Leslie C. Brook

The Concluding Laiisses of the Post-Oxford Roland Manuscripts

Once Ganelon has been put to death "par merveillus ahan" in the Oxford Roland (0), there are two concluding laisses (CCXCVII and CCXCVIII), which form a kind of coda and show a change of mood from the violence of the two laisses that immediately precede them; for in those two preceding laisses Ganelon's kinsmen had been hanged (laisse CCXCV), and then Ganelon himself dragged by four horses, a death described in grim detail (laisse CCXCVI). Moreover, a stern moral had been delivered in the last lines of these laisses, underscoring the heinousness of Ganelon's crime: "Ki hume traïst, sei ocit e altroi" (v. 3959), and "Horn ki traïst altre, nen est dreiz qu'il s'en vant!" (v. 3974).

The concluding two laisses are not, however, divorced from these actions, which continue to reverberate through the opening lines of each of them: "Quant li empereres ad faite sa venjance" (v. 3975), and "Quant l'emperere ad faite sa justice" (v. 3988). The similarity of these lines serves to link the final two laisses and to show clearly that in this poem vengeance and justice are synonymous; but beyond the opening lines a calmer mood prevails. In laisse CCXCVII there is in effect a continuation of the process of dealing with those who had in some way been opposed to Charles, but there could be no greater contrast in adjacent laisses than between the brutal death of Ganelon and the gentle treatment of Bramimunde, whose baptism and conversion to Christianity "par veire conoisance" is described in as much detail as had been the traitor's punishment. The fate of Bramimunde could easily have been left at the close of the Baligant episode, when Saragossa was overrun and the queen taken captive: "En France dulce iert menee caitive: /Ço voelt li reis, par amur cunvertisset" (vv. 3673-4). By

1 All quotations from the Oxford text are taken from La Chanson de Roland, ed. Frederick Whitehead (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1942).
devoting a whole laisse to the confirmation of this action the poet demonstrates in softer vein a symbolic triumph for the Word, as important in its way as the destruction of incorrigible and militant enemies had been—an attitude much to the fore throughout the text and well summed-up by Turpin when he said of Abisme: "Cel Sarraz[ins] me semblet mult herite; / Mielz est mult que jo l'alge ocire" (vv. 1484-5).

This change of tone in laisse CCXCVII also prepares the way for Charles's change of mood as described at the beginning of the final laisse: "Quant l'emperere ad faite sa justise / E esclargiez est la sue grant ire . . . " (vv. 3988-9). Here the poet expresses something akin to the close of Greek tragedy and to its later echo in Milton's famous line: "And calm of mind all passion spent" (Samson Agonistes, v. 1758); but the emperor's subsequent sleep of peace is broken by a final visitation from the Angel Gabriel, summoning Charles to yet further conflict with the same brisk directness that he had used in the Baligant episode ("Reis magnes, que fais tu?" v. 3611): "Carles, sumun les oz de tun emperie! / Par force iras en la tere de Bire . . . " (vv. 3994-5). Charles's weary reaction is that of the miles Christi whose task is never complete. He feels daunted ("Li emperere n'i volsist aler mie," v. 3999), expresses a heartfelt cry ("'Deus, ' dist li reis, 'si penuse est ma vie!" v. 4000), and he weeps, not so much for the losses at Roncevaux, but with sorrow at the constant need to combat the forces of evil.2

In none of the later versions—Venice IV (V4), Venice VII (V7), Châteauroux (C), Cambridge (7), Paris (P), and Lyon (L)—is this particular structural and thematic tidiness reflected. Nonetheless, while Ganelon's guarantors are either forgotten (P, L), or flee (C, V7), or are simply released (T), and the conversion of Bramimunde is never mentioned, these later versions do have effective and interesting conclusions of their own. After the death of Ganelon in all of them there is a vers charnière which signals the conclusion, and which is virtually identical in all six manuscripts:

2 For a recent discussion of the final line of the Oxford Roland, see David Hult, "'Ci fait la geste': Scribal closure in the Oxford Roland" Modern Languages Notes 97 (1982): 890-905.
"Baron,' dist .K., 'or ai quan que je vel'" (V7). In the case of V4 and P this line is the start of the final laisse of nine (V4) or eight (P) lines. In essence these two manuscripts have an identical conclusion:

"Baron,—dist Carlo —or ai quant ie voil,
Quant cullu ai destrut, qui m'à tollù l'orgoil,
Rollant et Oliver per cui repolser soil,
Li doç pers de France mist en si malle voil.
Por tant cum ià mes nes ne verà mi oil,
Per lui conquis e Rome e si l'Almaroil,
Laasi sa columbe oit les carboncles a soil,
Dont ben voit la crareté e li lusoil
Dous grant leves iusque la val de si doil."
(V4, vv. 6041-9)

"Baron," dist Karles, "or ai quan que je voil,
Quant cel ai mort qui m'a tolu l'orgoil
Rollant et Olivier par cui reposer soil;
Les .XII. pers a mis en mal aquoil.
Por tant com vive nes verront mais mi oil;
Par euls conquis Jone et Tyre et Marsoil.
J'ai laissié la columbe et l'escharboucle a foil,
Bien le puet on veoir jusques el val de Doil."
(P, vv. 6823-30)

The text thus ends with a speech by Charles, in which he expresses his satisfaction at having taken vengeance as well as his regret at the loss of Roland, Oliver, and the twelve peers. This regret is, however, partially alleviated by the wistful pride in past conquests.

3 All quotations from V7 have been copied from the photographic reproduction of the text which forms vol. V (1942) of R. Mortier, Les Textes de la Chanson de Roland, 10 vols. (Paris: La Geste Francor, 1940-4).


5 Mortier (VI: 183) prints in error for v. 6824 "Quant j'ai venglé Rollant le tres sené," thus reproducing v. 6821 of the preceding laisse.
achieved with their aid, and the thought of the monument (colunbe) erected somewhere in Roland's honour. The reference to this and its precise nature are far from clear. G. Gasca Queirazza translates the last three lines of V4 as follows:

Lasciai la sua colonna con i carbonchi al sole,
Di cui bene si vede il chiarore e il lucoare
Due grandi leghe fino alla valle del suo dolore;6

and in a note to v. 6047 states that the colonna "alludesse ad un monumento lasciato da Carlo Magno a ricordo di suo nipote e dei compagni periti a Roncisvalle."7 Following the reading suggested long ago by P. Jacob,8 G. Robertson-Mellor in his edition puts at the beginning of line 6047: "La asis a columbe . . . "9 This plausible reading gives added importance to the interpretation of l'Almaroil, which in André Moisan, Répertoire, is merely described as a "pays conquis par Roland,"10 while Gasca Queirazza translates it as "il Morocco." As for the final line, Robertson-Mellor is again probably correct in reading "jusque la val de Sidoil." The name Siduel occurs in V7C (see below), and Moison cross-references "Doil (iusques el val de)" in P with "Siduel (val de)," which he describes as "une des limites de l'empire de Charlemagne."

Wherever this monument was thought to be, it seems to pre-date the

6 Queirazza 315.

7 Queirazza 361.

8 Paul Jacob, Dissertations sur quelques points curieux de l'histoire de France et de l'histoire littéraire, VII: Sur les manuscrits relatifs à l'histoire de France et à la littérature française conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Italie (Paris: 1839) 151 (Note in Queirazza 361).


events of Roncevaux and to serve as a memorial to Roland, in Charles's eyes, shining out like a beacon in a conquered land; a poetic touch that provides an effective ending to the poem. Nevertheless J. Horrent does not regard the ending of \( V4P \) as particularly satisfactory; in his view it is older than that of \( C, V7, T, \) and \( L, \) which he prefers.\(^{11}\)

Among these other manuscripts, \( V7 \) and \( C \) contain the nearest equivalent to the final laisse of \( V4P, \) with the same mixture of emotions, but with no reference to the monument built in Roland's honor. The rhyme is practically the same as in \( P: \)

"Baron," dist .K., "or ai quan que je vel,
Quant cil est mort qui m'a tolu l'otel,
Mes nies Rolant, par cui repossier suel,
Li .XII. pers a mis en mals evel.
Tant com vivrai je n'en vesrai mais el;
Par als conquis et Valence et Morel,
Et tote Rome el valde Siduel." (\( V7 \))\(^{12}\)

\( V7 \) and \( C \) then add a further, final laisse. Consisting of twelve lines in \( V7, \) it expresses the general rejoicing at Ganelon's death ("Grant joie en fu . . . ") and has Charles returning to his palace at Mont Leon (Laon), addressing his summoned barons "Mult bellement," and embracing them. They request leave to depart, which he grants, since they have now performed the task for which they were


