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"AH, QUE CE COR A LONGUE HALEINE":  
THE HISTORY OF CHARLEMAGNE AND ROLAND  
IN EUROPEAN LITERATURE

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Denison University Honors Project  
1986-87

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## General Introduction

My purpose in undertaking the following research was, I will be the first to admit, primarily self-serving. I entered into it with the realization that many techniques of scholarship--methods and I will need to pursue my chosen field--still lay closed to me, that there were ways of approaching knowledge about which I was still unaware, and without which the facts and intuitions I have grouped up over the last four years suffer from a lack of relevance to one another. The ideal of a liberal arts education being the equitable exposure to not only as many bodies of knowledge, but as many interpretations of that knowledge as possible, I designed this project to be above all else an indulgence of interdisciplinary experience.

In this instance the learning takes the form of studying a story and discovering how different artists over the past twelve hundred years have made use of what is in essence the same flexible theme. Stories about the victories and travels of Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers emerge as the largest cycle of legends in Europe after those of Arthur and the Round Table, and the proportionally smaller amount of critical work done on its cycle means that the door of topical possibilities is wide open. If, as I do, you believe that in its consistent portrayal



of what is best about human nature heroic literature offers a more profound understanding of the culture in which it was produced than any procession of dates and events possibly can, you will not be disappointed by the centuries of legends, chronicles, poems, and plays idealizing Roland and his companions. Each is its own work with its own considerations of theme and presentation, but due to the nature of its nuclear story it is also evocative of all the other members of its family tree-- each work in an heroic cycle is at once creator and transgressor, subsequence and precedence, and this dynamic relationship fascinates me.

When I began this project I knew very little of the Charlemagne cycle apart from its most famous tableau and a brief acquaintance with a few of the works in its canon. When I began to find that all criticisms referred to titles and themes that I knew nothing about, I decided that the first logical step in the whole business would be to win for myself a working knowledge of all the representative versions of the stories. No such compilation has been made since Gaston Paris wrote his Histoire Poetique de Charlemagne in the 1860's, and the number of new theories and discoveries since that time suggests that a new edition akin to Paris' should be put together. One of the great advantages of the Arthurian legend has been its concise compilations, and I think that such a piece of work on this sibling cycle would be welcome.

As a sort of novice step in this direction, the first part of my paper is an introduction to the history of the legend in the literatures of western Europe: France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Scandinavia, and England. Many different subjects in the life and rule of Charlemagne found their way into poetry, and rather than face certain death trying to assimilate all of them, I have bent my investigation in the direction of what has become for many the dominant branch of Carolingian legend: the military doings of Charles in Spain, and the Battle of Ronceval Pass (778) at which, so the story goes, Charles' nephew Roland died.

The information I give is therefore not just about Charlemagne, but about Charlemagne in reference to Ronceval whenever possible. I resisted the temptation to simply pluck out the name Roland and construct a history around his character because that's not the way the stories were used by the majority of the writers I looked into: the many institutions associated with the reign of Charlemagne attracted attention to his time as a whole, not just to an isolated incident early in his kingship. At any rate, every analysis is allowed its point of focus, and this is mine. I have set up the chapters so that the background relevant to the ambush (the "proto-history") comes first; then I follow accounts of the story successively through the writing cultures of medieval and modern Europe, giving information on Ronceval versions and



major or extraordinary Charlemagne works, in that order. In those instances in which Roland turns up abundantly I have included major works (ie, artistically influential or popularly acclaimed) and representative examples of minor literature. My chapters are by no means a catalogue of all the works in the canon, for this is impractical, but they do contain all the leading works and authors.

Not only in its role as a reference work and as a painless way to discover the diversity of interpretations possible in a single historical event, this very much "research" half of the project has taught me much about available sources, major figures in criticism, the importance of a strong base in linguistics for study of this kind, and the subtleties of genres previously foreign to me.

In the second half of the project I turn my attention to a specific embodiment of the legend, one which (among many diverse elements) contains an account of the Battle of Ronceval. The work is an Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi ("History of Charles the Great and Roland"), written in Latin prose in the 12th century by a monk pretending to be an eighth-century Archbishop named Turpin (hence it has been dubbed "The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle"). It was enormously influential for over three hundred years, and the majority of all later literature in Roland's canon and much in the larger Charlemagne cycle either directly or indirectly descends from it.

While the Turpin was translated into many vernacular languages in the middle ages, it has not been Englished since an edition, now very rare, published in 1812. Since another of those scholarly arts I have been waiting to develop is that of translation, I took this opportunity to rise above the ritual paraphrases I have produced in Spanish, French, and Old English. I believe that a person can never really appreciate the choices and sacrifices involved in this process, and so can never be in the desired control of a foreign text (balancing suspicion with appreciation) until he or she has done the job firsthand. It is tricky work, made so by the constant tension between desire for both accuracy and readability--never before have I been as aware of the possible misrepresentations and quiet prejudices inherent in any translated work. I chose for my victim one of the many Old French editions of the Turpin, and have prefaced it with a short introduction concerning manuscript and method.

\* \* \*

I have always found it helpful, upon completing any project, to draw up a retrospective list of things that I would do differently if I had the chance--how I would go about the same project based on what I've learned from the



first experience, what tactics I would change or emphases I would shift, and so on. In free admission of the imperfection of this project, but in consolation that I will be playing with the works I've discovered for the rest of my life, here is my list of desiderata both whimsical and earnest:

1. My greatest regret in all this final product is that its nature did not allow it to be more interpretive. My original plans included not only the history section and translation below, but also critical essays on the Chanson de Roland and the translated Turpin and the differing accounts of the Roceval battle they contain. It is still an excellent idea, but time limits have meant that I can only now (late April) turn my mind toward it.

2. Even further back in my plans was the desire to apply a particular brand of literary interpretation to some of the works. The world of early European literature consisted for the most part of story cycles, of iterations and reiterations of pre-existing materials by commissioned writers working under a strong unspoken law of tradition. Aesthetically, an artist usually began his or her work from an instructed position: a patron directed the outline and initial steps of the creative process, first telling the artist what it was he or she was to make, and then telling him or her, in varying degrees, how to make it. The creation of literature, therefore, was not the isolated and ultimately unrestricted process that we have

come to know it today--no Dickinsons or Whitmans, ready and willing to actively create a brand new and fully-developed style of writing on their own initiatives, could have existed in the middle ages because literature at that time was defined in part by its position on the line of tradition--its creation and transgression once again.

Consequently, literature of the middle ages must be approached in a fundamentally different manner than that of periods after a culture's "artistic liberation." This difference, or even the disproving of its theory should all this turn out to be not the case, fascinates me, and I know that the wealth of excellent writing in the Charlemagne cycle would serve better than most as a testing ground. "Literature in its contexts" is a worthwhile telos.

3. I was regretful, but not really surprised, to find that none of the works in the immense cycle are known to have been written by women. In reaction to this I would like to do a study of the female characters in the various romances and epics (they do exist as characters: Christian and Saracen, loving and beloved).

4. A comparison of the Arthurian and Carolingian legend cycles, involving the themes and archetypes in each and in time suggesting criteria for what causes one story to stay newer in the hearts of Europeans than another, is begged by the often parallel growth of Arthur and Charles' stories in the middle ages.

5. Given so rich a legacy as this one, might it be possible to predict what an extensive recreation of the Ronceval ambush in today's literature would look like? Like Arthur, though quieter, the Carolingian legend is still alive today.

These few should keep me busy for quite some time to come, but my interest in what I have started has grown greater and greater the more I have learned about the material. The pages that follow were, once more, written for my own benefit; should they prove good reading to others as well, I will have surpassed all of my own expectations.







The Battle of Roncevaux  
15 August 778

Arab chroniclers,  
such as Ibn al-Athir

over a gap of 300, NG  
or in al-Athir's  
case, 500 years

SPAIN

inherits if not the  
details, then the  
sentiment of her  
Arab governors.  
Poems in 12<sup>th</sup> C are  
firm-influenced by  
this northern  
tradition - viz  
Almeria and Cid.  
later 13<sup>th</sup> C pro-  
duces the wonderful  
BERNARDO, Roland's  
alter ego

Lope de Vega  
and  
Cervantes

a future  
dominated  
by the  
French?  
1900?

Nota Emilianensa  
places ambush at  
Roncevaux in 1054-ish

popular legends  
in the vernaculars

official Latin accounts:  
Einhard, Annals, Life of  
Louis the Pious  
early 9<sup>th</sup> Century

pilgrim  
legends and the  
cult of St-James

and perhaps  
Celtic giant myth?  
So Skelton says

French chansons de geste,  
including **LA CHANSON  
DE ROLAND**

whose Oxford MS dates  
c1100.

- Also includes associated gestes of
- Fierabras
- Aspremont  
and
- Otinel

discovery of the  
Oxford Chanson in  
1830's re-directs  
English Carolingia back  
to the French:

witness  
The Silent Strain  
of Archibald  
Mac Leish

The Crusades  
1095+

Das Rolandslied of  
Falkner Konrad -  
c1170

The PSEUDO-TURPIN  
CHRONICLE  
c1140

Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi  
forming Book 9  
of Libri Sancti Jacobi  
at Compostela

Karlmannus Saga  
of King Hakon  
c1250

Drimurs + ballads in  
Iceland, Denmark, Sweden

Romances in  
Middle English begin  
circa 1300, lasting 'til the  
time of Malory and printing.  
Culmination is Chilton's Lof of  
Charles the Grete in 1485.

- Fierabras
- Otuel
- Vernagu

Spenser  
and  
Greene  
1590

and later English Italiana  
such as Merivale  
1817

shift in the  
source from  
France → Italy

viz Harrington  
1591

early Italian  
poetry very  
French  
eg, I Reali di  
Francia,  
11250

Entrée d'Espagne  
c1350

Pulci, Morgante

Boiardo, Orlando  
Innamorato

in 1495, sets in motion  
most enduring tradition of  
and Fancy

Ariosto,  
**Orlando Furioso**  
in 1532

Berni

the Italian  
tradition



## i.

All accounts of Charlemagne, Roland, and Ronceval start in the same place, chronologically if not textually: the concurrent growth of two very different and powerful political systems--one Christian, the other Arab--in eighth-century Europe. A short recapitulation of history will set the foundation for everything in the following chapters, and since I have the weight of tradition on my side I shall begin with names and dates.

The scene for western Europe in the 700's sets itself something like this: all of present-day France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and northern Italy comprised a vast empire controlled by the kings of the Franks, a people who over the last 300 years had grown from an insignificant Germanic tribe up near Holland to a military power capable of subjugating or destroying the many less organized tribes surrounding it. The key word with the Franks is Unification, and this becomes clear very early: within a hundred years after the fall of Rome (c430), the ruling Merovingian dynasty had stilled much of the post-Roman bureaucratic anarchy and reclaimed much of old Gaul. When King Clovis converted to Christianity in 497 he was able to ally his forces easily with the remnants of Gallic Rome (already Christian); in a fortunate procession of strong rulers, this conquer-and-unify process continued throughout the sixth and most of the seventh centuries

[Kinder and Hilgemann, p121].

The Carolingian Dynasty proper began in the late seventh century with Pepin II (679-714), who despite the fact that he changed the ruling bloodline and moved the seat of government managed to keep hold of the unification ideal: he kept pushing eastward and fighting battles against Germanic tribes. Pepin's son Charles Martel (714-41) did the same. Martel's son Pepin (called "The Short") became sole ruler in 743, and was anointed "First King of the Franks" by Papal authority in 751. Short Pepin added Aquitania to the roster of Frankish conquests, and was even named Protector of Rome in return for his military aid. Wars with nonunified tribes were a constant preoccupation, and Pepin kept pushing outward [Kinder and Hilgemann, p123].

Charles, Pepin's son, ascended the Frankish throne in 768, and immediately set out to increase the already considerable Carolingian holdings: from his seat of government in Aix-la-Chapelle (present-day Aachen, near Cologne) he added the continental Italian region of Lombardy in 774, the Saxon lands underneath Denmark from 772-804 (making these wars by far the most demanding of his reign), and many borderlands to the east from the Baltic to the Adriatic. He succeeded, after many attempts, in building the first bridge across the Rhine, and was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III in 800.<sup>1</sup> Thus "Charles" became "Charles the Great." Britain was tribally



Celtic and Germanic, Brittany was Celtic; otherwise, continental Europe north of the Pyrenees and west of Czechoslovakia was Frankish and Christian [McEvedy, p46-47].

All this Frankish activity, and to some extent the success in unification, was mirrored south of the Mediterranean at precisely the same time. The southern two-thirds of Spain, the entire north coast of Africa under the Mediterranean, and today's middle eastern region of northeast Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Iran were all under an Islamic power that had been spreading west from Saudi Arabia since 632. The dynasty largely responsible for this was that of the Omayyads, a family of tremendous power which had been doing pretty much what the Carolingians were about to start doing: conquer, convert, and move on, with the more explicit Islamic dogma motivating them. In 749, however, a rebellion occurred which replaced their hereditary rule with that of another family--the Abbasids--and this new ruling Caliphate took over the bulk of lands previously administered by the now less numerous Omayyads. But the Omayyads didn't disappear; their only surviving member, Abdur-Rahman, found a comparatively warm refuge in his family's former holdings in Spain and in 755 he founded an independent state there: the Caliphate of Cordova. Iberia remained tentatively his, except for the markedly independent Galician and Basque lands in the northwest quarter [Riquer 1968, p10].



A map of Europe will point out that the only interface between these two great powers--the only place where a Frankish King could stand in his domain and lock eyes with an Arab Caliph standing in his--is the Pyrenees, the natural border between modern France and Spain. Eastern Europe was an impasse of Slavic tribes, Turkey and Greece and variable parts of the Mediterranean belonged to Byzantium, and so the Pyrenees it was. Spain is the focal point in geography, and so now it becomes the focal point of discussion.

The northern half of Iberia in particular was not overwhelmingly impressed with Rahman and his government. It was a diverse area, culturally, and the youth of the administration gave many of its opponents a common ground on which to unite in their disagreement. Within ten years of the establishment of the Caliphate the governor of Barcelona, Suleiman al-Arabi, headed a deputy of other Arab chiefs to Charlemagne's father Pepin to ask for help in getting rid of Rahman. These quiet negotiations ended in 771 when Pepin died, but again in 777 an Arab delegation set out for the court of the new Frankish king to ask for help. Putting it briefly, Suleiman asked Charles to enter Spain and oust Rahman from power. In return, the north of Spain, and especially the strategic city of Saragossa, would be his to garrison and administer [Riquer 1968, p10; Brault 1979, p202].

Needless to say, Charles was delighted. Even though

Iberia had Arab rulers it was by no means completely Islamic--Christians and Jews lived without fear in the northern cities, especially those in the northwest. The political opportunity to set up strong outposts against Arab attacks on his southern borders, and the spiritual chance to unite with Christian Galicia, happened to come during a lull in his skirmishes with the Saxon tribes. In early 778 he assembled an unusually large fighting force from all over the kingdom and started moving south; he split his army into two parts, leading one through Ronceval pass in the western Pyrenees and sending the other down through what is today Andorra. The western army moved through the lands of the recalcitrant Basques toward Pamplona: Charles met Suleiman there, received Arab hostages as a sign of good faith, and then continued on to meet the eastern army and see about swooping down on Rahman's seat of government in Cordova.

The two armies met at Saragossa, where all the optimistic momentum was cut short: one of Suleiman's Arab colleagues, one al-Husein, decided to remain loyal to Rahman and himself moved into Saragossa and defended it. Charles, disgruntled at this unexpected turn, then turned the entire army around--possibly because he received notice of Saxon uprisings in the north, possibly because he didn't have the equipment or supplies for a starvation siege. He kept the Arab hostages (and Suleiman) with him and turned north back towards France through the same Ronceval pass by



which he had come south. The main army passed through without incident; the rearguard (including, according to custom, the baggage, royal plunder, and perhaps the hostages) was ambushed and completely destroyed.

It was an embarrassing loss, but not, I want to stress, anything nearing an Imperial disaster. Charles lost no cities or lands; he himself was not involved in the melee, and his quick response to the Saxon uprisings leads me to believe that he wasn't militarily crippled or that he even lost any momentum. The journey into Spain was unsuccessful, but because Charles failed to move into Saragossa and fortify it as a Frankish and Christian outpost, not because of a minor skirmish when he was practically back in his own lands [Watt and Cachia, p27]. Charles left the mountains to guard his southern border and didn't turn his efforts back there again for 17 years: with Saxons to conquer and the Pope to defend, Spain was not his highest priority.

## ii.

The historical problem caused by this archetypal little skirmish later to be called the battle of Ronceval (Roncevaux, Roncesvalles) is that there exist only a few reports of the ambush in written records of the time, and that while those accounts have told investigators a great deal about what "really happened," it's a knowledge gained by comparing them against each other and weeding out what doesn't fit in the larger scheme of the military campaign. If the process of searching were as simple as toning down liberal records or evaluating eyewitness reports all would be well, but, as I very quickly discovered, facts interior to this subject are scant indeed. In the ambush, legend will have it, everyone was killed; whether or not everyone was becomes insignificant because if someone with enough position to be considered an accountable eyewitness had survived, Carolingian chroniclers would have been able to give full, immediate, and harmonious accounts. As it was, the first interpretations of the motivations, circumstances, and cast of characters were left to the lettered clerics at Charles' court.

There are three significant Frankish sources for the event. Earliest (in fact, probably contemporaneous) is an entry in the Royal Frankish Annals, a series of chronological entries similar to England's Anglo-Saxon



Chronicle and covering the mid-8th to the mid-9th centuries. Lots of versions exist, but the most helpful is a revision made sometime between 814 and 830: <sup>2</sup>

He decided to turn back and marched into a pass through the Pyrenees. The Basques had placed an ambush at the top of the pass: they attacked the rearguard and threw Charlemagne's whole army into confusion. Although clearly enough the Franks were superior to the Basques by their weapons and in their courage, their superiority was nullified by the mountainous nature of the terrain and by the unfair way in which the battle was fought. In this conflict were killed most of the military leaders whom Charlemagne had put in charge of his troops, the baggage was stolen, and then without more ado the enemy, who had a most detailed knowledge of the neighborhood, slipped away in all directions.

This official record recognized that Charles' army had been attacked while returning from Spain, and offered details about specifics: Basques (Latin Wascones) do the attacking, and they are knowledgeable enough to know where to wait, when to attack, and how to successfully escape. And the special choreography of the clash, which I will come back to, is here.

Between the years 829 and 836, a monk named Einhard (Eginhard) wrote a posthumous biography of Charlemagne: Vita Karoli Magni, or the Life of Charles the Great. Einhard had been a counsellor and close personal friend of the Emperor's, remained so under Charles' son Louis the Pious, and so his Vita remains the only eyewitness account of Charlemagne's person, activities, and death [Thorpe,

p12-13]. His story too went through a few revisions, the later ones giving more information than earlier ones. The section quoted below is among the latest, and is based on the Annals' version quoted above. It elaborates further:

At a time when this war with the Saxons was being waged constantly and with hardly an intermission at all, Charlemagne left garrisons at strategic points along the frontier and went off himself with the largest force he could muster to invade Spain. He marched over a pass across the Pyrenees, received the surrender of every single town and castle which he attacked and then came back with his army safe and sound, except for the fact that for a brief moment on the return journey, while he was in the Pyrenean mountain range itself, he was given a taste of Basque treachery. Dense forests, which stretch in all directions, make this spot most suitable for setting ambushes. At a moment when Charlemagne's army was stretched out in a long column of march, as the nature of the local defiles forced it to be, these Basques, who had set their ambush on the very top of one of the mountains, came rushing down on the last part of the baggage train and the troops who were marching in support of the rearguard and so protecting the army which had gone on ahead. The Basques forced them down into the valley beneath, joined battle with them and killed them to the last man. They then snatched up the baggage, and, protected as they were by the cover of darkness, which was just beginning to fall, scattered in all directions without losing a moment. In this feat the Basques were helped by the lightness of their arms and by the nature of the terrain in which the battle was fought. On the other hand, the heavy nature of their own equipment and the uneven ground completely hampered the Franks in their resistance to the Basques. In this battle died Eggihard, who was in charge of the King's table, Anshelm, the Count of the Palace and Roland, Lord of the Breton Marches, along with a great number of others. What is more, this assault could not be avenged there and then, for, once it was over, the enemy dispersed in such a way that no one knew where or among which people they



could be found. [Thorpe, p64-65]

This passage is quoted in practically every edition of the Chanson de Roland, and for two good reasons: it is by far the most complete Carolingian interpretation of Ronceval, and since Einhard became a standard reference on Charlemagne matters (like William of Malmesbury or Geoffrey of Monmouth) this account or earlier drafts of it circulated widely. Einhard is the first and only Carolingian to supply names for some of the deceased: Eggihard, Anshelm, and Roland ("Hruoldandus"), a seneschal, a count, and a lord of Charlemagne's demesnes. None of the three is mentioned elsewhere in the biography; there is no information on who this Roland might be or where he came from (the name was not uncommon at the time). The other two names are recorded presences at Charles' court, and the name Eggihard provides an appreciated detail: the possible date of the encounter. Eggihard's epitaph states that he died on August 15th, 778.

The last significant mentioning I have been able to find in Carolingian writings, and the last in Christian Europe for some time, is this short statement by the biographer of Charles' son Louis the Pious in 840:

Once all that could be achieved had duly been accomplished in Spain, the homeward march was successfully begun. A disaster occurred on the journey, for in that same mountain range [the Pyrenees] certain troops of the King's rearguard were cut to pieces. As everybody knows their names, I will not trouble to list them. [Thorpe, p183]



There are no new details or names in this extract, but I think the assumption made in it is significant: as Lewis Thorpe, the translator of Penguin Books' Einhard points out, the unknown writer "states clearly that they were all fresh in men's memories more than sixty years after the battle" (p183).

\* \* \*

On the other side of the Pyrenees the ambush was also recorded, but there are significant differences in technical detail and the attribution of motivations between these Arab accounts and the Christian ones. First of all, Arab historians viewed Charlemagne's entry into Spain as an entirely political move--the idea of a theological motive (uniting with Christian Galicia) is not present. Rather, it's the Arab governors of northern Spain--of Barcelona and Saragossa--that Charles crossed the mountains to see [Metlitzki, p117-18]. Witness this anonymous 11th-century Arab history of the campaign in Spain: <sup>3</sup>

Then came Sulayman al-Arabi to Saragossa, and, with him, came Husayn ibn Yahya al-Ansari, a descendant of Sa'd ibn Ubada. The Emir [Abd al-Rahman] sent against him Ta laba ibn Abd, with an army. Ta laba besieged the people of the town and fought against them for some days. But by and by al-Arabi discovered a negligence in the besieger's camp...he prepared his cavalry, and the besiegers didn't realize what was happening until the moment Ta laba was attacked in his own tent. Ta laba was taken prisoner in his

power, and the army took flight.

Al-Arabi took the prisoner to Qarlo, and Qarlo, when he had him in his power, wished for this reason to gain power over Saragossa. He put together a company and lay siege to the town, and waged battle against the inhabitants; but they drove him back with much effort, and he was forced to return to his own lands.

The political interpretation is reinforced in these two 13th-century records of one Ibn al-Athir:

Year 157: This year, Sulayman ibn Yaqzan al-Kalbi made Qarlo, King of the Franks, to come to the Muslim land in al-Andalus, and he came to his meeting and was escorted to Saragossa; but he was forestalled by al-Husayn ibn Yahya al-Ansari, one of the descendants of Sa'd ibn Ubada, who walled himself up in the city. Qarlo, King of the Franks, grew suspicious of Sulayman and seized him, taking him away to his land. But when he had traveled out of the Muslim lands and thought himself secure, he was attacked by Matruh and A-ysun, the two sons of Sulayman, with their troops, and they rescued their father with whom they returned to Saragossa, rallying to the side of al-Husayn and joining with him against Abd al-Rahman.

Year 164: This year, Abd al-Rahman el-Umawi came to Saragossa, after having sent against it Ta laba ibn Ubayd with a great army, for Sulayman ibn Yaqzan and al-Husayn ibn Yahya had joined together to challenge obedience to him, as has been said. Ta laba fought against them at length; but after some days, as he was returning to his camp, Sulayman suddenly caught him unawares, struggled with him briefly, and took him prisoner. The army of Ta laba broke up. Sulayman took recourse to Qarlo, King of the Franks, to whom he promised to give the city and Ta laba; but when Qarlo came after him, he only gave up Ta laba. Qarlo took him, and returned to his country, thinking that he would receive a considerable ransom for him....



These three accounts in Arabic do not contradict one another. <sup>4</sup> al-Athir's 157 entry does, however, betray a different motive for what must be the same ambush that Einhard describes: there is no mention of the Basques that the Latin writers name as the conductors of the conflict; the entry suggests that from an Arab perspective the ambush had the qualities of a rescue mission. Moreover, the one detail emphasized in all the Arabic entries and noticeably absent in the Latin ones is Charles' failure to take what tactically must have been his primary goal--Saragossa. It isn't surprising to see such opposing points of view, considering we are examining accounts from both sides, but the lesson is that this insignificant historical event (history, and therefore unarguable, but history without tethers) will never be read quite the same way by any two individuals.

\* \* \*

The Latin sources stop in the 9th century, and there is essentially no more written down about Ronceval for three hundred years. Time, circumstances, and approximately the persons involved are accounted for; but, as scholar Gerard Brault summarizes, "no one knows where" the rearguard was attacked [Brault 1979, p202]. Charles' army passed through Ronceval on its way north (as well as



through other natural divides in the western Pyrenees), but that doesn't require that the battle was fought there. The earliest existing mention of the Ronceval pass as the site is a Latin scribble datable to between 1054 and 1076, in the margin of an earlier chronicle. It is referred to as the Nota Emilianense ("handwritten note"), and it tells a part of the history as follows:

In the 816th year of this Age, Charles came to Saragossa. In those days he had 12 nephews, each one of whom commanded 3,000 knights in armor. Their names were Rodlane, Bertlane, Oggero of the sharp sword, Ghigelmo of the curved nostrils, Olibero, and Bishop Torpin. And each of them served the king for one month with his retinue. It came to pass that the king camped his army outside Saragossa; by and by they advised him to accept many gifts so that his army wouldn't die of hunger, and to return to his own country. So it was: the king agreed, for the sake of his men and his army, that Rodlane, a strong fighter, follow behind with his men. When the army had crossed the threshold of Sicera, in Rozaballes Rodlane was killed by the Saracen people.

