MEDIOEVO ROMANZO

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CHARACTER AND CAUSALITY IN THE OXFORD « ROLAND »

I have argued elsewhere [1] that the nucleus of the Oxford *Roland* represented by the tragedy of Rencesvals offers the reader an experience which corresponds notably with Aristotle's conception of tragedy and tragic emotion. The tragic process is incorporated in the action, not in the depiction or evolution of character [2]. The action of the poem is carefully unified in a close web of causal connexions [3]. The tragic pattern of *peripeteia, anagnorisis* and *pathos* results from an initial *hamartia* (or, as in the *Roland*, *hamartiai*) without prejudice to the character or moral qualities of the protagonist. It is obviously important to establish precisely, as I was not able to do in the first study, how the chain of cause and effect in the poem is initiated and this must lead to a detailed examination of the two nomination-scenes, of what has been called the ' exposition '. These scenes announce the action of the entire poem, namely the definitive conquest of Spain and the termination of the war, as well as containing the initial *hamartia* which renders the course of the action irreversible.

Critics have in the past identified Roland as an admirable figure, unblameworthy in the beginning, in whom a moral flaw (variously identified with *orgueil* or *démesure*) is subsequently revealed amidst tragic repercussions [4]. Against this view I urge

[1] *The Tragedy of Roland: an Aristotelian View*, to appear in « MLR ».

[2] In his Commentary on the *Poetics*, written c. 1020, Avicenna declares with admirable succinctness, « In tragedy, to speak of actions is more important than to speak of moral qualities », see I. M. Dahiyat, *Avicenna's Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle*, Leiden, 1974, p. 92.

[3] It is interesting to note that it is this part of Aristotle's theory, on the perspicuity, symmetry and unity of action, that is best preserved in Avicenna's Commentary (c. 5), whilst elsewhere there are striking omissions or modifications.

[4] A noteworthy exception in an almost uniform critical tendency to censure Roland at Rencesvals is N. R. Cartier, *La Sagesse de Roland*, « Aquila (Chestnut Hill Studies in Modern Languages and Literatures) », I, 1968, 33-63. This interesting essay deserves to be much more widely read than it is.

that the notion of a moral flaw runs counter to the *Roland*-poet's concerns and that we have to deal with a false step or miscalculation, an Aristotelian *hamartia*, which leads to the hero's *undeserved* misfortune. Rejection of the notion of a moral flaw as the seed of the tragic misfortune does not, however, mean that the hero is flawless. Aristotle insists that the hero must stand high in the esteem of his peers, be a man of substance and repute, but must not be ' superhuman ' in respect of moral qualities such as goodness or justice. Once we posit that Roland's misfortune is in some sense merited by his possession of a moral flaw or a defect of character, the tragic emotion is dissipated. My purpose in this study, therefore, is to determine whether or not Roland's misfortune is portrayed by the poet as in some way arising from a moral flaw or weakness of character in the hero and to consider how the crucial *hamartiai* are motivated. In this way I hope to clarify the assessment of the poem provided by Professor Vinaver in his admirable study *The Rise of Romance* [5]. Whilst agreeing with him that the *Roland-poet* is more interested in the progress of events than in motivation (if by this Vinaver means character analysis and intentions), I cannot share at all his view that the poet discards completely « rational and temporal motivation » and the idea of ordered, causal connexions. Denying the existence of « an articulated causal scheme » behind the tragedy, Vinaver sees the tragedy as unfolding from « a series of logically unconnected but emotionally significant events and situations » (p. 13). This seems to me to underestimate the poet's *intelligence* and to assign the *Roland* too readily to that category of *chansons de geste* whose technique is frequently compared with that of Romanesque art. The *Roland* remains, in my view, a production *sui generis,* which cannot be taken as typical of a genre or artistic mode.

The moment the issue of completing the conquest of Spain, that is, the subject of the poem's action, is raised, the opposition of Roland and Ganelon is made manifest. It is usually assumed that this opposition is not motivated by the poet, who later in the poem invents a quarrel concerning wealth to account for the

[5] E. Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance,* Oxford, 1971, ch. 1 « Roland at Roncevaux ».

antagonism[6]. This view seems to underestimate the poet's skill in a number of ways, as we shall see. Formally, the opposition is presented in the parallelism of the antagonists' speeches. Roland's programmatic « Ja mar crerez Marsilie » (196) is countered by Ganelon's « Ja mar crerez bricun » (220), the parallelism clearly suggesting that Ganelon's reference is to Roland whose proposal is at issue, just as Roland had referred (explicitly) to the author of another proposal. We must examine the development of the quarrel carefully to discover how the poet views the conflict.

There is no doubt that Roland's mistrust of Marsilie is not in itself provocative. In reporting the pagans' peace proposals Charlemagne is careful to give emphasis to the condition he sets (« Mais il me mandet... » 187) and frankly reveals his own uncertainty: « Mais jo ne sai quels en est sis curages » (191). This caution is echoed by the Franks: « Il nus i cuvent guarde » (192). We know from an earlier scene that the pagan proposals are treacherous and to the assembled knights this may be typically obvious from the mere fact that the negotiators are pagans: *timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*. Roland's statements seem to be fair comment. He stresses that Marsilie has hitherto shown himself to be untrustworthy and implies that the rigours of the seven-year-long war and his own exertions are not to be sacrificed for an unreliable deal. This does not seem to give cause for any personal attack or vehemence. Why, then, does Ganelon react so violently? The answer surely lies in the fact that Roland provides

[6] Line 3758. Principal emendations are listed by Cesare Segre, *La Chanson de Roland* (« Documenti di Filologia » 16), Milano-Napoli, 1971, p. 648. As will emerge, I do not share the opinion of R. N. Walpole, « TLL » IV, 2, 1966, 10 « Cette querelle, soudaine et brutale, nous surprend: visiblement, elle témoigne d'une hostilité depuis longtemps contenue, d'autant plus dramatique et émouvante que les causes en restent cachées au plus profond des deux personnalités, hors de portée de la raison ». The true explanation of l. 3758 may lie in Ganelon's earlier reference to the incident of the ' vermeille pomme ' (*laisse* 24) prior to which Roland « out predét dejuste Carcasonie » (385). K. Wais, *Rolands Tränen um Ganelon*, « AJFS » 6, 1969, 465-83 is convinced that motivation of the enmity of the antagonists was originally quite clear and that it has become obscured in the course of transmission. He is eclectic in his use of the surviving versions of the legend to reconstruct earlier stages and is too often guided by aesthetic considerations and arguments about ' superior logic '.

