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**Æsthetic Considerations Based on "Elaborate Style" in
the *Chanson de Roland*: Narrative Progression in
Laissez 40-42**

John S. Miletich has developed a system of comparative quantitative analysis based on the study of "elaborate style" which has shown that medieval narrative poems such as the *Poema de mio Cid*, the *Mocedades de Rodrigo*, and the *Chanson de Roland* are quite different in style from authentic oral narrative poems, and are most likely learned texts composed in writing.¹ These poems, however, do contain a number of stylistic features that are generally characteristic of oral poetry, but are an integral part of their poetic system. In the *Chanson de Roland*, for example, "elaborate style" repetitions are not distributed evenly as they would be in an authentically oral poem, but appear to underscore in various ways important moments of the poem. One category of "elaborate style" repetition, the "repetitive group," is especially concentrated in series of *laissez parallèles* and *laissez similaires*. In a previous article on the function of "elaborate style" repetitions in the *Chanson de Roland*, I analyzed how the repetitive group contributes to the poetic structure of three *laissez parallèles*, *laissez* 232-34.² In the present article, I would like to propose another look at the function of the repetitive group in the Old French text. For this purpose, I have

¹ For a bibliography of John S. Miletich's works on the subject, see Jean-Paul Carton, "Æsthetic Considerations based on 'Elaborate Style' in the *Chanson de Roland*: Diminution in *Laissez* 232-234," *Olifant* 12 (1987): 43-45. For a more recent publication, see John S. Miletich, "Muslim Oral Epic and Medieval Epic," *The Modern Language Review* 83 (1988): 911-924. For an application of this method to the *Chanson de Roland*, see Jean-Paul Carton, "Oral-Traditional Style and the *Song of Roland*: 'Elaborate Style' and 'Essential Style,'" diss., U. of Utah, 1982; idem, "Oral-Traditional Style in the *Chanson de Roland*: 'Elaborate Style' and Mode of Composition," *Olifant* 9 (1981 [published in 1985]): 3-19; idem, "Diminution," 29-43.

² Carton, "Diminution."

selected three *laissez* that are generally considered to constitute the first instance of *laissez similaires* in the Oxford version of the poem, *laissez* 40-42. The scene described is the well-known exchange between Marsile and Ganelon which immediately precedes the latter's act of treason (*laissez* 43 to 47). Jean-Marcel Paquette, who devoted a series of articles to the examination of repetitive techniques in *laissez similaires*, published in 1981 a detailed analysis of repetition and variation in *laissez* 40-42. His approach, however, is based on a different perspective, his main concerns being rhythmicity and lyricism.³ Because its object is also repetition with variation in *laissez* 40-42, the present article necessarily covers to some extent the same ground as Paquette's. It differs from his study, however, in that it focuses primarily on the repetitive group and the effects of meaning and emphasis that arise from its use in *laissez* 40-42, especially in relation to the way this category of "elaborate style" repetition appears to underscore narrative progression, a notion which, of course, is at the core of the distinction scholars often make between the *laissez similaires* and the *laissez parallèles*.

But first, however, a few words about "elaborate style" and the "repetitive group." Because the definitions appear in detail elsewhere, I include only a brief summary here. The concept of "elaborate style" originated in studies conducted in a variety of linguistic and literary traditions by Miletich in order to differentiate between oral style and written or learned style in narrative poetry on the basis of quantitative stylistic analysis. "Elaborate style" is a feature of oral narrative poetry and consists of four different types (categories) of repetitions. These repetitions are characterized by a recurrence in idea which is unnecessary to the unfolding of the narrative line. Thus they delay, to some extent, the flow of narrative or descriptive information, whence the label "elaborate." The category of "elaborate style" repetition that is the object of the present study, the "repetitive group," consists of extended groups of metrical units, hemistichs in the case of the *Roland*, which may recur successively anywhere in a given poem, and, to a greater or

³Jean-Marcel Paquette, "Nouvelle contribution à la poétique des *laissez similaires*," in *VIII Congreso de la Sociedad Rencesvals, Pamplona-Santiago de Compostela, 1978* (Pamplona: Institution Principe de Viana, 1981) 381-86.

lesser degree, also retard the flow of narrative information. These groups are bound together by a common idea or theme, such as the enumeration of armies in laisses 232-34, a boast, a single combat, etc., and involve at least five immediately successive units (hemistichs). Although in these units diction and syntax are generally the same or similar, a certain amount of variation may occur, both in their composition and combination, as long as each one contains a repeated idea or ideas with enough semantic weight to clearly attach it (the unit in question) to the thematic patterning of the repetitive group.