[Riquer 1983, p25]

The three hundred years separating the Annals, Einhard, and Life of Louis from the Nota have been given many names, often poetic ones calculated to express the imperfect vision scholars still have of such periods. "The silence of the centuries," "epic fermentation," and so on all serve as tags for communicative terra incognita. <sup>5</sup>

When I used the word "archetypal" to describe the ambush I am referring to the special choreography it contains: a military force (an invading force) enters a

land that is culturally and ideologically different from its own; when leaving the country a group of indigents (foreign to the narrator) set a trap for the force. As the last of the invaders pass through rugged terrain in narrow file, the enemy (in overwhelming numbers) descends on them from above, kill them all, and repair again whence they came. Add an element of treachery from within or without, a specific character acting in the ideal manner of whatever age is writing about him, and the intrigue is complete. This pattern, however you wish to express it (and being an intangible thing the expressions are usually like that as well), recurs so often in literature that, as Gerard Brault puts it, "some sort of law is evidently involved."<sup>6</sup>

Many generations of Europeans have implicitly introduced their own psychologies: it was a defeat for Charles personally, a defeat for the Franks as a people, and a defeat for all Christians who would inevitably come to consider it an obstacle to the spreading of Christ's glory. The political motivation for the Spanish campaign (the tradition of unification among Frankish kings) becomes less prevalent in people's minds when spirituality is doing great things in the world; the situation reverses when power is exercised triumphantly on a secular level. The interpretively historical mode in which the battle exists makes all of this possible.

In three hundred years, see what has happened: kinship relationships have been constructed between Charles and his



captains; epithets have been applied to specific persons; names hitherto uncelebrated are now shown in personal light; Saracens (a generic term meaning approximately "outsider," but often applied to members of Oriental faiths) are now held responsible for the attack; and a place--as important a referencing tool in legend as is the setting in a drama--has either been chosen or has at last come to the surface for us. These are the new facts, brought on suddenly or casually by the working psychologies of their human celebrators.<sup>7</sup>



## iii.

The massive realm that Charles had administered did not long outlive him; by 888, under his son Louis the Pious and Louis' sons Lothair, Pepin, Louis, and Charles the Bald, the Empire had been segmented into a number of major and minor kingdoms and counties--France, Germany, Provence, Burgundy. The Carolingian name was still there, but the central figure of a single Frankish Emperor ruling it all (and the unity of administration and purpose possible in such a situation) was gone. The title of Roman Emperor (and, later, Holy Roman Emperor) migrated east and deposited itself in the German states where it would remain almost exclusively until its discontinuation in 1806 [Bryce, p475-506]. By the late ninth century, about 100 years after Ronceval, the Normans entered France from the north to take power, and in the late 10th the Capetian dynasty had begun [McEvedy, p48; Kinder, p159].

But the French people kept the memory of their great King alive through three cycles of chansons de geste ("songs of deeds") that flourished between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. The songs were, in the process I outlined in the preceding chapter, the result of a kernel of objective history surrounded by coat upon coat of interpretation, incorporation, and slow aesthetic elaboration; most of them are anonymous, and so taxonomists have

classified them first according to which of three main divisions they belong, and then according to sub-cycle--the many themes that developed within the larger groups. The three cycles are: <sup>8</sup>

1. The gestes du roi: "songs of the king," concerning Charlemagne and every facet of his life and reign.
2. The gestes about William of Orange, extremely diverse in subject, based on composites of practically every noble named Guillaume in pre-13th C France. Occasionally overlaps #1.
3. The gestes about vassals rebelling against Charlemagne. An offshoot of #1.

Over 110 distinct romances belong to these three groups, averaging six thousand lines apiece [Spence, p52]; fortunately, the purposes of this paper mean that we only need to deal with #1, the King-songs. About a dozen sub-cycles grew up about the Emperor after his death, most dealing ostensibly with his military campaigns. Of those the six most popular were: <sup>9</sup>

1. Charles' enfances--his youth and travels
2. His journey to the Holy Land
3. His military campaign in Italy
4. His military campaign in Spain
5. Songs about Otinel
6. The Saxon Song

Copies of romances belonging to the first group date back to the late 1100's and include Berte aus Grans Pies ("Berta of the Big Feet"), the story of a bed-switch masterminded by a wicked nurse which prevents Charlemagne's



mother Berta from meeting her husband Pepin the Short for a time. There is also Mainet, in which young Karlot (Charles), having lost his parents by poison, takes on the alias Mainet and travels to the court of the Saracen King Galafrey in Toledo. He distinguishes himself by his bravery and becomes enamored of Galafrey's daughter, who hopes that their children might rule instead of her brother Marsil. To win her he kills Galafrey's enemy Braimant with his sword Durendart (winning Braimant's sword Joyeuse), and in his honor the Saracen court converts to Christianity. Charles returns to France and is crowned king. Last comes Basin, which parallels Mainet insofar as Charles leaves court after his father's death. He takes up with a thief (Basin) and in a vision sees the usurpers being crowned Emperors of France--he returns to court and with Basin's help regains his rightful title [Riquer 1968, p185-6].

These popular stories are rich with the conventions of folk-tales and early romance, and they provide the origins for many of the watermarks of Charlemagne stories: in just these three we have what will come to be Roland's mortal enemy (Marsil, or Marsile), his sword (Durendart, or Durendal), and we see how Charles won his own sword Joyeuse. It has been said that all lasting heroes prove themselves in their youth by a formula of separation, initiation, and return;<sup>10</sup> in that interpretation, these stories serve as testimony that Charles' birthright was not an accident.

For the second group I need to talk a little bit about the Church in the middle ages, for there is other than a secular motive behind its origins: it was in the workings of various religious houses that the idea that Charlemagne once went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem was born. Such pilgrimages were not uncommon to the Christian kings of Europe, but there is no evidence that Charles ever traveled farther east than the Danube, let alone to the other side of the Mediterranean [Paris, p54]. The point in having him do this in the first place was that so great an Emperor wouldn't just go to the Holy Land, walk the paths and visit the shrines and come back empty-handed--rather, he would no doubt have visited Eastern kings and collected holy relics to bring back to Frankland with him. A nail from the True Cross, a bit of hair, a vial of blood, diverse bones or garments--any could be the motivation for church-building and miracles.

All churches, at some time or another in the middle ages, offered to pilgrims the experience of viewing or touching or otherwise being in the presence of some of these sacred remnants of Christ, the apostles, other Biblical figures or saints which had come into their possession. The trouble was that with such an industry, and a profitable one at that, it became more and more important to legitimize one's own relics--to be able to prove that your church, and not the one down the road, had the one and only Holy Umbilical Cord. If, however, you could generate a



story both in speech and on paper that contained not only an account of a revered figure like Emperor Charlemagne going to Jerusalem, but also an account of how he brought this or that relic to your church, pilgrims were much more likely to come and see it.

The first such stories appear in Latin just before the time of the 1st Crusade (1095), but the idea held such possibilities that an Old French poem was soon written about it. This is La Voyage de Charlemagne a Jerusalem et a Constantinople, which dates to the mid-12th century and was written by a monk of the Abbey of St-Denis, France [Picherit, vi-vii]. It begins and ends there, and in between contains the story of Charles' pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, his conference with the Emperor of Constantinople (from whom he receives Saint Simon's arm, Saint Lazarus' head, Saint Peter's beard, Saint Stephen's blood, a piece of Christ's shroud, the crown of thorns, one of the nails from the cross, the knife that cut the bread at the Last Supper, and the Holy Grail), and his journey back to France, where he invested St-Denis with many of the relics it was famous for in the 1100's. The success of this particular sub-cycle of gestes lies, I think, in both its poetic and ideological practicality: as far as conventions go it is a simpler, more skeletal cycle, and so if necessary could easily be included in passing in other stories.

The third group of gestes include two famous Old French titles, La Chanson d'Aspremont and Fierabras. Both

are long stories based vaguely on the historical wars Charlemagne waged against the Lombards to protect the Pope, and possibly influenced by any of the invasions of Rome (Goths in 410, Byzantines in 536, Saracens in 846, Normans in 1084). Aspremont, written just before the 3rd Crusade (1191), tells of the death of wicked King Agolant after prolonged battle in Italy, but of equal importance is the inclusion of what we could call the enfances of Roland: the young warrior is shown here in his pre-Ronceval prime, winning his horn Olifant, his steed Viellantif, and (contrary to Mainet) his sword Durendal from a Saracen named Aumont [Riquer 1968, p208-9].

Fierabras is of the same style. It was written a little earlier (1170), and is remarkable for the number of sub-cycles and conventions it works into its ostensible theme of fighting the Saracens in Italy. Like the Voyage it was written for the specific purpose of legitimizing the holy relics at the Abbey of St-Denis [Knott, p504-5], but it also includes a popular plot of the age--that of the converted heathen--and a love story between Sir Guy, one of Charlemagne's knights, and Floripas, a Saracen princess. Because of this central love element, Fierabras in particular became more widely known when popular romances developed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

\* \* \*



The fourth group--those dealing with Charles' Spanish campaign and, therefore, the battle of Ronceval--has the distinction of having in its membership the oldest existing manuscript of a chanson de geste, and the two primary and most influential Charlemagne works in history. The elaborate problems of history and its interpretation that I outlined in chapter ii become secondary when three works--of a single generation, but each of a different kind and with its own background and purpose--come under discussion. They are La Chanson de Roland ("The Song of Roland"), Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi ("The History of Charles the Great and of Roland," also called the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle), and Carmen de Prodicione Guenonis ("The Song of the Treachery of Ganelon"). These give us definitive answers to all those old questions, and almost every later author who exercises a knowledge of the Ronceval ambush has read one or more of them or their derivatives.

The "oldest and best" of these writings dates back only to 1100. It is a fragmentary poem written in Old French assonanced verse, dealing specifically with the events surrounding Ronceval; it is probably a copy of an earlier lost work, and exists in similar form in about a half dozen other manuscripts made later in the twelfth century. <sup>11</sup>

The Story, as official now as the Royal Annals had been in the ninth century, runs as follows: <sup>12</sup>

Having spent seven long years subduing the Saracens in Spain, Charlemagne is suddenly faced with a crucial decision. King Marsile, ruler of Saragossa, the only remaining enemy stronghold, offers to become his vassal and a Christian by a certain date if he will raise the siege. (The Saracen leader has no intention of keeping his word.) After receiving conflicting advice--his nephew Roland urges that there be no letup in the fighting until total victory is achieved; Ganelon counsels to accept the Saracens' terms--Charlemagne opts for a cessation of hostilities. Roland proposes that his stepfather (parastre) carry the Franks' reply to Marsile. Ganelon becomes enraged, but, after challenging Roland and his companions and vowing to have his revenge, he sets out on the dangerous mission. At Saragossa Ganelon convinces the Saracens that Charlemagne will be rendered powerless if they get rid of Roland, and together they arrange an ambush. Upon his return, the traitor, echoing the earlier designation, nominates his stepson (fillastre) for the rearguard.

At Roncevaux, with the main body of Charlemagne's army at a safe distance, Marsile springs the trap. Realizing that the rearguard is hopelessly outnumbered, Roland's companion Oliver urges him to sound the oliphant to call the Emperor to the rescue. Roland refuses. Archbishop Turpin absolves the Franks and the battle begins. After initial triumphs, the rearguard is reduced to a handful of men. The hero now sounds the oliphant, but before Charlemagne can arrive, the entire rearguard has been wiped out. Mortally wounded from the strain of sounding the oliphant, Roland makes his peace with God and succumbs. Angels take his soul to heaven. Charlemagne crushes the remnants of Marsile's fleeing army.

As the Emperor makes ready to return home, Marsile's ally, the Emir Baligant, appears with a tremendous force. The battle rages again, with heavy losses suffered by both sides. Aided by the angel Gabriel, Charlemagne defeats Baligant in single combat. The enemy breaks into a rout and Saragossa surrenders. All opposition has now been broken down.

Charlemagne returns to his capital at Aix (Aachen, in West Germany). Roland's



fiancee, Alda, dies upon learning of his death. The trial of Ganelon begins. Charlemagne accuses Ganelon of having betrayed him for a bribe and of having brought about the catastrophe at Roncevaux. Ganelon protests, saying it was not treason but a private feud: Roland had put his life in peril by nominating him for the mission to Saragossa; he, Ganelon, publicly defied Roland and his companions, then avenged himself. Fearing reprisal from Ganelon's kinsman Pinabel, the judges recommend that the traitor be let off. However, Thierry dissents and proposes that a duel between Pinabel and him settle the matter. With God's help, Thierry wins, and Ganelon and thirty of his kinsmen are executed. Bramimonde, the Saracen queen, is baptized. In a final scene, the angel Gabriel summons Charlemagne to wage new campaigns against the infidel.

It is easy to see the nucleus of history at the center of the story, much harder to reconstruct the steps by which the story grew. The narratives of this Chanson answer many of the logical questions I posed earlier: the Spanish wars have raged for seven years (the original campaign lasted perhaps three months); Charlemagne, King of the French (not Franks) is immensely old, sage, and battle-weary; Roland--the Hruodlandus mentioned in passing some 275 years ago--has become his nephew and has developed his own rich psychology of motivations and hero's responses. The circumstances around the ambush have been created: Ganelon, Roland's stepfather, sells out in spite to pagan King Marsile and together they set up the time and place to wipe out the rearguard. Peripheral characters, some of whom will in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries gain fan clubs

of their own, are introduced: Oliver, Roland's companion and his equal in worth; Duke Naimmes, the wise counsellor; Turpin, the fighting Archbishop of Rheims; fair Aude, Oliver's sister and Roland's betrothed. And, of course, Ganelon, second only to Judas in the betrayal of trust.

But above all is the interpretation of the event that the Chanson de Roland offers. It provokes at once a didactic and an emotional response because it boasts two complementary, but still distinct, manners of presenting its plot: by ideology and nationality (tangible) and by archetype (intangible). Take, for example, the imagistic center of the Chanson: the tableau of Roland, standing alone amidst the bodies of his French warriors and friends and blowing his Olifant to call for help. In "one of the grandest and most celebrated moments in literary history," [Brault 1978, p214] the two deceptions of the poem (Marsile's deception of Charles, Ganelon's treason) are focused; the original heroic debate (death versus dishonor) is decided; exegetic cognates (Jericho, Gabriel) burst in; history (Charles ambushed by Basques in Arab Spain) is augmented by modernity (Godfrey of Bouillon leaving on the 1st Crusade) to make certain in the minds of all readers and listeners that whatever the physical outcome of the battle, those men dying for Christ have achieved martyrdom and eternal life.

Politically, the French jongleurs interpreted the ambush as we might expect them to: with no official



information to the contrary, they have created a Charlemagne who not only captures Saragossa but who returns immediately after the death of his nephew to avenge this disaster for God and France. The victory of the Saracen forces under Marsile and Baligant is short-lived, for to a French Christian writing in the late eleventh century the real winner in the Battle of Ronceval--historically because of the power icon Charlemagne had become, and spiritually because of the truth and might of the Christian faith--was clear.

The second of the three works giving a Ronceval account also works along these lines of interpretation, but it is of a much different bloodline. The popular development in France which resulted in Old French poems like Mainet, Fierabras, and Roland was paralleled at the outset by writings in French churches in ecclesiastical Latin--this is what had started the journey to Jerusalem business. Charlemagne had much the same advantage in people's memory as Priam of Troy and Arthur of Britain: the years he was associated with were followed by years of relative disruption and ineffective government (the early Capetians), a situation which always lends much fuel to the legend fires. Although the Church as an institution would not have suffered extensively from political fragmentations, by the time Crusade spirit was building in the latter 1000's ecclesiastical attention was undoubtedly turning to past pious rulers as role models for the Holy

War. Charles the Great, crowned Emperor of the West by the Pope himself and even in his own time compared to David and Constantine, was a perfect candidate for the position of cult figure [Brault 1978, p94]. In invoking the reign of Charlemagne, a representative of the Church summoned up a time of great piety and church-building--a time when secular power and divine authority ran so close that the one often undertook the defense of the other (a sort of symbiosis).

In about 1140, just after the penning of the Oxford Chanson, the Abbey of Cluny in France put together a Liber Sancti Iacobi ("Book of Saint James") honoring that saint and to be used as advertising for his shrine in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain. Cluny had for some time taken an interest in Galicia (the region of Spain including Compostela); in 1120, its abbot had inquired after and obtained permission from Pope Calixtus II to turn Compostela into an archiepiscopal see, making the cathedral there one of the most important religious centers of western Europe [Smyser, p3]. So in 1140, Cluny further advanced the interests of St-James' shrine by putting together these five chapters of Latin prose which contain texts and services dedicated to Saint James (ch 1), the Saint's miracles (ch 2), the story of his body's transportation by sea from Jerusalem to Galicia (specifically Santiago de Compostela--ch 3), the matter of Turpin's chronicle (ch 4), and finally touring instructions



for the pilgrims who would come to see the relics and shrine (ch 5).

What sparks one's interest is the way in which whoever it was that put the thing together did so: it is a work of at least three ecclesiastical forgeries created for the purpose of giving additional legitimacy to the miracles and histories it contains. The oldest manuscript (1140) states quite plainly that it is being compiled by Pope Calixtus II (d1124); chapter 3 contains a special affirmation by a Pope Leo (the last one had been Leo VIII, who died in 1054); and chapter 4 says that it was written by Archbishop Turpin himself (died c810).<sup>13</sup>

Chapter Four, the Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi, pulls together accounts of battles and miracles from the Old and New Testaments, saints' lives, and popular legends about many kings (especially Charlemagne), all as garnish for its nuclear story of the marvels and miracles Charles performed in Spain. It shares the wicked and tenacious King Agolant with the Chanson d'Aspremont; portents of death from Einhard's Vita; and a full account of the Ronceval ambush close (but not too close--there are many additions and subtractions) to the Chanson de Roland. It is what scholar Gerard Brault (1978, p20) calls a "strongly clerical adaptation" of various popular sources perceived to have didactic content. Although no versions of this extraordinary Chronicle exist before its version in the Book of Saint James, it is very likely that it was written

earlier and then adapted for the Book's purposes: Saint James is mentioned only rarely in it, and then in parts near the beginning or end (as links to the rest of the Book) [Sholod, p111-12].

Within 300 years, the Pseudo-Turpin had been translated into many vernaculars including Provencal, Catalan, Galician, Welsh, Old Norse, and Old French [Walpole 1979, p5]; over 300 total manuscripts of it exist, all connectable in a tortuous genealogical tree.<sup>14</sup>

It is hard to say which of these--the Chanson or the Turpin--has had the greater influence on later literature; I suspect it is the latter, but an answer to the question is pointless within the parameters of this paper because both evolve from the same body of Roland legend. The Turpin had the advantage of greater immediate appeal to the literate clergy and so it spread farther; the Chanson has had a more long-term advantage, since the increase in lay literacy eventually meant an interest in written works of popular genres. Roland, Charlemagne, and Spain were preserved in both, and so whatever the proportions this sub-cycle has come to be equated with Carolingian legend.

About the third and final member of the works about Spain I can say only a little, since it is unique and has not received much scholarly attention. This is the Song of the Treachery of Ganelon, an early 13th-century Latin poem of 482 lines which makes the subject of its narration the famous traitor and trips its way through verbal switchbacks



and grammatical repartee to give the Ronceval story (without the Baligant episode, a quarter of the Chanson). Its author was well-educated, for Roman deities and classical allegories make occasional appearances; apart from its belabored grammar it is interesting because it moves deeply into the psychology of Ganelon--his thoughts are traditionally given little air time. The existence of parallel lines from manuscripts of the Chanson make it possible that this poem was a rhetorical exercise using a popular source for foundation.<sup>15</sup>

\* \* \*

The fifth sub-cycle of gestes du roi, now that I have finished the most intricate of the namings, does not present many surprises. It is a younger group than the others, not arising until the early 13th century and then in response to increased demand for stories. The plot sounds a lot like that of Fierabras: Otinel, the son of a pagan King of Lombardy (in this case Garsile, a variation on Marsile) comes to Charles' court bearing a war-challenge; there he is miraculously converted to Christianity, wins the hand of Charles' daughter Belisant, and joins the Peers in their fight against his father [Riquer 1968, p217-18]. It will become the case that cultures or periods that show an interest in Fierabras will do the same for Otinel, and vice versa.

The last of the King-songs presents a neat irony: Charlemagne's wars against the Saxons lasted most of his life--as I said earlier, they were his single largest undertaking. Of these decades of wars only one poem, the Chanson des Saisnes ("Saxon Song") by Jean Bodel, remains. The Spanish campaign, which involved the King's presence for maybe three months in 778 and less in 795, has become one of the literary shapers of European literature. The Saxon Song was written in the mid-13th century (like Otinel, rather late compared to the others), and has as its subject Charles' killing of Saxon King Guiteclin and the ensuing problems he has with the widowed Queen and ambitious Princes. Bodel's poem is probably best remembered for the summary in its opening *laisse* of the subjects about which *gestes* were written in the later middle ages: <sup>16</sup>

Ne sont que iii matieres a nul home antandant:  
De France et de Bretagne et de Rome la grant.

Thus the classifications some scholars have made of medieval poetry have their earliest notice here: Charlemagne, Arthur, and tales from Rome are the decorum of the day.

This earliest recorded production of texts, therefore, is predominately concerned with military expeditions, of which Ronceval was the most popular. Legend latched onto the idea of the Twelve Peers--Charles' military cabinet, his equivalent of the Round Table--and in the later twelfth century peripheral poems were starting to be written about



the exploits of individual Peers: Oggier the Dane was a favorite, and wise Naimés and Turpin. The late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries witnessed a new blooming, as variegated as the first had been, of continuations, imitations, and refabrications of the older works [Paris, p74]. In 1242, French poet Phillipe Mouskes wrote a vast work of 31,000 tetrameter lines in couplets called the Chronique Rimee (Rhymed Chronicle), in which he sets out to tell the history of all France from the time of the Trojan War to his 13th-century present. Like Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain it tends to be more literary than historical, at least to our way of classifying, but Mouskes brought together a wide variety of texts, stitching them together in as close to chronological fashion as he could. The work is heavily weighted toward the reign of Charles; included are accounts of the siege of Aspremont, the story of Oggier the Dane, the birth, youth, and death at Ronceval of Roland (this episode exists at length). Though not written specifically for the glorification of Charlemagne, as it might be argued Geoffrey's History was written to glorify Arthur (and to explain the victory of Normans over Anglo-Saxons by elevating the resistance of the Celts), the Chronique Rimee demonstrates that the diverse legends are still enough in demand to be brought together into definitive compilations. It isn't until the early fifteenth century that prose romances become the method for conveying legend. Vernacular

prose arose in France only just before it did in England (with Malory and Caxton), and the new style allowed the incorporation of later stories (the "developed" ones, far removed from the manuscripted songs of the twelfth century by three centuries of adaptors).

But for the most part, the heyday of popular Carolingian legend is past--this prosifying is the last widespread action France takes with its own matiere. It may just be that none of the scholars I have read on the subject extend greatly into the years since, but there seems to be almost an extinction of interest in Charlemagne in favor of neoclassical and then non-traditional subjects. The matieres of Jean Bodel move out of the way of French literature. The only later poems of which I have found mention are "Charlemagne" and "Charlemagne Penitent," written in the 1660's, and both with themes highly critical of the Emperor, his court, and the Christian zeal with which the centuries associated him [Paris, p113].



iiii.

But when he came below the Pyrenees mountains Charles did not deliver many cities from the hands of Saracens, as Frenchmen so falsely assert.

This protest by a Spanish monk of the boasts of Carolingian conquest in Spain serves as a nice model for the general attitude of his nation toward such sweeping claims as contained in the Chanson de Roland and the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle.<sup>17</sup> To judge from the scorn of this author (writing in about 1110), and as we shall see from centuries of similar expressions, the Roland tradition among Spanish writers was born in a defensiveness that is present in each telling of the tale.

The Ronceval story entered Spain early and provoked a considerable response there in the 11th and 12th centuries, and there are a few fundamental reasons for this. First of all, it enters because it's as much a Spanish story as a French one. However a particular person chose to interpret the ambush, it was the climax of any narrative dealing with the expeditions into the country, and it was the event with which a native of Spain would be most likely to associate the name Charlemagne; it was among the only cultural relevance that the Carolingian dynasty held for the Spanish [Sholod, p155].

And the story was of particular concern in these two centuries because the conflict between Christian and Arab states in Spain was taking an interesting turn. The

parallels between the politics of the 8th and 11th centuries are striking, for once again the question "Who will have possession of Spain?" is raised; this time, however, Islam is not the answer. Civil wars, remnants of the struggle that caused Abdur-Rahman to form his Caliphate of Codova back in the 8th century, caused the dissolution of that same government in 1028. Without this governing force the balance of power between Arab and Christian shifted in favor of the latter: this is the period called reconquista, the attempt by French and Spanish Christian armies to reconquer Spain politically and spiritually.<sup>18</sup> By 1200 the Arab presence in Iberia was half the size it had been a century earlier; by 1340 it was nonexistent [Kinder and Hilgemann, p187].

What all these names and dates mean is that suddenly (in the space of a hundred years, anyway) the official religion of all of north Spain became conclusively Christian. And so France enters: as I mentioned briefly in the preceding chapter, the Benedictine monks of Cluny began to take an interest in the religious houses of northern Spain during this reconquista. With the Islamic presence pushed back, the possibilities for the foundation of new churches and the profound revitalization of old ones were myriad; the Abbots of Cluny, with the support of royal power (especially Alfonso VI), began a sort of monastic invasion in which religious houses were taken over, feudalistic systems of administration were introduced, and



a better Latinity was stressed. Cluniac officials took governing positions in many Spanish churches and swept away what they considered to be outdated institutions: even so seemingly subtle a change as the replacement of the old Visigothic calligraphy with Carolingian miniscule nonetheless added to the number of French changes in the fabric of Spanish culture [Smith, p14-15].

Cluny extensively advertised the pilgrim routes into Spain, and with the flood of French travelers in the late 11th century came jongleurs: their chansons de geste, including versions of the Chanson de Roland, were adopted by the already existing song tradition there [Sholod, p155]. That the Ronceval story was known in Spain in the late 1000's has already been shown, and in none other than the Nota Emilianense: the margin in which Roland's battle was first placed at Ronceval belonged to a chronicle of a monastery just west of Saragossa. <sup>19</sup>

The first poem written in Spain on the Ronceval subject came about in 1157. It is in Latin, is called simply Poema de Almeria ("Poem concerning Almeria"), and was penned to celebrate a military victory of Alfonso VII's in that Mediterranean port ten years earlier. The poet begins with a comparison of Charlemagne and King Alfonso, and by and by creates what we might call an "alternative" to the heroic couple Oliver and Roland: Alvarus (Alvar Fanez) and El Cid. Both of the latter were Spanish military leaders in the eleventh century; while they were both alive

at the same time it is unlikely that they knew one another, let alone that they fought side by side as they are depicted as doing in Almeria [Smith, p149]. Their places in the Almeria are as embellishment, as part of the overall attempt to attach valiant names to the memory of the victorious King.

Most of the references I have been able to find on this poem, however, are ones in which it is cited as a source of one of the great pieces of medieval Spanish literature, the Poema de Mio Cid ("Poem of My Lord"), written in 1207 [Smith, p1]. The historical Cid (from "Sidi," an Arabic title of respect) was born Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar; he had been instrumental in many of the battles of the reconquista, including the capture of Toledo, and so quickly became a folk-hero and his country's version of Roland. The parallel should stop there, though, since the theme of Cid is very much a social one: a self-made man of modest class (the Cid) struggles against a nobility characterized as proud and cowardly.