an embarrassing reminder that the wisdom of Charlemagne's counsellors is not beyond reproach. Roland, of course, is bound to do this in order to defend and justify his war policy. There is no reason to see malice in his argument, but, like so much in the nomination-scenes, it is interpreted in a different way than intended. Roland explicitly recalls to the assembly that the present council had an ill-starred precedent. He tells the emperor that in an exactly similar situation

> « A voz Franceis un cunseill en presistes,
> Loërent vos alques de *legerie.* »
> (205-6)

The notion of *legerie*, as I shall show, is a *leitmotiv* of the poem. In this instance it had as its direct result the deaths of Basan and Basilie who were treacherously decapitated. The dual implication is that the counsellors were imprudent, they lacked insight, in giving ill-considered advice and that atonement must be made for the lives which they lost. In the minds of the onlookers, therefore, the continuation of the war is insidiously linked with the idea of collective guilt and the need for revenge (revenge is an ubiquitous motif in the *Roland*). It is the second half of Roland's speech which rouses Ganelon and elicits his counter-advice: « Ja mar crerez bricun / Ne mei ne altre, se de vostre prod nun » (220-1). Ganelon, whom we may assume to have numbered amongst the *Franceis* on the previous occasion, alluded to by Roland, thus feels resentment and it is Roland's criticism of the advice Charlemagne was given that prompts Ganelon's emphatic entreaty to the emperor to abjure *all* advice — that of Roland, of himself Ganelon, or of any other — and simply to consult his own interests [7]. But this resentment soon makes him return to a personal attack as he declares,

> « Ki ço vos lodet que cest plait degetuns,
> Ne li chalt, sire, de quel mort nus murjuns. »
> (226-7) [8]

[7] Cf. C. Lofmark, *The Advisor's Guilt in Courtly Literature*, « GLL » 24, 1970-71, 3-13 and J. T. Rosenthal, *The King's 'Wicked Advisors' and Medieval Baronial Rebellions*, « Political Science Quarterly » 82, 1967, 595-618.

[8] For convenience I draw all quotations and line references from the edi-

These lines are not transparent in significance and yet they are rarely carefully examined. The key to their understanding is the association of advice and death, which was also prominent in Roland's insinuations. Ganelon here deliberately counters Roland's argument by claiming that death on a mission of vengeance is a poor alternative to peaceful victory over the pagans in the religious war. It sounds to him as if Roland wants his ounce of flesh in an expedition of retribution and to this end will endanger the lives of the Franks. The parallel is obvious. Roland accuses the Franks, including Ganelon, of endangering the lives of Basan and Basilie by their ill-considered advice. Ganelon, for his part, makes the counter-claim that Roland will, in his turn, endanger by his own advice the lives of them all. To Ganelon Roland's advice seems foolhardy and arrogant, *cunseill d'orguill*, and he ends his speech on a note of contempt: « Laissun les fols, as sages nus tenuns » (229). Now it is crucial to observe how, in the course of these speeches, the emphasis has shifted away from the question of Marsilie's credibility, which is the question worrying Charlemagne (144-6), to a question of policy, as between ' doves ' and ' hawks '. On this issue it would be reasonable to accept that the contrary opinions of Roland and Ganelon are not unrelated to their own interests. Roland is a ' loner ' who may stand to gain by war (though it is fair to point out that the recital of his exploits in lines 198ff, sometimes interpreted as a sign of vainglory, is designed to show that Marsilie's heavy losses on a previous occasion were the prelude to a similar, but treacherous peace move) [9].

tion of F. Whitehead, *La Chanson de Roland*, Blackwell's French Texts, Oxford, repr. 1962, but all writers on the *Roland* will now wish to have Segre's admirable critical edition by them.

[9] There is no doubt that he achieves popularity by the distribution of the booty which he gains in his innumerable campaigns, see 11.395f. E. Köhler, *' Conseil des barons ' und ' jugement des barons '. Epische Fatalität und Feudalrecht im altfranzösischen Rolandslied*, « Sitzb. d. Heidelb. Akad. d. Wiss. », Phil-hist. Kl. 1968, 4, p. 23, n. 47 considers that Ganelon is convinced that Charlemagne acts only to please his nephew. He thus reads for 1.400 *Charles meïsmes fait tut a sun talent*. This is the reading of Hilka's fifth edition, but is not justified by the evidence of the MSS (see Segre, p. 76). The Oxford text has *L'emperere meïsmes ad tut a sun talent*. This seems to me unexceptionable and may be translated « even the emperor has all he desires ». The interpretation of G. S.

Ganelon, on the other hand, is a family man with domestic ties who may feel that he is an unsuitable candidate for a role in Roland's war policy [10]. The conflict of opinion has, at any rate, been initiated by Ganelon's interpretation of Roland's declared mistrust of counsel. Roland's indirect accusation, although designed to prevent the repetition of a mistake which has already led to grave consequences (at least for two members of the army) and to justify his war policy, sows the seeds of a conflict which will bring repetition of treachery with even more disastrous consequences, the sort of *peripeteia* prescribed by Aristotle. It is precisely because the conflict threatens to envelop the general issue of Marsilie's peace proposals that Duke Naimes, « il Nestore della *Chanson* » (Ruggieri), now steps forward and delivers a third argument. It inevitably strikes readers of the poem at this point that the arguments of Roland and Ganelon prove inconclusive and that Charlemagne and the Franks remain in a kind of mute agony, clearly embarrassed by the warning which Roland has given concerning their counsel and by the anger which this provokes in Ganelon. Naimes, to whose arguments they ultimately accede (243), therefore intervenes and seeks to cast aside the issue of counsel and concentrate on the predicament, not of the Franks, but of Marsilie. He thus begins,

> « Guenes li quens ço vus ad respondud;
> Saveir i ad, mais qu'il seit entendud. »
> (233-4)

Whatever Roland's views about guilt and vengeance, the reality is that Marsilie is basically defeated (235). Avoiding the tendentious

Burgess, *La Chanson de Roland, line 400*, « RoN » 13, 1971, 1-3: « Roland has the emperor constantly in his thoughts » seems to me quite wrong. Abbo of Fleury condemns the taking of booty, citing Augustine (« propter praedam militare peccatum est »), PL 139, 506A.