\(^{12}\) This laisse is almost identical in \( C \) (Mortier IV:222, vv. 8181-7):

"Baron," dist .K., "or ai quanqe je vel,
Quant cil est morz qi m'a tolu l'orguel,
.R. le conte par che repousser suel,
Les doze pers a mis en mal esvel,
Tant com je vive nel vesrai mas itel.
Per als conquis je Rome,Valence et Morel,
Palernes lonz (sic) jusqu'el Val de Siduel"

I have modified Mortier's version slightly after checking his text against the manuscript.
retained, namely, to advise on what should be done with Ganelon. As they go Charles is left "dolanz et abosmez," thinking of Roland:

Quant Guenellon fu a dolor livrez,  
Grant joie en fu par tote la citez;  
Karle li rois a Mon Leon tornez,  
Sus en la salle del pales est montez;  
Tot ses barons a devant lui mandez,  
Mult bellement les a araisonez,  
E doucement les a toz acolez.  
Congié demandent, et il lor a donez;  
Li rois sospire, de Rollant s'est menbrez.  
Cil s'en tornent, avalent les degrez;  
Charle remest, dolanz et abosmez.  
Chascuns s'en est en son reng intrez.

Unlike the triumphant symbol of V4P, this final image is of Charles sadly alone, an ending which Horrent finds poetically superior. In C, which throughout is very close to V7, the final laisse does not mention the rejoicing, but has Charles returning to his hall to receive his barons and embrace them, and then let them depart, as in V7. However, in place of the final line of V7, C has three lines of its own:

Quant .K. fu en la sale montez  
Apres ice qe il (sic) fu retornez,  
De Guenellon qi si fu tormentez,  
Toz ses barons a devant lui mandez.  
Mot bèlement les a araisonez,  
Et doucement les a toz acolez;  
Congié demandent et il lor a donez.  
Li rois sospire, de .R. s'est menbrez.  
Et cil s'en tornent, s'avalent les degrez.  
Et Charll' remest, dolanz et abosmez.  
De cest roman nus n'en seitz plus chantez.  
Cil vus beneie q'en la crois fu penez  
Et au terz jor de mort resuscitez.

13 Horrent 206.
Any distinction in earlier times between the designation of epic and romance composition is here blurred (romein, v. 8198), just as in a scribal explicit to V4 we read: "Explicit liber tocius romani Roncisvalis. Deo Gracias. Amen." The pious ending of C reflects the tone of the often lengthy prayers offered at various moments within this text and in all the later versions.

In T the first of the closing laisses concentrates totally on a feeling of relief and of thanksgiving:

"Barons," dist Charles, "or ai quanque je voil,
Quant de cellui traitre ai destruit l'orguil,
Qui les XII pairs vendit par faulx conseil.
J'en rens graces au Roy du ciel:
Qui mette nos ames en pes pareil
Avecquez eulx en glore celestiel!"

(T, vv. 5686-91)\(^{15}\)

This spirit of rejoicing carries over into a subsequent short laisse, in which Charles cheerfully releases those who stood pledge for Ganelon, on the grounds that they were not really involved in his treachery, and then summons his barons bonnelement:

Ly roi de France eut prins son vengement
Du faulx Guennez qui ovra malement;
De ceu fait bien que les ostages rent,
Car rien ne sceuurent de son traïment;
Et ses barons convoie bonnelement
Sur chevaux de prix de riche estorement.

(vv. 5692-7)

\(^{14}\) Mortier IV: 222. I have modified the text slightly (see Note 12 above). Beneath this final laisse there is a scribal explicit which reads: "Deo Gratias, Amen. Explicit Roncisvali e de .R. e d'Oliver e de Aude."

\(^{15}\) Mortier VII: 159.
There is then a final laisse in alexandrines which is also festive in mood, as the court breaks up and Charles distributes gifts. There is no feeling of Charles's isolation, for the poet assures us that his barons will return to carry out whatever he wants, whenever he wants. The last line of the laisse is almost flippant:

La court est départie et li baron s'en vont;
Argent assez leur donne a ceulx qui prou n'en ont.
Se Charles a besoing, arrière revendront;
Et, quan que lui plaira, volentiers feront,
Car oncquez n'eut tiel roy soubz la cape du mond.
Adieu, barons! Alez voir que vos amis font,
(vv. 5698-703)

The scribe then seemingly adds his own explicit in verse:

Deo gracias!
Le livre des XII pairs est cy finé,
Don loenge soit a la sainte Trinité!
(vv. 5704-5)

Throughout the conclusion of T, and standing in contrast to the text up to this point, the mood is decidedly light-hearted. The ending is thus quite unlike that of V7 and C; with the problem of Ganelon over, the redactor seems deliberately to have chosen to banish gloom and concentrate on a sense of relief and a relaxation of tension.