Laisses 40-42 contain the highest frequency of units belonging to such a repetitive group in the Oxford version of the Roland. The repetitions occur successively in the three laisses as follows (the first occurrence of the repetitive elements is indicated in italics and the repetitions in boldfaced italics):

40

- 520 *Ço dist Marsilies: "Guenes, par veir sacez,*
 En talant ai que mult vos voeill amer.
De Carlemagne vos voeill oïr parler.
Il est mult vielz, si ad son tens uset;
Men escient dous cenz anz ad passet.
- 525 *Par tantes teres ad sun cors demened,*
Tanz colps ad pris sur sun escut bucler,
Tanz riches reis cunduit a mendisted:
Quant ert il mais recreanz d'osteier?"
 Guenes respunt: "Carles n'est mie tels.
- 530 N'est hom kil veit e conuistre le set
 Que ço ne diet que l'emperere est ber.
 Tant nel vos sai ne preiser ne loer
 Que plus n'i ad d'onur e de bontet.
 Sa grant valor, kil purreit acunter?
- 535 De tel barnage l'ad Deus enluminet!
 Meilz voelt murir que guerpir sun barnet."

41

- Dist li paiens: "Mult me puis merveiller*
De Carlemagne, ki est canuz e vielz!
Men escientre dous cenz anz ad e mielz.
- 540 *Par tantes teres ad sun cors traveillet,*

- Tanz colz ad pris de lances e d'espriet,
Tanz riches reis cunduiz a mendistiet:
Quant ert il mais recreanz d'osteier?"
- "Ço n'iert," dist Guenes, "tant cum vivet sis niés:*
545 *N'at tel vassal suz la cape del ciel.
Mult par est proz sis cumpainz Oliver;
Les .XII. pers, que Carles ad tant chers,
Funt les enguardes a .XX. milie chevalers.
Soïrs est Carles, que nuls home ne crent." AOI.*

42

- 550 *Dist li Sarrazins: "Merveille en ai grant
De Carlemagne, ki est canuz e blancs!
Mien escientre plus ad de .II.C. anz.
Par tantes teres est alet cunquerant,
Tanz colps ad pris de bons espiez trenchanz,*
555 *Tanz riches reis mon e vencuz en champ :
Quant ier il mais d'osteier recreant?"
- "Ço n'iert," dist Guenes, "tant cum vivet Rollant:
N'ad tel vassal d'ici qu'en Orient.
Mult par est proz Oliver, sis cumpainz;*
560 *Li .XII. per, que Carles aimet tant,
Funt les enguardes a .XX. milie de Francs.
Soïrs est Carlles, ne crent hume vivant." AOI.⁴*

As evidenced by the italics and boldfaced italics, each of the three laisses considered here does rely heavily on the technique of the repetitive group for its composition and is built on a common

⁴ The text is that of the Mortier edition of the Oxford *Roland*: Raoul Mortier, ed., *Les textes de la Chanson de Roland*, 10 vols. (Paris: Geste Francor, 1940-44) vol. 1: *La version d'Oxford*. The correspondence between the repetitive elements is as follows (numbers given are line numbers; as in the previous studies dealing with "elaborate style" in the *Roland*, A and B refer respectively to first and second hemistichs; parentheses indicate the base occurrence[s] of the corresponding repetitive elements): (Laisse 40)/Laisse 41: (520A)/537A; (522A)/538A; (523A)/538B; (524)/539; (525)/540; (526A)/541A; (527)/542; (528)/543. (Laises 40, 41)/Laisse 42: (520A, 537A)/550A; (537B)/550B; (522A, 538A)/551A; (523A, 538B)/551B; (524,539)/552; (525A, 540A)/553A; (526A, 541A)/554A; (541B)/554B; (527A, 542A)/555A; (528, 543)/556; (544)/557; (545A)/558A; (546)/559; (547)/560; (548)/561; (549)/562.

narrative pattern, a question from Marsile followed by an answer from Ganelon. To be noted is the fact that Ganelon's first answer is not included in the repetitive group. In fact, laisses 40-42 are structured not on one repetitive group but on two groups that merge into one in laisse 42, the first corresponding to Marsile's three questions and the second to Ganelon's last two answers. Of course, the entire pattern of laisse 42 may be considered to be based upon a single repetitive group in its relationship with the preceding laisse.

[1] Repetitive group and variation in Marsile's questions.

Although it is generally admitted that no significant changes are formulated in Marsile's questions,⁵ a certain amount of variation does appear as they are repeated. Two types of variation, which are especially emphasized by the presence of the repetitive group, immediately come to attention in laisses 40-42. One consists of a reduction, i.e., the elimination of elements situated within the frame constituted by the repetitive group but which do not belong to it. This is a kind of variation to which I referred in another article as "implosion," a technique that is used in the Baligant episode as a means of accelerating the narrative pace and emphasizing the large size of the pagan forces in the presentation of their divisions.⁶ The other type of variation consists of substitutions involving elements which are generally syntactic and/or metrical equivalents, as in the case of "demened" and "traveillet" in hemistichs 525B and 540B.

[1.1] "Implosion" in laisses 40-41.