[10] Cf. G. B. Flahiff, Deus non vult: *A Critic of the Third Crusade*, « Mediaeval Studies » 9, 1947, 164: « Undoubtedly from the very inception of the Crusades there had been reasons why certain individuals could not or would not take part... Family ties, lack of means, ill health, defence of one's possessions, all these things and many others might legitimately prevent a man from going... » and see Flahiff's note 10. Attention may be drawn to the reaction of the Franks to peace in ll. 820 ff.

issue of advice, which had begun to cloud the situation and even subvert the consultative procedure to which Charlemagne is so anxious to conform, Naimes concentrates on the effectiveness of war and peace and thus attempts to bury the issue of blame and responsibility. That this is his major function seems clear from the manner in which he elicits the ready approval of the hitherto silent Franks and also from the slightly strained nature of his arguments in lines 239-42. There is a semantic problem here [11], but lines 239-40 are striking for the mildly incongruous ethical injunction which they introduce,[12] which is not found elsewhere in the poem, and lines 241-2 are notable for advancing as a positive argument what completely begs the question at issue, since Roland has already implied that Marsilie has made exactly the same promises before and proved himself untrustworthy. There is, however, some reason to feel that the Franks are anxious to come to a speedy decision and not to revive the issue of advice and advisors which had so nearly prejudiced the proceedings. So far, then, I think we can see that Ganelon is indignant at Roland's implied censure of misguided counsel in which he feels implicated and that Naimes succeeds in steering the discussion away from this delicate

[11] Viz. the exact meaning of *pecchét*. Cf. J. H. Caulkins, *The Meaning of* pechié *in the Romance of Tristan by Béroul*, « RoN » 13, 1971-2, 545-9. It seems to me that Naimes, in qualifying his praise of Ganelon's wisdom with the phrase « mais qu'il seit entendud », really has in mind Ganelon's insulting reference to *cunseill d'orguill*, which Naimes reinterprets along Christian ethical lines as *pecchét*. In other words, to pursue a *guerre à outrance* against an enemy ready to capitulate is not so much arrogant as morally shameful.

[12] The theme of *clementia* is, of course, prominent in the *Ruodlieb* and the position adopted by Naimes may betray the influence of hagiography and the monastic reforms, cf. W. Braun, *Studien zum Ruodlieb. Ritterideal, Erzählstruktur und Darstellungsstil*, Berlin, 1962, pp. 18ff. Quite counter to my view of the *Roland* is the interpretation of E. C. Schweitzer, Mais qu'il seit entendud: *Ganelon's and Naimon's speeches at the Council of the French in the* Chanson de Roland, « RoN » 12, 1970-71, 428-34. Schweitzer does not see Ganelon's speech as a reaction to Roland's remarks. He interprets it as a concern with self-interest and suggests that Ganelon's silence on the question of Marsilie's offers of wealth is strange and indicates that he is already plotting treachery and thus deliberately suppresses any indication of venality. In contrast, Naimes's speech « rests on the moral absolutes of Christianity and of the *Roland* and is beyond question » (p. 433).

issue of counsel. There is no doubt, though, that it is over the issue of counsel that the conflict arises and that, wittingly or not, Roland succeeds in charging difference of opinion with connotations of incompetence and guilt, thereby offending Ganelon and reducing the Franks to silence. It must be stressed that the conflict does *not* arise from a moral flaw or defect of character in the hero, for Roland must feel obliged to point out the error of the counsel previously given in order to avoid repetition of the treachery. In order to reach a decision (*pur sun counseill finer*, 166) Charlemagne binds himself to legal procedure (*Par cels de France voelt il del tut errer*, 167), even though its viability may appear to have been threatened by Roland's blunt estimate of the value of previous advice given and Naimes hastily seeks to procure a decision by arguing from both moral principle and military expedience. He succeeds and the emperor promptly retorts,

> « Seignurs baruns, qui i enveieruns
> En Sarraguce al rei Marsiliuns ? »
> (244-5)

It has often been remarked that this point is reached surprisingly soon after the council has been convoked, but we can now see how pressure to expedite the proceedings is generated by the emergence of a quarrel about capacity for giving good advice, in which Roland seems to be a threat to the procedure which Charlemagne wishes to adopt.

The ambiguity and uncertainty of the characters' postures in the opening of the first nomination-scene are not to be dismissed as faulty psychology or ' thin ' characterization, but are functional. The poet deals with the interpretations which men put on others' actions. This gives the *Roland* a quite different face from that of the ideological dogmatism associated with its crusading aspects. The poet portrays, not ideal stereotypes or moral types, but human beings. At the same time, what is important to him is not what they *are*, but the way they *act*. He shows that the significance of their acts and attitudes is not absolute, but depends on how they are interpreted. What at first seems a miraculous combination of psychological richness and narrative economy is in fact a subtle technique by which the poet evades

the ' fixing ' of identities through the portrayal of ' character ', a temptation which can be so prejudicial to the generation of tragic emotion, and concentrates, not on the *identity* of the actors, but on their *interaction.* It is their interaction which is the subject of the nomination-scenes and which underlies the poet's Aristotelian conception of tragedy, which derives from the perspicuous ordering of actions.

Nothing, therefore, is prejudged by the presentation of the characters. We are left with the *potential* (not actualized by the poet, for the reasons already given) for complex individualization. A varied attitude is depicted to the issue of war, not an issue which lent itself to subtle analysis in the time of the crusades. Roland is in favour of war as the only means of achieving the self-evident objective of defeating Marsilie. Ganelon is against the war, believing in less strenuous effort to achieve the goal and regarding Roland's bellicosity as rash, proud and senseless. Naimes's attitude is less clear, for he agrees with Ganelon's conclusion, but not with the way he leads up to it; certainly peace is to be desired, but there is an ethical desideratum which leads to this conclusion as well as the expedience of avoiding unnecessary danger. Finally, there is the agnostic attitude of the Franks, who agree with both Charlemagne's initial caution and Naimes's final opinion. This diversity is complemented by the various possibilities of motivation which the poet is careful to leave open. He leaves them open precisely because he must avoid establishing ' character ' and seek, in accordance with his concern with tragic effect, a certain degree of psychological ambiguity. His characters, that is to say, *must act,* since no firm knowledge is possible. The audience, too, must involve themselves with the action, enjoy that sense of community (*philanthropon*) which Aristotle speaks of, since they cannot prejudge the qualities of the actors and hence distance themselves from the action. Given the uncertainty about what the characters *are,* we can fall back only on what they do. Why is Roland pro-war? Is it because he is a descendant of the Germanic hero and that this is the only heroic stance compatible with the poet's conception of heroic epic? Or is his attitude a function of his temperament, which is rash and foolhardy as Oliver claims? Or does it depend on the calculation of self-interest, enthusiasm for the