L offers throughout a shorter version of the story than in the other rhymed manuscripts, and this tendency is reflected in the more succinct conclusion, though all the verses in this part of the text are alexandrines. In the first laisse Charles expresses satisfaction at the death of Ganelon and dismisses his barons:

"Baron," ce a dit Karles, "or ai ce que je voil,
Quant or est morz li gloz qui m'a tolu l'orgoil,
Reliant lo vaillant conte per cui reposer soil.
Des or vos en iroiz, baron, car je le voil."
(L.vv. 2922-5)16

16 Mortier IV: 75.
In the next and final laisse the barons depart, and the sense of satisfaction at the deaths of Ganelon and Pinabel is repeated. However, their deaths gave rise to trouble for Charles, as the last two lines indicate:

Francois preignent congé dou roi moult bonement;  
Lendemain se despartent per le Karlon comant.  
Or est mor Ganelon, qui la dolor ot grant,  
E Pynabelz, ses niés, refu morz ausemant.  
Puis en ot il en France moult doleirous torrant,  
E de ce muit la guerre de Grifonel l'enfant,  
(vv. 2926-31)

In many *chansons de geste* Ganelon is associated with the "lignage des traîtres" through his father, Grifon d'Hautefueille. In Moisan's *Répertoire* Grifon is described as follows: "3ème fils de Doon de Maience et de Flandrine, traître à ses frères, mari de Fauqueite, la fille du roi Guitant, père de Ganelon, Hardré, Berenguier, Alori, Gui d'Autefueille et Florie, chef du lignage des traîtres." As for Grifonel l'enfant, the reference is unique to *L*, and Moisan merely states: "Grifonel (la guerre de l'enfant), en France, après Roncevaux." Other than in the fragmentary *Doon de Nanteuil*, which states that Ganelon is "peres Pinabel," the only son with whom Ganelon is accredited is Bauduin, so perhaps this Grifonel is an otherwise unattested nephew, since the only sons of Bauduin, according to the *Répertoire*, are Fieramon and Dialas, and those of Pinabel, Auboin and Milon. In any event the implication is clear enough: a young member of the clan sees fit to avenge the deaths of Ganelon and Pinabel. It is noticeable that unlike in *T* there is no mention in *L* of clemency by Charles towards those *ostage(s)* (v. 2631) who stood guarantor for Ganelon, or indeed of their fate at


18 The precise relationship between Pinabel and Ganelon is far from clear. In *0* Pinabel is merely one of Ganelon's *parenz* (v. 3781), whereas in all the later versions he is described as a nephew of Ganelon. But who was his father or mother? None of Ganelon's brothers or sister listed in the entry for Grifon d'Hautefueille is given as father or mother of Pinabel under their individual entries.
all; and Pinabel in this version seems to have come to Ganelon's aid unaccompanied. Finally, following v. 2931, there is a scribal explicit in verse, which, unlike in T, continues on the same rhyme as that of the rest of the laisse:

\[
\text{Ci fenit li chançons des XII combatant;}
\]
\[
\text{Explicit la desconfite de Roncevauz.}
\]

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In essence and despite variation in scope and detail, all the later versions of the Roland, from V4, a unique hybrid of O and the rhymed versions, to the abbreviated text to be found in L, tell the same story. Up to the end of the Baligant episode the events of O are retained and expanded on through a more detailed exposition, especially in V7 and C, and there are some changes of emphasis and detail in all versions alongside moments when O is fairly closely adhered to. After Baligant new episodes are added. V4 is alone in having the capture of Narbonne, but all the later versions include the lengthily re-worked Aude episode, the two escapes of Ganelon, and the long discussion on what would be done with him. In O the Baligant episode served to put the Pagan versus Christian conflict on a universal level, as well as to satisfy the thirst for revenge after the events of Roncevaux. In the later versions, with the exception of L, which omits it totally, the Baligant episode is still given considerable space within the narrative, although the significance it achieved in O is somewhat diminished in two ways: firstly there are far more references to Ganelon's treachery, so that the Roland-Ganelon conflict is never lost from view; secondly it is followed by the new or protracted episodes, all of which turn on the Roland-Ganelon issue, for even the capture of Narbonne by Aimeri in V4 is partly undertaken in revenge for the loss of the peers (laisse 300). By the addition and constant emphasis of these episodes the fight against Baligant becomes somewhat submerged in the new sequence, so that in the longest versions there are over 2000 lines which have nothing to do with Pagan versus Christian. This overall shift of interest and emphasis is certainly the major modification in all the later versions, and significantly the suppression or omission of the Baligant episode in L marks the furthest point of this transformation.