The first type of variation mentioned above, "implosion," is accompanied by a number of other variations, including substitution and metrical variation, and occurs as follows (all italicized elements belong to the repetitive group):

⁵ See Jean Rychner, *La chanson de geste : Essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs*. Publications romanes et françaises 53 (Genève: Droz, 1955) 94-95. André Burger, *Tuold, poète de la fidélité: Essai d'explication de la Chanson de Roland*. Publications romanes et françaises 145 (Genève: Droz, 1977) 41.

⁶ Carton, "Diminution," 36-37,41-42.

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- 520 *Ço dist Marsilies*: "Guenes, par veir sacez,
En talant ai que mult vos voeill amer.
De Carlemagne vos voeill oïr parler.
Il est mult vielz, si ad sun tens uset ;
Men escient dous cenz anz ad passet.

41

Dist li païens: "Mult me puis merveiller
De Carlemagne, ki est canuz e vielz!
Men escientre dous cenz anz ad e mielz.

540

The reduction bears on three elements used by Marsile in the introductory remarks to his question, "Quant ert il mais recreanz d'osteier?" (528, 543): (1) a three-hemistich sentence stating his good intentions toward Ganelon, his promise of *amistiet* (hemistichs 520B, 521A and B), which is replaced by one hemistich, "Mult me puis merveiller" (537B); (2) one hemistich belonging to a sentence expressing his desire to hear Ganelon talk about Charlemagne, "vos voeill oïr parler" (522B); and (3) one hemistich stating that Charlemagne has run out of time, "si ad sun tens uset" (523B). The slight acceleration in the narrative pace, which characterizes the first three lines of *laisse* 41, is produced not only by the elimination of a number of units but also by the combination into one verse line of the first hemistichs of lines 522 and 523: "De Carlemagne vos voeill oïr parler. / Il est mult vielz, si ad sun tens uset;" becomes "De Carlemagne, ki est canuz e vielz!" Hemistichs 522A and 523A in *laisse* 40 are repeated as hemistichs 538A and 538B in *laisse* 41. The elements of the *répétitive* group which frame the reduction just described are the narrator's introduction-to-speech formulaic expression,⁷ the core of which is "dist" (520A, 537A), and the line devoted to the mention of Charles's age, which begins with the adverbial phrase "Men escient(re)" (524,539).

⁷ Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960; reprint ed., New York: Atheneum, 1974) 47.

This reduction and the accompanying variations are essential to the significance of the passage, as they correspond to an important reaction on Marsile's part. In the description of Charlemagne that accompanies his first question, in *laisse* 40, the pagan king refers to the emperor in deprecatory terms, which begin by a remark on his age, "Il est mult vieiz, si ad sun tens uset" (523). In the following *laisse*, the same question is accompanied by an apparently very similar description; however, this time, following the reduction and the addition of "Mult me puis merveiller" (537B), the emperor's age is turned into a factor of respectability and Marsile's negative language becomes language of praise. Gerard Brault pointed out that, in *laisse* 41, Marsile is for a moment at a loss after Ganelon has answered his attempt to disparage Charlemagne by a statement lauding the French emperor in *laisse* 40. According to Brault, the pagan king did not interpret the situation quite correctly and, following Ganelon's acceptance of a gift and his own promise of a reward (*laisse* 39), expected him to welcome his belittling remarks about Charlemagne. Consequently, when Ganelon praises the emperor, Marsile, who is eager to ensure that the French envoy cooperate with him, joins him in his praise of the Christian leader.⁸ One of the functions of the repetitive group in *laisse* 41 is thus, by the emphasis brought about by the omission of some of his introductory remarks and the slight acceleration in narrative pace caused by the reduction or implosion described above, to mark the shift in the pagan king's discourse as he adapts it to that of the Christian messenger in order to probe him further. In addition, it must be noted that the repetition and accompanying reduction isolate the second hemistich of line 537, "Mult me puis merveiller," i.e., the new element in *laisse* 41 that is the most essential to conveying the pagan king's rhetorical adjustment. This new element is further reinforced by an unusual enjambment (537B/538) and the fact that its insertion does not disrupt the grammatical connection established in the previous *laisse* between the verb "parler," which "merveiller" replaces, and its complement, "Charlemagne," and thus the bulk of the repetitive group corresponding to Marsile's questions, which is devoted to a

⁸ Gerard J. Brault, ed. and trans., *The Song of Roland: An Analytical Edition*, vol. 1 (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978) 152.

description of the French emperor. This grammatical connection and the accompanying effect of parallelism are reinforced by the presence of the preposition "de" at the beginning of the run-on line (538).⁹

By this implosion and the slight acceleration in the narrative pace that accompanies it, the repetitive group thus endows Marsile's change of tone with a certain mechanical dimension and fluidity which underscore the antithetic nature of the pagan king's remarks about Charles, from disparagement to praise, and, perhaps, a certain ability on the part of Marsile to adapt language smoothly to the situation. Marsile's two questions, in *laisses* 40 and 41, are formulated in a very different tone of voice and one can easily imagine, assuming that the text of the Oxford manuscript was ever delivered orally or was meant to be delivered orally, how this use of repetition must have given the performer a good opportunity to display his art, changing swiftly the tone of his voice to mark the switch in Marsile's approach.