power and popularity which will accrue to him from the taking of further booty? Perhaps it is simply a question of ideology — in the circumstances of a holy war the only right attitude for the Christian to take is that of the *guerre à outrance*? Similarly, we ask why Ganelon is so against war. Is it the result of a simple desire to oppose Roland out of personal antagonism (cf. *bricun, fol, cunseill d'orguill*)? Or does his attitude reflect a fundamental realism — he is representative of that real-life class of knights who are tired by war and stand to lose by it? Does he oppose war out of envy of the success and wealth which will accrue to Roland through further victories? [13] Or ought we to accept Ganelon's opposition to war as a *bona fide* construction of his emperor's interests? Naimes's attitude is no more transparent. Does he act simply from an enlightened Christian sense of morality, that one should never refuse mercy? Or does he act more out of naïveté or simple-mindedness — he totally begs the question of Marsilie's credibility in offering hostages? Whilst basically agreeing with Ganelon, does he seek to purify the latter's motives and keep personal spite out of the discussion? Or does he, after all represent *sapientia* — the Nestor of the poem? These questions are not answered, because the poet does not want them answered. If, as Aebischer and others believe, Oliver was crucial to the poem from the beginnings, why does he not here take up a position on the issue of war? It is noteworthy that the Franks chorus-like echo the views of Charlemagne and Naimes, but are silent before Roland and Ganelon, so that the two antagonists are left, as it were in suspension, without the support of any corroborative body. At the same time, as we have seen, there is uncertainty about their qualities and about their motives. The tragic conflict arises not so much from a collision (based on the known), but

[13] Is Ganelon's real flaw cupidity or avarice? It has been claimed, for example, that the *Waltharius* is a Christian epic concerned with the condemnation of *avaritia* (in Gunther, Hagen *and* Walther), which prevents Walther from being and ideal Christian hero, see D. M. Kratz, *Quid Waltharius Ruodliebque cum Christo?*, in H. Scholler (ed), *The Epic in Medieval Society. Aesthetic and Moral Values*, Tübingen, 1977, esp. pp. 126-37. Cf. M. Waltz, *Rolandslied-Wilhelmslied-Alexiuslied*, Heidelberg, 1965, p. 29ff. and the comments of Segre, « Z. f. rom. Phil. », 87, 1971, 414ff.

from manoeuvre (based on the unknown, that is, the opacity or uncertainty of motives). The poet is simply not concerned with what comes *before* an act, but with what follows *after* it. He is not interested in *motivation*, but in *repercussion*. He clarifies *causes*, but not *motives*. This technique is entirely the result of his interest in tragedy as the product of *action*, not *character*, and in particular in the interpretation put on actions rather than in their absolute value in themselves. This is an Aristotelian approach to tragedy.

Charlemagne now asks who should be sent on the embassy to Marsilie. It emerges from his conduct at this point that the nominee must be the choice of the Franks and that individual volunteers are unacceptable. He says to Naimes, « Alez sedeir, quant nuls ne vos sumunt » (251, cf. 273). There is more than paternalistic protection for the Peers and great vassals in evidence here. Those who see in Charlemagne the literary transposition of the early Capetian monarchs remark that he cannot afford to risk the loss of his ' royal officers ', here represented by the Twelve Peers, who were the agents of the crown in its struggle with refractory vassals [14]. But more important here is the conflict of individual and collective interests, which runs throughout the poem. As Roland, leader of the war-party, himself volunteers to go to Marsilie, it is not the emperor, but one of his fellow Peers, Oliver, who discreetly objects that Roland is ill-suited for such a diplomatic mission, since he is headstrong and assertive — « Jo me crendreie que vos vos meslisez » (257). This is all we are unambiguously told about Roland's character, and it is enough to establish, as Aristotle prescribes, that he is human and not perfect. At the same time, this judgement, whilst it doubtless offends or at least frustrates Roland, amply justifies the notion that voluntary acts of self-appointment to the embassy cannot be entertained and that what is required is a single nomination made by one of the Franks and approved by the rest of the council. This is the way to restraint and the protection of common interests, whereas Roland's speech and Oliver's objection may suggest that Roland's position is too individualistic.

So far the council has made little progress. It began with a

[14] See Köhler, *op. cit.*

dispute about individual powers of counsel and was deflected, *bona fide*, to a series of personal offers of assistance. Neither activity lay within the cooperative spirit of the assembly. Charlemagne, therefore, no longer beats about the bush: « Car m'eslisez un barun de ma marche / Qu'a Marsiliun me portast mun message » (275-6). Charlemagne makes it clear that he is not hereby soliciting voluntary offers to take his message to Marsilie, but desires, instead, that his barons should choose or nominate someone to the task, and that the nominee should be drawn from his marches, by implication the Spanish marches [15]. There seems no necessity to infer from this that Charlemagne means to prejudge Ganelon to the task [16], but it may be that Roland interprets his words in this way. At any rate, almost without pause Roland nominates Ganelon: « Ço ert Guenes mis parastre » (277) and the Franks, anxious to display some positive initiative at last, immediately approve the nomination (278-79) [17]. This suggests that nothing malicious is seen in Ro-

[15] See R. Lejeune, *La signification du nom 'marche' dans la* Chanson de Roland, *Actas do IX Congresso Internacional de Lingüística Românica*, Lisboa, 1961, 263-74. This no doubt reflects Carolingian history. After his defeat in 778 Charlemagne left military operations in the south-west to his son Louis and this resulted in the conquest of the north-eastern corner of the peninsula and the creation of the 'Spanish March' after the taking of Barcelona in 801, see M. Defourneaux, *Les Français en Espagne aux XIe et XIIe siècles*, Paris, 1949, p. 260.

[16] See Aug. Demoulin, *Charlemagne, la légende de son péché et le choix de Ganelon pour l'ambassade*, « Marche Romane » 25, 1975, 105-25 who argues that Roland is Charlemagne's son and that Ganelon transfers his hatred of the father to the son, whilst Charlemagne retains a strong feeling of repulsion concerning Ganelon. In Demoulin's view Roland clearly recognizes the emperor's intentions and assists him by nominating whom he perceives to be Charlemagne's choice of candidate. This theory presents us with an entirely new, but I think unacceptable, view of the emperor.