The center of interest in all the various conclusions of the later versions is nevertheless Charles, so how in general do these
versions portray him? Throughout he is very much in command and has the unswerving respect of both his followers and his enemies. His grief and anger are given considerable prominence. He displays tenderness in his sorrow, savagery in his endorsement of the death proposed for Ganelon, ill-temper in his remarks to Otes when Ganelon escapes, and guile in his attempt to protect Aude from the truth. He insists that none of his barons shall depart until Ganelon has been tried, and the effect of the lengthening of the post-Baligant material is to portray him as a man obsessed with vengeance, for though he was doubtless equally determined in O, the issue was there settled more rapidly. Amid all this energy and emotion he maintains, as in O, a close link with Heaven.

After sharing for the most part a common sequence of episodes, the redactors of the later versions were free to use the coda in a variety of ways, giving a range of emotions and effects, thus exploring a number of possibilities following the uniform grimness of the narrative up to this point. With the death of Ganelon the drama, certainly as it is conceived in these versions, is over, and Charles can subsequently release his barons and be shown as sad, relieved, wistful, or gay, but in none of them is he shown, as in O, to be on an eternal quest against the pagan.

It is interesting, too, that the various endings of the later versions display a different alignment of relationships from the traditional grouping of the manuscripts, in that V4 and P share an ending, which, if Horrent is correct, is an earlier version than that of the other manuscripts. The ending of V4P is partly reflected in V7 and C, but added to, while T and L show far greater independence, as they do throughout the text that they reproduce. In all cases, though, the concluding laisses concentrate solely on the aftermath of the tragedy of Roncevaux and its resolution through the death of Ganelon. The poem is thus isolated and self-contained, with no suggestion of cyclic attachment. Indeed in C and V4 the text is called respectively romein and romani. Only L manages to suggest further conflict, and that a consequence of the events of the poem.

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Personalia

In a publication closely related to her article in the last issue of Olifant, Kim Campbell calls to our attention her book, The Protean Text: A Study of Versions of the Old French Legend of "Doon and Olive" (New York: Garland, 1988), the first in a new series of Garland Monographs in Medieval Literature under the general editorship of Paul E. Szarmach and Christopher Kleinhenz. She has recently returned from a stay at the Camargo Foundation, where she was working on a book preliminarily entitled "The Reiterated Self: An Essay on Meganarrative." As of fall 1989, Kim will be Language Coordinator at NYU.

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Larry Crist has recently published in Speculum (63 [1988]: 961-66) a lengthy review that will be of special interest to our readers: it concerns André Moisan's Répertoire des noms propres de personnes et de lieux cités dans les chansons de geste françaises et les œuvres étrangères dérivées (Geneva, 1986). This important research tool, which replaces Ernest Langlois Table des noms propres . . . (Paris, 1904), will also be the subject of a review in these pages in a forthcoming number. It is particularly amusing to note that even the "epic fragment" from the "Carroll Dodgson Library" published in these pages (Olifant 6 [1978-79]: 193-4) has found its way into these exhaustive (and exhausting!) volumes, with its hero Willelme listed as a "personnage d'une chanson de geste inconnue." Larry is also proud to announce the impending naissance of his latest son, Baudouin de Sebourc, due sometime in the 90s from the Société des Anciens Textes Français.

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Peter F. Dembowski has recently been appointed a "Distinguished Service Professor" at the University of Chicago.

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This May Eliza Ghil is finishing her first year as chair of Foreign Languages at the University of New Orleans. Her book, L'Age de parage: Essai sur le poétique et le politique en Occitanie au XIIe siècle, is due out this year from Peter Lang Publishing.