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Das Rolandslied and the *Song of Roulond* as Moralizing Adaptations of the *Chanson de Roland*[1]

The medieval conception of translation seems to have been a good deal more flexible than the modem one. Not surprisingly, writers translating Scripture or works on spiritual matters often tried to be faithful to the perceived message of their exemplars; they glossed or pruned in order to clarify the original text.[2] Translators of chansons de geste or romances, however, do not appear to have felt similarly constrained by the authority of their models, and their textual contributions cannot always be analyzed in terms of *amplificatio* or *abbreviatio.* Some medieval "translators" reorganized plot and established new strategies of discourse (e.g., changing direct to reported speech or *vice versa*[3]). In recent years, literary critics have begun discussing such works as creative adaptations rather than as defective translations.

Since the medieval story of Roland was a popular one, preserved in many languages, modern scholars have the chance to examine the way very different medieval authors adapted a secular text in accordance with their own distinct interpretations of the

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1989 Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, MI.

[2] On medieval translation of Scripture, see, for example, Raymond C. St-Jacques, "The *Middle English Glossed Prose Psalter* and its French Source," in *Medieval Translators and their Craft,* ed. Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Pubs., 1989), 135-54. On medieval translation of other religious works, see, for example, Tim William Machan, *Techniques of Translation: Chaucer's "Boece"* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim, 1985) and William MacBain, "Five Old French Renderings of the *Passio Sancte Katerine Virginis"* in *Medieval Translators and their Craft,* 41-65.

[3] Karen Pratt ("Direct Speech—A Key to the German Adaptor's Art?," in *Medieval Translators and their Craft,* 213-46) explores the literary effect of such changes.

story's meaning. Neither the Middle High German *Rolands lied,* written in the late twelfth century by a priest named Konrad,[4] nor the fragmentary Middle English *Song of Roulond,* composed in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century by an anonymous poet,[5] corresponds exactly to an extant French or Franco-Italian version of the *Chanson de Roland.* The German work parallels the Oxford version of the *Roland* in many respects but also has close affinities with the Chateauroux and Venice IV versions[6] (and Konrad complicates the question of translation technique by claiming that he rendered the text first into Latin and then into German [vv. 9082-83][7]). The English poem shows similarities with the Chateauroux,

[4] Karl Wesle, ed., *Das Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad;* 3rd rev. ed. by Peter Wapnewski (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1985). On the dating of the text see esp. Dieter Kartschoke, *Die Datierung des deutschen Rolandsliedes* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1965).

[5] S. J. Heritage, ed. *The Sege off Melayne, The Romance of Duke Rowlande and of Sir Ottuell of Spayne, together with a Fragment of the Song of Roland from the Unique MS Landsdowne 388,* Early English Text Society, Extra Ser. 35 (London: EETS, 1880). On the dating and dialect of the text (closely related issues) see esp. the summary of research in Jon Robin Russ, "The Middle English *Song of Roland,* a critical edition," (Diss., Univ. of Wisconsin, 1968), xxix-xxxiii.

[6] Concordances between the German poem and the various French mss. can be found in the margins of Jean Graffs French translation of Konrad's work: *Les Textes de la Chanson de Roland,* ed. Raoul Mortier, Vol. 10, *Le Texte de Conrad,* trans. Jean Graff (Paris: Geste Francor, 1944). For a detailed study of the place of the *Rolandslied* in the ms. tradition of the *Roland,* see Paolo Merci, "Il *Ruolandes Liet* di Konrad e lo stemma della *Chanson de Roland," Medioevo Romanzo 2* (1975): 193-231 and 345-93.

[7] Ferdinand Urbanek ("The *Rolandslied* by Pfaffe Conrad—Some Chronological Aspects as to its Historical and Literary Background," *Euphorion* 65 [1971]: 219-44) identifies Konrad's patron Hainrich as Henry the Lion, whose wife Matilda was the daughter of Eleanor of Poitou, and then suggests that Matilda asked for the text because she was "not yet master of the German language, and was homesick for the literary atmosphere of her former environment." It seems odd that Urbanek does not conclude that if Matilda were still uncomfortable with the language, she might have been hoping to improve it by reading a story she thought she would recognize; she might have even requested the Latin version to help her read the German.