[17] I do not see that there are pressing grounds for assuming these lines to be misplaced and for adopting the order and attribution of V^4, see M. Delbouille, *Sur la Genèse de la Chanson de Roland*, Bruxelles, 1974, pp. 5ff (and, in agreement, Köhler, *op. cit.*, p. 20, n. 41). It is always pointed out that this step provides a parallel with the second nomination scene (O 743f), but aesthetic arguments of this kind cannot justify emendation unless there are palaeographical reasons for correction. There is no reason why the Franks should not approve the choice of Ganelon, to his credit, and his own reaction is based entirely on

land's choice [18]. The fact, remains, however, that this action is absolutely crucial. It is, indeed, quite possible that Roland thinks that the emperor is preselecting the candidate for the embassy. On the other hand, nothing is more natural than that a ' local ' man, a baron from the Spanish marches with a good knowledge of the area, should be desired for the mission to Marsilie. Admittedly, we have no reason to conclude that Ganelon is the only vassal of Charlemagne so situated, but we can readily understand how Roland is so promptly put in mind of his stepfather. Roland is no doubt offended that his own advice has not been taken, but rather that of Ganelon, and that even his attempt to volunteer for the mission has been rejected. He has thus found no way to assuage his annoyance at Ganelon's implication that he is a ' bricun ', that he is ' fol '. In other words, neither his advice as a war-leader nor his assistance as a peace-maker has been accepted. To a man of action this is shame [19]. On the other hand, Ganelon, who has insulted him, has not so far been implicated in the discussion about the embassy. A curious vacuum has been created. He who was labelled ' fol ' is helpless to act: he who counted himself ' sage ' is inactive. In such a vacuum the personal tension is unresolved. It may, therefore, be the case that Roland wishes Ganelon to defend his assertions by action. If he has ridiculed Roland and self-righteously proposed peace, let him implement his views by undertaking the peace-mission. There is an elementary and inoffensive logic in this view. Roland's nomination of Ganelon is the comprehensible act of a man who is neither bad nor superlatively good. The uncer-

his assessment of Roland's motives. It is true that Ganelon's own men criticize the choice (350ff), but this is a hyperbolic way of giving prominence to the danger which he faces. Cf. Segre, *ed. cit.*, pp. 46-7.

[18] The problem is considered by Wais, *art. cit.*, whose methodology is incompatible with the one which I adopt here.

[19] I think that it is going too far to claim with R. A. Hall Jr., *Ganelon and Roland*, « MLQ » 6, 1945, 264, that Roland is « sincerely but tactlessly trying to give Ganelon an honor which he had wanted for himself, but which the emperor had refused him ». Hall interprets Roland's conduct throughout the scene as sincere, but unperceptive, arguing that « even to the very end, it is doubtful whether Roland really understands what he has done to render Ganelon hostile » (p. 266, n. 9). However, one can agree that a certain lack of perception underlies Roland's *hamartiai.*

tainty of its motivation precludes the adoption of any dogmatic moral stance or of criticism of the hero's intentions. The act is comprehensible, but is not explained. It constitutes an Aristotelian *hamartia*, a false step or error of judgement, which, however small in itself, has momentous and *unforeseen* consequences. It is in no way the result of a moral flaw.

Roland's swift response to the emperor's request for a nomination produces a frightening reaction from Ganelon [20]. Yet it is precisely at this moment that the poet affirms his fairness of stature, which would be a positive moral indicator and a sign of public worth (at least at this stage) [21]. Despite the measure of uncertainty concerning the motivation of Roland's *hamartia*, we must certainly reject, I think, Beichman's view that the nomination is merited by Ganelon « as a courtier whose selfishness, lack of courage, hypocrisy and cynicism should be apparent to everyone » [22]. This is exactly the opposite of the impression which the poet is careful to convey (see 11. 279, 283-5, 421ff, 467, 3762-4). In my view the poet did not seek to oppose Roland and Ganelon morally at this stage. The punitive motive which Beichman detects (« to punish a man who would expose one of them [= Roland's companions] to needless dangers ») is both morally objectionable and, in the context of the prosecution of a holy war, strategically reprehensible. It makes Roland's error a morally ascribable fault, which seems to me contrary to the poet's conception of the tragedy. The poet deliberately allows for a number of different interpretations, none of which, however, prejudices the moral standing of the hero. We have already seen one possible explanation of Roland's intervention. Another view might be that he nominates Ganelon in order to spur him on to heroism for the honour of the

[20] In the line *e li quens Guenes en fut mult anguisables* (280), I interpret *anguisables* as ' frightening ' (as in l. 3126), which can be harmonized with the poet's depiction of Ganelon's impressive appearance. Cf. A. Tobler, *Vermischte Beiträge zur französischen Grammatik*, 3te, vermehrte Aufl. Leipzig, 1921, I, c. 23 « Participia perfecti aktiven Sinnes » (e.g. *esfrée* ' erschreckend ').

[21] Cf. H.R. Jauss, *Die klassische und die christliche Rechtfertigung des hässlichen in mittelalterlicher Literatur*, in id. (ed.), *Die nicht mehr schönen Künste*, « Poetik und Hermeneutik », III, München, 1968, 148f.

[22] A.M. Beichman, *Ganelon and Duke Naimon*, « RoN » 13, 1971 [358-62], 360.

clan. Roland may feel that Ganelon is a stay-at-home, a comfortable, domesticated figure whose life-style — cast in a different mould from his own heroic stance — is a poor advertisement for the family honour. The poet leaves the possibilities open because he wishes to convey the freedom of manoeuvre exhibited by men in their interpretation of others' actions and, indeed, the wilfulness and tendentiousness of such interpretation. To permit moralistic judgements of the antagonists would be to destroy the tragic emotion which the poem is designed to generate.

In view of Ganelon's repetition of the word *parastre*, we should perhaps be cautious in attaching too overtly a derogatory connotation to the term (cf. 1027) [23]. At the simplest level Ganelon has a very obvious reason for suspecting and resenting Roland's intervention. Since Roland himself is convinced of Marsilie's untrustworthiness, recalls the deaths of Basan and Basilie, and implies the Franks' moral responsibility in the matter, his nomination of Ganelon can only seem to the latter malicious, designed to expose him to danger, or else scornful, stemming from a belief that Ganelon will decline the nomination out of fear [24]. It is clear that Roland, who has charged Ganelon, *inter alios*, with *legerie*, can scarcely be interpreted as genuinely viewing Ganelon as wise and ideally equipped for the mission [25]. This explains Ganelon's reaction. The Franks are anxious to expedite the proceedings (as they are also in the trial-scene), sympathize with Ganelon's peace policy, and probably do feel that he is suited to the mission (see

[23] I do not really follow the reasoning of R.N. Walpole, « Romania » 63, 1937, 92 who declares « Roland, en proposant le nom de Ganelon, le qualifie de *parastre* (v. 277). En O, la première parole de Ganelon exhale son ressentiment contre l'emploi du terme (v. 287) ». See, however, Demoulin, *art. cit.*, 117, n. 52 and p. 121.

[24] Astonishing is the claim of Vinaver, *op. cit.*, p. 11 that « By all reasonable standards Ganelon's mission to Saragossa involves no serious risk for him ... Allusions to the fate of Basan and Basilie, two unfortunate messengers sent by Charlemagne to Marsile and beheaded out of hand, have no bearing on the case. All that such allusions suggest is the necessity to accept their irrelevance, however difficult this may be ». This seems to me perverse.

[25] Hence I reject the reading of V^4. Even if it is interpreted as ironical, it is still unsatisfactory, for it would certainly make Roland malicious and irresponsible.