[1.2] Substitutions in Marsile's questions.

As illustrated in the following example, the substitutions of elements that are syntactically and/or metrically equivalent involve both elements situated inside of units which belong to the repetitive group and units which do not belong to the repetitive group, but fit tightly into its narrative pattern because they depend upon other units that do:

"Par tantes teres ad sun cors demened," (525)

"Par tantes teres ad sun cors traveillet," (540)

"Par tantes teres est alet cunquerant," (553)¹⁰

⁹ For Paquette's comments on the repetition of "De Carlemagne," see n. 11 below.

¹⁰ in this and subsequent instances discussed in this section, I have indicated the variations by not italicizing them, even when they occur within units that belong to the repetitive group.

In this series, hemistichs 525B and 540B belong to the repetitive group in spite of the difference in diction ("demened" is replaced by "traveillet"). They contain several repeated words, one of which, "cors," clearly attaches them to the thematic patterning of the repetitive group. Hemistich 553B, on the other hand, does not contain such a word and thus does not belong to the repetitive group. For the purpose of the present study, however, it may not be necessary to distinguish between these two types of variation. Because the units which do not belong to the repetitive group depend on units which do, and occur in syntactic and/or metrical patterns which are either identical or closely similar in the three instances of the repetitive group, the kind of emphasis brought on the new elements by the strong effect of parallelism created by the repetitive group, and by the mere fact that these elements constitute a variation in an otherwise highly repetitive and tightly knit pattern, is very similar in both cases.

It must be stressed that not all such lexical variations may have the same degree of significance or be related to narrative progression. In some instances, as in "*Men escientre doits cenz anz ad e mielz*" (539) and "*Mien escientre plus ad de .II.C. anz*" (552), it may be pointless to look for an explanation that goes much beyond satisfying the need for the right assonance. Indeed, in *laisse* 40-42, except for the introduction-to-speech formulaic expression in the narrator's voice, "*Ço dist Marsilies*" (520A) / "*Dist li paiens*" (537A) / "*Dist li Sarrazins*" (550A), in which "Marsilies" is replaced by "li paiens" and "li Sarrazins,"¹¹ all substitutions occur in the second hemistich. However, in a number of instances, as is the case with the change in the pagan king's introductory words from "vos voeill oïr parler" to "Mult me puis merveiller" (522B/537B), the variations do seem to correspond to and/or denote, if sometimes only slightly, successive narrative steps as the pagan king progressively probes Ganelon. This feature is not limited to *laisse* 41, where it is associated with the pagan king's switch from a tone

¹¹ Cf. Paquette 382-83. Paquette notes that the variation in the expression designating Marsile from "Marsilies" to "li paiens," and finally to "li Sarrazins" corresponds to a destabilization of the name of Charles's enemy and stands in sharp contrast in the three *laissez similaires* to the stability of the expression designating Charles, "De Carlemagne," which is repeated without change in *laissez* 41 and 42.

of deprecation to one of admiration, but also occurs to some extent in *laisse* 42, in which it corresponds to an intensification of his praise of Charles. In the example of lines 525, 540, and 553 (cited above), hemistich 525B, "*ad sun cors demened*" becomes "*ad sun cors traveillet*" in line 540. The change of the main verb from *démener*, which in this context conveys the notion of "knocking about" and "traveling relentlessly," to *traveiller*, i.e., "to torment," denotes an increase in the degree of suffering brought upon Charles by his trials and emphasizes in line 540 the fact that Marsile is now talking about his valor. Charles's prowess as a military leader is ultimately intensified in the third and last instance by "*est alet conquerant*" in line 553, a variation involving the entire second hemistich.

In the two following sets, although no progression of the type discussed in the preceding paragraph appears in *laisse* 41, one may see in the variations in the third instance of Marsile's question in *laisse* 42 a similar pattern of intensification in his praise of Charles:

"Tanz colps ad pris sur sun escut bucler," (*laisse* 40:526)

"Tanz colz ad pris de lances e d'espier," (*laisse* 41:541)

"Tanz colps ad pris de bons espiez trenchanz," (*laisse* 42: 554)

"Tanz riches reis cunduit a mendisted:" (*laisse* 40:527)

"Tanz riches reis cunduz a mendistiet:" (*laisse* 41:542)

"Tanz riches reis morz e vencuz en champ:" (*laisse* 42:555)

In the case of the replacement of "*sur sun escut bucler*" (526B) by "*de lances e d'espier*" (541B), lexical variation does not denote in itself a progression but, rather, simply presents different facets of the same reality. Nevertheless, the shift of focus from Charles's shield to the instruments that deliver the blows must be noted. It prepares the next change in the series, from the mere mention of the weapons used against Charles, "*lances*" and "*espier*," to a reference to the qualities of one of the types of weapons cited in the first instance, "*espiez*," which are described in *laisse* 42 as being "*bons*" and "*trenchanz*," i.e., dependable and efficient. Stressing

the quality of the weapons directed against the emperor rather than merely restating their names is tantamount to intensifying the threat they represent for him, and therefore both the harshness of his trials and his valor in withstanding them.