Venice VII, Paris, and Oxford versions of the *Roland* and apparently includes a borrowing from the Johannes translation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle.*[8] Both the *Rolandslied* and the *Song of Roulond* have been considered by some scholars to have been based on French intermediary texts now lost.[9] Since these hypothetical lost texts are presumed to have been conflations themselves, there seems to be no reason to posit them; hence some scholars have proposed that the translator-adapters compiled their texts from various sources.[10] Both the German and the English texts also contain material found in no other version of the story, material that significantly affects the ethical message of the story.

The Oxford version of the *Chanson de Roland* has often been perceived as morally ambiguous.[11] Scholars are sharply divided over the blameworthiness of various characters.[12] The poets

[8] H. M. Smyser, "Charlemagne Legends," in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English,* vol. I, *Romances, e*d. J. Burke Severs (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1967), 94-96; Russ, ix-x. Stephen Shepherd ("'I haue gone for þi sak wonderfull wais': The Middle English Fragment of *The Song of Roland" Olifant* 11 [1986]: 219-36) is the only scholar to notice that details in the section borrowed from the *Turpin* correspond only to the Johannes translation, not to any of the Latin versions.

[9] Danielle Buschinger, "Le Curé Konrad, adaptateur de la *Chanson de Roland," Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 26 (1983): 95; Russ, ix-x.

[10] Graff (xv) considers the possibility that Konrad himself may have conflated French sources; Shepherd (220) argues that the Middle English poet certainly did.

[11] Joseph J. Duggan argues that such ambiguity stimulates criticism and may have positive literary value ("Ambiguity in Twelfth-Century French and Provençal Literature: A Problem or a Value?" in *Jean Misrahi Memorial Volume: Studies in Medieval Literature,* ed. Hans R. Runte, Henri Niedzielski, and William Lee Hendrickson [Columbia, SC: French Lit. Pubs., 1977], 136-49).

[12] Recent contributors to the old debate about whether or not Roland was prideful include Robert Francis Cook *(The Sense of the Song of Roland* [Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1987]), who argues that Roland was not guilty of pride, and Wolfgang van Emden ("'Argumentum ex silentio': An Aspect of

of both the *Rolandslied* and the *Song of Roulond clarify* the issue of moral responsibility through numerous changes in the structure and discourse of the story. Interestingly, the two writers use similar narrative strategies to support opposite conclusions. Konrad exculpates both Charlemagne and Roland while the Middle English writer implicates both men. This paper will explore the techniques of literary adaptation that these two authors have in common. The discussion of Konrad's text will focus largely on the parts corresponding to the extant portion of the English text, that is, beginning with Ganelon's return from Saragossa and ending with Roland's decision to summon help.

Under the general heading of structural changes one might include moving passages from one position to another, deleting material, and adding new text (which may or may not have been intended as a gloss on the original work).

Konrad makes two particularly important changes in the order of scenes. In the Oxford *Roland,* Charlemagne has two prophetic dreams the night before Ganelon nominates Roland to the rear guard. In the first, Ganelon attacks the emperor in a mountain pass and breaks his spear; in the second, Charles is attacked by a boar (vv. 719-35).[13] Konrad moves the two dreams to the night after Ganelon suggests Roland should stay behind, so the warning comes too late for Charlemagne to act upon it (vv. 3020-65). He does indeed attempt to reverse the decision, but Roland is determined to lead the rear guard (vv. 3095-132).

Konrad also moves the scene in which omens forecast the death of Roland. In the *Rolandslied,* the violent storms and earthquakes occur at the moment of the hero's death (vv. 6924-49). Karl-Ernst Geith has argued that Konrad's text recounts the meteorological disturbances in a more "logical" place than does the Oxford version; Geith concludes that Konrad's text must be closer

Dramatic Technique in *La Chanson de Roland," Romance Philology* 43 [1989]: 181-96), who contends that he was.

[13] Gerard J. Brault, ed., *The Song of Roland, 2* vols. (University Park, PA: Penn State UP, 1978).

to the *Urtext* than is the Oxford text.[14] However, the order found in the Oxford text is equally "logical" if one sees the disturbances as portents of disaster (quite common in classical literature) rather than as events meant to imply a comparison between Roland and Christ. Therefore, Konrad's changes do not improve the "logic" of the text; they simply make clearer that, for Konrad, Roland is a Christ figure.