278-9). It is evident from later passages (ll. 289, 310f, 316, 329f, 359, 3771f) that Ganelon's primary feeling is that Roland has deliberately endangered his life. To the fact that he suspects Roland's motives (given Roland's declared mistrust of Marsilie) is added the further humiliation of feeling that he is a permissible risk, whilst the lives of the Twelve Peers are too precious to be endangered.

Ganelon, enraged by the public humiliation, as he sees it, administered by his youthful and self-confident stepson, promises that he will stir up trouble on his return. Roland's anger is now roused and he throws back at Ganelon the terms which the latter had used at the outbreak of their initial quarrel: « Orgoill oi e folage » (292, cf. 228-9) and clearly reveals that he does not consider Ganelon, at least now, as the *saives hom* needed for the mission (294). This clearly marks a second stage in the antagonism. There is nothing in the text to suggest that Roland intends ill in nominating Ganelon to the embassy. This is a *hamartia*, a false step or error of judgement the consequences of which Roland does not foresee. Having nominated Ganelon, however, Roland acts provocatively, though perhaps not by intention, when he now impugns his competence and valour. Roland may well feel ashamed at Ganelon's reaction to the nomination and thus seek by taunting him to compel him to accept the task with better grace. He is certainly irritated by Ganelon's animosity. Although he has been rejected by Charlemagne as an ambassador to Marsilie, he offers once again to go. It is difficult to avoid the impression that he does so for the purpose of discomfiting Ganelon. I cannot share the view of Wais, who sees « stupid self-satisfaction » in line 294 and prefers the readings of other versions [26]. In lines 278-9 it is not Roland but the French who assert Ganelon's diplomatic wisdom (it is Roland who asserts it in V^4) and Roland's denial of this in line 294 is based on Ganelon's hot-headed reaction in lines 289ff. The offer is certainly out of place and, consequently, insulting, as Ganelon shows when he vigorously repudiates the idea that his stepson is his vassal, which alone would justify the offer of substitution.

[26] See *art. cit.*, 470f.

Roland's taunts have, in fact, a very special effect which will cause him severe, though concealed, pangs of conscience later on and will produce a second *hamartia* (the refusal to blow the horn) by making him determined to rescue the rearguard unaided from the ambush for which he bears some responsibility. The simple nomination draws from Ganelon only the threat that *when he returns* he will try to get even with Roland (« Se Deus ço dunet que jo de la repaire, / Jo t'en muvra[i] un si grant contr[a]ire / Ki durerat a trestut tun edage », 289-91). However, after Roland's sarcastic taunts (292-5) Ganelon threatens to work some mischief *while on the embassy itself*: « En Sarraguce en irai a Marsilie; / Einz i frai un poi de [le]gerie / Que jo n'esclair ceste meie grant ire » (299-301). The threat has become more insidious, since Roland will not be present to defend himself. Ganelon accepts that he is now expected to perform the appointed task [27] — after the approval of the Franks there is really no possibility of his declining. But he declares that he will not merely go to Saragossa, but also (*einz*) perform *un poi de legerie* there, in order to relieve his anger. It can scarcely be doubted that Ganelon uses this expression as an ironic allusion to Roland's charge that he advised Charlemagne *alques de legerie* (206). The implication is that if Roland is so convinced of Ganelon's imprudence, he will give him a clear demonstration of it: « I shall certainly go and meet Marsilie in Saragossa. But while I'm there I shall also behave ' a little ill-considerredly ' to appease my anger ». The expressions *alques de legerie* and *un poi de legerie* provide an example of the sort of verbal parallel which the poet frequently exploits. Ganelon here seeks to turn Roland's initial insinuation against him — perhaps in the same way that Roland seeks to turn Ganelon's contemptuous phrase « Lais-

[27] I find no difficulty in imagining, with Bédier, that after the Franks have approved his nomination, Ganelon simply assumes the *pro forma* ratification of the decision by Charlemagne and thus anticipates it in line 298. For a different argument see F. Whitehead, *The Textual Criticism of the* Chanson de Roland: *an Historical Survey*, in *Studies in Medieval French presented to Alfred Ewert*, Oxford, 1961, p. 80, n. 1. It is unnecessary to interpret 11.298-9, with Pellegrini, as two asyndetic constructions with the force of a conditional (« Se Carlo me ne dà l'ordine, andò a Saragozza da Marsilio »), see S. Pellegrini, *L'Ira di Gano*, in id., *Studi Rolandiani e trobadorici*, Bari, 1964, [pp. 123-35], p. 123, n. 2.

sun les fols, as sages nus tenuns » (229) against him by countering his furious reaction with the words « Orgoill oi e folage » (292).

Throughout the opening nomination-scene the poet's great skill is to portray the characters' attitudes to each other, their interpretation of each other's actions, to show how, once irritated, they overreact to every possibility of an offensive insinuation. The poet is not concerned with determining his audience's reaction to the antagonists but only the antagonists' growing distrust of each other. Whether Ganelon at this point conceives the plot to betray Roland it is fruitless to speculate, since it can hardly be established what ' conceiving the plot ' would really amount to. He has certainly had no time for reflection and common sense dictates that we see in Ganelon's words a threat, the nature and consequences of which he cannot yet have worked out. I cannot, however, accept Pellegrini's argument that Ganelon does not imagine any plan to trick Roland until he arrives in Saragossa and that in the present statement he forecasts the bravado he will display before Marsilie and thereby demonstrates to the court what risks he is willing to take and how iniquitous Roland's imputation of cowardice is [28]. Lines 289ff clearly announce Ganelon's intention to ' get even ' with Roland, lines 322ff express his formal defiance of his stepson and the Twelve Peers, and laisse 25 includes an omen which the Franks quite openly interpret as a sign of trouble to come [29]. In the face of this evidence Pellegrini's position seems untenable. It was adopted, however, to explain Ganelon's behaviour before Marsilie which Pellegrini appears to have imperfectly understood.

[28] Pellegrini, *art. cit.*, 133 paraphrases « quando sarà a Saragozza farà un po' il matto, dando così insieme sfogo alla sua grande rabbia ».

[29] This is normally thought of as a sign of bad faith. A contrary view is that of Ruggieri, who sees in it a symbolic recognition of the mortal danger to which Ganelon is now exposed, see R. M. Ruggieri, *Il Processo di Gano nella ' Chanson de Roland '*, Firenze, 1936, p. 170: « Nella caduta del guanto non è lecito vedere un qualsiasi indizio di viltà o di titubanza di colui che lo riceve ... L'incidente significa soltanto un cattivo presagio per l'ambasciatore, e dalle esclamazioni che seguono arguiamo che si trattava di un pregiudizio molto diffuso e molto accreditato. Tutti si attendono una ' gran perte ' e, come i Franchi, i lettori che hanno in mente i discorsi agitati durante l'assemblea, non possono non pensare alla morte di Gano. La perdita sarà ben altra e ben più grave del prevedibile ».