In the second set cited above (lines 527, 542, 555), the Parry-Lord formula "cunduit a mendisted," which occurs for the first time in hemistich 527B and is repeated without lexical, syntactic, or metrical change in hemistich 542B, is replaced by "morz e vencuz en champ" in hemistich 555B, in the third occurrence of Marsile's question. In laisse 41, hemistich 542B thus does not denote a movement forward of the narrative line but merely fits into the pattern of narrative progression established by the elements of Marsile's second question which clearly indicate his reaction to Ganelon's first answer. The change from "cunduit a mendistiet" (542B) to "morz e vencuz en champ" (555B), on the other hand, involves lexical variation that is significant from the standpoint of narrative progression and is emphasized by the departure from the echo provided by the repetition of hemistichs 527B and 542B. Marsile measures the emperor's valor first by the fact that Charles has deprived many kings of their livelihood in laisse 41 (542B) and then in a harsher way by his ability to deal death on the battlefield (555B). Here, the intensity of Marsile's praise of the Christian emperor corresponds to the degree of suffering the latter is able to inflict upon his enemies.

Although the lexical variations accompanying the repetition of the reference to Charles's old age may not be as clearly indicative of narrative progression as the examples just discussed, one of them should perhaps also be noted here because it does appear to do more than provide the new assonance and, indeed, seems to fit quite remarkably the pattern of Marsile's questions described in the foregoing paragraphs. It involves the eventual elimination of the adjective "vielz," which, in the context of the first occurrence (523) and in combination with the intensifier "mult" and hemistich 523B, "si ad sun tens uset," is clearly derogatory. In the second occurrence, in laisse 41, the one-line statement "Il est mult vielz, si ad sun tens uset" (523B) is reduced to one hemistich, "ki est canuz e vielz" (538B). Marsile's change of tone is thus accompanied by this reduction as well as by a weakening in his reference to Charles's old age: in the progression from "mult vielz" to "vielz," the intensifier "mult" and the clause "si ad sun tens uset" are eliminated. Instead,

the pagan king chooses to introduce a reference to Charles's white hair with the adjective "canuz," which is perhaps more apt to present old age in a more favorable, or at least less negative, way and thus fits Marsile's new approach. The next variation in Marsile's wording, in *laisse* 42, goes one step further. The direct naming of old age disappears altogether: the word "vielz" is eliminated from the description and replaced by "blanc" (551B) as Marsile's apparent praise of the emperor intensifies.

[2] Repetitive group and variation in Ganelon's answers.

In Ganelon's answers as they appear in the three *laissez similaires* under consideration here, the repetitive group reveals a pattern of emphasis somewhat different from those discussed above. As shown in the highlighted text, the most obvious feature is the fact that his first answer, in which he praises Charles, is completely excluded from the repetitive group. Scholars have long noted that because Ganelon's first answer is the only non-repeated part of the set constituted by the three *laissez similaires*, it acquires a particular importance. To go back to Jenkins, one of the crucial points in these three *laissez similaires* is to show that "It is evident that Ganelon believes, or has deceived himself into thinking, that he can indulge his hatred of Roland without severing his connection with the emperor." Brault, in his annotated edition of the Oxford text of the *Roland*, notes that this distinction is of first importance later on for the traitor's defense.¹² Ganelon's loyalty to Charles must

¹² T. Atkinson Jenkins, ed., *La Chanson de Roland: Oxford Version, Edition, Notes and Glossary* (1924; revised ed. Boston: Heath, 1929) 47, n. to v. 522; mentioned in Brault 152-53, 401, nn. 26-27. See also Pierre Le Gentil, *La Chanson de Roland* (Paris: Hatier, 1955) 99. Ganelon brings the point up in *laissez* 272-73, when he addresses Charles and his knights at the time of the trial:

Rollant me forfist en or et en aveir,
 Pur que jo quis sa mon e sun destreit;
 3760 Mais traisun nule n'en i otrei."