The Poema de Mio Cid makes borrowing from French sources an art form. The Castilian who wrote it had a "wide and sensitive" experience of French verse [Smith, p157]; elements in the Cid are borrowed from over a dozen gestes du roi from the last decades of the 12th century (e.g., Fierabras, Berte aus Grans Pies, La Chanson de Roland). Like the Chanson, Cid is divided into assonanced laisses; Gabriel appears to the Cid in a dream just as he does to



Charlemagne; both have flowing white beards to denote their sagacity. <sup>20</sup>

What the poets of Almeria and the Cid have done is to borrow French, and in both cases specifically Roland material, using the forms, character types, or heroic proportions of the latter to help develop their own themes. Neither is a reworking of the French storyline; neither contains a Ronceval narrative or comments on those of others. The ideals expressed in the Chanson or in other Old French epics were not the pragmatic, what we might call Marxist, ideals of 12th century Spain. All the two poems evidence is the existence of the matiere de France, and they suggest that the jongleurs moving down into Spain left their styles behind to be borrowed from.

The retaliation against the excessive claims about Carolingian conquest, as opposed to the occasional quiet entry in a monastic record or chronicle of kings, comes into being far later than all of this easy adaptation. In the thirteenth century the juglares of Spain create a character named Bernardo de Carpio, the "Spanish anti-Roland," who at once refutes those claims and asserts Spanish superiority over the intrusive French [Duggan, p124]. Like the eventual Charlemagne in French legend, Bernardo is a composite of at least three 12th and 13th-century nobles of that name [Franklin, p302], and the tale in brief runs as follows: Ximena, sister of King Alfonso II ("the Chaste," 791-835) of Asturias, has an

affair with a noble of her brother's court and gives birth to an illegitimate son (Bernardo). Alfonso is enraged when he learns of this; he throws Ximena into a convent and her lover into prison, but brings Bernardo to the court to be educated. By and by Bernardo gains much power and respect, and when Alfonso dotingly invites King Charles to become overlord of Asturias, Bernardo, in loud disagreement of this policy, joins forces with Moorish King Marsil of Saragossa to repel the northern intruders. In a valley in the Pyrenees called Val de Carlos, the two forces meet and Roland and many French knights are killed; Charles retreats to Germany to recover from his loss. <sup>21</sup>

The story rolls on after this encounter, mostly centering around Bernardo's unsuccessful attempt to free his aged father from prison--but the unwillingness of the Spanish to acquiesce to French demands, even after so thorough a cultural rifling as they underwent in the years following the reconquista, is what leads me to consider the Bernardo stories the largest single Spanish contribution to the story's catechism. It is bound to be an unpopular one outside of Spain due to its essentially reactionary nature, but this cycle of legend grew as large in the 13th and 14th centuries as some of the French ones. Bernardo's youth was constructed, and early loves; his achievements become so numerous that eventually the years he is associated with add up to over a hundred and fifty [Franklin, p289].

After the 14th century, however, the Bernardo stories



and ballads become less and less the subject for written attention. It isn't until the 16th century, when the publication of the Italian epic Orlando Furioso brought Roland and Charlemagne to the attention of all Europe (see chapter vi below) that another small surge takes place. The prolific playwright and poet Lope de Vega wrote a number of comedies and lyrics on the love themes in the latter 1500's; Miguel de Cervantes, invoking his country's chivalric history through the romantic eyes of Don Quixote in the 17th century, paraphrases the Bernardo stories and occasionally includes verses from some of the many ballads.

v.

There is a quiet irony in the fact that the land in which Charlemagne was born, in which he came to power and centered his vast Empire, has produced only three works casting the Emperor in a leading role. The reasons for this lack of interest lie predominately in political history, especially that of the ages following the death of Charles and the territorial battles dividing Frankland during his successors' reigns. As one scholar phrases it, German literature "has always suffered from the nation's checkered political history" [Reich, p22], a condition which, as in the case of Beowulf, has meant the gravitation of a legend cycle away from an area in which we might otherwise expect it to flourish. With the collapse of his empire and the dissolution of the many unifying projects he had begun, Charlemagne became to the German-speaking people an increasingly "western Frankish" and then "French" king--one associated with the still existing institutions in those lands to the west and, more importantly, one dissociated with the contemporary regime.

When German literature began to be cultivated in the late twelfth century, it captured momentarily a bit of the Carolingian story group before going on to celebrate its own Germanically-defined cultural legends (the Nibelungs, for example). The first and most influential piece of German literature concerning Charlemagne is an interpreta-



tion of the Chanson de Roland made by a priest at Regensburg named Konrad in about the year 1170 [Walshe, 60]. One of the earliest works to be translated from French to German, Konrad's Rolandslied ("Song of Roland") is a fledgling chivalric poem of over 9,000 lines with the expressed intention of lauding the miraculous deeds of Charlemagne and the practical effect of "strengthening the conception of the divinely commissioned warrior" [Walshe, p62]: <sup>22</sup>

Charles was the son of Pepin;  
 Honors and achievements by the score  
 Did that lord harvest:  
 He conquered the furious pagans  
 To bring them to the true light;  
 They were ignorant until then  
 Of their Creator.

Father Konrad received whatever manuscript of the Chanson he used from his patron, Heinrich the Lion, Duke of Bavaria and Saxony, at the request of the latter's wife (Matilda, eldest daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II of England), and translated it first into Latin and from that into Middle High German. <sup>23</sup> He was forced by the political situation in Bavaria to modify the pervading theme of French nationalism into one of regionalism; in offering the Chanson material to Heinrich's court, Konrad emphasizes those members of Charlemagne's army who are listed as being from Bavaria--in general he makes the logical attempt to add elements to his story which will make it culturally meaningful and place-specific for his

audience.

But another and far more pervasive influence is shown in Konrad's work. Awareness of "contemporary realities," as one critic terms Bernard of Clairvaux' preaching of the Second Crusade (the 1140's), caused Father Konrad to emphasize the moral lessons to be learned from the treachery of Ganelon and the moral inspiration to be gained from the example of men fighting together for God's cause [Ashcroft, p263]. All of the criticism I have read remarks on the spirit of piety and didacticism that pervade the work; Konrad spares few opportunities for Biblical exegesis [Ashcroft, p278], and it is for this reason that I emphasize the interpretive, rather than the translative, character of his Song. He also strengthens the feudal concepts extant in the Chanson, subtly adapting them once again to match the slight differences in the Bavarian lord-vassal relationship, so along with its contemporary sibling the Alexanderlied ("Song of Alexander"), the Rolandslied is the earliest incarnation of German Court Epic [Reich, p46; Urbanek, p223].

The other two pieces of German writing are both modelled on Konrad's work. Around 1230 the poem was modernized (Konrad, in vogue with his lord's court and foreshadowing the chivalric movement, wrote in purposely archaic language) by a man referred to only as Der Stricker ("the Knitter") [De Boor, p245]. This "amplified paraphrase" [Paris, p284] is titled Karl der Grosse



(Charles the Great), and from all accounts involved a process similar to that applied by Berni to Boiardo's Orlando Innamorato in the late 1400's (see section vi below).

In the mid-1300's a collection of folk tales about Charlemagne's early life titled Karlmeinet appeared. Based on the Mainet legends from France (Berte aus Grans Pies, Mainet, Berin) and containing an incorporated version of Stricker's new Rolandslied [Scherer, p82] perhaps broadened by other versions of the Chanson which had by that time found their way into Germany [Ashcroft p271], Karlmeinet tells the story of Charlemagne's exile and travels as a young man.

## vi.

Roland crossed the Alps at the same time and in the same manner as he traveled throughout much of the rest of Europe: in the early twelfth century, along crusade routes [Avery, p685]. In Lombardy, the northernmost part of modern Italy, the stories arrived first in unwritten and then in written form, but it was in peninsular Italy that they were to find a more sustained and prolific literary attention than anywhere else in Europe. Over 110 romances dealing with the Carolingian stories have been catalogued [Comfort, p903], the majority written in and after the sixteenth century--and included are some of the greatest poetry of the Italian Renaissance. The key word when looking at this literature is Imitation: conventions were brought into existence by one author, reinforced in their use by another, and so on until a warehouse of very attractive furniture stood ready for the use of writers who (at worst) needed only an imaginative theme or gimmick to hold all the conventions together. The entire calculus of poetry--from sublime to sensational, epic to lyric to satiric--is present in Italian Carolingian material.

The stories can be reduced for discussion into the following broad categories of type or period: <sup>24</sup>

1. Franco-Lombardic poems based on French sources
2. prose and verse collections of #1
3. poems with original themes, to Orlando Innamorato (1495)
4. Orlando Innamorato and its descendants



Most of the stories were not translated into anything approaching contemporary (ie, spoken in Court) Italian for a long time--until about 1300--a seeming oddity made understandable in light of the fact that the legends were until that time still very much on the popular level, and that on that popular level the linguistic differences between Lombardic Italian and French were not great enough to prevent the former from understanding the oral literature of the latter [Comfort, p883]. The first category above consists predominately of oral poems carried into Lombardy by jongleurs (the French bard or scop); French was still the literary language of northern Italy in 1300, so in those instances when oral did become written it tended to be an unpredictable and dialectal French writing dubbed Franco-Lombard.

These are poems from the gestes du roi--the enfances, Aspremont, Fierabras--as many of the different story lines as France produced, and an important foundation for what lies ahead simply because they get the material into a receptive cultural area: "they are, in a way, the umbilical cord which connects Carolingian poetry in Italy to its French mother" [Paris, p183].

Since there is no markedly individual use of the stories (and in any case no editions of them accessible to me), it's next to impossible for me to characterize the general ends to which the material is employed. At a guess,

however, I would say that unlike Konrad's Rolandslied over in Germany, the absence of newly-developed themes suggests that the previous ones have not yet changed greatly. This guess is backed up by some passing references in the Divine Comedy (1308-15), where Dante betrays a familiarity with the basic story-line of the Chanson and with the equipment and devices of the Ronceval story. In this case both general and specific references serve to color Dante's background; he includes the following simile in Inferno xxxi, 16-18:

When Charlemayn, in rout and ruin red,  
 Lost all the peerage of the holy war  
 The horn of Roland sounded not so dread.  
 [Dante, Inferno, p265]

At line 122 of canto xxxii, Ganelon is mentioned in passing with other famous traitors. Roland and Charlemagne flit about the heavenly crucifix in Paradiso xviii, 43-45 as exemplars of Christ's warriors:

Then Roland on the track of Charlemayne  
 Sped, and my keen eye following--as it does  
 The flight of one's own falcon--watched the  
 twain. [Dante, Paradiso, p215]

Both of the cited passages, following the sources available to Dante and in the same manner as the French, Spanish, and German writers of this same time, connect 8th-century Carolingian with 11th through 13th-century divinely-commissioned battle, first in reference to "the holy war," then in the implicit placement of Frankish heroism among God's fighting legions.



It wasn't long before their popularity caused the many Franco-Lombard poems to be brought together in large prose collections (category #2 above). Created in the mid to late 1300's, such works in this tradition as Storie de Rinaldo ("The History of Rinaldo"), I Reali di Francia ("The Kings of France") and the prose Spagna ("Spain") normalized dialects into the increasingly decorous Tuscan one.<sup>25</sup> These compilations can in many ways be compared to the vulgate cycle of the Arthurian legend--a sign of still-increasing popularity and literacy in their effort to offer definitive encyclopedias of legend [Comfort, p886]. The Reali (after 1360) collates versions of ten French romances dealing with Charlemagne's childhood, Roland's lineage, the Ronceval battle, and other associated subjects [Paris, p184-190]. Like the later Karlamagnus Saga (see section vii) it puts its stories chronologically: it was, like the History of the Kings of Britain, an influential reference work for generations of writers.

At the same time as this collecting trend, and in many ways symbiotic with it, begins the truly "Italian" movement--the time when authors begin to abandon the traditional story-lines of the French gestes in favor of stylistic notions adapted from other sources (category 3 from above). Roland really becomes Orlando in his own right in 1350 with the anonymous creation of an original poem of over 15,000 lines later given the French title Entree d'Espagne ("The Entry of Spain"). Based solidly on the

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events of the Pseudo-Turpin and inheriting that work's strong religious motives, the Entree's author included conventions from Arthurian romances and in so doing changed the course of the matiere de France for good [Comfort, p885].

At this time Italy's burgeoning epic literature absorbed three soon-to-be conventions: voyages into the Middle East by knights errant, strange and exotic courtly relationships with strange and exotic Saracen princesses, and an overall acceptance of nonChristians as potentially hospitable and definitely interesting. This is only an initial acquaintance, I should stress, and one which does not reach its zenith for another hundred years: the "roving apostles of Christianity" inherited from Arthur stories of quest and adventure are quickly written up in less influential poems of the fourteenth century such as Prise de Pampelune ("The Capture of Pamplona," a fragmentary verse continuation of the Entree) and Viaggio di Carlo Magno in Ispagna ("The Voyage of Charlemagne in Spain"). The poetry, with new conventions, is beginning to move into a strong Italian identity; what in the thirteenth century had been poetry relatively pure in its inheritance of the matiere de France becomes in the fourteenth markedly altered by the matiere de Bretagne.<sup>26</sup>

In effect, the poets in the Italian tradition are no longer following a legendary source, but each other, and it has been argued that "it requires a constantly greater



effort to comply with the time-honored requirements of the matiere de France, and to indulge in the appropriate number of prayers, battles and conversions" [Comfort, p899]. The convention list is widened to include the behavior of certain key characters, a quality similar to that in the Arthurian legend, and eventually having the effect of reducing Charles and many of the Peers to the level of stock characters. Charlemagne himself is consistently upstaged, becoming a character at whose court such and such events occur. The character Rinaldo (a warrior cousin of Orlando's) is upgraded until he, as often as his cousin, is the leading man; Ganelon and his faction grow in number and influence until it is practically understood by all at court that some day he will do a great act of treason. And likewise Ronceval, when eventually mentioned, becomes a destination rather than an incident.

And the tone is changing, too: Luigi Pulci anticipates (or contributes to, or exemplifies) the increasing lightness associated with the stories in 1470 with his comic epic Morgante Maggiore. Writing for Lorenzo dei Medici and reading canto by canto to his court [Avery, p658], Pulci, "the poet of laughter," sets everything into occasional satire, frequent buffoonery, and constant whimsy. He creates the first real comic figure in Italian literature: the title character, a giant named Morgante, who literally dies laughing.<sup>27</sup> Pulci's Morgante is, in my 4-class reduction, the last of these individual poems--

individual in the sense that they do not consciously continue or complete plots begun in earlier works, and last because the next three hundred years of poems are variations, completions, arguments, complaints, all founded on one work.

In 1486, Count Matteo Maria Boiardo of Scandiano published the first two books of an epic romance titled Orlando Innamorato ("Orlando in Love") [Avery, p687]. A loyal servant of the House of Este, he created in the Innamorato the single most influential work of Carolingian literature in Europe after the Oxford Chanson de Roland and the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle. His is an act of unmatched invention: while retaining the characters of the earlier French and Italian incarnations--Orlando, Carlo, Turpin, and so on--and to some degree incorporating earlier situations of plot from the manuscripts kept in the Este library in Ferrara [Staebler, p11], Boiardo added scores of original characters and the precedental element of passion; in so doing he redefined the appeal of the entire legend for the Italian reader.

Which sounds excessively declamatory, but consider: every action in Boiardo's epic is directly or indirectly motivated by love. Fraternal, paternal, maternal, sororital, courtly, sexual, repressed, suppressed, expressed, perverted, Platonic, divine, transferred, fixated--all are present. The poet himself wastes no time in proclaiming the unmoved mover of his epic: <sup>28</sup>



You knights and gentlemen assembled here  
 to listen to delightful tales and new,  
 pay attention, stay still and you will hear  
 the great story which brings my verse to you;  
 you'll see wondrous deeds defying fear,  
 heroic labors, and feats of strength too  
 which frank Orlando wrought at Love's call  
 when King Charles ruled, lord of all.

Now don't be amazed at all, my friends,  
 to hear me sing Orlando made Love's pawn.  
 He, the proudest in the world, unbends  
 to Love's force when all his will is gone;  
 no bravery or strength of arm defends,  
 no brace, chain mail, or razor sword quick-drawn,  
 no earthly force is sufficient shield  
 against that Love which makes all men yield.

As the epic opens, Charlemagne is holding the annual Pentecost banquet; Angelica, a beautiful Saracen princess from Cathay, appears in the hall on sneaky business and instantly every knight present falls desperately in love with her. Marriage matters not, nor status, and "it is this passion which motivates all the action of the eleven-hundred-page epic" [Staebler, p3]. Angelica offers herself as prize to whichever of the knights can best her brother Oberto in combat; Orlando immediately muses on his feelings for her (he likens it to insanity, shame, weakness, whim, sin, defeat, death, and evil in rapid succession, and any audience will get the hint that Boiardo's Love will have many, many consequences), and the Innamorato "scherzo" [Lewis, p300] is off and running.

Many thousands of lines later, after its characters drink from fountains that reverse affections, are carried off by lusty hermits and imprisoned beneath lakes, travel

to Spain and the "Faroff" isles, tilt with each other in numerous glorious tournaments to win damsels, foretell the House of Este, win the Armor of Achilles, lay siege to every city in Europe, battle sphinxes, giants, centaurs, dragons, wizards, Amazons, crocodiles, knights born of dragon teeth, and the Laistrygonians from the Odyssey, are captured and saved and captured again--all with a sprezzatura of narration that can make the most intricate of succeeding English plots seem clumsy--early in Book III Boiardo abruptly ends:

But, Oh God our savior, while I speak  
 I see Italy ruined in flames and fire  
 by these brave Gauls who descend to wreak  
 damage in every spot that they admire;  
 so I'll leave Fiordespinga alone to seek  
 fulfillment of her impossible desire;  
 another time, if I'm given the chance,  
 I'll continue the story of this romance.  
 (Orl Inn: III,viii,26)

Nothing better expresses Boiardo's overall approach to his writing than this: he was a fifteenth-century poet not so concerned with stylistic perfection that he could not suddenly halt his narrative in a very personal, desperate way. The French invasion meant that Boiardo never did continue the story of his romance, and this is the fact which has kept Orlando Innamorato from an extra-Italian audience for five centuries. <sup>29</sup>

Orlando Innamorato was continued in 1509 by Ludovico Ariosto in a celebrated poem titled Orlando Furioso ("Orlando in Madness"). The opening cantos of the Furioso



begin exactly where the Innamorato broke off, and it begins its own lightning romp with the same characters for thousands more stanzas of ottava rima. The plot lines achieve new heights of intricacy, and Ariosto adds an edge to his tripping words that is somewhat sharper than Boiardo's was--the same ludicrous darts and quips are there, but now more calculated and profound. He wrote in Tuscan, without many of Boiardo's informalities, and he likewise had the advantage of living long enough to polish his poem himself (he continued revising for over twenty years, until 1532) [Staebler, p27]. He also served the Estensi, and succeeded in the course of his poem in achieving Boiardo's unrealized goal: getting the star-crossed lovers Bradamante and Rugiero together to found one of Italy's greatest noble families. <sup>30</sup>

Over the next 250 years Carolingian stories in Italy are almost exclusively based on Ariosto and, to a lesser extent, Boiardo. Comedy--and most often the neoclassically lower kinds of comedy (burlesque, travesty)--becomes the dominant form after the romance, and everybody eventually falls in love and goes mad. The titles start to imply variations on a theme: Angelica Innamorata, Rinaldo Appassionato, Rinaldo Furioso, Ricciardetto Innamorato, Ricciardetto Ammogliato, Astolfo Innamorato, Astolfo Furioso, Rodomonte Innamorato, Mandricardo Innamorato, and on and on [Comfort, p904]. The last two named poems I have been able to find on the subject are from the eighteenth

century; the first is Ricciardetto by Niccolo Forteguerra (d1735) [Paris, p201], who has his Saracens plant land mines in Ronceval pass (Carlo, Orlando, and Rinaldo fly to heaven without the help of angels). The last is La Marfisa Bizarra by Carlo Gozzi (c1772), which "represents the court of Charles as sunk in ease and luxury after the victory over Marsilio, and contains a comic caricature of all the Peers" [Comfort, p908].

As late as the 1940's there are reports that the public storytellers and puppeteers in Naples and Sicily still work with Boiardo and Ariosto's characters, romantically recreating the "Christian versus Pagan" theme for the purpose of spectacle [De Sanctis, p78; Comfort, p909].

Given the sum of all this, the evolution of the legend is probably more complete in Italy than it was even in France; although it took a while for anything particularly Italian to happen to the material, the late bloom was a brilliant and inspirational one which has not died.



## vii.

In the late thirteenth century, King Hakon Hakonarson of Norway began an ambitious project of collecting and translating many popular French and English stories from all cycles and genres [Duggan, p35]. His emissaries traveled throughout northern Europe (England, Denmark, Normandy), visiting monasteries and courts and receiving gifts of manuscripts to enrich houses of knowledge in Norway and Iceland which would eventually become impressive warehouses of pan-cultural history, biography, and legend.

One of the single largest results of Hakon's movement is a series of translations biographing Charlemagne and collectively called Karlamagnus Saga ("Charlemagne's Saga"). It is a fascinating work, a collage of individual French and derivative English poems rendered into Old Norse prose by several unspecified translators; its best surviving manuscripts contain ten separate stories, each from a different source, placed end to end and covering the whole of the Emperor's life. The sole common thread among them is the presence of Charlemagne, and the various origins of each of the parts and the emphasis on strictly literal translation means that contradictions (in dates, names, obituaries) are bound to occur--these and other general facts facilitate the comparison of the Saga to Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur made by Saga editor Constance

Heiatt. <sup>31</sup>

Most of the manuscripts used by Hakon's monks have been lost, and in a few cases the only avenue by which scholars can reconstruct a particular romance is by referring to the existing Norse. The reliability of translation and the relatively neutral tone maintained throughout are most often pointed to as the watermarks of this work: as far as possible, each translator tried to make sense out of passages employing puns or other verbal oddities that would require familiarity with the source culture; <sup>32</sup> and he treats themes that only rarely are found in southern versions. <sup>33</sup>

The parts are biographically chronological, and so the first deals with the legends of Karl's early life ("Berta of the Big Feet" again, and the plot of Basin). Part I also covers the birth of Rollant, the presentation to him by Karl of the sword Dyrumdali, and the set-up with Ganelon and Ganelon's wife of the Ronceval ambush. Part II, "Olif and Landres," does not continue this narration, but rather gives a unique folk-tale about an accused queen and a wicked steward, in which Charles and his court play only a peripheral role. The story's own introduction says that it is a translation from English, but that source no longer exists [Heiatt, I, p163-175].

Part III translates one of the French romances about Ogier the Dane, a favorite minor character and one of the Twelve Peers; Part IIII, "King Agulandus," is a very



lengthy intertwining of the Chanson d'Aspremont and parts of the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle, using as a common reference the mythical enemy King Agolant (Aigolandus) [Hieatt, II, p9-10]. Part V, "Guitalin the Saxon," bears close resemblance to the Saxon Song of Jean Bodel; it may be a translation of Bodel's source. Sixth is the Otinell tale translated from Old French; seventh is an exact translation of a known manuscript of the Voyage de Charlemagne, recounting the Emperor's purported pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Part VIII is called "The Battle of Runzival," (Saga af Runzivals bardaga) and it bears a very close resemblance to the first half of the Oxford manuscript of the Chanson de Roland--it is speculated that it may be a translation of an even earlier version. Ninth comes the shortest section, and the only one out of place in this history of Charlemagne: "William Short-nose" transplants Charles from the cycle of gestes du roi into that of William of Orange by writing him in as William's son. Tenth and last comes a translation of Vincent de Beauvais' account of Charlemagne's death, as contained in the former's Speculum Historiale ("Mirror of History") [Hieatt, III, p213-19; 291-98; 320-25].

The few other Scandinavian works I have found on the subject are all much later, and most are based on parts of the Saga. There is a Danish Karl Magnus Kronike in the late 15th century which adds five legendary episodes not used in the Saga; a Swedish Karl Magnus which translates parts VII and VIII above, also of the 15th century; a Ferakuts Saga

from the late seventeenth on the subject of the Roland-Fernagus duel from the Pseudo-Turpin; and, lastly, a number of ballads in Iceland, Norway, Denmark, and the Faeroe Islands in the 17th and 18th centuries [Hjorth, p265]. Very few have been edited and published.

for assistance, the battle commenced on both sides. (Giles, p276-77) stimulate the soldiers, and calling on God that the worthy example of that man might kingdom." Then beginning the song of Roland, saying, "My dukedom shall be turned into a he corrected the mistake with a laugh; had put on his hauberk the hind part before, when, through the hurry of his attendants he side, called for his arms; and presently, would favor his, as being the righteous, serene countenance, declaring aloud that God

As William of Malmesbury demonstrated in 1125, legend has it that William the Conqueror brought the tale of Roncevaux to England along with his Norman culture in 1066. The Norman romance writer Wace, in about 1150, gives this account of the same event: "Tallifer, who could sing very well, spurred his horse before the duke and sang of Charlemagne and Roland, and of Oliver and the vassals who died in Roncevaux." 34 Whatever the exact content of Tallifer's song, we have here the first recorded mention of Charles and Roland in what will become an English-speaking country. The continual wars in Anglo-Saxon England since the time of Charles' actual reign precluded poetic possibilities until 1066 [Paris, p124], and after this first example of the story in English circumstances it returned again to its



## viii.

On the other side, the Normans passed the whole night in confessing their sins, and received the sacrament in the morning: their infantry, with bows and arrows, formed the vanguard, while their cavalry, divided into wings, were thrown back. The earl, with serene countenance, declaring aloud that God would favor his, as being the righteous, side, called for his arms; and presently, when, through the hurry of his attendants he had put on his hauberk the hind part before, he corrected the mistake with a laugh; saying, "My dukedom shall be turned into a kingdom." Then beginning the song of Roland, that the warlike example of that man might stimulate the soldiers, and calling on God for assistance, the battle commenced on both sides. [Giles, p276-77]

As William of Malmesbury demonstrated in 1125, legend has it that William the Conqueror brought the tale of Ronceval to England along with his Norman culture in 1066. The Norman romance writer Wace, in about 1160, gives this account of the same event: "Taillefer, who could sing very well, spurred his horse before the duke and sang of Charlemagne and Roland, and of Oliver and the vassals who died in Rencevals." <sup>34</sup>

Whatever the exact content of Taillefer's song, we have here the first recorded mention of Charles and Roland in what will become an English-speaking country. The continual wars in Anglo-Saxon England since the time of Charles' actual reign precluded poetic possibilities until 1066 [Paris, p154], and after this first example of the story in English circumstances it returned again to its

French background: not until the new rulers conceded somewhat to their new subjects' vernacular--thus creating the dialects of Middle English--do new poetic creations emerge. Between 1300 and 1535 thirteen metrical and prose romances were written in Middle English: all but one are adaptations of pre-existing French stories [Wells, p83], and they fall into three categories based on source or subject-matter: those based on the Fierabras stories (there are three of these), those based on the Otinel stories (five of these), and what may be called detached romances, being based on many or no French sources (five of these).<sup>35</sup>

The Fierabras stories come into English and become Ferumbras stories; the dominant theme is still that of the converted Saracen, and is purported to have been the most popular Charlemagne story in medieval England.<sup>36</sup> Sir Ferumbras, a metrical paraphrase of a Fierabras text and written in the Southern dialect in about 1375, is representative of this first group as far as theme treatment goes. As we'll find in most of the English versions, and owing in part to the French originals, Charlemagne himself plays a minor role; even Roland and Oliver, in this set of three romances, are outdone by characters central to the story-line. In this case it's the title character Ferumbras, son of the King of Babylon, who while beseiging Rome is overcome in combat by Oliver and yields to the superior physical and moral strength of Rome's Christian defenders. Ferumbras converts on the spot



(he is baptized by Turpin), and joins his new chivalric colleagues in their adventures of blockade and battle. Ferumbras' sister, a saracen princess named Floripas, falls in love with Charlemagne's ally Sir Guy of Burgundy and aids him and the other Christian knights to outfox her father's infidelic plots; by the end of the romance the King is executed, Floripas and Guy are married, Roland and Oliver have been captured, dungeoned, and rescued, sieges have been set and escaped from, Ferumbras has been crowned and rules in Spain as a Christian king, and all's well that ends well [Spence, p108-109].