Roland's contemptuous sneer [30] precipitates a final paroxysm of anger in the now indignant and humiliated Ganelon, who roundly tells his stepson « Jo ne vus aim nïent, / Sur mei avez turnét fals jugement » (306-7). The *hamartia* lies in the nomination of Ganelon to the embassy, for it is this action which produces the *peripeteia* of the betrayal. So far as Roland's subsequent sarcasms are concerned, it may be said that they are merely a defensive counter to Ganelon's threats (« Ço set hom ben, n'ai cure de manace », 293). It is difficult to interpret the exact import of the phrase *fals jugement* [31]. It might be considered that Ganelon is here protesting his unsuitability as a candidate for the mission to Marsilie, especially since the next lines depict his domestic anxieties, which place in relief his own private responsibilities and Roland's solitariness. Ganelon, of course, has married Charlemagne's sister, who is the mother of Roland. Whether Roland is the offspring by an earlier marriage or by Charlemagne's incestuous relations with his sister or whether he is simply illegitimate it is impossible to determine [32]. Ganelon may well feel that Roland's nomination of him was malicious in the light of Roland's declared poor opinion of Ganelon's powers of counsel and of his open distrust of Marsilie. Ganelon may thus mean by *fals jugement* that it is prompted by personal animosity rather than true concern for the emperor's interests. Thus he counters the emperor's stern « Oït l'avez, sur vos

[30] See B. N. Sargent, *Medieval* Rire, Ridere: *a laughing matter?*, « Med. Aev. » 43, 1974, 116-32, who sees Roland's ' rire ' as primarily an observed facial gesture.

[31] Köhler, *op. cit.*, points out that *fals jugement-falsum iudicium* is a common formula in the *Coutumes* and talks of « Die Urteilschelte ... d.h. der schwere Vorwurf der Rechtsfälschung ... » I cannot agree with Pellegrini, *art. cit.*, who translates line 307 as « vi siete fatto di me un concetto sbagliato ». Pellegrini interprets Ganelon's behaviour in *laisses* 21 and 22 as a protest against imputations of cowardice from Roland.

[32] See R. Lejeune, *Le péché de Charlemagne et* La Chanson de Roland, *Studia Philologica. Homenaje ofrecido a Dámaso Alonso* II (Madrid, 1961), 339-71 and G. J. Brault, *The Legend of Charlemagne's Sin in Girart d'Amiens*, « RoN » 4, 1962-3, 72-5. If Roland benefits from the emperor's silence because he is the embarrassing token of Charlemagne's sin, it is unlikely that Ganelon would not know it and exploit the fact, see R. R. Bezzola, *Les Neveux, Mélanges Frappier*, t. 1, Paris, 1970, esp. pp. 102ff.

le jugent Franc » (321) with « Sire . . . ço ad tut fait Rollant » (322). In the desperate circumstances of his trial he goes further, claiming « Rollant sis nies me coillit en haür, / Si me jugat a mort e a dulur » (3771f), though this belief is probably an exaggeration used in self-defence. A more insidious thought which may lie at the back of Ganelon's mind is the contrast between Roland's wealth and power and the vulnerability of his own patrimony, concern for which doubtless leads him to prefer a speedy peaceful solution to the war in Spain. If Ganelon should lose his life at Saragossa, his inheritance might be in jeopardy, since the lands of a minor were sometimes partitioned among the greater vassals. At any rate, it may be said that if Ganelon considers that Roland abuses the procedure of the council in order to discomfit him, thereby making a *fals jugement*, he himself also abuses the procedure by announcing a personal feud [33], which is a breach of the *pactum pacis* or *Pax Dei* extended to crusaders to encourage them to leave home to fight in a holy war without domestic anxieties and fears for the safety of their property [34]. Charlemagne's army has been in Spain for seven years (line 2 possibly indicates no more than a long, indeterminate period) and Ganelon is sufficiently aware of the dangers facing him in the embassy to realize that peace may still not be achieved. He is thus wrong to start a feud whilst the army is engaged in a holy war on foreign soil, away from home, in which circumstances its members would be under protection. Thus at the trial Thierry says to Charlemagne « Que que Rollant a Gue-

[33] Mme Lejeune considers that the *défi* is occasioned by the emperor's irritable impatience, *Le péché de Charlemagne* . . . , p. 360: « Ces propos insultants et impatients du roi constituent un nouveau ressort psychologique fourni à Ganelon, décidément poussé à bout, pour protester contre cette injustice, pour laisser libre cours à une nouvelle colère ». Mme Lejeune would, of course, explain the emperor's attitude by his embarrassment at his own guilt in connexion with Roland's paternity, in the light of which Ganelon appears as a sort of living reproach. It should be remembered, however, that Ganelon claims always to have been loyal to Charlemagne.

[34] See H. Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei*, Stuttgart, 1964, pp. 222ff; J. A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader*, Madison etc., 1969, pp. 160ff; M. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, transl. by L. A. Manyon, London, 1961, p. 414; L. C. Mackinney, *The People and Public Opinion in the Eleventh-Century Peace Movement*, « Speculum » 5, 1930, 181-206.

nelun forsfesist, / Vostre servise l'en doüst bien guarir » (3827-8). Ganelon's formal defiance is the last link [35] in a chain of individualistic and dramatic moves within the framework of the formal and collective negotiations of a council which should be acting *pro bono publico*. The first nomination-scene is, in fact, remarkable for the tightly-knit sequence of causally related moves and verbal responses *du tac au tac*. Each move is made in response to an imagined insult, beginning with Roland's evocation of the deaths of Basan and Basilie.

