinitarian" symmetry in the poet's construction is a cherished and familiar technique.

Need we repeat with Horrent that the fulfillment of Bernard's boast is "un vrai miracle"?³¹ Bernard, called forth by Hugon to act, rushes to Charles, asks him to pray (v. 772), hurries to the river bed, and forms the sign of the Cross over the waters:

Deus i fist tel miracle, li glorius del cel.
Que tute la grant ewe fait isir de sun bied. (vv. 774-775)

²⁸*Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. E. Langlois, Société des anciens textes français (Paris, 1887; repr. 1968), vv. 130-133. *Le Charroi de Nîmes*, eds. G. De Poerck, R. Van Deyck, R. Zwaenepoel, I (Saim-Aquilin-de-Pacy: Mallier, 1970), vv. 1458-62; cf. vv. 55-57, where his heavy stride frightens bystanders in the court.

²⁹Aebischer emends to *Par amur*, erroneously in my opinion. Both Favati and Koschwitz retain *Par amur*. Favati inserts no comma at the end of v. 751.

³⁰Favati believes, perhaps correctly, that God is Charles's personal divinity and would interpret the passage as "by God's strength for the love of Charlemagne." Horrent is precise: "Dieu a donc donné au fier bras de Guillaume ta vigueur nécessaire, Guillaume n'est qu'un instrument de Dieu" (*Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, p. 101).

³¹Horrent, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, p. 103.

The event happens so quickly that we wonder if Charles had time to pray, for the relics have once again demonstrated their aspect "*incontinent*." The Emperor and his barons are forced, like monkeys, up a nearby pine, ancient and large enough to hold them, where they now pray for God's protection.³² Though the relics are not mentioned here, we recognize their traits. They resemble Pandora's Box, or a jack-in-the-box, or Roland's *desmesure*; they resemble especially the *gabs* themselves. Bernard's boast is indeed made possible by the relics, but for a moment they are out of control, and the angel made no guarantee of arresting their progress, once underway. Despite these identifiable signs, they are not explicitly mentioned in tight liaison with the accomplishment of the last two *gabs*. Horrent sees in them an intermediary: "Elles président au triomphe plus qu'elles ne semblent y coopérer."³³ True, the formula we noticed in vv. 192, 196, and 255 has temporarily disappeared. Horrent interpreted this absence as deference to the relics, a respectful attitude toward them, and lays the responsibility for the extravagant performance on God himself. The poet, he hypothesized, probably feared compromising the holy objects: "Sans doute . . . préfère-t-il laisser au Dieu bonhomme du moyen âge la responsabilité de ceux-ci. . . . Il traite les reliques avec une circonspection telle qu'elle bannit toute intention d'irrévérence" (*ibid.*). Perhaps he is correct, for the waters are withdrawn when a rare flash of humility prompts Charles to beg Jesus to stop the flood (vv. 788-790).³⁴ God quickly complies, as the poet emphasizes by his return to the formula: "Deus i fist grant vertut pur amur Carlemaigne" (v. 791). The sacred mementos have served as a communication line between Charles and the powers on high (the angel, God, and Jesus) but come out of the embarrassing situation unscathed. Their usefulness has ended now, however, for the story has reached its climax and draws rapidly to a close.³⁵ The poet dis-

³²For v. 780 Horrent (*Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, p. 104) prefers Koschwitz's emendation to *pui*. Aebischer (ed., p. 94) and Favati convincingly argue for the retention of *pin*. The latter recalls that King Marc climbs a tree to spy on Tristan and Iseut (p. 27, n. 34).

³³Horrent, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, p. 90. Coulet also discerns a subtlety in divine intervention. He claims that God permits "la double erreur grâce à laquelle la fille du roi et Hugon lui-même croient que [le *gab* d'Olivier] est accompli" (p. 363), but maintains that God "really does all" of Guillaume's feat. When he contends that Charles and the Peers pray for help to bring on the flood rather than to escape its wrath (*ibid.*), he distorts the text.

³⁴The Emperor displays a single other instance of charity when he pardons his wife (v. 869), but only after he has proved her wrong, just as he feels humility here only after his opponent has been shamed.