Its kin stories include The Sowdone (Sultan) of Babylone, which tells essentially the same story in half the space (3274 versus 6106 lines) with a much broader borrowing from other available sources for ornaments. It is written in the East Midland dialect of about 1400, is also in verse, and evidences what we might call a comparatively strong artistic presence: the poet embellishes considerably to create a tone more in line with English romances of the 14th century. Chaucer seems to be a favored source; the Sowdone includes mirrored passages from the Knight's Tale, the General Prologue, and the shorter poem Anelida and Arcite [Wells, p86]. The third and final member of the Fierabras branch is Firumbras, a later (c1450) version akin to Sir Ferumbras.

The Otinel branch likewise comes from France, and is a collage of stories having to do with Charles' battles

against Saracens. Earliest are Roland and Vernagu and Otuel, both from the same manuscript of the early 1300's. Roland and Vernagu is in North Midland dialect, and puts end to end two French stories: first the church-generated vision of Charles' trip to Jerusalem and his relic-gathering there, and second a whirlwind summary of the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle ending with the duel between the Saracen Fernagus (=Vernagu) and Roland (chapter xvii of the Chronicle). Otuel is mentioned only in the last three lines as a link to his title story, which comes next in the manuscript [Walpole 1944, p390].

Otuel is Vernagu's nephew and also a Saracen, and his poem was written in the South Midland dialect in about 1310. Otinel (=Otuel) converts miraculously to Christianity, marries Charles' daughter Belisant, and rescues Roland and Oliver--thus he embodies both the motifs of the converted Saracen (like Fierabras) and the duel-for-divinity (like Fernagus).

Also in this group are Otuel and Roland, Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spain, and The Sege of Melayne ("The Siege of Milan"), all from the late 14th and early 15th centuries. The first two are variations on the story told in Otuel; the third was originally an introduction to Duke Rowland (it precedes it in their shared manuscript--see Walpole 1944, p39), and focuses on the fighting done by Roland and Archbishop Turpin when Milan has been taken by the Sultan Arabas and must be liberated. <sup>37</sup>



The final five romances--the detached, or differently derivative ones--include the only Middle English rendering of the Ronceval ambush, called simply Song of Roland [Russ, v]. In no case a translation of the Chanson because it follows no known source's lines or phrases and includes many elements not found in any of that poem's versions, the Middle English Song might be based on a lost French source that combined the Chanson and the Ronceval account in chapters xxi through xxiiii of the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle.<sup>38</sup> It is in South-West Midland dialect, datable to about 1400, and its overall inconsistencies (in rhyme, assonance, alliteration) have caused every evaluator I have read to say something like "Intrinsically the poem has little value. As compared with the French Song, all its elements are badly thinned out, emasculated" [Wells, p93]. Such evaluations presuppose, of course, that the poem was consciously modeled on an actual text.

The Taill of Rauf Coilyear ("The Tale of Rauf the Collier") is the only definitely original English romance of the set. Written in a Scottish dialect in about 1480 but not printed until 1572 [Herrtage 1882, v], it relates how Charles, separated from his men in a storm, finds his way to the cottage of Rauf the coal-seller. Charles keeps his identity secret and is by and by treated to Rauf's rustic hospitality. Persuaded to come to court at Christmas, Rauf runs headlong into a system of protocol with which he has had no experience: he is humiliated in front of the

Christmas assembly, and the knights make a clamor and demand that the peasant be hung: instead, Charles knights him and gives him an estate. Later he duels a Saracen on a camel and finally sends for his wife to live with him at court.

Its Breton romance elements are all clearly present as well, suggesting to me that its origin lies in part in formula--the king in disguise, an inviolate promise, a foreboding damsel (in this case Rauf's wife), glittering descriptions of court, stylized actions, and a Breton rhyme scheme (akin to Sir Gawaine's: ababababcbddc)--all are used with command. It is thematically the tightest of the romances, and so far as its Carolingian material is concerned it could just as easily be written about any other king. <sup>39</sup>

The final three detached romances are all in prose, and were all written after printing had come to England in the 1480's. The Lyf of the Noble and Crysten Prynce Charles the Grete, Translated from the French by William Caxton and Printed by Him, 1485 was the first English Charlemagne work to be printed. Any reader of Malory's Morte Darthur will remark at the similarity between the styles of these two works; in effect, both works achieve the same ends for their respective mythical kings. Charles the Grete includes all the incidents of Sir Ferumbras, The Sowdone of Babylone, Roland and Vernagu, and the Song of Roland [Herrtage 1881, v]. The translation is supposed to be



"slavishly" close to the originals: it makes informative reading to those interested in early prose, interesting reading to those desiring introduction to Charlemagne in English, and rich reading to anyone who likes the romance style.

The other two prose romances are The Four Sons of Aymon and Duke Huon of Bordeaux, translations of the French Les Quatres Fils Aymon and Huon de Bordeaux and first printed in 1489 and 1534 respectively [Wells, p95]. They both belong to the cycle of chansons de geste concerning rebellious vassals under Charles; in Aymon, the four sons Renaud, Richard, Alard, and Guichard earn the King's wrath until peace is imposed by knights at the court, while Huon is concerned with power struggles and richly-laid intrigues at the court when Charles announces he will divide the kingdom between his sons Louis and Charlot.

I need to emphasize that except in the case of Rauf Coilyear all these works are very far along the authorial chain; none is a "pure" rendering of its story because all of the sources used for them had, by the fourteenth century and thereafter, undergone many generations of copying. However scholars may evaluate individual works, there can be no argument that we have here a literary cycle: apart from the Conqueror's Taillefer there is no evidence of oral Carolingiana in England. The popularity of the romances is connected with this, I think, or at least the argument could be made that the one is precursive of the other. By

the time these romances were written there was no need for people living in England to laud a French hero: romances about Arthur and Camelot were speeding along the length of the country and fulfilling the "central place" of the national hero [Metlitzki, p120]. It should be no curiosity of chance, therefore, that ten out of the thirteen Charlemagne works in Middle English are also overwhelmingly Saracen works: the popular interest was not with Charlemagne or Roland as characters.

\* \* \*

With the publication of the definitive Orlando Furioso in 1532 (or, more accurately, with its transmission to England in the decades following), the style of the stories changes completely to reflect the new Italian influence. In a clean break from the French-dominated romances, Elizabethan England adopted Orlando and Rinaldo and their mood of extravagant possibility, and turned once again to characters who, however far removed from their ages-old sources they might have been, were characters admired for the qualities they themselves possessed. In about 1580 John Harington, godson of Queen Elizabeth and a knight of her Court, translated one of the more lurid tales in Orlando Furioso for circulation among her ladies. When by and by the Queen learned of this, she banished Harington from the Court until such time as he had translated the whole epic.



By 1591 the Herculean task (33,000 lines of English heroic verse) was accomplished and Harington was restored to favour [Gottfried, p9-10].

As John Harington was translating, Edmund Spenser and Robert Greene were each writing works based on Boiardo and Ariosto; there is much speculation on the matter of communication between the three, but the practical result was the printing of the first three Books of Spenser's Faerie Queene in 1590, the publication of the Harington Ariosto in August of 1591, and the registration of Greene's romantic tragicomedy Orlando Furioso in December of 1593 [Hayashi, p4].

Although he does not rework any of the traditional French plot devices, Spenser's use of Boiardo and Ariosto's characters, themes, and narrative furniture shouldn't be underestimated. Graham Hough, in his Preface to the Faerie Queene, says the following: <sup>40</sup>

[Boiardo] created Ariosto's world, and therefore, at one remove, Spenser's world. He lays down the lines both of its adventures and its characters. All the principal characters in Ariosto are taken over from Boiardo.... And without them we should not have Arthur, Guyon, Calidore, Artégall and Britomart, Scudamour and Amoret, Archimage, Duessa and Acrasia. Intricate adventures proliferating into many episodes, feats of arms inspired by love, and a background, however treated, of religious conflict--these are the materials that Spenser was to inherit.

Greene's play works with the alternating love and hatred of Orlando for princess Angelica, one of the three

major plots in the Furioso. It has not been received as a particularly noteworthy drama, but it can be valuable because it betrays very well to the modern reader the atmosphere in which it was written. The exploring British Empire is evidenced in the cast of characters: Rodamant, King of Cuba; Mandrecard, King of Mexico; Brandemart, King of the Isles. The mythologies once used as points of origin for exotic characters are replaced by the nontraditional (but equally exotic) names of the New World.

Interest in the Italian characters has never quite left English literature, but the whimsy in which they were created does not endure. Especially in the Romantic period, many budding poets found the fateful trip to Ronceval compelling in its emotional intensity and so wrote verses usually loosely resembling the Italian models (canto form, ottava rima), and with the characteristic passion now thoroughly awash with foreboding. A good example of these is Orlando in Roncesvalles, A Poem in Five Cantos written in 1814 by John Herman Merivale, which was published complete with its author's own lengthy explanatory notes. Merivale had read Turpin's Chronicle and early Italian poems including Pulci's Morgante and both Boiardo and Ariosto, and chose Pulci's account of Ronceval as the main source of his own work since it has the most concise battle-narrative [Merivale, xi-xviii].

But while Italy never leaves the English consciousness after the works of Harington and Greene and Spenser, there



is a third and final wave of Charlemagnic invasion which comes, as the first back in the fourteenth century did, from the French. In the early 1800's, at about the time Merivale was writing his Italianate poem, the Oxford manuscript of the Chanson de Roland was discovered in the midst of English scholasticism and was quickly adopted as an English ward: "...have not we here in England the honour of possessing, in the MS of the Bodleian Library, the oldest known copy of the most famous song of the cycle, the Chanson de Roland?" [Weston, p18]. Its first translations into English in the 1930's brought it to the attention of Anglo-America, and of writers who have continued to borrow from the archetypes and cognates of Ronceval in pursuit of their own artistic goals. In 1930 one James Baldwin, inspired by an anthology of popular epics of the middle ages including the French Charlemagne cycle, compiled The Story of Roland, a popular edition of the choicest French, German, Italian, and Middle English adventures of the hero ending, of course, in "The Vale of Thorns"--his valiant death at the battle of Ronceval. The presence of devices from the Chanson in murder mysteries and fantasy stories (the modern chanson de geste?) shows that the story endures, and occasionally a new voice adds yet another reworking, another age's interpretation of the value of warfare, to the twelve centuries of Charles and Rolands:

We too, we too, descending once again  
 The hills of our own land, we too have heard  
 Far off--Ah, que ce cor a longue haleine--  
 The horn of Roland in the passages of Spain,  
 The first, the second blast, the failing third,  
 And with the third turned back and climbed once more  
 The steep road southward, and heard the faint sound  
 Of swords, of horses, the disastrous war,  
 And crossed the dark defile at last, and found  
 At Roncevaux upon the darkening plain  
 The dead against the dead and on the silent ground  
 The silent slain--

--Archibald MacLeish, 1924



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kinder and Hilgemann, p123. It might be argued that he "had himself crowned." I haven't looked into what must have been the interesting relationship between Charlemagne and his Popes; from the outside, the re-creation of the title "Emperor of the West" looks to have been quite a timely move on the part of Leo III. For my purposes, though, it's just important to keep in mind that on Christmas Day in 800, Charlemagne became the first Christian King to be ritually united with the authority of the Caesars.

<sup>2</sup> Thorpe, p182. The entry considerably amplifies its original:

Hostages were handed over by Ibn el Arabi, by Abou Thaur and by a number of other Saracens, Pamplona was destroyed, the Spanish Basques were beaten into subjection and so were the men of Navarre: and then Charlemagne returned to certain parts of Frankland. [Thorpe, p182]

This original entry contains no ambush, and recounts that Charlemagne returns to Frankland before being informed of the Saxon uprisings [Brault 1979, p204]. Explanations for this elaboration vary: it might have been that only after the Emperor's death could the Annals be revised to portray misfortunes or errors in judgment; it might have

been that popular legends were influencing even at this early date [Sholod, p18].

<sup>3</sup> Menendez Pidal, p519-20. Note that this excerpt, as well as the two following, are not contemporary accounts, but rather were written three to five hundred years after the fact. I have no conception of the methods or reliability of Islamic texts, so my purpose in using them is not as part of the Frankish/Christian process that involves the Annals, Einhard, the Life of Louis, and the few bits to be mentioned in a moment--rather, I have included them as the sole accounts I have been able to find of the view from "the other side."

<sup>4</sup> Menendez Pidal, p520-21. I assume the years 157 and 164 mean Hegira years, so adding 632 we get 789 and 796 respectively. There may be other calculations involved, but at present it seems the 789 does disagree with Einhard's date of 778.

<sup>5</sup> To say that no constants have been determined in the process of the oral tradition is to cheat a little, though; the problem is that while it's easy to write down a vague formula for the "snowball effect" of turning history into legend into literature, there's no way (in my opinion) to quantify the sources or to predict how the ossification will progress. The part of me that wants an empirical



answer to the fundamental questions of Kirk and Whitman and Jung also realizes that after a point art cannot be empiricized. But history can be, at least to a greater extent than literature, and while I have barely begun checking into the particular happenings of later 9th, 10th, and 11th-century Europe, I am already discovering that if you look in the right place you know that the centuries were by no means silent.

What takes place between the last Carolingian accounts and the first ones of the eleventh century is what I term "incorporative history," because it's a time of gathering together many isolated bits of story or fact and of attributing them to persons they weren't originally associated with. It tends to sound amateurish, but one of the greatest hindrances to untangling written references from the intervening centuries is that there were so many Frankish Kings named Charles, and too many unspecified battles fought against the same groups of people. Charles Martel in the 730's; Carloman, brother and brief co-ruler with Charlemagne in the late 760's; Charlemagne from 768-814; Charles II ("the Bald"), Charles III ("the Fat"), and another Carloman in the 870's--right up until the Capetian dynasty, and all likely to have each other's fortunes gravitated by the unlettered and by the lettered with particular intentions for doing so. Sholod (p43; 60) dangles in front of us, but does not pursue, two more Ronceval incidents which might, as he puts it, "have added

more vigor to a Roland tradition": one in 812, when the Basque inhabitants of Pamplona plotted to ambush another Frankish army going through the pass, and a recorded ambush in 824 when both Basques and Arabs overcame a Frankish army under Louis the Pious. Incorporation is the key--seeing it as a primary psychological activity of western history will give us greater ability to examine the particulars it picks up, and both key and treasure will be ours.

<sup>6</sup> In fact, a book has been written on the subject: Custer and the Epic of Defeat, by Bruce Rosenberg (Pennsylvania State UP, 1974). It seems that the "evident pattern" is most evident in Biblical, classical, medieval, and American western legends.

<sup>7</sup> Heated debate on the particulars still continues at conferences and on paper: is the Nota to be believed? If so, which side of Ronceval did the ambush occur on: the northern (French) or the southern (Spanish) [Ross, p186-188]? Einhard and the Annals say that Wascones are the attackers: should that imply the indigent Basques (as my translator rendered them), or Gascons? If Gascons, French or Pyrenean? And couldn't it have been Saracens after all (as the Arabic report confesses), in which case the later legends were more correct than the immediate accounts?

This sort of satisfying but often pointless debate will continue for a long time; Ross (p180) even goes so far



as to play Schliemann and offer a battle plan on contours based on lines from the various Chanson manuscripts. For my purposes the minimal information--that less than which the story of Roland in Ronceval cannot exist, and greater than which the story becomes a distinctive interpretation--is this:

1. Charles goes to Spain.
2. He returns north through Ronceval pass, and Roland is in charge of his rearguard.
3. Roland's force is ambushed from above by Saracens, and the rearguard is wiped out.
4. Roland has a horn and blows it to call for help, which arrives too late.

Granted, even most of these details (Roland, Saracens, the olifant, or horn) are French in origin. But by the time anything is written down, I would argue, these have become inseparable from the expedition: to know of it is to make these few associations. After these common elements, each embodiment of the story (the subjects of the next six chapters) becomes individual art. Variables on which each artist can adapt the story abound: Why is Charles going to Spain? What else happens once he is there? Who are the Saracens? What is Roland's history? How does he come to be in command of the rearguard? What are the circumstances of the ambush? Is there a denouement? Take any of these logical questions (and any others from Christian doctrine or the genre of the folk-tale) and pose them in verse or prose--somewhere in Europe there has been a poem or story answering them all.

<sup>8</sup> Spence, p51-53; also p385-6. Though in need of revision due to scholarship since its compilation in 1913, Spence's Dictionary of Medieval Romance and Romance Writers is a very useful reference for the titles and themes of medieval genres.

<sup>9</sup> Riquer 1968, p184-226. The origins of each belong mostly to the twelfth, but in two cases to the thirteenth, centuries. Since most later literature (especially compilations like those in Scandinavia, Italy, and Germany) borrows from these groups (and I'll be referring back often), what follows is a short synopsis of the themes and furniture used in each of them.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Saxon, lecture at Denison University, Granville, Ohio, 14 May 1984.

<sup>11</sup> Brault 1978, p4-6. The fragment is owned by the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and was named by its first editors in the 1830's La Chanson de Roland, although at the time the names Roman de Roncevaux and Chanson de Roncevaux were used interchangeably to refer to the same work [Michel, i-v]. Raoul Mortier (1940) published a series of the major texts (referred to by the cities which own their manuscripts): Oxford, Venice (two), Chateauroux, Paris, Cambridge, and Lyon. These "other" manuscripts have been



somewhat neglected by an Old French scholarship which, now and again since 1830, has tended to think of the Oxford manuscript as the original poem. While its age and poetic quality do demand such appropriate tags as "precellent" [Douglas, p100], it is bad scholarship to think of La Chanson de Roland as a unique poem: the age of tradition in which it was written simply does not produce artistic anomalies. Discussions of the masterful poetic presence in this particular version, and the implications of that presence on its purpose (was it written to be read silently or aloud?) must not, if they are to satisfy eclectic tastes, pull it out of its corpus and dissect it all alone on the tray. The articles of William Kibler ("The Roland after Oxford: The French Tradition," *Olifant* 6, 1979) and Stephen Nichols ("The Interaction of Life and Literature in the Peregrinationes ad Loca Sancta and the Chansons de Geste," *Speculum* 44, 1969) are steps toward evaluating the Oxford Chanson in conjunction with the Lyon, Venice, Paris, and Chateauroux texts, and thus steps toward redefining the chanson de geste.

The Chanson was also translated into various other vernacular languages, among them Old Norse, Middle Dutch, Medieval Welsh, Middle English, and Middle High German.

<sup>12</sup> Brault 1984, xvi-xviii. The last sentence has been the subject of much discussion. While the end of the Oxford text is intact, these future battles are not realized

anywhere; other poems like the Chanson dealing with battles and sieges in Spain are referred to in extant literature, some are historically accurate, some not. Allusions to "the Taking of Noples," "the Deaths of Basin and Basile," "The Taking of Carcassonne by Roland," "the Battle of Marsune," and so on are to be found in writing of later date. As Gaston Paris (p71) puts it,

...we are not familiar with the capture of Carcassonne by Roland, nor the taking of Thebes by Achilles, both achieved through siege; the first is mentioned in a speech of Ganelon's, the second in a discourse of Andromache in Iliad vi, 114.

If these poems were ever written down, they have been lost in the intervening centuries. If they never became literature, this would be the point to begin an inconclusive digression on why this particular one did.

<sup>13</sup> Hence, of course, the retrospective name Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle for the fourth chapter--Smyser, p1-4. The genre of medieval forgery is an easy one to win the prejudice of a modern audience. Our definitions of plagiarism would make no sense to a medieval man or woman--once more, it's the overwhelming economy of written matter and the pervading loyalty to traditions of many sorts which tend to make the middle ages seem referentially gullible. I have learned to resist this as much as possible without becoming defensive against it--in the case of Calixtus' Book the most important mnemonic is simply that it had the



effect it was written to produce.

<sup>14</sup> Duggan, p100. Andre de Mandach (1961) gives short descriptions and filialities for "plus de 300" of them. For more information, as well as the opportunity to read the Pseudo-Turpin, see Part II below.

<sup>15</sup> Paris 1882, 466-80. Latin works (excluding the Turpin), of which this is an extraordinary example, were in decline by the mid-1200's; since on the whole they did not have place-specific purposes, they were increasingly upstaged by vernacular poetry and prose. Another Latin Vita of Charlemagne was written in 1165 on the occasion of Charlemagne's canonization; it drew heavily from the Turpin. Latin versions of the Voyage a Jerusalem were written in the twelfth century, but again, the vernacular versions won posterity.

<sup>16</sup> Bodel as quoted in Sholod, p15. "There are but three subjects that men listen to: / Those of France, of Britain, and of great Rome."

<sup>17</sup> Historia Seminense, c1110, as quoted in Sholod p163. It may be a reaction against Einhard's claims in the Vita Karoli Magni.

<sup>18</sup> Two of the most successful rulers in this movement

were Alfonsos VI and VII of Castile and Leon. During their administrations (roughly 1050-1150) Christian principalities and kingdoms in the north developed: Navarre, Aragon, Catalonia, Portugal. Toledo was captured (1085) and Sicily ceased to be Arab (1091) [Sholod, p21].

<sup>19</sup> Sholod, p157. The monastery is San Millan de la Cogolla, and Sholod goes into detail in his reconstruction of the monk's likely knowledge based on what he wrote (see section ii above). He suggests that the *Nota* is the result of an already existing Cantar de Rodlane ("Song of Roland"); whether or not the monk heard the story in Spanish, French, or a dialect between the two, it is almost certain that he did hear it. The only physical clue that a Spanish version/translation of the Chanson de Roland ever existed is a 100-line fragment discovered in 1917 and dubbed Roncesvalles (c1290) [Duggan, p42]. It is a late example, considering that most of the other vernacular translations of the Chanson are made by 1250. Smith (p135) suggests that it was the eventual result of an earlier Spanish translation.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, p217; the list could and does go on and on. Colin Smith's chapters 4 and 5 ("Metrical Structures," "Historical, Literary, and other Sources and Motives") are excellent compilations of many such borrowings from the chansons.



<sup>21</sup> Franklin, p286-88. I haven't been able to find an edition of the massive work containing this story, the Primera Cronica General de Espana, which dates to 1270. This is the earliest extensive mention of Bernardo, although it's thought that he evolved as a folk-hero for some time before reaching paper. Many poems on various parts of the story, including a duel to the death with Roland, are included in the appendices to F. Michel's 1837 edition of the Chanson; translations of unspecified poems are contained in T. Rodd's 1812 edition of the Pseudo-Turpin.

<sup>22</sup> My translation of a French translation in Volume 10 ("La Texte du Chuonrat") of Mortier's Textes de la Chanson de Roland; lines 17-23. None of these works has been translated into English, so the information I present is entirely second-hand. The Rolandslied in particular makes fascinating reading: an edition of it would need to differentiate the process of textual exegesis (as demonstrated here) from the more straightforward job of changing the words from the one language to the other. "Translation" can apply to any of a number of processes between the two points. Some, like the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle I translated for this project are relatively faithful to the original; some Icelandic works are meticulously close. The Rolandslied, by all reports, is

not, and so what I would like to read is an evaluation of Konrad's work from a point of view sensitive to the influences (patronage, politics, metaphysics) that caused his translation to add rather than repeat.

<sup>23</sup> Brault 1978, p37. See Ashcroft and Urbanek's articles for very full discussion of the scholarly melee concerning Konrad's dates and patrons. Urbanek points out (p226) that "hundreds of phrases" used by Konrad are found in an earlier compilation, the Kaiserchronik ("Chronicle of Kings"), put together in about 1155. While Konrad doesn't seem to have borrowed themes from this work, he either had read it or had written it himself, so widespread are the similar phrases. The Kaiserchronik itself was a collection of the lives of various Kings in Germany up to the twelfth century; the portrait of Charlemagne in it would be painted from Latin oils and French watercolors.

<sup>24</sup> This is a simplification of the five-point list that Gaston Paris offers in his Histoire Poetique (p201). He separates the works based on Franco-Lombard poetry into prose and verse.

<sup>25</sup> Following Dante, and especially under the rules of Petrarch and Boccaccio (about 1320-1370), poetry in the dominant forms was either written in Tuscan Italian or ignored [Paris, p164].



26 Comfort, p891. The Entree d'Espagne and its immediate imitators give birth and growth to this pool, and the pattern continues in 1400 with the anonymous penning of a 17,200-verse-long poem in ottava rima which weaves together the subject of Bodel's matiere de France with the furniture of the matiere de Bretagne. This poem, called simply Orlando by its discoverer in 1869, is yet another example of influential literary precedent-setters for the upcoming four centuries of Italian tradition, and the point after which there is no attempt in the writing to reclaim the ethos of the older legends--to reshape or popularize a plot line in the theological and didactic tone of the original French stories. Certainly the Saracens remain, and they are still infidels and technically the enemies of God and the western world, but increasingly the Saracens and Christians look and sound more and more alike: the reason for using the Spanish campaign and Ronceval stories in an artistic context is no longer just the "praise God and spread His word" one, but more often one of contemporary politics.

27 Avery, p658-59; p798. The poem was written in two parts, an original 23 cantos plus 5 later ones (hence the title Maggiore, or "greater," Morgante). The first half tells of Orlando's itinerance and his theological discussions and antics with Morgante; the material is

therefore a composite of influences as diverse in origin as the Arthurian see-the-Orient idea and the Roland/Fernagus duel from the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle.

The completion of the Morgante contains the Ronceval incident, and in fact switches the scene back to Charlemagne's court after the death of Morgante at precisely the point where many of the Chanson texts begin--and we can still see the Old French peeking through: Orlando is to travel to Ronceval pass to pick up a tribute from Marsilius. Rinaldo travels to Egypt; Orlando's force is ambushed; a French magician sends a servile fallen angel named Astarotte to bring Rinaldo back in aid. Astarotte enters Rinaldo's horse and flies the knight back across the Mediterranean, and the two talk along the way about many things--self-made purgatories, courtesy among devils, the geophysical makeup of the world, the salvation of mankind--but they arrive too late. Battle in Ronceval is very thick; Orlando and Uliviero (Oliver) have their horn debate; Uliviero dies; the horn is blown three times; Carlo arrives too late and slays all the infidels (Marsilius included).