 Seignors, jo fui en l'ost avoec l'empereür,
 3770 Serveie le par feid e par amur.
 Rollant si nies me coillit en haür,
 Si me jugat a mon e a dular.

therefore be reasserted before he takes any action against Roland. Here, one of the functions of the repetitive group is to differentiate through diction and within the overall narrative pattern delineated by the three *laissez* (i.e., the threefold repetition of the question/answer sequence) between the two elements of Ganelon's betrayal: (1) on the one hand, his understanding that he can be loyal to Charles corresponds to the use of non-repetitive diction (as far as the category referred to as repetitive group is concerned); (2) on the other, his betrayal of Roland corresponds to the use of the repetitive group. This differentiation is accompanied by a certain emphasis which results, in the reader's/listener's overall perception of *laissez* 40-42 and in retrospect, from a twofold sensation of unfulfilled expectation created by the pattern of the repetitive group. First, in *laisse* 41, because Marsile's second question constitutes a repetitive group in relationship to his first, one may anticipate, on the basis of the pattern established in the previous *laisse*, that Ganelon's answer will do the same, or at least involve a certain amount of repetition. As we know, however, the traitor's second answer is different. The emphasis thus brought on that second answer is further reinforced by a second departure from the set pattern, which occurs in *laisse* 42 when the third answer is perceived to belong to the repetitive group.

Here, because of the distribution of the repetitive group in the two previous *laissez*, Ganelon's third answer might be expected not to belong to the repetitive group. Because it does, however, his first one lingers even more forcefully in the reader's/listener's perception (memory) of the entire three-*laisse* passage.

.....
 3775 Jo desfiat Rollant le poigneor
 E Oliver e tuiz lur cumpaignun;
 Carles l'oid e si nobilie baron.
 Venget m'en sui, mais n'i ad traïsun."

When Tierri comes forward in defense of Roland, he presents the opposite point of view in his address to Charles:

Que que Rollant a Guenelun forsfesist,
 Vostre servise l'en doiüst bien guarir!
 Guenes est fels d'ïço qu'il le traït;
 3830 Vers vos s'en est parjurez e malmis.

Another function of the repetitive group in Ganelon's answers is, of course, to mark the designation by name of Roland as the main obstacle to Marsile's purpose, by emphasizing in *laisse* 41 the long-noted switch from the reference to Charles's nephew to the actual naming of Roland in lines 544 and 557: - "*Ço n'iert, dist Guenes, 'tant cum vivet sis niés*" (544) / - "*Ço n'iert, dist Guenes, 'tant cum vivet Rollant*" (557). Jean Rychner, who viewed the three instances of Marsile's questions as an "ensemble statique," saw this variation as the climax of a pattern of psychological and dramatic progression in Ganelon's answers.¹³ Both by its position and by the emphasis brought upon it by the repetitive group, the naming of Roland is indeed endowed with a high degree of emotional intensity and becomes the culminating point of the three *laissez similaires*. Although the variation consists merely of a two-syllable substitution within a unit belonging to the repetitive group, it occurs in a position of high emphasis at the end of the first Une of the first and only repetition of Ganelon's answer. It is also stressed by the fact that the rest of Ganelon's answer in *laisse* 42 (558-62) is essentially limited to the mere reassertion of the content of his second answer. Other lexical variations, which are similar in form and involve periphrastic equivalents and near-synonyms, do occur. One of them, in lines 545 and 558, even involves an entire hemistich, which thus does not belong to the repetitive group: "*suz la cape del ciel*" (545B) / "*d'ici qu'en Orient*" (558B). However, unlike the switch from "sis niés" to "Roland" just mentioned or the variations studied above with regard to Marsile's change of tone (*laisse* 41) and the intensification of his praise of Charles (*laisse* 42), they do not appear to correspond to or denote any significant progression in relation to the previous and first instance of the repetitive group. These variations include the substitutions of "aimet tant" for "ad tant chers" in the relative clause modifying "Li .XII. per" (547B/560B), and "de Francs" for "chevalers" in "a .XX. milie chevalers" (548B) / "a .XX. milie de Francs" (561B). Another such variation occurs in conjunction with a syntactic change in the last line of Ganelon's answer: the adjective "vivant" fills the metrical slot freed by the elimination of the conjunction "que" and the adjective "nuls" from the first instance of the hemistich and provides the assonance in "que nuls home ne crent" (549B) / "ne crent hume vivant" (562B). Thus,

¹³ Rychner 94-95; cf. Burger 41.

to Marsile's third question, in which the pagan king intensifies his praise of Charles in order to probe the Christian envoy further, Ganelon responds by merely restating emphatically his position, his designation of Roland by name being followed essentially by the reiteration of the points made in his preceding answer. Ganelon does not yield to the pressure of Marsile's insistent probing with a greater commitment than one involving Roland and the rearguard. The periphrastic elements and near-synonyms that constitute the lexical variations may be viewed as an amplification of the traitor's second answer (*laisse* 41), but it is essentially a redundant one. This redundancy fits the overall redundancy of the repetitive elements in verses 557-62 and contributes to the emphasis Ganelon is eager to place upon Roland as the source of Marsile's troubles, thus stressing the distinction he wishes, to establish between Charles, to whom he appears to think he remains loyal and who is the object of the pagan king's questions, and Charles's nephew, to whom he is trying to shift Marsile's attention.

[3] Narrative progression and styles of speech.