³⁵The relics' crucial display of power occurs when they cause the angel to descend, but

penses with them in two lines at the end (vv. 866f.), almost as an afterthought, but in a statement that conforms more or less to the supposedly historical distribution of relics across the realm. This final allusion nods at legend, at those Latin chronicles that may have guided the author. But another literary predecessor looms even larger than those documents stored in church vaults or libraries: the *Chanson de Roland*.

Walpole justifiably conjectures that the *jongleur* who sang the *Roland* of a morning at the Lendit fair may have chanted the *Voyage de Charlemagne* in the afternoon.³⁶ Favati has built an almost airtight case confirming what virtually every scholar admits today: that the author of the *Voyage* knew intimately the *Roland*. He contends that the relics in one spring from those in the other. Here is his argument. In *laisse* 173 we read that Durendal's pommel contains:

La dent seint Perre e del sane seint Basilie
E des chevels mun seignor seint Denise;
Del vestement i ad seinte Marie.
(vv. 2346-2348. éd. Bédier)

Favati (pp. 51f.) links these to the *Voyage* in finely honed parallels. He reasons that the later poet "outdoes" his predecessor by amplifying the collection of relics.³⁷ Thus, if Roland owned Peter's tooth, the patriarch yields to Charlemagne both beard and hair from the saint. For the blood of Saint Basil, Father of the Greek Church, Charles receives blood of Saint Stephen, the very first Christian martyr. For the hair of Saint Denis, the *Voyage* poet steps up to the Prince of the Apostles. Favati relies here on a qualitative correspondence rather than a strictly numerical equation, for the hirsute remains serve a double function in his schema. Finally, the Virgin Mary's clothing is made precise by naming her chemise, and her motherly quality stressed by adding her milk. If we include the shoe that Aebischer reports from other versions, we add grist to Favati's mill. But he himself fills in his quadrangle by suggesting that the four objects in Durendal have been multiplied by three, to total the twelve sacred memen-

the formulaic "la Deu vertut" is absent at this juncture. Thus Maureen Cromie errs when she observes that the formula appears whenever the poet mentions the relics' energy. See her "Style formulaire dans *le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*," *Revue des Langues romanes*, 77 (1967), p. 39.

³⁶Walpole, art. cit. n. 5 supra, p. 174.

³⁷Is not this technique the "Ueberbietung" identified by Ernst Robert Curtius? See his *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, third edition (Bern: Francke, 1961), pp. 171-175, and cf. Douglas Kelly's discussion of *amplificatio* in *Medieval Imagination* (Madison, Wisconsin University press, 1978), p. 70.

tos offered to Charles in Jerusalem: "La corrispondenza in crescendo ci sembra perfetta; Non solo: se le reliquie di Rolando sono quattro, numero legato ad una tradizione particolare, quelle che il Patriarca dà a Carlo-magno sono distribuite in tre successive offerte, le quali paraltro avvengono secondo un'effettiva quadripartizione" (p. 52). He divides them into three groups (as Horrent had done independently): (1) saints' remains, (2) souvenirs of the Passion, and (3) mementos of Mary; but separates the second group into (a) objects associated with Christ, and (b) remains of Saint Peter. Favati's discovery that the *Voyage* frequently mimicks the *Roland* lends credence to his hypothesis concerning the amplification of the relics.

Walpole, Aebischer, and Coulet, among others, have argued that the *Descriptio* was a source, at least a springboard, for the composition of our poem. Comparison to the relics cited in the *Descriptio* leads to significant observations. The Latin chronicler relates that Charles was called to Constantinople on a military expedition (in sharp contrast to his mission in the *Voyage*), where he expelled the pagans and obtained relics which the Empress Helen (not a patriarch) had safeguarded in her city (not in Jerusalem). The holy objects materialize supernaturally and they too produce miracles by curing the insane, the lame, lepers, hunchbacks, and paralytics, as Charles makes his way back to Aix-la-Chapelle.³⁸ But the precise inventory in the *Descriptio* concerns us now:

Partem scilicet spinee corone Domini et octo spinas cum robore
ubi infixae fuerunt et unum de clavis ac frustrum de cruce ipsius
et sudarium, et beatissime Marie semper virginis interulam
quam in ipso partu habuit ac fasciam qua strinxit eum in prese-
pio, et brachium sancti senis Symeonis et alia multa.³⁹

Echoed in the *Voyage* are: (1) the Crown of Thorns, not just a part of it nor eight "spinas"; (2) the Crucifix Nail; (3) the Shroud; (4) Mary's garment; (5) Simeon's arm. These five can be arranged in three groups, just as in the *Voyage*:

³⁸Bédier summarizes the episode in *Légendes épiques*, IV, p. 124. For the text, see Castets ed., p. 460.

³⁹Pp.460f., ed. Castets.

- I. Saints: Simeon's arm
- II. Passion: Crown of Thorns
Crucifix Nail
Shroud
- III. Mary: chemise ("interulam").

The three groups with three items in the center are surely no startling configuration in a medieval artifact, and the *Voyage* sets them off over three *laissez* punctuated with the formulaic boundary marker: "Karlemaines l'en rent saluz et amistez" (vv. 166, 182, 190). Without wishing to overemphasize the trite preference for the number three,⁴⁰ we note that the tripartite organization corresponds to the number of *gabs* performed, and further that the inventory of thirteen relics announces with extreme precision the number of *gabs* spoken. But does our poet enumerate twelve or thirteen holy objects? I am convinced that thirteen is correct, especially if we accept Aebischer's addition (Mary's shoe). Nonetheless the hesitation between twelve and thirteen offers a dynamic parallel with Charles's boast in vv. 152f.: that he has conquered twelve kings and intends to vanquish a thirteenth.

But let us cast our gaze on the relics that the poet has apparently added to those in the *Descriptio*. Aside from the first group, which has not only been tripled but now includes blood, the centerpiece proposes a chalice, a plate, and a knife, while in the last section the poet thinks of a mother's milk. If God appears in this tale as a "bonhomme du moyen âge,"⁴¹ it is not sacrilegious to argue that these four additions concern nourishment, dining instruments, or meals. Are not the *gabs*, according to custom, pronounced in association with meals? Roland's famous boast to remain facing the enemy even after death is made at "une feste anoel" (v. 2860, ed. Bédier), i.e., at a major liturgical celebration,⁴² where eating was an indispensable festivity. Thus the "added" relics unify their qualitative nature to the formal, mathematical structure of the principal episode: the *gab* scene.

A. Formal correspondences within the *Voyage*:

- i. 13 relics; 13 *gabs*; 13 kings

⁴⁰Cf. Curtius, pp. 499f.

⁴¹Horrent, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, p. 90.

⁴²See Lucien Foulet's Glossary to the *Roland* in Joseph Bédier, *La Chanson de Roland commentée* (Paris, 1927), p. 334.

ii. 3 groups; 3 *gabs* performed

B. Qualitative contrasts with alleged source:

- i. *Descriptio*: Miscellaneous religious reminders
- ii. *Voyage*: Objects connected with nutrition
(blood, cup, plate, knife, milk)

To boast, as to eat, one must use the mouth. The ultimate etymon of *gab* and its congeners, may be the shape, action, or sound of the mouth.⁴³ The "added" relics, then, reflect the *gab*, that "custom" of boasting after an evening meal just before bedtime to which Charles refers (v. 655).

The poet seems to know that much of his tale is phony. Aebischer holds that the relics themselves are inauthentic, but their authenticity concerns us less than the author's attitude towards them. The narrator never intervenes to support their genuineness. Indeed his voice does not once sound the traditional appeals for his audience to listen, nor to claim a source, perhaps because it was generally known to his public.⁴⁴ Favati has perspicaciously shown the reliance on the *Roland*, and Walpole doubts not that *jongleurs* had both the *Roland* and the *Voyage* in their repertoires. The author knew about relics, about Charles's legendary journey to the Orient, about claims of authenticity, and probably about forgeries.⁴⁵ Sources intrigued him, e.g., the origin of Charles's glorified label *magnus*. He was informed about customs and had perhaps even witnessed vestiges of venerable Germanic rituals, for he applied the word *gab* in a unique way to describe them.⁴⁶ Perhaps he modeled his *eschut*, the listener, on the

⁴³See Theodor Braune, "Zur Wortgeschichte: Über afr. *gibe*, fr. *gibet*, *gibelot*, *gibelet*, *gable*, *gabet*, *gabre*, *gober* und *gaffe*," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 36 (1912), pp. 80-83.