Pulci is credited with establishing the use of ottava rima in the Italian romance. His work is "at once the crowning achievement and the parodying" of all the poems that precede it [Paris, p195]: he was a fifteenth-century University Wit.



<sup>28</sup> Staebler, p70 (Orlando Innamorato I,i,1-2). For his Stanford dissertation in 1981, Mark Staebler translated approximately an eighth of the Innamorato. I am told that a complete translated edition will be published soon, so until then Staebler remains the textual authority in English.

In the following cantos Boiardo says that this is Turpin's "untold story," which he concealed to protect Orlando's reputation. Referring to the traditional source is by this time more convention than legitimator, but this is evidence that Turpin's history (or at least strong rumor of it) is still known.

<sup>29</sup> This point interests me a great deal. Boiardo was by neoclassical standards very much a rustic; he wrote in his own dialect of Ferrarese-Lombard and purposely adopted the persona of one of the cantari--the Italian jongleurs [Staebler, p6 and 21]. Modern readers such as myself will admire the suitably archaic use of epithets and details he included only for the amusement and excitement of his family and friends; his plot seems to strike a balance between consideration and accident, always sacrificing the demands of "high poetry" in favor of effectively telling one of the most glittering tales in the West.

But as I said, the neoclassicists were not amused. Since Boiardo did not write in the relatively strict Tuscan-after-Dante pattern, his manner was not of the sort

that the intelligentsia at the end of the fifteenth century considered "proper" [Weaver, p53], and any unfinished story is extremely vulnerable (witness Guillaume de Lorris' Roman de la Rose). Orlando Innamorato was rewritten twice within seventy years in so complete a manner that until the nineteenth century it was the rifacimenti ("reworkings") that were considered the original poem. The most celebrated came in the 1530's, when Francesco Berni published his Rifacimento dell'Orlando Innamorato in response to great demand for Orlando stories by the reading public:

Berni...Tuscanized the sounds, forms, and syntax. He rewrote almost every line and often reorganized entire octaves, sometimes entire scenes. He suppressed many of Boiardo's octaves, and he introduced new material, particularly in the form of new proems to the cantos, although he also added one brief episode and several digressions such as his impressions of the sack of Rome and his autobiography.... His allusions to contemporary events are frequent in the proems, but are also occasionally found within the cantos, substituted for Boiardo's allusions to his times as part of Berni's general attempt to modernize the poem for sixteenth-century readers. [Weaver, p54]

Whereas narration was most important in the original Innamorato, with logic and strict detail secondary, Berni and the other rewriter, Ludovico Domenichi, recreated the story without the cliches, epithets, and other mnemonic devices designed to stay with a reader.

Revision was a common practice, as much a literary vogue as deconstructionism is today, and it is a tribute to both Boiardo and Berni that although printing had only just



arrived in Italy the Innamorato went through nineteen editions between 1495 and 1544. But "for three centuries the precursor of Ariosto's Orlando Furioso was known as 'Orlando Innamorato by Francesco Berni': the next printing of the original text wasn't until 1830 [Staebler, p20]. Berni's rifacimento has been translated into English, but for purists like myself the longing for Boiardo's rambunctious original remains. This poem deserves unqualified recognition.

30 Boiardo created Angelica, Rodamonte, Rugiero, and Bradamante; through the waning of the other more traditional characters, these become among the most popular.

31 Most of my information on the Saga comes from the definitive edition of Constance Hieatt, particularly the Introduction (Volume I, pages 13-25). Doctor Hieatt has created a work of scholarship that is approachable in a way that very few translations I've read have been. For much more information than I can include here on any aspect of the Saga or its component parts, refer to her three masterful volumes.

32 Halvorsen points out (p3) that the only indigent Norse literature is the chronicle, and that the translators were faced with not only the difference in linguistic

structure but also with completely different literary forms than their own. Because there is no Norwegian equivalent of the chanson de geste, many of the conventions of that form (peritaxis, assonance) were not recognized and rendered as such in prose: many lines in the original, which the translator evidently considered to be redundant or unnecessary, are crunched into a word or adjective.

Halvorsen therefore lists these points of omission in the Saga:

1. elaborations
2. details and phrases used earlier in the poem
3. facts not directly relevant to the main theme
4. descriptions, stock phrases
5. various kinds of speeches, boasts, soliloquies

It is fascinating to see the way in which the translators made sense out of some obvious grammatical unknowns; for example, the name of Charlemagne. "Karl" and "Magnus" were and are still common Scandinavian names, so the Saga translator works it in like this: the chanson of Basin tells of how Karl befriended a thief in his youth, and how the two of them set out to do some espionage that becomes focal to Karl's coronation. To protect himself in the field, the future King takes on the alias "Magnus" (in the French it had been "Mainet"), and when later his mother Berta finds out she dubs her versatile son Karla-magnus. The battle-cry "Munjoie!" is likewise dealt with in this earnest way.



<sup>33</sup> The Saga does not moralize, at least not in the same way we might consider other thirteenth-century translations to moralize. The rumor-legends of Roland's birth being the result of Charles' incest with his sister Gisela are preserved, and adultery is tied in with the Ronceval account: Roland sleeps with Ganelon's wife, and the cuckolded warrior doesn't forgive and forget. Scandal in general is very likely to be preserved here.

<sup>34</sup> Douglas, p99. Douglas gives an excellent discussion of the possible relationships between the Oxford manuscript of the Chanson de Roland and the patrons of Normandy, especially Odo of Bayeux. I find the simultaneity of the Norman expansion and the earliest extant Roland manuscript a very good example of the many-tiered French advances in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Those two centuries were a sort of national renaissance, a time when all the fair faces of French history came to mind again.

<sup>35</sup> Wells, p83. All of the romances were edited and published, in the late 1800's, by the Early English Text Society.

<sup>36</sup> Wells, p86-87. Paris (p154 ff) suggests that "Charlemagne was too foreign to be made the center of their [the English] stories," and this may account for part of the enormous popularity of this non-nationalistic plot.

37 This is to me the most interesting of the Otinel romances, made even more tantalizing by the fact that no French original for it remains [Wells, p89]. It is full of miracles, and in it Turpin himself declares a crusade to save Milan: he assembles 100,000 fighting priests and repeatedly assaults the walls of the city. I am sure that whoever wrote it or its original had also read the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle: there are sequences of dreams that parallel the visions in the Turpin, and the dignity, authority, actions, and wounding of Turpin are reminiscent of it as well. The last two or three pages of its one manuscript are missing so we don't know if he saved the city or not, but the Turpin in this solitary story is an exhilaratingly powerful character--at one point he excommunicates Charles for his failure to aid Milan, and swears that he will shut him up inside Paris and burn down the city--would make a good study.

38 Russ, x. Echoes of episodes from both are present, and Song editor Jon Russ goes to great lengths examining what might have come from where, etc. He does note (page xxiii) that "the great unifying theme of the love for France so noticeable in the old French versions, especially the assonanced, is nowhere to be found in the Song," but the tortures through which he puts many known texts in order to reconstruct his hypothetical Song

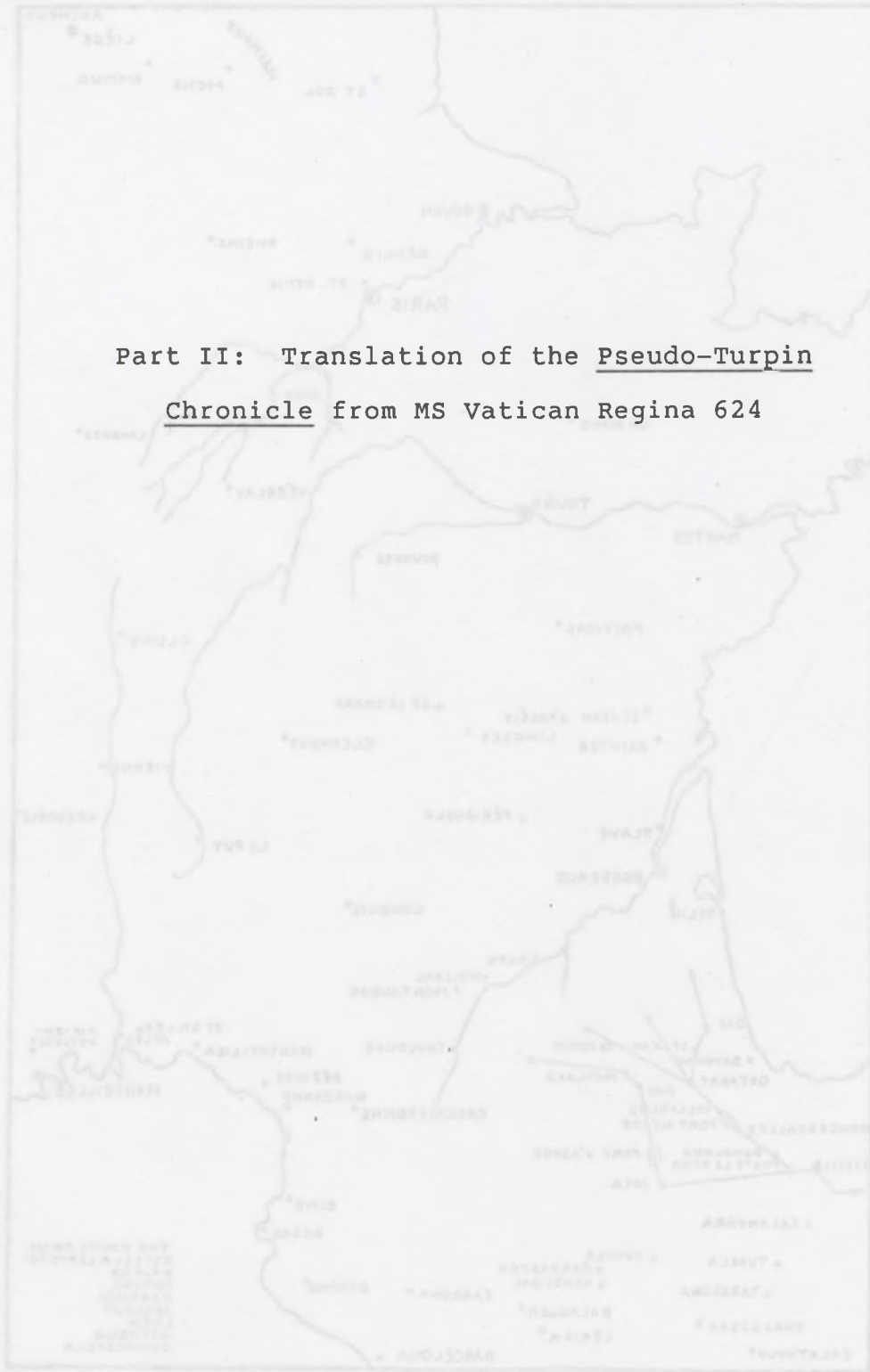


source make me wonder if the answer need be that complex.

<sup>39</sup> In fact, it has: Wells (p95) lists "King Henry II and the Miller of Mansfield," "King Henry and the Soldier," "James I and the Tinker," "William III and the Forester," "King Edward and the Shepherd," and "Henry VII and the Cobbler" as tales sharing the motif of the disguised king. From the modern point of view, Rauf Coilyear is very much a Marxist romance. The rules of courtesy in both social classes--rural and courtly--are clearly defined, and any analysis interested in class relationships will find rich material in the psychology at work when Rauf (very much the lord of his domain) loses himself and his rural identity in Charles' great hall.

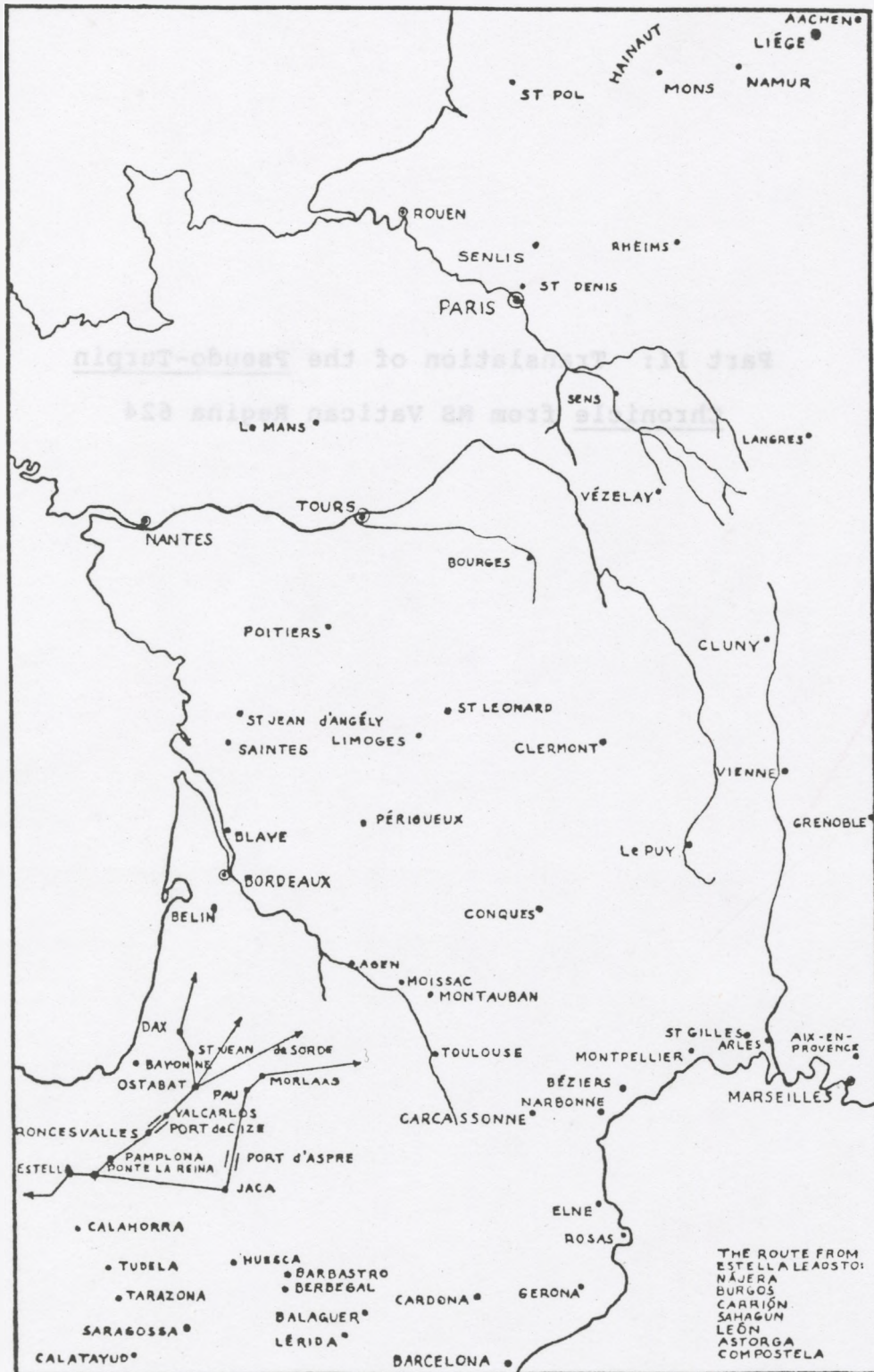
<sup>40</sup> Hough, p24. The references to characters, character types, episodes, and devices from the Orlandi that Spenser weaves into the Faerie Queene are many, but scholarship is only recently starting to untangle what came from Ariosto and what from Boiardo--it seems that Spenser had read, or at least had reference to, both. A translation of Orlando Innamorato would speed this process along nicely.

Part II: Translation of the Pseudo-Turpin  
Chronicle from MS Vatican Regina 624



FRANCE AND THE ROUTES THROUGH THE PYRENEES





FRANCE AND THE ROUTES THROUGH THE PYRENEES

## Introduction and Translation Method

Texts of the Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi (or Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle) from the Book of Saint James at Compostela have been edited and published many times in the last century,<sup>1</sup> but not since 1812 has the work been translated into English. Since the manuscript on which the latter work was based is not specified, and since the relationships among the diverse branches of redactions of the Turpin are particularly complicated, the time has come for a new critical translation of the work for those persons interested in the subject but not versant in the languages (Latin, Old French, Anglo-Norman) of the principal editions.

The text I have translated is one of the Old French versions; the second-oldest of the vernacular translations, it was made between 1210 and 1237 as part of a longer work compiling information about all the kings of France up to that time. Its manuscript is Vatican Library Regina 624, and I have used the edition (introduction, text, notes, glossary, and proper name index) of Claude Buridant (1976). I chose this particular version for several reasons, not the least of which is that it is in a language in which I am able to move around comfortably. Thirteenth-century French is not very different from modern French--the



absence of lexicography means that there is no spelling consistency in texts from that period, but this presents only a trial of patience. Verb forms are still recognizable, and words like "biaus" (modern "beau," or beautiful) fit into place when spoken aloud. The way the language looks may have changed, but the way it sounds hasn't; and in any case my Latin is not up to the challenge of a reliable rendering of one of those texts.

While this particular translation postdates many Latin versions, it is more faithful to the oldest known manuscripts of the Book of Saint James than many of them. Turpin texts are divided into two groups--"longer" and "shorter"--depending on whether they include or omit a celebrated list of birthmarks (such as Chapter XX below, a physical description of Charlemagne); many of the published editions have been of shorter Turpins because their editors were concerned with establishing them as the sources for this or that later work. Buridant's manuscript contains most of the identifying marks, though not all, and so it is the most "complete" Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle accessible to me.

I am indebted to two other editions, both of which I have used at length to double-check the intention of a passage or to note divergences. Hamilton Smyser's edition of a pre-1200 Latin text (Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Latin MS 17656) offered me not only a very valuable early source relatively free from the mutability of text

generations, but also the next best thing to a translation: a brief synopsis in English of each of his manuscript's chapters. His version is one of the shorter kind, but except in a few cases I never went into a chapter without knowing roughly what it was about. The other edition (Walpole, 1979) is a later French one (Bibliothèque Nationale MSS fr. 2137 and 17203), easier in many ways to read than Buridant's. Its translation dates to around 1300, and the seventy years in-between seem to have been busy ones linguistically, but again it is of the short kind. It generally gives a similar meaning in an adjusted vocabulary and syntax, so I used it to clear up some passages murky in my version.

Here are the major considerations I worked with:

1. Breaking the French up into syntactically feasible English sentences has been by far the most difficult task. The original is written in long clauses linked by relative pronouns, and often I have resorted simply to ending one sentence and beginning another while the French rolls on. The paragraph divisions and punctuation are therefore mine, adjusted to fit my prose.

2. I have shifted the narrative into past tense across the board because as yet I lack enough versatility in the subtleties of Old French to make adept transitions. Tense switches abound in the text, as in those of many Old French writers of both prose and verse [Picherit, x]; it is generally the case that actions intended to feel more



immediate will suddenly be in the present, after which the narration returns to its standard past. This particular desideratum for the translation will have to wait until I've had more experience with the language.

3. I have modernized the syntax, often changing passive to active and rearranging the elements of possessive constructions.

4. Place-names and races are modernized, since they are of more practical use that way. Smyser, Walpole, and Buridant all offer proper name indexes in their editions, so I simply cross-checked. Personal names vary widely in spelling, even within the same sentence; I standardized the most significant ones--Charles or Charlemagne, Roland, Agolant, Marsile, Oliver, Fernagus, Baldwin, Thierry, Ogier--and left the rest in their original forms.

5. I have omitted most initial "et"'s, have tried to work "grande" into context with more emphatic words, and have avoided "knight" when translating "chevalier" because of its chivalric connotations. I have varied the vocabulary only slightly (e.g., using both "charger" and "horse" for OF "destrier"), and never in cases where understanding depends on consistent reference.

6. The notes to the text that I have included are generally ones of particular interest to this manuscript, ones not included in Buridant's edition or not relevantly discussed in Smyser's or Walpole's.

My greatest overall concern is in making the text read

in the same easy way it does in the Old French. The original's tone is not elevated, except in a few places requiring formula or the quotation of a Biblical passage, and it has been my wish to preserve this ease of narration. Any translator's style must to some degree imitate the personal consistencies and inconsistencies of his or her original--and in my case, considering this is a work of prose from an age in which "literature" was poetry, I have allowed myself to depart occasionally from a literal (and roundabout) Englishing. The result, therefore, is not what I would want to call "a scholarly translation" because the technique involved is not of that consistency or caliber--I translated the Chronicle, after all, in part because I wanted to read it.

I have enjoyed becoming familiar with the writing style of the scribe, so much so that I am certain both the prologue and the appendices were translated (if not written) by someone else: the adjectives, sentence length and construction, use of stock phrases, and so on are different in them. In such eclectic cases as this manuscript it was common to include a prologue and epilogue giving whatever connective information the circumstances of the surrounding book required.

It is my hope that I have found a medium between literality and readability, and that you as a reader find my work both entertaining and, in the spirit of the Turpin, of unpredictably close authorial presence.



## The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle

Prologue <sup>2</sup>

Of the many Christian kings of old who have gained fame and renown in our time because of the prudence and bravery that they demonstrated, it must be agreed that the most virtues and the greatest strength were commanded by our mighty King Charlemagne, whose deeds and qualities rise above those of all the earthly kings in history. His great valiance cannot be kept hidden, nor can his fearful power; so compelling was his will that he commanded all he looked upon, and the miracles associated with his name have spread to many distant lands. He was the best of the Christian kings, loved by God, and through the worthy revelation of Jesus Christ he crossed the sea and went to the land of Jerusalem against the enemies of the Holy Church who impeded Christianity--he destroyed them or drove them from the holy land.

This Charles, after accomplishing all he set out to do in the land across the sea, turned back towards his realm in France. He came to Constantinople and was received with great honor by the Emperor and all those in the city. He stayed there for a time, and was showered with lavish

festivities and given many beautiful gifts by the Emperor; among these were precious relics that Charles had inquired after, and he prized them above all the other treasures he received. He received the holies with joy and brought them all back to France with him, where after his death they were distributed for the enrichment of many prominent French churches. There the relics are kept and cherished. Leading all the rest was the royal church of my lord Saint Denis, which was given one of the sacred nails of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the precious crown of thorns.

After Charles the great Emperor of Rome and King of France returned from this voyage, he led many wars by divine grace and in them suffered many setbacks and pain. After a time he wished to rest from the campaigns and the arms-bearing, but it was not the will of God that he do so: God required that he continue working so he might achieve the eternal crown and become King of the world of the living--that he might command greater power and dominion than any man in his day anywhere in the world. After Charles had subjugated many peoples, taking all their lands for the French, he went to Spain with his army to liberate the land of Saint James from the hands of the Saracens who were ravaging it. In that land he did miracles and won great glory; all the world speaks of him and will do so until judgment day. His conquests in this world are so sweet and delicious to hear about, but we need not recount them now since they are so often told.



Here ends the prologue and begins the history of the deeds of Charles the great emperor.

I.

When Our Father sent his apostles into the world to preach, my lord Saint James went to Galicia and preached there and converted the people to the Christian faith. After this he returned to Jerusalem and was put to death by King Herod, and his body was carried back to Galicia. Following his death, those pagans who would not believe in God nor hold his commandments forced all Christians to return to the pagan belief--and thus they remained until Charles, the Emperor of Rome and King of France, made them come once again to the faith of Christians. This Charles had subjugated England and the Teutonic lands, and Bavaria, Lorraine, Burgundy, Italy, Brittany, and several other lands that he freed of a few Saracens; by force and with great travail he turned them to the Christian faith. After all this he decided to rest rather than return again to a life of battle.

And it came to pass that a vision came to him in the night: he saw in the sky a path of stars climbing out of the Frisian Sea and sweeping over the Teutonic lands and Italy, between Gaul and Aquitaine, passing right by Gascony and the Basque lands, Navarre and Spain--all the way to

Galicia, where the body of my lord Saint James then lay without recognition or honor. Charles gazed at the starry way for some time, wondering what it could mean.

As he lay deep in thought, an aged sire of beauty greater than I can express appeared to him there in the dark and said to him, "How fare you, my son?"

And Charles answered, "Who are you, lord?"

"I am James," said he, "apostle of Jesus Christ, son of Zebedee, brother of John the Evangelist. I am he that my lord Jesus Christ chose by the sea of Galilee to instruct his people; he that Herod ordered killed by the sword, and whose body was brought to Galicia, a place now unremembered and defiled by Saracens. It much marvels me that you have not delivered my land from the hand of infidels, you the conqueror of so many lands. I bring word to you whom God has made greater than any other prince or earthly king: you have been chosen to deliver my land from Saracen hands, and in so doing you shall wear a crown of joys forever in paradise. The road of stars that you have seen portends that you will go to the land of Galicia with a great host to battle the Saracens and rid its soil of them, and that you will visit my chapel and shrine. After you, for generations all the people between the two Seas will go there on pilgrimage asking Our Lord Jesus Christ to pardon their sins, magnifying their praises of God and of the miracles that he does. Go as soon as you are able, for I have great need of your aid. I will entreat Our Father that



for your pain and hardship he bestow on you the crown of life in paradise after you die, and that your name shall be remembered until the end of the world."

In this manner my lord Saint James appeared to the Emperor three times, and when Charles heard what the Apostle Saint promised, he assembled and equipped a great host to combat the miscreant and liberate all of Spain.

## II.

The first city that Emperor Charles besieged was Pamplona. He lay siege to it for three months but could not capture it since it was well protected by strong walls. And when Charles realized that he could not take the city, he raised his eyes to the Lord God and said: "Lord Jesus Christ, I have come to this land to combat the infidel; grant me that I may take this city for the glory of your name. And you, gracious lord Saint James, if it was indeed you that appeared to me, give me your help so that I may capture the city."

And as his last word fell, the great Saint James cast down the walls of the city in pieces. Charles and his men entered Pamplona and baptized those Saracens who would accept the Christian faith, while those who would not be baptized were put to death. When the Saracens knew of the great miracle he had caused, they cried for mercy and

brought him all the treasure of their land in willing tribute. They marvelled when they saw the men of France so well vested, and they received them without struggle and in high honor.

Charles went immediately to the tomb of my lord Saint James, and then he went to the edge of the Sea and thrust the tip of his lance in the water; there he thanked God and my lord Saint James for bringing him safely to that place from which he could go no further. Those Galicians who had been forced into the Saracen belief and away from the preaching of my lord Saint James and his apostles were baptized by Archbishop Turpin of Rhiems, and those who would not believe were taken captive or put to death. After this, Charles went through Spain from the one Sea to the other.