Konrad also moves numerous minor passages, often to improve the images of Charles and Roland. For example, in the Oxford text, Ogier tells Charlemagne that he is unfit to be king if he does not avenge the deaths of his men (vv. 3538-39). Konrad finds this criticism wholly inappropriate, so he puts it in the mouth of one of Marsile's men (w. 5195-97). In what may be a similar case, Konrad has Blancandrin tell Ganelon's story about how Roland used an apple to represent the world and his ability to conquer it (Oxf. *Roland, vv*. 381-90; *Rolands lied, vv*. 1837-44). The motivation for this change may be that Konrad wants to show unequivocally that the story is a fabrication; in the world of this poet, Ganelon the traitor might be capable of telling the truth in a distorted and misleading way, but the Saracen is, by definition, a liar.

Like Konrad, the Middle English poet moves two important scenes to affect the audience's perception of Charles and Roland, but his changes make both men seem more foolish. Charlemagne begins to have doubts about Roland's safety even before the battle has begun. It is at this early stage in the narrative that Ganelon gives the absurd excuse that Roland is late because he is hunting, and Charles actually believes it. The French barons suspect the treason and claim that if Ganelon has betrayed the French, Charles must take some of the blame for not listening to their warnings earlier (w. 393-97). Since the fragment breaks off in the middle of the battle, we last see Charles pacifying his barons and reconciling them to Ganelon. There is no way of knowing if Charles ever acquires any wisdom in the Middle English version of the story.

[14] Karl-Ernst Geith, "Rolands Tod. Zum Verhältnis von *Chanson de Roland* und deutschem *Rolandslied" Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 10 (1976): 1-14.

In addition to moving forward the hunting anecdote, the Middle English poet moves forward Gautier's return from combat (the battle is described in vv. 322-46). Gautier's battle takes place before Roland's, and the wounded soldier has limped back to his commander with the news of his defeat (vv. 347-67). Worse still, Gautier went out with ten thousand men, not one thousand. There can be no question of the number because it is mentioned twice, once when Gautier first sets put (v. 316) and once when the pagan Amaris reports victory to his Sultan (v. 467). Therefore, when Roland decides not to sound his olifant, he knows for certain that at least a third of his troops are already dead. (Ganelon had suggested he be given 30,000 men). Oliver is only one of many people asking Roland to call for reinforcements, and Roland's response is to accuse first Oliver (v. 535) and then the other French barons (vv. 560-64) of cowardice. After Roland has announced that he will not call for help, he climbs a hill to calculate the size of the opposing army. He sees that it covers twenty square miles and he weeps for his men (vv. 589-601). The soldiers respond that Roland's grief is inappropriate since he has doomed them by his own decision, one that he does not change even after seeing that it was the wrong one (vv. 633-39). Roland obviously helps bring disaster on the French army and does so knowingly.[15] (In contrast, Konrad's Roland states that he will not call for help because the pagans, cursed by God, will all die that day, and if the French die as well, they will be martyrs [vv. 3870-98]).

Both Konrad and the Middle English adapter also omit passages that are not compatible with their characterizations. For example, Konrad removes Charles's repeated swoons from grief (Oxf. *Roland,* vv. 2416-22), since this scene might make Charles seem weak[16] or unable to be comforted by his faith. Konrad also deletes the part of Roland's speech in the French council that has sometimes been considered boastful (Oxf. *Roland,* vv. 198-200),[17]

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[15] Russ, xx-xxi.

[16] Buschinger, "Adaptateur," 101.

[17] Buschinger, "Adaptateur," 101-02.

Roland's insulting of Ganelon (Oxf. *Roland,* vv. 761-65),[18] and Roland's "lament" over the death of his men (Oxf. *Roland,* vv. 1855-65)—grief that might imply that Roland did not believe their martyrdom had saved their souls,[19] or might suggest that he feels partly responsible for their deaths.

The Middle English poet omits the speech in which Naimes approves of Roland's appointment to the rear guard (Oxf. *Roland,* vv. 774-81), replacing it with widespread mistrust of Ganelon *(Roulond,* vv. 169-77); hence Charles is clearly foolish to allow this appointment.[20] The poet also omits Roland's politer accept- ance of the nomination (Oxf. *Roland,* vv. 751-59), replacing both this speech and the more insulting one with an announcement of his willingness to kill anyone who might interfere with him *(Roulond,* vv. 157-68). It is not initially clear whether he is referring to Saracens who might later impede the progress of his troops or to Frenchmen who might now try to take his place as leader of the rear guard.