As I have already mentioned, the notion of narrative progression is fundamental in the distinction which is frequently made between *laissez parallèles* and *laissez similaires*. The general contention is that in *laissez parallèles* successive actions are described in similar terms, while in *laissez similaires* the same action is described twice or three times, different constitutive aspects being developed in each new occurrence.¹⁴ This interpretation argues for the static aspect of the *laissez similaires* suggested by Rychner, i.e., a temporary slowing down of the narration or even its halt in time as an essential component of their lyrical dimension.¹⁵ In the *Roland*

¹⁴ See, for example, Burger 40-42. See also Eugène Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) 7ff. Jenkins gives a possible instance of four *laissez*; see his note to v. 24, Jenkins 6. See also Paquette, "Nouvelle contribution," 381, for an instance of five *laissez* in which the author sees two series of three overlapping *laissez*.

¹⁵ Rychner 93-100. For a recent study emphasizing the notion of stasis in *laissez similaires* in general and in *laissez* 40-42 in particular, see Suzanne Fleischman, "A Linguistic Perspective on the *Laissez Similaires*: Orality and the Pragmatics of Narrative Discourse," *Romance Philology* 43 (1989): 70-89.

article in *Mimesis*, Auerbach relates the technique to parataxis in sentence structure, stressing that in this type of presentation, "causal, modal, and even temporal relations are obscured."¹⁶ This is the position adopted by Jean-Charles Payen, who goes as far as stating that the *laisse* order, in particular in the case of Roland's laughter, actually does not matter since "la succession des *laises* dans la *Chanson de Roland* ne cherche pas à épouser la succession chronologique des événements, mais à décrire les faits par petites touches successives qui se précisent et se complètent, chacune apportant un point de vue partiel sur l'action."¹⁷ However, the distinction is not always a clear-cut one. Even Rychner admits that from the "*laises* ... parallèles aux *laises* similaires, le passage est insensible, la frontière incertaine" and argues against being too strict in the distinction.¹⁸ The British scholar, D. D. R. Owen, concedes that a list he gives may be debatable.¹⁹ Brault, who rejects the idea of static *laises similaires*, sees in them separate representations of the same event from different spatial points of view, in such a way that a stereoscopic effect is achieved through a movement forward which, according to him, corresponds to a sort of "ambulatory" perception of the action.²⁰

¹⁶ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (1968; rpt. Princeton University Press, 1974) 105.

¹⁷ Jean-Charles Payen, *Le motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale (Des origines à 1230)*, Publications romanes et françaises 98 (Genève: Droz, 1967) 111.

¹⁸ Rychner 93.

¹⁹ D. D. R. Owen, "Charlemagne's Dreams, Baligant and Tuoldus," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 87 (1971): 198.

²⁰ Brault 78-79. For other important analyses of *laises similaires* in the *Roland*, see, Jean-Marcel Paquette, "Le texte en métamorphose: Contribution à une poétique des *laises similaires* d'après six versions de la 'scène du cor' de la *Chanson de Roland*" in *The Nature of Medieval Narrative*, eds. Minette Grunmann-Gaudet and Robin F. Jones (Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1980) 99-122; idem, "Les lamentations de Charlemagne. Essai d'analyse différentielle d'après cinq versions de la *Chanson de Roland*," in *Essor et fortune de la chanson*

In laisses 40-42, there not only appears to be significant narrative progression both in Marsile's questions and in Ganelon's answers, in spite of the use of highly repetitive diction, but this narrative progression is emphasized, if in an extremely stylized fashion, by the use of the repetitive groups. Here, the effect of the repetitions, at least in the first two laisses, is not to blur the succession of events, but to isolate each moment, to place them in separate frames, as it were, these frames being delineated simultaneously by the structure of the dialogue (question/answer), the structure of the repetitive group, and the laisse structure. The successive narrative moments in laisses 40-42 that have been outlined in the present study by the analysis of the function of the repetitive groups are as follows: to Marsile's deprecatory remarks about Charles (Marsile's first question in laisse 40), which are aimed at drawing a commitment from Ganelon, the latter answers by praising the French emperor (Ganelon's answer in laisse 40); possibly surprised by this answer, but definitely bent on probing Ganelon further, Marsile then adjusts his answer to the French envoy's first response (Marsile's second question in laisse 41) and Ganelon seizes the opportunity to point out that Charles's nephew is the source of Charles's might, and, consequently, by implication, of Marsile's trouble (Ganelon's second answer in laisse 41); even in the case of the third laisse, which may at first appear to bring little to the narrative line, one may see the framing of two successive narrative stages, the first corresponding to an intensification of Marsile's praise of Charles, probably aimed at obtaining more of a commitment from Ganelon than one involving only Charles's nephew, and the second to Ganelon's reiteration of his position, this time naming Roland for emphasis.