### III.

Here are the names of the cities and castles and great estates that our Emperor Charles took in Spain: Vizeu, Lamego, Dumia, Coimbra, Lugo, Orense, Iria, Mondonedo, La Coruna, Compostela (which was small then), Braga (the Archbishopric). He took Alcala de Henares, Guadalajara, Talamanca (which was very wealthy), Uceda, Ulmos, Canales, Madrid, Maqueda, Medinaceli (a lofty city), Berlanga, Osma, Segovia (a very big town), Salamanca, Toledo, Calatrava,



Badajoz, Trujillo, Talavera de la Reina, Guadiana, Merida, Altamira, Palencia, windy Luserne (which is called Carcesse and sits in a green valley) Caparra, Astorga, Oviedo, Leon, Carrion, Auque, Burgos, Najera, Calahorra, Uranzu (which is called Arcus), Estella, Calatayud, Miraglo, Tudela, Sarragossa, (which is named after Caesar Augustus), Pamplona, Bayonne, Jaca, Huesca (which is said to have 90 towers), Tarazona, Barbastro, Rosas, Urgel, Elne, Gerona, Barcelona, Tarragona, Lerida, Tortosa and Berbegal the strong castle, Solsona, Ureja, Alegon, Hispalis, Escalona, Usrerie, Cutanda, Sites, Ubeda, Baeza, Pedroso (from whence comes the good silver), Beace, Valencia, Denia, Satura, Granada, Seville, Cordova, Abula, Acci (where Saint Torquatus the confessor of Our Lord lies; he was a companion to my lord Saint James, and over his tomb, by the will of God, grows an olive tree which bears fruit each year on the day of his festival, May 15th); he took the city of Bizerta with its well-dressed horsemen known as Arrabites. He captured Bougie (where there was a king by custom), Gerbi (on an island), Oran, Minorca, Ibiza, Formentera, Alcaraz, Almage, Almeria, Almunecar, Aloneque, Gibraltar, Carteya, Ceuta (which is in the district where three narrow straits come together). He took Algeciras and Tarifa and all the land of Spain, the land of Andalusia, of Portugal, the land of the Saracens, the Turks, the Castellians, and the Moors; the lands of Navarre, Louarre, Biscay, Palarque, and the lowlands: all these lands were

commanded by Charlemagne. He took all the cities that I have named, and the towns and castles, some by force of battle, others by great art.

Luserne boasted a great force and contained great riches, and at first Charles was unable to capture it. Finally, after laying siege to the city for four months and praying to God and my lord Saint James, his prayers were answered and he breached the walls and razed the city; thus it stands deserted to the present day. And from within the city burst forth a flood of dark water full of dark fish. <sup>3</sup>

Other Kings of France and other ruling Emperors, before Charles and since, conquered some of the cities whose names lie before you; soon Saracen force returned them to pagan belief, however, until the coming of Charles in Spain--this you can read in the histories. Clodoves was the first Christian king of France, and then Clotaire, and Dagober the strong king, his son, and Pepin, and Charlemagne the warrior, and Louis the son of Charlemagne for whom this history is made, and Charles the Chauz, son of Louis the Pious, and Carloman who conquered a part of Spain and allowed a part of it to be conquered; but this Charles in his time conquered it all. These are the cities that Charles cursed and destroyed, for which reason they are without inhabitants to this day: windy Luserne, Caparra, and Adana.



## IIII.

Charles destroyed all the idols he found in Turkish Spain except for one in the land of Andaluz which was called Salancadiz. "Cadiz" was the place the idol was located, and "Salan" in the Arab language means "our God." The Saracens say that the idol was made by Mahomet himself during his life, and that through his art he sealed inside it a legion of devils of tremendous power; any Christians who approached it perished at once, but when a Saracen came near to pray and adore Mahomet he could approach and kneel and nothing would happen. If a bird were perchance to land on the idol, it would die immediately.

There stood at the edge of the sea a huge stone of solid Saracen workmanship, and on this stone was raised the statue, also well-made, and bearing the likeness of a man standing erect as high as birds normally fly. It was turned to face south and held in its right hand a key; the Saracens believed that the key would fall from the idol's hand when a great king of France came to turn all of Spain to the Christian rule; and as soon as the key fell, the Saracens would flee the land.

## V.

Charlemagne stayed in Spain for three years, and with

the gold that the kings gave him he built a chapel to my lord Saint James; there he installed canons holding the order of Saint Isidore the goodly confessor. He honorably gave bells, tapestries, vestments, books, and all manner of other things proper for a church to have. And with the rest of the silver he restored other churches such as Our Lady of Aachen and the chapel of my lord Saint James at Biterne, and the church of my lord Saint James in Toulouse, and another church of my lord Saint James at Aachen, and the church of my lord Saint Jean de Sorde on the Via Saint James, and in Paris an abbey between the Seine and Montmartre, and so many more abbeys throughout the land that I can't name them all.

## VI.

When Charles returned to France, a pagan king from Africa named Agolant entered Spain and reconquered it all, killing all those men that Charles had left there as a garrison to guard the castles and cities. And when the Emperor heard this, he gathered his host and returned once more to Spain, taking Milon of Anglier with him as his captain.



## VII.

But before I write further concerning Emperor Charles, it behooves me to pass on a most marvellous example that the Lord God made to show the consequences of those who keep for themselves things they are entrusted to pass on to others for the ease of others' souls.

The story says that when Charles went with all his host to Bayonne, a Basque city, and camped there, one of his men named Romeris fell ill and it became apparent he was going to die. After he had been given the rites and had said his prayers, he gave his horse to a cousin with the instruction that he sell it and give the money to clerics and to the poor. Then Romeris died, and the cousin took the horse and sold it for a hundred silver marks and at once spent them all on clothes and food and drink. But Our Lord, who is with us every day and is aware of all evil deeds, made his vengeance known. Thirty days after the death of the man, he appeared to his cousin in a dream and said, "Know thee well that Our Father has forgiven me my sins, for the which I commanded you to give my money away; but since you kept the money to yourself I have suffered these 30 days in the fires of hell. Rest assured that tomorrow you yourself will be suffering in those fires, and I will be with God in eternal paradise." And after hearing this curse, the man awoke, all pale and trembling.

When he got up in the morning, he told all the host

what he had seen and heard; while they were talking about the vision and marvelling at what it might portend, a drive of demons bellowing and howling like bulls and lions descended from the sky and snatched up the man who had kept the money and carried him off before everyone's eyes. What more can be said? For four days, on horseback and foot, over hills and in gullies they searched for him, but they found nothing. Finally after twelve days, as the king and the army were marching through the wilds of the country around Navarre, they found the man dead and torn to bits, all strewn about on rocks near the sea three days' travel from the city where he was taken. The demons had abandoned his body, but they took his soul with them back to hell. Wherefore all may know who keep back the bequests of the dead, that they will be damned forever.

#### VIII.

After this, Charles and Duke Milon searched diligently throughout Spain for Agolant and at last came upon him in the land of Champs near a river called the Ceia. This was at the picturesque spot where Charles later established a church to Saint Faconde and Saint Primitis, where their bodies lie, and there he founded an abbey of monks and a thriving town. When Charles' army approached the city, Agolant proposed a battle between 20 of his chosen warriors



and 20 of Charles', or 40 against 40, or 100 against 100, or 1000 against 1000, or 2 on 2, or 1 on 1. Charles decided to send 100 knights, and Agolant matched his hundred. All the Saracens were killed. Then Agolant sent 200 against 200, and all his 200 were killed. Then he sent 2000 against 2000, and those who were not killed ran away. After the third day Agolant had had enough, and saw that Charles would fare the worse if their armies met. He proposed full battle, and it was agreed.

That night, a group of the Christian fighters who were greatly anticipating the battle thrust their lances into the ground in front of their tents, near the river I spoke of earlier. When the morning came, the men found them all covered with bark and leaves, a sign that they were to become martyrs for Our Lord. They marvelled greatly at this miracle of God, so wondrous was it, and they cut the lances off near the ground. But the roots remained and sprouted, and grew into large groves that may still be seen. Most of the lances were made of ash wood.

What more is there to say? That day the two armies did battle, and forty thousand Christians died, including Duke Milon, the father of Roland; among the killed were those whose lances had sprouted. Charles' horse was killed under him: thus he came to be on foot amidst the Saracens, with two hundred Saracens who were also on foot.<sup>4</sup> He had his sword, whose name was Joyeux, and he grasped the strong gold hilts and did wonders, as the book says,<sup>5</sup> and so

vigorously did he swing that he cut down many Saracens with each stroke. As the night grew near, the Saracens and the Christians returned to their camps. The next day, four dukes from the land of Italy came to Charles' aid, and with them four thousand men to do battle by his side. When Agolant saw this, he fled back to his country and Charles returned with all his host to France.

And in the battle just related is an example of the salvation of those who fight for Our Lord Jesus Christ: just as the warriors of Charles prepared themselves for battle, so we should prepare our weapons, that is to say our good virtues, against vice, to destroy it. He who puts faith against wicked actions, or charity against hatred, or liberality against greed, or humility against pride, or chastity against luxuriousness, or prayer against the temptations of the devil, or poverty against the beatitudes <sup>6</sup> --his soul will be crowned with victory on the day of judgement. See! the soul of the victor will be crowned by the king of heaven if he lawfully battles against vice on earth. It is as the apostle said, "Yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully"; and as the men of Charlemagne died in battle for the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ, just so we ought to die in this world to vice, and live to holy virtue, that we will come to have the crown of life and victory from the king of heaven.



## VIII.

Then Agolant gathered together all manner of men: Saracens, Moors, Morabites, Ethiopians, Turks, Africans and Persians; Thezofin the King of Araby; Burrabel the King of Alexandria; Avite the King of Bougie; Ospin the King of Zerbi; Fatin the King of barbarian lands; Alyer the King of Morocco; Asmoige the King of Majorca; Maimon the King of La Meque; Ebrain the King of Seville, and the Emir of Cordova. And all of these men came to Agen in Gascony. Then Agolant sent to Charles, asking him to come there and parley in guaranteed peace with a small number of men, and he promised forty horses laden with gold and silver and other riches if Charles would agree to become his vassal. But he only said this in order to see what Charles looked like, so that later he could kill him in battle.

And Charles knew the truth in this, so he brought two hundred of the best warriors with him to within four leagues of Agen. He selected forty of them and posted them atop a nearby hill where they could clearly be seen. Charles disguised himself and a companion from the forty and set off to the city without weapons since they wanted to look like messengers. As they approached the city they were met by a garrison of Saracen who wished to know who they were and why they had come. They answered that they were messengers from Charles the Great, whom King Agolant had sent for. And they were escorted into the city and

brought before King Agolant, and they gave this message: "King Charles has sent us to you and informs you that he has come as you desired, bringing forty men, and wishes to parley with you and become your servant." Then Agolant armed himself and told them to return to Charles with the message that he would see him soon enough.

All the while Agolant was ignorant of the fact that it was Charles that spoke to him, but Charles saw Agolant and which kings were with him, and he learned the inside of the city and saw where it would be easiest to capture it. Then he went back to the forty men he had left on the hilltop, and returned with them to where the two thousand were camped. King Agolant, after Charles had come before him in the guise of the messenger, made ready a force of seven thousand warriors mounted on Arabian horses and set off to find Charles. And Charles, who knew well the evil plans laid for him, drew his force away from that area and returned to France to assemble more men.

When he had gathered a great host, he returned to the city of Agen and besieged Agolant for six months. In the seventh month he built bashers and biters and other great engines and meant to start destroying the city the next morning. Agolant saw all this, and realized how vulnerable the city was; that night he crept out of the city through the sewers with six of the kings and his nearest kinsmen, and floated across the river Garonne which ran next to the town. In this manner Agolant escaped from Charles' hands.



Next morning, Charles entered the city in high spirits and killed ten thousand Saracens, while others jumped into the Garonne and swam away.

## X.

By and by Agolant came to the city of Saintes, which was held at that time by Saracens, and he took refuge there with his men. Charles, as he had sworn, rode after him with his army and demanded that he surrender the city. Agolant did not wish to give it up and said that he would battle for its possession, and so it was agreed.

The night before the battle was to be fought, the Christians planted their spears in the ground near their tents, in the area around the castle of Taillebourg and the city on the river Charente. In the morning, many of the staves had grown branches and flowers, and they were those of the fighters who would become martyrs in the battle that day for the faith of Our Lord. When all saw this great miracle, they marvelled much and then chopped off their lances near the ground; then they armed themselves and rode out to battle at the forefront of the army. They killed many Saracens, but in the end they were all killed and were taken to holy heaven and crowned with everlasting crowns. And those who were killed in this manner numbered four hundred, as the book says. In the same battle Charles'

horse was killed under him, but he, like a valiant and able warrior, grasped firmly his sharp sword and entered the press on foot and killed and wounded many Saracens. No man alive can describe the miracle that he worked that day when by his command the Saracens were conquered--they could not withstand his compelling strokes as he made for the city. And Charles then placed his entire host around the city (except for the part on the river). That night Agolant and all his army took flight across the river. Charles knew what he was up to, gave chase, and killed the kings of Zerbi and Bougie, and about four hundred other pagans.

## XI.

Then Agolant travelled through Gascony and through the pass of Cise, and came to Pamplona and won it and entered its strong walls; then he challenged Charles to do battle with him nearby. Agolant hoped to win all of Spain by winning this battle, and he brought from his own land huge men by the hundreds and thousands--Saracens and Slavs--to help him.

And when Charles received the challenge, he returned to France and called to him all his counts and barons and dukes and princes, and from all the corners of the kingdom they came to his court. And he proclaimed throughout France that whoever would accompany him, be he a servant to a



wicked lord or a man bound to a foreign master--all those who would go with him to Spain to fight, he would declare them and their descendants free men for all time. What more is there to say? All those whom Charles found in prison, he freed; those he found poor, he gave money to; those he found naked, he clothed; those he found in enmity, he brought to accord; those he found deprived of their rightful situations and lands, he restored; all those who could bear arms were given arms and honorable apparel, and all those who had done evil deeds and lost his favor he brought back to his grace and made peace with through the will of God. And all those that Charles took to Spain to destroy the evil folk, I, Turpin, Archbishop of Rheims, give benediction and absolution for their sins.

These are the names of the barons who went to Spain with Charles: I, Turpin, Archbishop of Rheims, who each day urged the faithful to do good deeds and absolved them of their sins, and who killed with my lance and sword many impious Saracens. And Roland went also, the count of Mainz whose forefathers were of Blayes, the nephew of Charles, the mightiest of men in battle, son of Duke Milon and Bertauz, and he brought four hundred men-at-arms. Another Roland went as well, but I will not write of him here. And Oliver went, the son of Count Renier of Agen, inspired warrior and cool in battle, who brought along four hundred hardy and experienced men-at-arms. Also came Estouz de Langres, the son of Count Oudon, with three thousand men;

and King Restauz of Brittany, of whom I shall say no more than that he brought seven thousand fighting men. Another king came from Brittany about whom I will not speak more; there was Angeliers, the King of Aquitaine. This city named Aquitaine lies between Limoges and Bourges and Poitou; it was founded by Augustus Caesar who named it Aquitaine, and from it he subjugated Limoges, Bourges, Poitou, Saintes, Angouleme and all the lands around them, and then he named the whole region Aquitainia. This city, as the story goes, was destroyed after the death of Angelier, as though the city was killed at Ronceval along with him.

The King of Bordeaux brought four hundred men; there were also Geliers, Gelins, and Salemons the companion of Estout; and Baldwin the brother of Roland, who brought ten thousand men. Also Gondebues the King of Frisia and seven hundred men, and Hernauz of Beaulande and two hundred men, and Naimes of Baviere with ten thousand, Ogier the King of Denmark with ten hundred, Constantine of Rome with twenty thousand. There were Renaus of Aubepin, Gautiers of Aubepin, Gautiers of Termes, Guielins, Garis the Duke of Lorraine; Baigues brought four thousand men; Auberis le Burgogne, Renars of Nubles, Guinars, Estormis, Tiaris, Yvoires, Hates, Beroigiers, and Ganelon who made the treason.

And when all this host was assembled there were forty thousand horsemen, but of the footmen only God knows how many of them from diverse lands and regions came in



obedience to the call of Emperor Charlemagne. Thus Charles of France, Emperor of Rome, and his men conquered the country of Spain for the glory of Our Lord.

They all assembled in the country of Bordeaux and covered an acreage two good days' journey long and wide, and you could hear the noise of the men and horses twelve leagues away. First Hernauz de Beaulande went through the pass and came to Pamplona, and after him went Estouz de Langres. Then went Ogier the Dane and Constantine. After them came Charles and all the rest of the host, and they covered all the land from the river Rune to the mountains that are three leagues from Pamplona on the Via Saint James. It took eight days for them all to pass through. Then Charles sent to Agolant and demanded that he either surrender the city or defend it in battle. When Agolant saw Emperor Charles' massive army he thought much less of his own power, and knew that he would never be able to hold the city against it; still, he would rather die on the battlefield than in the city. He sent to Charles requesting a truce during which his men might file out of the city and make themselves ready for combat and during which they two might speak together, for he still much desired to see what Charles looked like.

## XII.

Thus a general truce was declared. Agolant and all his host issued forth from the city, and he and sixty of his strongest men went to where Charlemagne was camped, a league away. The armies faced each other across the Via Saint James.

And Charles said to Agolant, "You are the man who has stolen and pillaged my country and that of Galicia that I had taken through the aid of mighty God and turned to Christian faith; you who have killed the Christian men I left behind when I returned to France, and who have destroyed my castles and my cities and my countryside, and have caused me ever and anon more pain."

When Agolant heard Charles speak Saracennese, he marvelled much and was filled with joy; Charles had learned it in Toledo, where he was sent for a while when he was young. <sup>7</sup>

And Agolant answered, "Prithee, tell me why you have taken the land of our people, when neither your father nor his fathers held it to give to you."

"Because," Charles answered, "My Lord Jesus Christ, maker of heaven and earth, chose the Christian people above all others and commanded that they be the rulers of all the people in the world--it is for this reason, and for the great power I wield, that I convert your Saracen people to our faith."



"That's no reason," returned Agolant, "for our people to be under the command of yours: our belief has more worth than yours.<sup>8</sup> We serve the commandments of Mahomet, who was commanded by God and sent to us by him, and we have other very powerful gods who appear to us by the command of Mahomet and who tell us the future. And we live at their behest."

"Ha!" said Charles, "Agolant, you are in this pitiable state because you do not know the commandments of God, but rather the vain commandments of proud men. We believe in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while you believe in and adore devils in the shape of idols. Our souls will be carried to paradise and eternal life when we die, because of the faith we have, and your miserable souls will be tormented in hell--all this proves that our faith has more worth than yours. Now, if you or your folk will be baptized you may live in peace; if not, you may join battle with me."

"It shall not be," said Agolant, "that I take baptism or renounce my god Mahomet; rather, my men and I will battle you and yours. If our faith is stronger than yours, we will win; if yours is, you shall." And after this he said, "If my men are beaten I will take baptism, provided I be allowed to live." All was in this manner agreed upon.

Immediately Charles sent twenty horsemen against twenty Saracens on the field, and they fell to. And what do you think happened? Straightaway all the Saracens were

killed. Then Agolant sent forty who were slain as quickly as the first. Then 100 against 100, and again all the Saracens died. Then another hundred fought, and it happened that the Christians were killed or fled: this suggests a message concerning the faith of Our Lord, that those who fight for God should never turn their backs. Just as those who fled were killed, so Christians must fight adamantly against evil vice; if they turn their backs on the battle they invite vices, and it is their sin. But those who steadfastly struggle against vice easily put their enemy to death (and that enemy is the devil, who inspires them with evil ideas). As the holy Apostle said, "He will not be crowned with joy who does not loyally struggle against himself."

Then Charles sent out 200 Christians against 200 Saracens, and all the latter were killed. And then 1000 versus 1000, and again the same result. Then a general truce was declared, and Agolant went to speak to Charles: he confessed that the Christian belief was superior to that of the Saracens, and that on the morrow he and all his men would be baptized. He went back to his camp and told the other kings and barons that he wished them to take baptism. The rest he ordered to do so; some agreed and some refused.



## XIII.

At the third hour on the next day, as had been arranged earlier, Agolant went to Charles to be baptized. He found him at a table at which were also seated all manner of men wearing vestments of different kinds--some were dressed as chevaliers, some in black like monks, some in white like canons, some like clerics, and many, many others in all sorts of different vestments--and Agolant asked who they were.

And Charles answered, "Those that you see in [dark] colors are bishops and priests of our faith who absolve us of our sins and preach to us the commandments of God and give us the blessing of Jesus Christ Our Lord. [lacuna]<sup>9</sup> Those you see dressed in white are regular canons who live the lives of holy men and sing masses and matins, and pray for us."

Looking past this sight, Agolant saw thirteen poor men, dressed poorly, sitting on the ground apart from the others. They had little to eat or drink, and no table or tablecloth to eat it on.

He asked Charles whose men these were, and Charles replied, "These are the messengers of Our Lord Jesus Christ who come here each day in the name of God and his twelve apostles. It is our custom to give them food."

Then Agolant said, "Those sitting with you are well arrayed and have plenty to drink and eat--and those whom

you call messengers of God, why are they sitting on hay? Why are they ill-clothed? And why are they so far from you and your companions? Your Lord must think little of his messengers to allow them to be treated so poorly here in the company of your vassals, such disgrace he heaps on them. This faith that you spoke so highly of, you have shown it to be false and dishonorable."

Then Agolant took his leave and went back to his troops, revoking his wish that they be baptized, and sent a challenge to Charles for battle on the morrow. Charles realized that Agolant had refused because of his want of charity toward the thirteen poor men, and he sought out all the poor men in his host and saw them well vested and equipped. By this example let all Christians remember not to neglect God's needy. Through this lesson, Charles lost Agolant and all his men--they would not be baptized now--all because they saw his poor treated in such a manner.

And what will become of them, on judgment day, who in this life treat God's poor poorly? How they shall hear the terrible voice of Our Lord when he speaks on that day of terrible judgement: "Go from me, you evil ones, go to the scorching pains of hell! When I was hungry, you gave me nothing to eat; when I was thirsty, you gave me nothing to drink; when I was naked, you clothed me not; when I was in prison you did not visit me," and what many other things does the Gospel enumerate? Belief in God's law does little



for Christians and their faith if it is not augmented with good works--as the apostle said, "just as a body is dead without a soul, so is faith dead without good works."

#### XIIII.

The next day the two faiths met each other on the battlefield, as it had been agreed. Charles had in his host 134,000 men, and Agolant had 100,000. The Christians were in four batallions, the Saracens, five. The first batallion of Saracens was immediately beaten, and a second immediately after that. When they realized their great loss, they all gathered round Agolant. The Christians saw this assembly, and quickly spread out and surrounded the whole Saracen army. On one side was Hernauz de Beaulande and all his troops; on another Arestial, the King of Brittany; and also Goubans of Frisia, and Constantine, and Ogier, each with their armies, and finally Charles with his great force. Hernez de Beaulande struck at the Saracens first, and swung right and left, and slaughtered and killed and wounded everything in his path until he came to Agolant in the center, and Hernez killed him with his sword. And then a great cry went up, and from all sides the Christians closed in on the Saracens, killing them. On this great occasion none escaped but the King of Seville and the Emir of Cordova. All the Saracens that were found in the city

were put to death.

So you can see that Charles fought Agolant, and that in the battle of two faiths the one was killed; by this example we see that the Christian faith has more worth than all others. Ha! Good Christians, if you hold fast to your faith and do good works, you will be crowned by angels in the presence of Jesus Christ Our Lord--we are his people. If you wish to climb up to heaven, remember what God said: "He who believes strongly, so can he do."

Then Charles called his host together, and they were all joyful of the victory; they travelled to the bridge spanning the Arge, on the Via Saint James, and there they made camp.

#### XV.

That night some Christians, motivated by greed, crept back to the battlefield (Charles knew nought of this), and stripped the bodies of all their gold. As they were returning, the Emir of Cordova swept down from the hills with many Saracens who had fled the battle, and they killed all the thousand men that were there. This is an example of the waning of God's champions, who through their greed to own the possessions of their fallen enemies were then killed by their enemies--just so those who have conquered evil vices and do penitence should not return to



death (that is, to evil actions), or they will be killed by their enemies (that is, devils). Just as those who returned to steal lost life in this world, so those who return to sin from proper faith will lose eternal life when they die, and gain only the death of hell.

#### XVI.

The next day Charles was informed that the prince of Navarre--Fourres he was named--had challenged him to a battle near Montjardin. When Charles arrived at the mountain, Fourres said he would fight him the next day. Charles prayed to God that night, asking that he be shown those who would be killed in the battle. As they were arming themselves next morning, a vermilion cross, red as blood, appeared on the shoulder of each man doomed to die. When Charles saw this, he left them behind so they wouldn't die in battle.

The judgments of God, and his faculties, cannot be understood by men. What more is there to say? After the battle, when Fourres was killed and four thousand Navarrese and Saracens as well, Charles returned to find dead those whom he had left behind in a chapel--there were 140 of them. They won the holy company of God's champions, for although they were not killed by the sword, neither did they lose the heavenly crown. Then Charles took the castle

at Montjardin and purged it of its devils, and in like wise  
all the country of Navarre.

XVII. They le. together to the ground, picked

Soon word came to Charles that a giant named Fernagus,  
one of Goliath's descendants, had come to Najera from the  
country of Syria; the Ammiral of Babylon had sent him to  
fight Charles with a troop of twenty thousand Turks. This  
Fernagus fought without lance or sword or arrow, and had  
the strength of forty men. Charles made ready to meet him  
in Najera, and when Fernagus heard that he was coming, he  
sent to him demanding single combat. Charles sent Ogier the  
great Dane, and straightaway the pagan tucked him under his  
arm like a lambkin (in full armor), and carried him off to  
his castle. He stood twelve cubits high, his face was a  
cubit across, his nose a palm wide; his arms and legs were  
four cubits long, and his neck three palms. After Ogier,  
Charles sent Renaut of Aubepin; the giant took him in his  
arms and imprisoned him in his castle. Next was sent  
Constantine of Rome and Count Hoel, and they were picked  
up, one under each arm, and carried off to prison. By and  
by he had taken twenty men, two at a time, and put them all  
in prison.

When Charles saw this, he didn't want to send any more  
men, but his nephew Roland begged him in great earnest and



was allowed to go. When the giant saw him, he took him in his right arm and put him in front of him on his horse. Just then, using all his force and praying to God, Roland seized him under the chin and threw him to the ground behind his horse. They fell together to the ground, picked themselves up, and remounted their own horses. Roland readied his sword to kill the giant, and with one stroke slew Fernagus' horse. Fernagus, now on foot, brandished his sword and lunged at Roland. Roland parried the blow, breaking the giant's sword, but so great was the effort that his own weapon fell to the ground. Fernagus was astounded when he saw this, accosted Roland with his bare hands, and killed his horse. The fighting continued on foot with fists and stones until nightfall, at which time Fernagus asked for a truce until the next morning, and they agreed that on the morrow they would continue without horses or swords; then each returned to his camp.

Next morning, bright and early, they returned to the field on foot as agreed. Fernagus brought a sword with him, but it was of little advantage since Roland had brought a long gnarled club with him. He wielded it well and often, but he could never wound the giant seriously; the stones he threw likewise could not harm him.