Both Konrad and the Middle English poet omit Oliver's exonerations of Charlemagne (Oxf. *Roland,* vv. 1099-1105 and 1713-18) but for opposite reasons. Konrad clearly feels that no excuses are needed. Ganelon alone is guilty. Since Oliver never blames Roland, he does not need to make it clear that blame does not extend to Charles. The Middle English adapter, however, has encouraged his audience to hold Charles partly accountable for the debacle since several counsellors warned him of impending danger. In this version of the story, Oliver does blame Roland but he does *not* go on to say that Charles is innocent.

Both adapters add material as well. Konrad adds many scenes in which Charles prays either privately or publicly. Among the most significant is the one in which Charles beseeches God not

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[18] Danielle Buschinger, "Roland et Olivier dans la *Chanson de Roland ette Rolandslied:* quelques jalons," *Olifant* 11 (1986): 133.

[19] Danielle Buschinger, "La prière dans le *Rolandslied* de Konrad," in *La prière au moyen âge (littérature et civilisation), Senefiance* 10 (1981): 51.

[20] Russ, xi and xviii-xix.

to harm the French army as presaged in the emperor's first dream
(vv. 3048-65). Charles fears that his men are being punished for
the sins of their king, and his hours of fervent prayer show his
piety. Another important addition to the early part of the *Ro-
landslied* is the speech in which Roland tries to urge Charles not to
accept Marsile's offer of peace. Roland speaks at length about how
pernicious the spread of Marsile's faith would be (vv. 912-36).
Only when these arguments fail does he present military reasons for
rejecting the overture (vv. 1141-53).[21] When Charles tries to avert
the disaster he has seen in his dreams by depriving Roland of the
command of the rear guard, Roland delivers another speech couched
in pious language. His words make it clear that he fully expects to
die and welcomes the opportunity to become a martyr. He speaks of
service to Christ, the health of his soul, and the Last Judgment (vv.
3095-132). Konrad even includes a scene in which the French
destroy a pagan temple and Roland forbids his men to plunder it.
The hero considers this pillage sinful largely because his men have
yet to complete the important task of forcing the Saracens to convert;
he says that anyone who survives the coming battle will be free to
claim a monetary reward (vv. 4167-216).

The additions made by the Middle English poet are briefer
but equally important in guiding the audience's perception of the
moral message of the text. He includes a scene in which Charles
tells his barons about his prophetic dreams but ignores their
assessment of the dreams as portents of disaster. Charles finally
cuts off speculation by saying, in effect, "God's will be done,"
despite the fact that he does not seem to be doing God's will
himself: he decides to pull out of Spain despite two divine warnings
(vv. 106-14). It may also be significant that in his first dream
Charles is besieging Saragossa rather than travelling through the
mountain pass (vv. 77-91). While some may consider this an
obfuscation of the meaning of this dream, Jon Robin Russ suggests
that the revised dream makes clear that more than the rear guard is at
stake—the dream foretells the endangering of Charles's entire
mission to conquer and convert the pagans.[22] The poet also

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[21] Buschinger, "Jalons," 131-32.

[22] Russ, xiv-xv.

includes a passage in which Charles tries unsuccessfully to find someone to replace Roland as head of the rear guard and then openly admits his misgivings (vv. 169-90). All of these insertions show clearly that Charles suspects treason and does nothing about it. In a later added passage Charles even protects the traitor from just accusations (vv. 428-32). As noted above, the English author's barons openly (and rightly) blame both Charles (vv. 393-97) and Roland (vv. 633-39). Finally, the poet adds fleeting but significant references to Naimes's being named as a peer and fighting in the battle at Roncevaux (w. 206 and 688-91); by ignoring warnings from his retainers and from God, Charles deprives himself not only of his best general, but also of the advisor most noted for his wisdom.