⁴⁴Janet H. Caulkins's essay on "Narrative Interventions: The Key to the *Jest* of the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*" appears directed more toward the "Implied Author's" treatment of characters rather than the narrator's interruptions. See *Études de Philologie romane et d'histoire littéraire offertes à Jules Horrent*, eds, Jean-Marie d'Heur and Nicolette Cherubini (Liège, 1980), pp. 47-55.

⁴⁵Forgery was rampant in England but less so in France. See M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England, 1066-1307* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 234f.

⁴⁶See Erik Von Kraemer, "Sémantique de l'ancien français *gab* et *gaber* comparée à celle des termes correspondants dans d'autres langues romanes" in *Mélanges de Philologie et de Linguistique offerts à Tauno Nurmela*, *Annales Universitatis Turkuensis*, série B, tome 103 (Turku, 1967), pp. 77-81.

stranger's opponent in the flyting.⁴⁷ Surely, he had visited (or lived in) Paris, Chartres, Saint Denis, but never Constantinople, or Jerusalem. He had heard of one or two churches in the Holy City (Heinermann attempts to identify them precisely)⁴⁸ and was impressed with Constantinople's fame. I disagree with Favati's contention (pp. 62f.) that this city could have been patterned on any wealthy town of Southern France or Italy, but believe instead that the mere name of this fabulous oriental metropolis is necessary to the thrust of the poem. His knowledge of Constantinople is, however, so skeletal that he fleshes it out with his own imagined landscape, or, as some have claimed, with fragments of Celtic legends (Hu Gudarn, the Ploughman King; the Otherworld).⁴⁹ His geographical familiarity stretches in Western Europe to Hungary; thereafter he invents, or distorts, the map.⁵⁰ We know nothing then of his status except that he was a gifted artist with knowledge of church matters, relics, knights, drinking, boasting, and traditions. Was his poem condemned, destroyed by ecclesiastical guardians of Christian orthodoxy? Official church attitude may explain why a single MS has survived, and that one precious document up to the nineteenth century only, when history may have repeated itself. This poet has a constant twinkle in his eye, a smile on his lips, as if he, like the French in Constantinople, had just finished a satisfying meal with copious amounts of wine. Was he bragging about the relics in Saint Denis or mocking them? Both 'boast' and 'mockery' live side by side in the semantic domain of *gab*. His poem, which scholars have consistently recognized as different and exceptional, is not an epic. It is a boast, a tall story, a *gab*.⁵¹

JOHN L. GRIGSBY

Washington University in St. Louis

⁴⁷A preliminary comparison between *gab* and flyting is made in John L. Grigsby, "*Gab* épique, mais *gab* lyrique?" which is scheduled to appear in the *Actes du VIII^e Congrès international de langue et littérature d'oc et d'études franco-provençales, Liège 1981*. On the structure of the flyting, see Carol J. Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferth Episode," *Speculum*, 55 (1980), pp. 444-468.

⁴⁸Heinermann, art. cit., n. 4 supra, pp. 526-535.

⁴⁹Walpole, p. 185; A. Rejhon, "Les Attaches du Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople avec le monde celtique," *Olifant*, 8, No. 4 (Summer 1981), pp. 441f.

⁵⁰Aebischer, *Versions norroises*, p. 103.

⁵¹See John L. Grigsby, "A Note on the Genre of the *Voyage de Charlemagne*" in *Essays in Early French Literature Presented to Barbara M. Craig*, eds. Norris J. Lacy and Jerry C. Nash (York, S.C.: French Literature Publishing Co., 1982), pp. 1-8.