After a while Fernagus asked Roland for a truce, saying he was tired and wanted to lie down and sleep. Roland, being young and agile, put a stone under his head in order that he might sleep better. <sup>10</sup> Neither Christians

nor Saracens will kill a man while he is sleeping, as that was the custom when Christian gave pax to a Saracen or vice versa: the man who broke such an oath would be killed.

When Fernagus awoke, Roland asked him how it was that he came to be so strong that neither sword nor stone nor club could harm him. Fernagus replied that he couldn't be hurt seriously except in the navel--he spoke in Spanish, which Roland understood well.

Then Fernagus asked Roland what his name and lineage were, "you who fight so mightily against me?"

And Roland answered, "I am Roland of the Franks."

Fernagus asked him of what belief were the Franks, and Roland responded, "We are called Christians, after the faith of Jesus Christ, and we obey the commandments of Our Lord Jesus Christ for whose love we fight with our troops."

When Fernagus heard him speak of Jesus Christ he asked Roland who he was, "this son of God in whom you believe?"

And Roland said to him, "It is he who was born of the Virgin, and suffered death upon the cross and was buried, and descended into hell and arose on the third day."

Fernagus said, "We believe that the maker of heaven and earth is God alone, and that it was neither father nor son nor anything else that made us; so I say to you that there is but one God, not three."

And Roland answered, "When you say that there is but one God, and that he does not exist in a trinity, you stray from the true faith and belief. If you consider the father,



the son, and the holy spirit, you will know that there is but one God who exists in three persons."

Fernagus replied, "If you say that the father is God, and that the son is God, and that the holy spirit is God, then you have three Gods, and that cannot be when there is only one God."

And Roland said, "I didn't say that, I said that the one God exists in three parts: he is the three-in-one, the three always together. Equal with the father is the son, and equal is the holy spirit." <sup>11</sup>

And Fernagus said, "We shall decide who is correct by combat: if I am right I shall win, and if you are right you will. To the victor belongs everlasting honor; to the vanquished, shame and reproach. Likewise the men of each."

"That is well said," agreed Roland.

Then Roland assailed the pagan; Fernagus struck a blow at Roland, but he parried it with his club so that it was cut in two. Fernagus picked Roland up and threw him to the ground and fell upon him; Roland saw that he wouldn't be able to escape him, and he prayed to God and his sweet mother. Then by the help of God he raised himself up a bit and found the pagan's dagger, and he thrust it into his navel.

The giant leapt back, crying pitifully "Mahomet, Mahomet, my God, help me or I die!" And many Saracens came and carried him away in their arms. Roland returned triumphant to the Christian army. Then the Christians

marched into the city behind the Saracens carrying the dying Fernagus. Thus was the giant killed and the city taken, and the men freed from the prison into which Fernagus had put them, and the Emperor rejoiced.

### XVIII.

After a time, word reached our Emperor that Effrainz the King of Seville and the Emir of Cordova, who had fled from the battle in Spain, lay ready to fight him at Cordova with the Saracen armies from seven cities--Seville, Granada, Santine, Dane, Ubeda, Abla, and Baeza. Charles set out at once to meet them. As he neared Cordova, the Saracens issued forth from the city in full force and galloped three leagues towards them; there were easily ten thousand of them, and no more than six thousand of us.<sup>12</sup> Charles divided his men into three groups: the first were his best warriors, the second were footmen, the third horsemen. The Saracens did likewise. When the first group of our men advanced so did the pagans, each matching each, and the pagans wore barbarous masks like horned devils and carried drums in their hands which they beat upon. When our men's horses saw the masks and heard the booming of the drums, they reared up and could not be controlled, and the army was pushed back--when the other groups saw the first flee, they fled as well.



When the Saracens saw this they rejoiced, and pursued our people all the way to a mountain far from the city. There we rallied and regrouped ourselves and made ready once more for battle. When the Saracens saw this they pulled back a bit, so there we pitched our tents and remained until the following day.

The next morning Charles took counsel and ordered each man to cover the head of his horse with cloth so they wouldn't be able to see the masks, and to plug up their ears so they couldn't hear the drums. When they had done this the men were much encouraged, and they went right to the battle. With eyes and ears covered the masks and drums had no effect; they fought much more heartily than the day before and killed many men, but none of ours were killed. The Saracens regrouped themselves, and in the middle of their host they erected a crimson banner on a cart pulled by eight oxen. They believed that none of their army would run from battle as long as the banner flew. When Charles saw this, he laced on his helmet, took his lance in his hand, and with the help of God he rode forward smiting right and left until he came to the cart where the banner was, and cut through its mast with his sword; the banner collapsed and the Saracens turned and ran. A great cry went up from both armies, and by and by eight thousand Saracens were killed, including the King of Seville; the Emir of Cordova took refuge in the city with two thousand of his men.

The next day the Emir surrendered the city to our Emperor and promised that he would be baptized and would obey the commands of Emperor Charles. When this was done, Charles departed and divided command of the country of Spain between those of his men who wished to remain. He gave Navarre and the lowlands to the Bretons and the land of Castille to the French; Nadres and Sesaire he gave to the Puillois and to the Greeks who had come with our army. He gave the land of Aragon to the Poitevins; the part of Andalusia by the sea he gave to the Germans; Portugal he gave to the Danes and Flemish. The French didn't want to stay in Galicia because it seemed too harsh a place. After this there was no man in Spain who dared combat Charles, now that he had come to Spain and had delivered it.

#### XVIII.

Thus Charles left a part of his army behind in Spain and returned to the tomb of my lord Saint James, and the Christians that he found there gave him much honor. Those Saracens that he found he put to death or sent away in exile and captivity to France. Then he called to him bishops, archbishops, and priests from all the cities, bidding them attend a council in the city of Compostela, and he established for the love of my lord Saint James that all the bishops and kings of Spain and Galicia should



answer to the Archbishop of my lord Saint James. But in Iria he did not put an archbishop, since it was such a small city: he decreed that it should be under the command of the Archbishop of Compostela.

At the same council in July, I, Turpin, Archbishop of Rheims, along with fifty bishops and archbishops, honorably dedicated the chapel of my lord Saint James. By the command of Charles who put all the land of Galicia and Spain under the church of my lord Saint James, each household in the land sent four denarii for rent after which they were free from all servitude.<sup>13</sup> And he proclaimed that the church be known as an Apostolic See because my master Saint James lies there, and ordered that all the councils of Spain be held there, and that it was there that the bishops and kings of Spain would be invested and crowned by the bishop of the city honoring the Apostle Saint. And the other cities in the land were returned from their sinful state to the faith and commandments of Our Lord.

All believing in the Christian faith of Our Lord should be brought together in this church, for so it is that the faith of Jesus Christ is established in the See of my lord Saint John the Evangelist, the brother of my lord Saint James, in Ephesus in the East; likewise the Apostolic See of my lord Saint James is established in Galicia in the West. These sees, Ephesus and Compostela, make up the worldly kingdom of Jesus Christ--Ephesus on the right hand, Compostela on the left. Just as the Scripture witnesses

that they besought God that the one might sit on his right, the other on his left hand, so these sees were divided between the two sons of Zebedee.

Three principal sees should all Christians know and honor above all others in the world: Rome, Galicia, and Ephesus. God exalted three apostles--Saint Peter, Saint John, and Saint James--above all the others because they demonstrated most devoutly and fully their love, says the Scripture, and so he exalts their three sees above those of the other apostles.

And rightly is Rome considered before the other two on account of my master Saint Peter, the master of the apostles; it is dedicated to his preaching and his holiness. There his tomb lies, and there are honored the great miracles that he made in his life, and makes still, and will make until the end of the world. Compostela is rightly named an apostolic see because of Saint James, who after Saint Peter surpassed all others in dignity and honor; he was the first to be given the heavenly crown of martyrdom; he preached in Compostela, and there he lies in holiness and there he will make miracles forever. Ephesus, the third see, is rightly so called because of my master Saint John and his writings: "In principio erat verbum et verbum erat apus Deum." He preached his holy words there, and did miracles, and there he is buried.

So in the manner you have heard, the first army of Saracens was repulsed from Galicia by the grace of God and



through the prayers of my lord Saint James; by the aid and efforts of Emperor Charles it was rescued, honored, and will remain forever in the Christian faith.

XX. 14

King Charles had brown hair and a pleasant face, a light heart, and a keen eye. He was seven feet tall by the measure of his own long feet, broad in the shoulders and wide in the stomach. His arms and legs were strong and firm, and there was much health and virtue in all parts of his body. He was wise and confident in battle, being an excellent horseman and striking with a heavy hand. His face was a palm and a half in length, his forehead a foot across; his eyes were large, fierce like a lion's and bold like a leopard's, and they glittered like two carbuncles beneath eyebrows that stretched half a palm. Those he looked on in anger trembled. His overshirt was eight palms long, not counting the part which hung loose. Of bread he ate little, but he liked a quartered mutton, or two chickens, or a goose, or a jamb of pork, or a peacock, or a crane, or a whole rabbit; and he drank little wine, preferring water. His sword-arm was so strong that he could split a man in half with a single blow while the man was in full armor, and the horse beneath him too. He could bend four horse-shoes easily with his bare hands, and could lift

a man standing on his palm as high as his head with ease.

He was generous with gifts, and was wise and eloquent, always giving good counsel. He wore his crown at the four high feasts of the year--Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and the day of Saint James--and a bare sword was carried in front of him at these times as should be done before the Emperor. Each night he had one hundred forty men guarding him: forty kept the first watch, with ten each at his head and feet and right and left. Each held a bare sword in his right hand and a lit candle in his left. Thus did the second group of forty take the second watch, and the last forty the third while all the rest slept.<sup>15</sup>

He who would tell of the great deeds and marvellous works that Charles did in his life would have the great task of telling the multitude of stories that men tell concerning him. For instance, how Ammiral Galafre of Toledo educated him in his youth when he was in exile, and how the Ammiral made him a guard of the Palace, and how Charles killed in battle the proud Saracen King Bramint, Galafre's mortal enemy. He would tell also of how Charles conquered many lands and many cities by his great ingenuity, bringing to each of them the Christian faith; how he founded many churches and many abbeys in the world and endowed the shrines of many saints with gold and silver; how he became Emperor of Rome and visited the sepulchre of Our Lord, and how he brought back pieces of the true cross and gave them to various churches throughout the world. All these things



I cannot recount to you, since it would be a very long story indeed; the hand and the pen would wear out before the many marvellous stories could be told--I will not tell them here. Let's leave these things behind and I will tell you in a few words how he left Spain and returned to France.

## XXI.

After Charles the Great, the famous Emperor of Rome, had conquered Spain for the glory of God and my lord Saint James, he turned back with all his host to Pamplona where they all made camp. At this time there were two Saracen kings in Saragossa--Marsile and Baligant--whom the Ammiral of Babylon had sent to Spain to serve Charles and obey his commands. By way of Ganelon Charles sent word to these two that they must either accept baptism or pay him tribute. The two kings sent him thirty chests full of gold and silver and silk, and they sent to the men in our army four thousand chargers laden with the best Spanish wine to drink and 1000 Saracen women of great beauty to do with as they liked. They gave Ganelon twenty chargers laden with gold and silver and silk if he would leave them free to kill the men in our army, and the traitor promised to do it and took what they offered him. When the pact of treason was sealed between them and the details worked out, Ganelon returned

to Charles and gave him what the kings had sent. He made it known that Marsile had decided to become Christian and that he would make the trip after him to France and take baptism there, and that he would hold all the land of Spain under him.

The chief French barons took for themselves the wine that had come into their possession, and the common men took the women. Charles, believing what Ganelon had told him, made ready to cross the passes and return to France. Taking the counsel of Ganelon he commanded that his closest friends, that is to say his nephew Roland the Duke of Mainz and Blaye, and Oliver the Count of Agen, and all the twelve Peers, that they take the rearguard and twenty thousand men as backup and follow the rest of the men through the passes. In this way was it done.

But a group of the men, who had drunk the Saracen's wine and had sinned with the Sarradines and the Christian women who had come with the army from France, rightly met their deaths. Would you hear more? When Charles had marched through the passes with his twenty thousand men, and Turpin and Ganelon with him, Marsile and Baligant poured out of the surrounding woods with fifty thousand Saracens who had been waiting there for two days and nights following Ganelon's advice. As soon as the Saracens appeared, those in charge of our rearguard arranged the men to fight the Saracens in two groups, the one against twenty, the other against thirty thousand. Right away the batallion of twenty



thousand attacked our men with great force; ours turned to them the points of their lances, and thus began a great and perilous mortal battle in which the best Christian warriors were killed. The two armies fought from matins to tierce, until finally the twenty thousand Saracens were all killed--none escaped. Much strain it was for our men to overcome this first batallion, and they wished to rest if this were possible; but there was no time to rest, so near at hand were their mortal enemies. Then they allowed the thirty thousand Saracens to encircle them, and great destruction was visited on our men from all sides.

Ah! what desperate fighting was done that day, and what meetings of swords! What lovely youth was killed that day, and hacked to pieces! Our men who had just triumphed in their toil could not hold up for long, and there they died. There were killed the twelve Peers of France and all the twenty thousand Christians, of whom none escaped. Some met death by the lance, others by the sword; some were minced with great axes, some were pierced through with arrows and darts; others were beaten with huge clubs and staves, while still others were flayed alive with honed knives. Some lay on the ground, others hung from trees. In that place were killed the best of the best in the heart of Emperor Charles except worthy Count Roland who that day showed well his great prowess, and strong Baldwin and Thierry who made for the forest and so escaped. After the fighting at Ronceval was concluded, the victorious Saracens

withdrew to a place a league away.

It should be asked in this situation why God allows to die in battle those who have not sinned alongside those who have lain with women and have sinned with them. He causes them suffering and death because he would rather they not return afterwards to their own lands and commit a sin there, and because he desires to give them the crown of the heavens after death. And those who sinned with the women God allows to die because he would pardon them of their sin through the death anguish they suffer in the defense of his faith. None can say that God the sovereign father and the fountain of mercy does not know well the travail and pain that men suffer for him, or that he does not pardon in the end the sins of the truly confessed and repentant. They may have sinned often, yet they were killed in the end for the name of Jesus Christ.

This is why one should not bring women with him to battle, because he will come to no good and will be led astray by them. To add a few examples, it is as with Darius the King of Persia, and Antony, both of whom made it a habit to take a large company of women with them to battle, and both of whom were conquered and killed: Darius was vanquished by Alexander, and Antony by Octavian of Rome. So it is, as I have told you, that we ought not bring women along with an army, as they are a great encumbrance to the body and soul. Those who make acquaintance and sin with women are addressed by the priests and religious men who



fight against vice, who say that one should in no way be familiar with women. But as is well known, if they do this they will be taken by their enemies (that is to say, by devils) and will come to a bad end and be tormented eternally in the depths of hell. Such was the comeuppance of what we had begun to say--of the great pain and sadness which our Emperor Charles suffered that day at Ronceval when the battle was done.

## XXII.

So it was that Roland withdrew all alone on his charger far from the Saracens, and as he saw all his men lying around him his heart was heavy--more than I can tell--for the loss he had suffered. Then by chance he discovered a Saracen, completely black, hiding in the woods. Quickly Roland captured him and tied him with four ropes to a tree and left him there alive. When he had done this he mounted his horse and rode through the woods until he came to a hill from which he could see the Saracen army, which was camped nearby in a grove, and he saw that there were many of them. He studied them well, and made his way back along the route of Ronceval, to the spot where those that had gone ahead had passed through. There he put his horn of ivory to his mouth and made it sound, and in response to the horn's voice there appeared over 100

Christians who had hidden here and there in the woods. He returned with them to the Saracen tied to the tree, and they untied him. Roland unsheathed his sword and put it to the head of the Saracen, saying "Come and show me King Marsile and I will release you unharmed. If you don't, be sure that I will kill you." Roland had never seen King Marsile.

Forthwith he took the Saracen with him, and was shown Marsile in the midst of the other Saracens: he was on a ruddy horse and carried a round shield. Roland released the Saracen; he had strength and virtue in himself and great faith in God. Hear what he did, this noble warrior, in the face of thirty thousand Saracens! No other fighter ever achieved the like. After he made his presence known to them, he saw a Saracen who seemed a stronger and greater lord than all the rest; he spurred his horse up to him and gave him such a blow with his sword that in one stroke both the Saracen and his horse beneath him split in half and fell to the ground in two directions. When the other Saracens saw this, they became fearful and fled this way and that, and right away Roland, full of God's virtue, entered into the press and began hacking and slaying right and left, making a path with his deadly sword until he reached his goal--Marsile--and killed him for the glory of God in the midst of all the Saracens.

In the battle I have recounted died the 100 companions of Roland, and he himself suffered four lance-wounds and



many sword cuts and stone and staff strokes. But wounded as he was, he escaped from their midst. And now that Baligant saw that Marsile was dead, he withdrew from that place along with all the remaining Saracens. Thierry and Baldwin, as we have told you, and other Christians with them, hid from the Saracens at diverse places in the forest; others went ahead through the passes, which were oblivious to all this great sadness.

Count Roland, overburdened with the great pains he suffered in the battle, and saddened by his loss and beginning to weaken from loss of blood through his wounds, came by and by to the foot of the pass of Mount Cize, and there he left his horse under a tree near a great rock. He still had his good sword with him, well-made and resplendent in the light and so strong that it could not be nicked or broken, and its name was Durendar. Durendar it was called because it "endured the savage Saracens" and "gave great strokes." Now he took its bare steel in his hand, and regarded it, and began to cry, saying, "Ah! best of swords, who has never failed and has always been so bright and resplendent! Best of swords, of such length and with your pommel of gold and cross of beryl! Honored sword, on whom is written the name of Our Lord and who is steeped in the virtue of Jesus Christ--you who have made me strong, will I never wield you again? Who will carry you, then? He who holds you in battle will not be vanquished or frightened or enchanted by art or by the work of the devil,

but he will always be near the aid of God. Ah! best of swords! You have killed many Saracens; you have killed the miscreant and glorified the Christian faith. You have conquered all Christendom for the glory and fame of his name. Ah! best of swords, I have avenged with you the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ! So often have I slain the enemies of God with you, so many Saracens have I wounded with you, so many Jews and miscreants have I destroyed with you for the faith of almighty God! You are filled with God's justice. So many feet and hands have I severed from bodies so many times with you! Ah! beautiful sword, unmatched in strength and handsomeness, never to be again! He who made you made no other like you; he who feels your edge feels nothing afterwards. O sword purer than any other, it would give me great pain to have you carried in battle by a wicked man. No Saracen or false Christian should hold you."

And vowing that his great sword should not come by chance into the hands of a Saracen, the good Count Roland brought it down hard three times on a large rock that was there, hoping to break the blade. What more can be said? The boulder split in half, but the sword remained as whole as if it had never touched the stone.

XXIII.

After this Duke Roland took his ivory horn and put it



to his mouth and made it sound, so that any Christians still hiding in the woods for fear of the Saracens would come to him, and so that those who had gone ahead through the passes might perchance hear it and return to him at the hour of his death to take his sword and horse, and to take revenge on the Saracens for the sake of him and the others who were killed in the battle of Ronceval. He blew his horn with such force and intent that it shattered, and the nerves and veins of his neck burst. The voice of the horn reached Charles where he was camped with his army in Valcarlos, six leagues away, and the sound was carried there by the will of God.

When our Emperor heard the horn's voice, he realized that Roland was in distress and made to return immediately to aid his nephew, but the deceitful traitor Ganelon, knowing all too well of his death and the treason that had been done, came to Charles and said, "Lord, do not return, for it would be great folly to do so. You know that Roland sounds his horn all the time at the slightest provocation, and so he is not now in need of our help. Most likely it's for nothing more than hunting some beast in the woods that he blows it."

Listen to the disloyal sycophant! Ah! What wicked advice you give, traitorous Ganelon, and how well yours could be compared to the treason of Judas, who willingly betrayed God.

Duke Roland lay down in the green grass because of the

pain of the wounds he had received all day in the Saracen melees: he was in greater need of cool water than I can express. Soon his brother Baldwin passed by and found him lying there, and the Duke made known to him through signs that he wished to have something to drink. Baldwin at once set out to look for water, but couldn't find any. He returned to where Roland lay and found him much nearer death; he took him by the hand, but fearing that he too might fall into the hands of the Saracens he mounted Roland's horse and set out along the road to bring Charles back, leaving Roland there alone.

And just as Baldwin had passed nearby in wandering from the battle, soon Thierry arrived and found the dying Count. Thierry began to cry sorrowfully over him, mourning the loss of his great bravery and ability and other good qualities, and finally counselled him that he should make confession. That same morning Roland had received all the sacraments and the body of Our Lord and had made confession to a priest, as it was the custom at that time that all those going to battle confess to priests travelling with the army.

Count Roland raised his eyes to heaven and said this prayer to Jesus Christ: "Gracious Lord Jesus Christ, for whose faith I left my country and travelled to this foreign land, for your faith and for your holy name, and by whose aid I have come victorious from many battles with the Saracens, and for whose love I have suffered many wounds



and pains, and suffered heat and cold and hunger and thirst, often barefoot and without sleep, and suffered much great anguish, to you I commend my soul this day. Also gracious Lord God, because you love me and all other sinners and were born of the glorious holy Virgin, and died on the holy true cross, and were buried and rose again on the third day, descended in to hell and ascended into heaven---Lord, because I know this to be the truth, I beseech you to deliver my soul from neverending death. Ah! gracious Lord God, I have been guilty of more sins than I can tell of, but you, Lord, have pardoned all of them. You have mercy for all creatures; you do not hate that which you have made; in every hour you forget the sins of those who turn to you. You spared the people of the city of Ninevah; you pardoned Mary Magdalen of her sins when she washed your feet with her tears and dried them with her hair in the house of Simon. You forgave the Apostle Saint Peter of his sins, he who denied you three times: when he cried for your mercy you gave him the gates of Paradise. Lord, in your great mercy pardon me my sins. Lord, it is you who makes the soul leave the body and allows it to live a better life, and they say, Lord, that you prefer the life of the sinner to death. Glorious lord God, I believe with full heart and acknowledge with my mouth; if it be your will, take my soul safely from this life and show it a better one after I die."

After these words he held the skin of his chest

between the fingers of his right hand, as Thierry who saw him recounted, and then the Count said tearfully, "Gracious lord Jesus Christ, son of God the sovereign father and of the Virgin Mary, I believe with all my heart that you are my redeemer, that you live, and that on the last day of the world I shall be resurrected and that in my own flesh I will see God my savior."

Then he put his hands over his eyes and said three times, "And these eyes will see him."

Then he opened his eyes and looked towards heaven and made the sign of the cross, and said, "I hate all the things of this world; the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of man known that which God has prepared for those who love him."

Then finally he held out his hands toward Our Lord and began to pray for those who had died in the battle of Ronceval, and said, "Gracious lord God, let your great mercy be spread over all your loyal followers who have died in battle for love of you and who came on so long a journey to this strange country to fight the miscreant, to exalt your holy name, to avenge your precious blood, to spread the knowledge of your faith; they have been killed by Saracens for your love. But you, Lord, who have mercy for all creatures, deliver them from the pains of hell--send them your angels to deliver their souls from the unending pains of hell and guide them to your realm where they may live with you and your martyred saints in unending glory,



you who live and reign as the father and the son and the holy spirit--Amen--without end."

As Roland made this confession and these prayers to Thierry, his sacred soul issued forth from his blessed martyr's body, and was without doubt carried by an angel to eternal rest where it was rightly placed in the company of the glorious martyrs.

XXV. 16

When the soul departed from Count Roland the blessed martyr, I Turpin, Archbishop of Rheims, was in Valcarlos as I said before. I was with the Emperor himself, singing a mass to the faithful to God, and it was the sixteenth day of July. I fell into a trance and heard the singing of angels, but I didn't know at first what was happening. As the voices passed in the heavens above me, a company of dark warriors came into view; they appeared and moved slowly by those who had come to pray.

And suddenly I asked them, "What are you carrying?" And they answered, "We are carrying the soul of Marsile to the flames of hell, and Michael is carrying your master--the one who blows the horn--with a great assembly of angels beside him to heaven and eternal glory." When the mass was done, I hurried to Charles and said, "Lord, know truly that holy Michael is carrying the soul of Count

Roland to heaven along with a great number of Christian souls; I do not know how it is that he comes to be dead, but the soul of Marsile is likewise being called to hell, and all the pains found there, by the devil."

And as I, Turpin, stood speaking to the Emperor, Baldwin arrived on Count Roland's horse. He informed us of what had happened, and how he had left Roland lying mortally wounded near the huge rock. Then a cry greater than any ever heard went up through the entire host, and they all sped back to the scene. There Charles was the first to find the body of Count Roland lying on the ground, with his arms folded on his chest in the likeness of a cross. When Charles saw him he dropped to the ground beside him, weeping and sighing sorrowfully and with great depth of feeling. He beat his breast, and tore at his face and hair and beard with his fingernails; so distraught was he that could not speak.

At last, amid great shuddering sobs, he said, "Ah! the right hand of my body, the honor of the French, the sword of justice, the unswerving lance, the unwarping shield! Like Judas Maccabeus in bravery, like Samson in strength, like Absalom in beauty, like Saul and Jonathan in the mischance of death! Best of horsemen, battle-wise, royal of lineage, destroyer of Saracens, defender of Christians, shining defender, supporter of orphans and widows, feeder and nourisher of the poor from the rich, revered by the church, proper in speech and judgment, companion of the



French, leader of God's champions in battle, exalter of the Christian faith, avenger of Our Lord's blood, the best of all good men, loved by all--why do you tarry here in this foreign land? Why do I see you dead? Why did I not die with you? Why have you left me sad and in pain? O my poor captain, what will I do? What will become of me now, in my misery? Sweet friend, you now live with angels; you are exalted in the company of the martyred saints; you will have joy with the saintly apostles forever. I will always weep for you, as David wailed and wept in his sadness for his son Saul and for his nephew Jonathan and for Absalom.<sup>17</sup> You have achieved eternal happiness, and have left me mourning here in this world. You are in the shining palace of paradise, and I remain in tears and sighs for the rest of my life. All the world grieves your death, and heaven and the saints are rejoicing."

In this manner did Emperor Charles mourn his nephew Count Roland the rest of his life. That night Charles camped the host around the place where Roland lay dead, and did honor to his body, bathing it in finest myrrh and aloe, and lit great candles and watched before the body all that night. And let it be known that Count Roland was thirty-eight years old when he died.

## XXVI.

When morning came all the men armed themselves and travelled to Ronceval where lay the others who had been killed in the battle; each man found someone he knew and loved--some dead, some still alive but mortally wounded. Among them they found the body of Count Oliver--temperant, valiant, noble warrior--lying on the ground, stretched out like a cross, his hands and feet bound by four thongs tied to stakes driven into the ground. All the flesh below his head had been flayed, from his fingernails to his toenails, and he bore wounds left by lance-tips and swords and darts and arrows; all over he had been bruised by stones and clubs. There arose cries and weeping so great that the doleful sound cannot be expressed; each man bewailed a loved one until the woods and vales filled with the great uproar. Then Emperor Charles vowed before God almighty that he would not rest until he tracked down the Saracens. As he rode after them with his company, the sun stood still and held its place for the length of three days; Charles found them eating and drinking by the river Ebro near Saragossa, and there he killed four thousand before returning to Ronceval.