Both Konrad and the Middle English poet also add certain narrational leitmotifs that serve to unify their works. In Konrad's case, these consist of parallels drawn between events in the story and situations in the Bible, mini-sermons embedded in the exposition, echoes of Scriptural passages, and direct quotations from the Psalms and the Gospels. Such didactic passages are ubiquitous. Konrad compares Ganelon to Judas (vv. 1924-43). He delivers a sermon on false appearances, in which he says that Ganelon is like a tree that is attractive on the outside but worm-ridden inside (vv. 1960-77). He quotes what the Psalmist says of traitors (vv. 2385-99). In describing the way the French soldiers prepare for martyrdom, he refers to the Psalmist's promise of reward for monastic behavior (vv. 3455-58). He describes an ostentatious Saracen temple and points out that St. John says the proud will be brought down (vv. 3509-11). He tells of the powerful Saracen Amarezur and reassures his audience that all the prideful pagans will fall as Lucifer did (vv.4602-06). He shows how the Frenchmen honor the Cross and says the Psalmist's words apply to them: they will vanquish their enemies (vv. 4983-86). He compares the French forces to the small but powerful army of Gideon (vv. 5013-24). He asserts that Hatte and Anseis fight valiantly against impossible odds because they have the promise of an afterlife (vv. 5149-54). He explains Turpin's willingness to risk his life by relating that Turpin remembers the parable of the vineyard and the chance of all people to be saved (vv. 5396-404). He compares the French soldiers to the innocents slaughtered by Herod (vv. 5767-71). He emphasizes that God lengthened the day for Charlemagne as He did for Joshua at Jericho (vv. 7017-22). He

contends that Charlemagne's vanguard was protected against Baligant's army as Daniel was protected from the lion (vv. 8180-84). And he compares the fight between Thierry and Pinabel to the fight between David and Goliath (vv. 8847-50). Aside from these examples, there are many passing remarks of a pious nature.[23]

The Middle English poet's means of unifying his work is a good deal more subtle. As Stephen Shepherd notes, the narrator seems to highlight examples of Ganelon's treason with references to birds, animals, and other natural phenomena. In recounting the horrifying portents of Roland's death, the narrator adds a description of fleeing animals and trees torn by wind (vv. 846-62), and this extra imagery contrasts sharply with a tranquil portrait of nature inserted just before the depiction of Roland's battle (w. 578-82). New nature imagery also appears in Charlemagne's second dream (vv. 91-98), which is recapitulated twice (vv. 107-16 and 382-86). Furthermore, since Charlemagne's second dream mentioned a boar, that animal is the one Ganelon claims that Roland is hunting (vv. 415-21). The poet also adds new descriptions of nature when Charlemagne describes the path back to France (vv. 121-27), when Roland admits that Ganelon has betrayed the French (vv. 303-09), when Gautier fights the Saracens (vv. 326-42), and when Gautier reports the massacre of his troops to Roland (vv. 357-66). Thus all of the added nature imagery serves to link together the scenes dealing with Ganelon's treason and its effect, while the contrasting portraits of calm and tormented nature suggest that the cosmos is offended by the senseless waste of life at Roncevaux.[24]

The Middle English narrator also guides audience perception through the use of proverbial statements or "folk wisdom." The tone of these statements is simple and direct though not necessarily unsophisticated. For example, the narrator uses proverbial style ("who so beleuythe hym..." v. 9) to compare Ganelon to a broken

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[23] Graffs translation provides footnotes identifying the (probable) Biblical citations inspiring the great majority of these passages (and those discussed below in connection with the characters' rhetoric).

[24] Shepherd, 226-31.

spear, which emphasizes Ganelon's worthlessness as a defender and foreshadows Charles's first prophetic dream,[25]

Obviously, the rhetoric of Konrad's narrator redounds to the credit of Charles and Roland while the rhetoric of the Middle English poet's narrator lays bare the stupidity of these characters' actions. The same can be said of the rhetoric used by the characters themselves, which matches narrative style to a certain degree.

In the *Rolandslied,* the sermonizing discourse of the narrator is mirrored in the speech of the Christian characters. Since Archbishop Turpin has clerical responsibilities, it is no surprise that he quotes or paraphrases the Bible in his public prayers and inspirational speeches (vv. 263-66, 3914-16, and 5738-54). However, other characters speak in the same style—specifically Charlemagne and Roland. Naimes's comparing Ganelon to Judas (vv. 6102-04) is unremarkable because the analogy might have occurred to any Christian, and Oliver's use of an image from a psalm may simply follow from the context of his remark—he is praying and preparing to die (vv. 6503-06). But both Charlemagne and Roland use the clerical style in speeches intended to inspire the troops, speeches that resemble public prayers (vv. 5807-28 [Roland], 7698-733 [Charles], and 7807-30 [Charles]). Since Konrad uses this style in his narrative voice, he presumably invests it with positive value, and intends for the audience to think of Charles and Roland as men of spiritual wisdom. (It is ironic, therefore, that the Saracen characters end up being more interesting rhetorically. All the Saracen barons deliver essentially the same boast, that they will kill Roland, yet their speeches reveal diverse personalities, and Marsile responds distinctively to almost every man [vv. 3544-3844].)