In addition to the narrative sequence just described, the repetitive group pattern implicitly conveys in its structure and in relation to the narrative pattern of the laisse structure, another type of narrative progression. At the level of diction, it is indeed as if Ganelon progressively yielded to Marsile's style. At the core of the three laisses is a constant, the repetitive group constituting the major

de geste dans l'Europe et l'Orient latin: Actes du IXe congrès international de la Société Rencesvals (Modena: Mucchi, 1984) 2: 977-84; Eugène Vinaver, "La mort de Roland," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 7 (1964): 133-43.

part of Marsile's three questions, which, as was noted by Rychner and Burger, are strictly *similaires*.²¹ Ganelon's discourse, on the other hand, is not perceived to be part of the repetitive pattern until the last *laisse*, *laisse* 42, where its style eventually blends with Marsile's as the two repetitive groups merge together. It is only at that point in the text, in the third *laisse*, that a repetitive group answers a repetitive group, with the climactic focus on Roland. The two characters seem to have reached a common ground, a situation that is poetically materialized and emphasized by the use of similar diction. What is so powerfully stressed here is not merely Ganelon's treason, but the mention of Charlemagne's strength and the naming of Roland, i.e., the foundations for the plot which appears later, in *laisse*s 43 to 45. It is only now that Ganelon can go ahead and convince Marsile that the emperor's nephew is the one to be destroyed. Contrary to Payen's general assertion on *laisse* technique in the *Roland*, the *laisse* order is here of primordial importance, since one may see in this eventual blending of styles the expression of a certain chronology related to the unfolding of the action: to the merging of the two repetitive groups coincides the merging of the two minds intent on reaching an agreement

In conclusion, therefore, it does appear that one of the main functions of the repetitive group in *laisse*s 40-42 is to emphasize, in a manner akin to paratactic narration, successive narrative stages, by isolating each one with a sort of framing effect created here by a tight correspondence between the discourse structure (questions/answers), the structure of the repetitive group, and the *laisse* structure. The chronological aspect of the scene encompassed in the three *laisse*s *similaires* is, in addition, poetically stressed by the eventual blending of styles involving the merging together in one *laisse* of two different repetitive groups, one corresponding to Marsile's questions, the other to Ganelon's answers.²²

²¹ Rychner 94; Burger 41.

²² This article is a longer version of a paper read at the 1989 MLA Convention in Washington, D.C. (December 28, 1989), at the session entitled "Problems in the Medieval Romance Epic I," which was organized by the Société Rencesvals, American-Canadian Branch. I wish to express my gratitude to the président of that session, Edward A. Heinemann, for his very helpful comments on the first draft. I also wish to thank John S. Miletich for his suggestions at an earlier stage in the development of this study.

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Personalia

Gérard Brault, past international president of the Société Rencesvals has been named Distinguished Professor of French and Medieval Studies at Pennsylvania State University. Among his recent publications, two in particular may interest readers of this journal: "Quelques allusions modernes à la *Chanson de Roland*," in *Farai chansoneta novele: Hommage à Jean-Charles Payen: Essais sur la liberté créatrice au Moyen Age* (Caen: Université de Caen, 1989) 99-104; and "The Religious Content of the *Chanson de Geste*: Some Recent Studies," in Noms J. Lacy and Gloria Torrini-Roblin, eds., *Continuations: Essays on Medieval French Literature and Language in Honor of John L. Grigsby*, (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1989) 175-86. In February, Gerry gave invited talks at the Sorbonne (Philippe Ménard's seminar) and at the École Nationale des Chartes. He also delivered a major address before the Heraldry Society of London the following month. Currently, he is preparing a critical edition of the rolls of arms of Edward I (1272-1307). This project involves establishing the texts of sixteen rolls of arms and identifying 4,441 coats of arms—a large number of them for the first time.

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Emanuel Mickel, Jr. published *Ganelon, Treason and the Chanson de Roland* with Pennsylvania State University Press in 1989.

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PROGRAM: 1990 MLA, CHICAGO

The Société Rencesvals, American-Canadian Branch, will sponsor two sessions at the 1990 MLA meeting in Chicago. Both sessions will be held on Friday, 28 December 1990, and both will be chaired by David P. Schenck, University of South Florida:

Romance Epic I, 8:30 - 9:45 a.m., O'Hare, Marriott.

- "Rethinking 'Romanesque Design' in Old French Epic." Donald L. Maddox, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- "Women and Their Sexuality in *Ami et Amile*: An Occasion to Deconstruct?" William Calin, University of Florida.
- Business Meeting, Joan B. Williamson, Long Island University, presiding.

Romance Epic II, 7:15 - 8:30 p.m., Water Tower, Marriott.

- "The Legend of the *Cid's* Illegitimacy." Joseph J. Duggan, University of California, Berkeley.
- "How Italian is the Venice IV *Roland*?" Robert F. Cook, University of Virginia.
- "The Significance of the *Cid's* Daughter's Marriage." Maria Eugenia Lacarra, Universidad del País Vasco.

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