What more can I say? When the dead and wounded were carried to the place where Roland lay, he investigated the rumors of Ganelon's treason. He ordered two warriors to arm themselves: Pinabel for the sake of Ganelon, his uncle, and



Thierry representing himself. Thierry easily killed Pinabel. Thus was the treason of Ganelon decided, and straightaway Charles ordered him tied to four horses mounted by four men; it was done in disgrace and sadness, and in that manner he met the death he deserved.

## XXVII.

And then the men took care of their dead friends, cleansing this one with myrrh, that one with balm, another with salt for lack of other ointments; they cut open the bodies and washed the entrails. They made wooden litters to carry some of the bodies; others were lain across their horses, or carried over shoulders, in a friend's arms, or pulled on his shield. Some were buried there, others carried back to their own lands in France; some were carried as far as possible, and then buried.

## XXVIII.

The largest cemeteries were those at Arles, Alischamps, and Bordeaux, which God had blessed and sanctified through the hands of seven bishops: Maximin of Aix-en-Provence, Trophin of Arles, Paulin of Narbonne, Saturnin of Toulouse, Frontins of Perigord, Marcel of

Limoges, and Tropes of Saintes. And in these cemeteries were laid most of the bodies and those who died swordless deaths in the battle of Montjardin.

XXVIII.

Then they put the prepared body of Roland on a litter of gold covered with silk and drawn by two mules, and he was transported to the church of my lord Saint Romain at Blaye, which Charles had established and where he had placed regular canons. There he was honorably entombed: his sword was placed at his head and his horn at his feet. In honor of his noble chevalerie was this done. But later other men carried it [the horn] to the church of Saint Seurin at Bordeaux. The church and city of Blaye were much honored by the army's presence, and comforted them in their need. Oliver was entombed at Belin, as well as Gombaust the King of Frisia, Ogier the Dane, Arustans the King of Brittany, Garis the Duke of Lorraine, and many other worthy lords: happy is the town of Belin to be honored with all these great men. At Bordeaux, in the cemetery of Saint Seurin, lie Gaiffiers the King of Bordeaux, Angeliers the Duke of Aquitaine, Lambers the Duke of Bourges, Gelins, Renaus d'Aubepine, Gautierz, Guillaumes, and Beuves--fully six thousand men lie there. Count Hoel was interred at his city of Nantes along with many other Bretons.



When they were all buried, Charles took twelve thousand measures<sup>18</sup> of silver and as much of gold and divided it among the poor for clothing and food, and he gave all the land for seven leagues around to the church of my lord Saint Romain of Blaye in remembrance of his nephew Roland. He took all the castles in Blaye, and all the fiefs, and the sea below the castle, and gave them all to the church because of his love for Roland. He commanded that the canons there not be required to serve any offices except for one: that on the anniversary of the death of Roland and his companions and for their souls, they shall clothe thirty poor men and feed them, and sing thirty requiem masses and thirty psalters for them and for all those who had suffered, or will suffer, martyrdom in Spain, so that God will have mercy on them. The canons carried out that office, holding it faithfully.

After this I, Turpin, and Charles, departed from Blaye with all our host and travelled through Gascony and Toulouse to Arles. There we met the Burgundian army which parted from us at Ronceval and came through Gascony and Mollant; they bore their dead and wounded on litters and carts, and buried them in the cemetery at Arles. There were entombed Estouz the Count of Langres, Salemons, Sansons the Duke of Burgundy, Hernaus de Beaulande, Auberis le Bourguignon, Guimars, Estormis, Tiarris, Hyvoires, Hancon, Berangiers, Bernars of Nubles, Naines of Baviere, and five thousand others. Constantine the Magistrate of Rome was

returned to that city by sea along with many other Romans and Apulians. And Charles gave to Arles twelve thousand measures of gold and as much silver.

xxx. 19

Then we came together to Vienne-sur-le-Rhone where I, Turpin, stayed behind because of the wounds and pains I had received in Spain; Charles and all the host continued leisurely on to Paris, where he called a council of barons and bishops at the church of my lord Saint Denis. He did honor to God and to Saint Denis who had helped him fight against the pagans. Then he put all of France under the authority of Saint Denis, just as Saint Paul and Saint Clement had done in their lifetimes, and commanded that all the kings and bishops of France should ever after obey God and the Abbot of Saint Denis--that no kings might be crowned without his consent, nor bishops invested, and that no transactions might take place with Rome except in his name.

After this Charles ordered that each man holding lands in France should give four denarii to the church of Saint Denis. Charles knelt before the shrine of the saint and prayed to him that he recommend to Jesus Christ all those who gave denarii and those who were martyred in Spain. That night Saint Denis appeared to Charles and said to him,



"Those who under your guidance and command were killed in Spain are saved, and those who gave denarii to my church at your bidding, are forgiven of their burdenous sins. This is what God has granted."

The King recounted this to the people the next day and they gave offerings even more gladly. Those who gave were called the Franklins of Saint Denis because they were now free from obligation. <sup>20</sup> Then he decreed that the land heretofore called Gaul was from now on to be called France, because it is the French who should have seignorie over all other people.

Then Charles travelled through Liege to Aachen and caused to be built there the hot and cold baths, and he adorned the church of my lady Saint Mary, which he founded, with gold and silver, investing it with all the ornaments of the most honorable of churches. He ordered stories from the Old and New Testaments to be painted on the church walls, and on those of a palace he ordered to be painted scenes from the battles he had won in Spain, and skillful descriptions of the seven arts.

### XXXI.

First of all it was written that GRAMMAR is the mother of all the other arts, for it assigns how many letters there are and what they signify, how they should be

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### XXXI.

First of all it was written that GRAMMAR is the mother of all the other arts, for it assigns how many letters there are and what they signify, how they should be

written, and by which letters syllables are made and how they should be written. It tells further in what places one should put a diphthong, and contains the two books of orthography which take precedence over all the others because they give proper instruction: "ortho" in Greek means "proper," [and "graphis" means "to write",] therefore orthography means proper writing.<sup>21</sup> For this reason those who can write are held dear in the Holy Church, while those who cannot are like men who hold the key to a closed box and don't know what is inside.

MUSIC, it was written, is the science of singing well and correctly, for the service of celebration and embellishment in the Holy Church, and is cherished for these reasons when it is done in four parts. This art was discovered foremost through the voice of the angels, as the Holy Scripture says: "Ah! lord God, we pray to you that you receive our voices with the voice of the angels." In this art lie many great and important treasures, as it contains the four parts and the eight notes. The four parts are the four principal virtues of man (prudence, fortitude, temperance, justice), and the eight notes are the eight beatitudes with which our souls will be honored on the day of judgment.

DIALECTIC, it was written, is used to expose the views of fools, and to question in matters of speech and science.

RHETORIC, it was written, is that by which we speak decorously. "Rectos" in Greek means "to speak" in French.



This art makes men speak well.

GEOMETRY, it was written, is that by which one learns how to measure other things. "Geo" in Greek is "earth," and "metros" is "measure." This art teaches measurement of all heights and lengths. It was by this art that the wise men of Rome measured their cities, and by it that they measured the distance between one city and another; the sons of Israel measured the earth by means of chords. And villeins measure their lands and meadows and forests.

ARITHMETIC, it was written, speaks of all the numbers. As it is well known, if one sees a high wall one can say how many stones are in it, or how many drops are in a basin full of water, or how many coins are in a pile, or how many men are in an army. By this art masons build their high towers.

ASTRONOMY, it was written, is the name given to contemplation of the stars, and how their comings and goings bring good and bad to pass. Each of these seven arts has a daughter, that is to say a book written about it. Necromancy gives birth to pyromancy and hydromancy, and its book is abhorred, not sacred. But it is still read by those who wish to know its secrets; it cannot be used effectively except with the devil's help, which is why it is called the diabolical art. Its name proves this: "mancy" in Greek means divination, and "necros" is black, so by necromancy we mean "black magic." "Pyros" in Greek suggests divination by fire, and thus "hydromancy" by water. The paths to

necromancy are many: "With this you undertake the death of your soul."

XXXII.

A short time later the death of Charlemagne was portended to me. I was at the altar in Vienne-sur-le-Rhone and was speaking this psalm: "Deus in adiutorium meum intende,"<sup>22</sup> and in a vision in the midst of my prayer I saw a band of warriors pass before me in the direction of Lorraine. One of the dead men walked apart from the rest, and I asked him, "Where are you going?"

"To Aachen, to carry Charles' soul to hell."

And I said, "I conjure you in the name of God that you pass by here on your return."

Just as I had finished the psalm they passed in front of me as before, and I commanded of the same dead man: "How have you fared?"

And he answered, "That Galician, Saint James, took all the stones and timbers of the churches that Charles has built, and put them on his side of the balance that weighs good and bad, and so we lost his soul." The devils took their leave, and I knew that Charles had passed on and that Saint James had carried him to heaven.

Before he had parted from me in Vienne, the two of us had made a pact that whichever of us happened to die first



would send the other word if he was able. As he lay ill he remembered this covenant, and before he died he sent a rider with the message. What more can I say? Fifteen days after my vision the messenger arrived with the news, and he said as well that upon leaving Spain Charles had given twelve measures of silver and as much Byzantine gold, and ordered masses and psalters to be sung, all for the souls who were martyred for God's love on the sixteenth of July; and on each anniversary he gave clothing and food to the poor. The day and the hour that I saw the vision had been the sixteenth of February in the year of the incarnation 814. He died at Aachen and was interred most honorably in the round church of Saint Mary, which he had founded.

There were portents of his death three years before it came: the sun and the moon were dark for eight days; his name, "Karolus princeps," disappeared from the wall of the church of Saint Mary; the portico which connected the church to the palace fell by itself on Ascension Day; the bridge he had built over the Rhine at Mainz burst into flames of its own volition and sank; and once when he was in the countryside a great tongue of fire flashed before him from right to left, so that he dropped his spear and fell from his horse and had to be helped up.<sup>23</sup> Thus we know that he who establishes churches establishes for himself a place in heaven and shall be saved from devils, as Charles is in heaven with other church-founders.

## XXXIII.

I ought to include here, before other things, a miracle that God performed for Roland before he went to Spain. The Count had held the city of Grenoble under siege for seven years with his army of Christians when word reached him that his uncle Charles was being held in a tower near Worms by the armies of the Kings of Vandalia, Frisia, and Saxony, and that he besought Roland's aid to free him. When he heard this, Roland sighed and wondered what to do--should he withdraw from the city he had gone to such lengths to bring under Christian rule (and so save his uncle), or should continue the siege and take the city? This is the path he took out of his dilemma: for three days and nights he and his army fasted, and he prayed to God and said, "Gracious Lord God Jesus Christ, son of the almighty father, who parted the Red Sea in three<sup>24</sup> and delivered the children of Israel from the tribulations of Pharaoh and his men, and who gives to all your people according to their deserts and destroys their enemies; you who killed Sehon the King of the Amorites and who gave to the people of Israel the promised land; you who cast down the walls of Jericho when your enemies defended them--Lord, wrest this city from the pagan people with your mighty hand. We know you to be God, and stronger than all kings in the defense of all Christians."



On the third day after Count Roland had uttered this prayer the walls of the city fell in pieces and the Saxons found inside were killed. In this way was the city destroyed. The Count rejoiced at the miracle God had performed and went with all his host to the aid of his towered uncle in Germany, and freed him from the hands of the Saracens with the help of almighty God.

Appendix A 25

Archbishop Turpin of Rheims, the holy martyr to Jesus Christ, did not live long after the death of Emperor Charles. He travelled to Vienne-sur-le-Rhone, and there, suffering from the wounds he received in Spain, he died. His soul without doubt found its place among those of the other martyrs, and he was interred near the city in great honor. But after a time clerics from Blayes came and found his holy body with its rich sarcophagus and archbishop's vestments, and carried it to the city on the other side of the Rhone and buried it there, where it lies in great honor. And he wears in heaven the crown of victory that he won in his great trials while he lived.

It is to be believed that those who die for the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ are crowned with glory in holy heaven--even though Charles and Turpin were not killed alongside Roland and Oliver and the other martyrs, they are

not excluded from the crown of martyrdom because they felt all their lives the pain and the wounds and the suffering, just as if they had been with them. As the Apostle said, "We who are together in passion and suffering will be together in the joy that is without end."

The name Roland we think of as meaning "holder of knowledge" because he surpassed all kings and princes in intelligence and learning and chevalerie. Oliver, "seat of noblesse" because he was more gracious and free than anyone in his day in his speech and all manners of honest living--valor, intelligence, chevalerie. Charles' name reminds us of "light of the body" because he illuminates the terrestrial kings with his honor and wisdom. Turpin means "hardy man" because of all his great undertakings. And each year they are honored in the Holy Church, not only Charles and his companions but all those who have gone to Spain and Jerusalem to exalt the Christian faith in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### Appendix B

We need now to speak of what came to pass in Galicia after the death of glorious prince Charles. For a long time the country was in peace, but then after a number of years (at the incitement of the devil, who opposes all good things) the Emir of Cordova returned to power and decided



to reconquer the lands of Galicia and Spain which Charles had liberated, and brought back to them the belief of the Saracens. He entered those lands with a great host and pillaged here and there until he came to the church of my lord Saint James, which Charles had founded. He robbed and defaced it, leaving not a cross or golden cup or scrap of gold or silver; even the vestments that he found, he took. The Saracens themselves made camp inside the church with their horses, and heaped their trash and dung beside the altar of the glorious apostle. But the rightful vengeance of the Lord God was not far away, and many took ill with dysentery; others were struck blind and wandered sightless through the church and into the city.

And what more? These afflictions were visited on the Emir, and he lost his sight. But through the counsel of a priest of the church who had been captured he called on the aid of the God of the Christians: "God James, God Mary, God Peter, God John--God of the Christians, if you restore me to my former health I will renounce Our God Mahommet and will never again enter the land of James bearing ill will. Hear me James, mighty man: if you give me back my health and my sight, I will return all that I took from your house." Fifteen days later he returned all he and his men had taken from the church, and he left the land of my lord Saint James. And the Emir promised my lord Saint James never to do evil there again; he said that the God of Christians and God James were very great.

After this he travelled about in Spain until he came to a town called La Hornija, where the lavish chapel of my lord Saint Romaine was located. It was adorned with rich tapestries and silver crosses and many other treasures. When the Emir came to this church he robbed and defiled it, and did the same to the city. And as he camped there with his people, one of his mighty barons went into my lord Saint Romaine's chapel and saw the ornate marble columns layered in gold and silver which supported the church, and through envy and covetise took a metal wedge and stuck it in the joint of one pillar, quite prepared to tear down the whole chapel. He took up a great iron mallet with which to drive in the wedge and destroy the building. As he took aim to swing, it happened through the rightful judgment of God that he was turned to stone, colored the same as the clothes he was wearing. There he may still be seen, and pilgrims who have done so report that the stone smells bad.

When the Emir saw this miracle, he said to his men, "Great and powerful is the Christian God, whose many followers and men can protect themselves in such ways even after they are dead. They can turn one man blind, another to stone--James took my sight away, and now Romaine has made a stone of this man. But James is more gracious than Romaine, since he took pity on me and returned my sight; Romaine will not give me back my man. Let us all leave this country where such evil things have happened!" The Emir and his host left in great confusion.



For a long time no Saracen dared enter the land of my lord Saint James to do mischief. As you well know, all those who did evil there were eternally damned, and those who defended the land from Saracen hands were rewarded by God when they were crowned in paradise.

Thanks be to God.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The eleven most often cited are: Ferdinand Castets (an edition based on seven Latin MSS), 1880; Fredrik Wulff (two Old French texts), 1880; P. Pius Fisher (an Old French text and analysis in German), 1932; Ward Thoron (one of the oldest Latin texts), 1934; C. Meredith-Jones (an assessment of 49 Latin MSS), 1936; Hamilton Smyser (text of a shorter Latin MS and an English synopsis), 1937; Ian Short (Anglo-Norman translation), 1973; Claude Buridant (the Old French used for this translation), 1976; Ronald Walpole (a short Old French version named "Johannes" after its scribe), 1976; same Walpole (a short Old French edition based on two MS), 1979; same Walpole (the "exemplary" Old French version, much akin to Buridant's), 1985.

<sup>2</sup> In many manuscripts this prologue is accompanied by yet another legitimating document, a letter from Turpin to Leoprand, Dean of the church in Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen today) where Charlemagne is buried. The intimate quality of this letter, and its introductory position, serve to make what follows truly "Turpin's Chronicle." It's missing in this particular manuscript, but here is a translation of the letter from the Old French version of William of Briane, as found in Mandach, Volume 2: La Chronique de Turpin (1963), p54:



Turpin, by the grace of God Archbishop of Rhiems and companion to mighty King Charles, to Leoprand the Dean of Aix-la-Chapelle, health and greetings in Christ.

Because you requested of me, as I lay lately in Vienne-sur-le-Rhone recovering from the wounds I received in Spain, that I write to you and tell in what manner our Emperor Charles conquered all of Spain and delivered the land of Galicia from the hands of the enemies of God, the Saracens--so I write to you of the great deeds that were done for the admiration of all Christians, and the great victories that we gained. I was fourteen years with my lord the Emperor and suffered with him the great pains and travails in Spain and Galicia; these are the things I write to you of. You said that you could not find record of the great deeds of Charles in the Brotherhood of my lord Saint Denis in France, and so what he did in Spain need now be written down.

May you live and travel with God! Learn well this history, and know that it is true.

Smyser's Latin text includes a version very similar to this; it follows the Preface and precedes what is chapter I in my edition.

<sup>3</sup> This "engulfed Lucerna" has not been positively identified by any of my editors--an interesting point, considering what is contained in this paragraph. It is referred to three times in this chapter, and following the Latin ("Lucerna ventosa quae dicitur Karcesa"--"windy Lucerna which is called Karcesa") Buridant narrows it down to three modern sites: Lucerna, Ventosa, and Carcesa.

Smyser (1933), attempting to reconstruct the folktale alluded to in these few words, suggests that Lucerna Ventosa is one city and Karcesa another nearby (p52); it is

likely that some geographical associations have taken place to result in the Edward II-like syntax. In any case, the dark fish may either be interpreted literally (Lake Carucedo, on the pilgrim's route to Compostela, is famous for its dark fish: Smyser 1933, p57) or metaphorically (pagan souls swimming through a sunken city: p55), or both.

<sup>4</sup> Smyser and Walpole's editions both have Charles being on foot here amidst the Saracens, but with two hundred Christians also on foot--Buridant gives no note to this effect, but it may be a scribal error unique to this MS.

<sup>5</sup> "Si comme l'estoire le tesmoingne." This is the first of two Malorian source references (the second is in chapter X). Buridant suggests that perhaps the translator "takes it upon himself to make believable, for an auditor of 'serious' historical texts, this fabled blow of Charlemagne's" (p128).

<sup>6</sup> "Ou povrete contre boene aurte." Someone has made a mistake here, either the scribe or Buridant (he makes no note of the oddity) or his typesetters. Both Walpole and Smyser continue the pairs of opposites with "poverty versus richesse"--poverty against luxury.

<sup>7</sup> The language must be Arabic, and this reference in



the Chronicle is the earliest known of the legends of Charlemagne's childhood (the enfances, or Mainet legends); a short elaboration is given in Chapter XX.

<sup>8</sup> My "worthier" is "vaut miaux" in Old French. This phrase comes up a few more times, and in my unwillingness to perjure qualitative terms I have consistently rendered it "has more worth." In like wise I have rendered as "dishonorable" the OF "mauvase."

<sup>9</sup> Buridant doesn't discuss the nature of this gap, but both Smyser's and Walpole's translations contain a little more detail about the colors and the offices associated with them.

<sup>10</sup> "Rolans estoit jones et legiers, si li aport une piare sus son chief por ce que il dormist plus a aise." The parallel Latin says pretty much the same ("Rotholandus vero, ut erat iuvenis alacer, misit lapidem ad caput eius, ut libentius dormiret"), and Walpole's OF reports "Fernaguz comenca a dormir, et Rollant qui forz et fiers et hardiz estoit, li aporta une grant pierre desouz son chief pource qu'il dormist plus a aise." The common factor in all the editions is that Roland puts the stone under the giant's head so he might sleep easier; it seems to me that none of the adjectives quite prepare for that reason, even if we are to read "legiers" and "alacer" and "feirs" with mental

as well as physical connotations.

11 This theological discussion is the element of the Chronicle (apart from the battle at Ronceval) most often picked up and borrowed by later writers, and as with the account of the battle the manuscripts vary here more than the usual amount. Some manuscripts carry out the debate for pages, during which Roland explains the virgin birth, transubstantiation, and many more of the Christian mysteries. The interpretive possibilities of such an episode--defending the Faith verbally and physically against a seemingly invulnerable foe--is part of what gave the Chronicle its great appeal.

12 At this point the narrative in all the editions shifts into an inconsistent first person, using phrases like "we Christians" and "we French" here and there. This latter is one of the watermarks that caused scholars to believe the Chronicle was adapted by a Cluniac monk; while it did have a close affiliation with Compostela in the twelfth century, Cluny then as now was very much in France.

13 The OF is "deniers," which applies to many different French coins in the middle ages. I've simply Romanized the name, since denarii were as generic as deniers.



14 This chapter is modeled on the description of Charlemagne given by Einhard [Smyser 1937, p13], but considerably inflated. The "shorter" editions, which both Smyser and Walpole's are, don't include this chapter.

15 Thrice forty are one hundred twenty, so the math is wrong. It's notated as .vii.<sup>xx</sup>--meant to be read as seven times twenty--so it may be a printing error?

16 To stay consistent with the chapter numbers used by earlier editors of this branch of the Pseudo-Turpin, Buridant skips over what would be a chapter XXIIII. Since the translations and redactions of the Turpin are extremely variable as to chapter divisions (Walpole's Old French version, covering approximately the same material as Buridant's, is divided into 63 chapters), I think it's hopeless to try and accomodate one system. But since this is a translation of Buridant's edition, I have kept the skip.

What's missing in this manuscript is a series of standard elegaic verses on the subject of the dying hero, written by Venantius Fortunatus in around 600 AD. Here is the translation given by Thomas Rodd in his 1812 edition (p46-47):

No longer it becomes the heart to mourn  
 A hero of immortal joys possess'd;  
 Of noble rank, and noble parents born,  
 For nobler deeds in heav'n with glory blest.

To none inferior, thine was native worth;  
 Thy feet still tending to the temple's bounds;  
 A glorious model to the wond'ring earth,  
 A faithful balsam to thy country's wounds.

The Clergy's refuge, and the Widow's friend,  
 Bounteous to guests, and liberal to the poor;  
 To heav'n thy parting steps may safely bend,  
 Whose works have open'd wide salvation's door.

Thy tongue the fount of heav'nly eloquence,  
 That still would slake the thirst, and never pall,  
 Endued with graceful wit, and manly sense,  
 Proclaim'd thee common father, friend of all.

Blest Chief, farewell! but not the marbled urn  
 That holds thy ashes can thy soul contain:  
 Our wond'ring eyes to heav'n above we turn,  
 Where thou for ever dost triumphant reign.

17 "...si com David mena et plora son duet sor son  
 fill Saul et sors son neveu Jonathan et sor Absalon." This  
 presents a problem, since Absalom is the son of David, and  
 Jonathan the son of Saul. The friendship of David and  
 Jonathan is legendary (I Samuel 19:1-20:42), but there is  
 no avuncular relationship in the Bible among the named. It  
 is probably this passage from II Samuel 1:17 that the  
 scribe is in part paralleling: "And David lamented with  
 this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son."

Smyser's text reads simply "quemadmodum luxit et  
 doluit David super Saul et Ionathan et Absalon," so I have  
 no explanation for this confused genealogy.

18 The OF is "onces," probably ounces, but I don't  
 know if the measure has changed meaning.



19 Here is the text of this chapter for comparison:

Puis venimes ansamble a Vianne ou ge, Turpins, me remaig por les plaes et por les delors que je avoie aues en Espeigne, et Karles a toste c'ost vint a Paris molt affablis et assambla un consile de ces barons et de ces evesques an l'iglise mon seignor saint Denise et randi graces a Dieu et a saint Denise qui force li avoit donee contre paienne gent. Lors mist toute France sors la seignorie saint Denise antresi comme seins Polz et seins Climans avoient fait a saint Denise a son vivant, et com- manda que tuit li roi francois et li avesque qui estoient et qui avenir estoient fussient obeissant a Dieu et a l'abe de saint Denise, ne que roiz ne fust coronnes sans son consoill, ne evesques ordenes, ne ne fussient receu a Rome ne danne se par lui non. Apres ce commanda que chascuns qui tandroit ostes an France donast chascun an .iiii. deniers a faire l'iglise de saint Denise. Karles c'setut deles le cors saint et li proia qu'il proiast a Jhesu Crist por tous ces qui ces deniers i donroient et por tous ces qui martire avoient soffert an Espaigne. La nut aparu a Kale seins Denises et li dist: <<Cil qui par ton amonestement et par ton hardement furent mort an Espaigne sont sauve, et cil qui an m'iglise donerent les deniers par ta cemonse, il ont pardon de lor grinours pechies, car De le m'a otroie et done.>> Li rois reconta ce au peuple l'andemain et tuit i ofrissent plus velontiers. Cil qui les randoient estoient apele li Franc saint Denise por ce que il sont franc a tout cervaiges; don il avint que la terre qui devant est apelee Gaulle fu des lors an ca apelee France, par quoi li Francois doivent avoir seignorie seur toutes autrez gens. Donc apres s'an ala Karles par lou Liege a Ais et i fist feire biems chaus et d'eive froide, et i aorna l'iglise et madame saint Marie que il avoit feite, de son or et de son argent, et l'atira de touz les aornemens de seinte Iglise molt esnorablement, et fist poindre le viez testament et le novel, et ausimant an un palais que il avoit dejouste fist poindre les batailles que il avoit vancues an Espaigne et les .vii. ars par grant angin.

20 The double meaning doesn't translate so well. "Franc," the collective name given to St. Denis' donors, can mean both "Frankish" and "free." By giving denarii a man both achieves exemption from future taxes and (as in the next sentence) gains a patrician pride.

21 The "two books" may, I think, be the Major and Minor Institutiones Grammaticae of Priscian (6th century). These were by far the most famous medieval texts on the subject of sounds, formations, inflections, and syntax; over 1000 manuscripts of them remain.

22 Psalm 69, "the cry of distress."

23 All these portents are from Einhard's Vita; he in turn borrowed them from the Lives of Augustus, Caligula, and Claudius as told by Suetonius [Thorpe, p187].

24 Buridant (p136) suggests this means two parts water, one part land.

25 Likewise in keeping with the conventional chapter notations, these last two segments are isolated because of the purpose they served originally as connections to the subsequent sections of the Book of Saint James.



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