In the *Song of Roulond,* on the other hand, most of the characters' attempts to imitate the narrator's rhetoric fall a bit flat. They state the obvious as if they are delivering pithy proverbial wisdom. Charles states, rather unnecessarily, that people who spend time with evil folk will find trouble (vv. 132-33). He also makes the cryptic observation that a person who strips the bark and

[25] Shepherd, 221-22.

ROLANDSLIED

	Lines containing direct speech		Lines containing reported speech			Lines containing other narration			Lines in an average speech
	#	% of total	#	%	of total	#	%	of total	
I. (vv. 2847-3984)	579	50.9%	47	4.1%		512	45.0%		17.6
II. (vv. 3985-5190)	256	21.2%	5	0.4%		945	78.4%		6.2*
III. (vv. 5191-5278)	78	88.6%	0	0.0%		10	11.4%		15.6
IV. (vv. 5279-6032)	294	39.0%	28	3.7%		432	57.3%		8.4

* If this statistic is "corrected" to remove the battle cry "Mountjoy" (which seems to be more like scenery than communication), the length of the average speech increases to 7.8 lines.

leaves off a tree should stay home in bed (vv. 152-53). Roland announces that it is good to be wise in deed and in thought (v. 310).

In comparing the *Rolandslied* and the *Song of Roulond,* one discovers that even the distinction between exposition and direct discourse reveals something significant. Since both writers distinguish between occasions for speech and occasions for action, it seems most enlightening to examine the importance of the speech act in these two different settings. Thus the poems have been divided into four sections for statistical analysis: 1) before the main

SONG OF ROULOND

	Lines containing direct speech		Lines containing reported speech		Lines containing other narration		Lines in an average speech
	#	% of total	#	% of total	#	% of total	
I. (vv. 1-664)	322	48.5%	44	6.6%	298	44.9%	8.7
II. (vv. 665-805)	3*	2.1%	0	0.0%	138	97.9%	1
III. (vv. 806-915)	38	34.6%	4	3.6%	68	61.8%	9.5†
IV. (vv. 916-1049)	27+‡	20.1%	4	3.0%	103	76.9%	4

* If this statistic is "corrected" to remove the battle cry "Mountjoy," there is only 1 line of direct discourse: Oliver says "be manly" (v. 762).

† French speech, 3.5 line avg. Saracen speech, 9.5 line avg.

‡ There is a lacuna of indeterminate length during one speech.

battles begin;[26] 2) during the first attack [in which the French massacre most of the first Saracen force]; 3) between the two main battles; and 4) during the second attack [in which most of the French are slaughtered]. In order not to present a distorted comparison, the

[26] This section does include Gautier's battle in the *Roulond,* but the exposition of that event takes only 17 lines and does not contradict the general pattern of speech use.

only sections of Konrad's poem analyzed are those corresponding to the extant portion of the English poem. [See tables, pages 72-73.]

One significant point could not be included in these tables. The Middle English poet makes extensive use of a pattern found only infrequently in Konrad's poem. In the *Song of Roulond,* almost half of the instances of reported speech (7 of 15) conclude with direct speech by the same individual or group. In other words, the poet reports, for example, that Charles told the soldiers of the vanguard not to blow their horns (because he wants to listen for Roland's olifant [vv. 234-39]), and then the description of this speech ends with direct discourse—"And he the hethyn se, and help wold haue,/ lowd cast vp a cry, and hie vs hym to saue." (vv. 240-41). The poet seems to be skipping over material that might be considered dull and ending with the significant point that the army will rush to help anyone who calls out that he has seen a heathen. The effect can be quite dramatic. Konrad does make use of this technique, but only in two of the twelve instances of reported speech (in the section corresponding to the extant part of the *Roulond).*

Studying the tables of statistics one discovers that Konrad's characters routinely speak at much greater length (twice as long) and far more during the initial battle (ten times as much). Both of these situations contribute to the didactic tone of the *Rolandslied* and the "dramatic" feeling of the *Song of Roulond.* Konrad's characters often appear to be orating, not expecting to carry on a conversation. The major exception occurs when the Saracen peers deliver their boasts and Marsile responds to them (vv. 3544-3844). Of course, the Saracen "message" is not the one Konrad wants to convey.

The English author's characters, on the other hand, respond dynamically to each other. Significantly, that interactive discourse breaks down just before the main battle. After Oliver requests that Roland summon help, Roland suggests that he is a coward. When many other barons echo Oliver's plea (in reported speech), Roland responds that they, too, are cowards. He clearly does not feel he needs to justify his actions. Once the battle has begun, no one has time for speech.

The two poets' use of direct discourse actually makes perfect sense in terms of their view of the moral justice of the battle. Konrad considers the slaughter at Roncevaux to be mass martyrdom

in a good cause, so his characters continue to speak directly about their faith and its superiority to the Saracen faith. By contrast, the Middle English poet presents the Roncevaux debacle as a senseless waste of life caused by human malice (Ganelon's) and arrogant stupidity (Charles's and Roland's). Thus the account of the battle itself, in sharp contrast to what precedes it, contains almost no direct discourse. The men are fighting for their lives and have no time to gloat or proselytize.

Several sorts of conclusions can be drawn from this comparison of the two writers' presentation of the Roncevaux story. The first sort presupposes that an author responds largely to the interests of his or her patron and probable audience. Such conclusions have been drawn by others who have studied these works. Jeffrey Ashcroft asserts that the crusading tone of the *Rolandslied* is intended as propaganda for the military interests of Henry the Lion, the presumed patron.[27] Maria Dobozy asserts that the *Rolandslied, Sankt Oswald,* and *Orendel* were all intended to rebuild confidence in holy wars after the failure of the Second Crusade.[28] Marianne Ott-Meimberg discusses the *Rolandslied* in the context of a resurgence of interest in salvation history and a developing consciousness of German cultural identity.[29] Jon Robin Russ suggests that the "democratization" of the story in the Middle English *Song of Roulond* (that is, the increased importance of Charles's advisors and Roland's peers) reflects English distrust of central authority.[30] In this context it may be worth noting that the *Song of Roulond* does share this mistrust of kings with another English Charlemagne romance, the *Sege of Melayne* (included in

[27] Jeffrey Ashcroft, "Konrad's *Rolandslied,* Henry the Lion, and the Northern Crusade," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 22 (1986): 184-208.

[28] Maria Dobozy, "The Theme of Holy War in German Literature, 1152-1190: Symptom of a Controversy between Empire and Papacy?" *Euphorion* 80 (1986): 341-62.

[29] Ott-Meimberg, Marianne. *Kreuzzugsepos oder Staatsroman? Strukturen adeliger Heilsversicherung im deutschen "Rolandslied"* (Munich: Artemis, 1980).

[30] Russ, xii and xxi-xxiii.

Herrtage's edition of the *Roulond).* In the *Sege,* Charles consistently uses his power to shirk responsibility for defending the Lord of Milan against Saracen invaders, and Archbishop Turpin takes it upon himself to force the king to execute his duties more responsibly.

While information about socio-political environments may satisfactorily explain some of the concerns of Konrad and the Middle English poet, a critic might also want to consider medieval attitutes towards the act of writing itself. H. J. Chaytor points out that during the thirteenth century, prose came to replace poetry as the vehicle for "serious" expression of thought; increasingly, poetry was associated with fiction. Thus when the *Roman de Troie* was recast in prose in the mid-thirteenth century, the *remanieur* asserted that one often finds lies in poetry.[31] Being a twelfth-century writer, Konrad naturally could expect his audience to take guidance on spiritual matters from the speeches by the characters in his text. As a late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century writer, the creator of the *Song of Roulond* would suppose that his audience expected to be entertained; thus he would focus (as he does) on dramatic interactions between interesting characters. If he intended to teach his audience something, he would have to be somewhat subtle.

Finally, one must always admit that even under the system of literary patronage common in the Middle Ages, an author can still show an individual creative spark that goes beyond the world-view of his or her peers. The explanation for why Konrad and the Middle English poet wrote as they did will not necessarily be found by studying the time in which they wrote.

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[31] H. J. Chaytor, *From Script to Print. An Introduction to Medieval Vernacular Literature* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1966), 83-86.