Some comment must be made here on the difference between O and the other MSS concerning the order of *laisses* in the first nomination-scene. In O Charlemagne formally ratifies the decision of the Franks made upon his invitation (275). The three earlier voluntary proposals are accompanied by the silence of the Franks, who have not yet been formally charged with the task of deciding on a nomination. Once Charlemagne has laid down the conditions (vetoing voluntary offers by the Twelve Peers and specifying the choice of a *barun de ma marche*), he accepts the decision of the assembly (321). This formal ratification is quite naturally anticipated by Ganelon (298, 309), once he has heard the Franks approve the choice. The validity of this interpretation has been confirmed by Gibellini's study of the judicial role of the council in

[35] Throughout the council scene the text of O is distinguished from that of V^4, C, V^7 by the order of the *laisses*, but there is agreement between O and V^4 on the placing of Ganelon's formal act of defiance *after* Roland's *rire*, whereas in the other versions it occurs very early and before this new provocation. Whatever degree of ' authenticity ' is conceded to O, its text seems to me to be quite unobjectionable, cf. A. Burger, *Le rire de Roland*, « CCM » 3, 1960, 2-11. R. Menéndez Pidal, *La Chanson de Roland et la tradition épique des Francs*, 2e éd. . . . , Paris, 1960, 89-104, concludes that V^4 represents « la leçon la plus archaïque, et la meilleure, de la scène du défi de Ganelon » (p. 102). This view has been cogently contested by C. Segre, *Tradizione fluttuante della* Chanson de Roland?, « Studi Medievali », ser. III, 1, i, 1960, 72-98, now reprinted in id., *La tradizione della ' Chanson de Roland '*, Milano-Napoli, 1974, see esp. pp. 99-104, whose arguments are endorsed by F. Lecoy, « Romania » 84, 1963, 92. See also J. Horrent, *La Chanson de Roland dans les littératures française et espagnole au moyen âge*, Paris, 1951, pp. 213-8, who distinguishes the *content* of the *laisses* (O is authentic here) and the *order* of the *laisses* (the MSS other than O preserve an older stage).

the *Roland* [36]. I think that Gibellini is right to see in the royal ratification, not a legal *sine qua non*, but a religious and ' meta-historical ' authority or sanction which, whilst not indispensable, enhances the character of the scene, just as the *jugement de Dieu* ratifies on a higher plane the assembly's condemnation of Ganelon's treachery. Not the least interesting suggestion of Gibellini's study is that the other MSS display a quite different view, attaching little importance to the *council's* power of decision and the character of the emperor as *primus inter pares*. The order of the *laisses* in these MSS clearly expresses the need for the emperor's ratification (e.g. O 319ff are inserted after 278). Gibellini explains many ' variants ' of the MSS by this idea of a different judicial conception of the role of the council, and the emphasis, sometimes arbitrarily introduced, on the presence and power of Charlemagne. I am much less convinced by Professor Köhler's argument that the poet of the *Roland* has turned the historically attested consultative *conseil des barons* into a legal and executive *jugement des barons* [37], an invention of the poet, to which the emperor is portrayed as irrevocably bound, and in which are projected the political problems of the early Capetians.

There follows the episode of Ganelon's journey with Blancandrins [38]. It is noteworthy that critics seem to have been bewildered by this episode until Professor Lonigan clarified its function. Although Ganelon's courage is shown to good effect — he takes a calculated risk — the emphasis is always, as elsewhere, on the action rather than on the depiction of character. Quite simply, Ganelon seeks both to initiate his revenge on Roland and at the same time to obtain peace for Charlemagne in accordance with the mission on which he has been sent. By distorting the terms of the

[36] P. Gibellini, *Droit et philologie: l'ordre des laisses dans l'épisode de la colère de Ganelon dans la* Chanson de Roland, « Revue Romane » 7, 1972, 233-47.

[37] See Köhler, *op. cit.* Cf. J. Schulze, « Poetica » 3, 1970, 632-7.

[38] Cf. H. S. Robertson, *Blancandrin as Diplomat*, « RoN » 10, 1968-9, 373-8 who defends the Blancandrins episode against Pidal's criticisms and comments on the role of Blancandrins, which is both to tempt Ganelon to treachery and to save him from Marsilie's wrath at the Saracen court. As usual, Wais, *art. cit.* 475, is unwilling to accept the text of O and considers the exchanges between Blancandrins and Roland to be the work of a *Nacherzähler*.

emperor's peace-proposals he seeks to arouse Marsilie's anger and by implying that Roland is a constant threat to peace and will attack Marsilie if he does not agree to the (distorted) peace proposals he suggests a way of separating the two goals. In this way Ganelon persuades the pagans to abandon their original treacherous peace-plan, of which he is of course unaware. Irony runs deep in this scene. By frustrating the original pagan treachery Ganelon unwittingly saves Charlemagne from the ignominy of a repetition of the previous deception against which Roland has already warned! Ganelon, who smarted under Roland's criticism of the *legerie* of earlier counsel receives from Marsilie an apology for the latter's overhasty reaction to him: « Jo vos ai fait *alques de legerie,* / Quant por ferir vus demustrai grant ire » (513-4). One may note too irony in the fact that the first treacherous step by Ganelon is taken in response to Blancandrins' raising the issue of advice once more: « Dist Blancandrins: ' Francs sunt mult gentilz home, / Mult grant mal funt e [cil] duc e cil cunte / A lur seignur ki tel cunseill li dunent, / Lui e altrui travaillent e cunfundent ' » (377-80). Further, Ganelon converts Roland's advice to the emperor to lay siege to Saragossa (211-12) to the threat that if Marsilie does not agree to Charlemagne's peace-proposals (distorted by Ganelon), Roland will attack him in Saragossa [39]. This is Ganelon's act of *legerie* (300): Roland accused him of giving ill-considered advice, and so he now takes *Roland's* advice on the conduct of the war and turns it against him. So far as Charlemagne is concerned, Ganelon seeks to remain loyal. When it transpires that Marsilie has 400,000 troops at his disposal (565f, in contrast to the implication of 1.18) with which to attack « Carle e (a) Franceis », Ganelon ironically maintains his opposition to imprudent militarism by arguing « Lessez la folie, tenez vos al saveir » (569), which reflects his earlier advice to the Franks (229). In this way Ganelon attempts to advance a limited military objective, the isolation of Roland, which will not harm the rest of the Christian army. Ulti-

[39] See P. R. Lonigan, *Ganelon before Marsilie* (Chanson de Roland, *laisses XXXII-LII)*, « Studi Francesi » 14, 1970, 276-80. At first, this threat is framed impersonally (433ff), but in *laisse* 36 Ganelon allows Marsilie to think that the subject of « En Sarraguce vus vendrat aseger ... » (476) is Roland.

mately, of course, Roland's charge of *legerie* is ironically justified. Ganelon *is* imprudent, he *does* lack insight, for in believing that he has remained loyal to Charlemagne he does not realize that he has committed treason in (a) distorting and falsifying the emperor's peace-proposals with which he was entrusted and in (b) depriving the emperor of his « destre braz » (957), who whilst fighting for Charlemagne in a holy war on foreign soil was under his protection and immune from private warfare [40].

What I should wish to emphasize here, in accordance with the view I have already expressed in an Aristotelian approach to the *Roland*, is the extraordinary skill with which the poet binds together the action in a relentlessly causal sequence, utilizing repetition of motifs and key words (e.g. *fol, saveir, cunseil, legerie*), at the same time creating a succession of ironic reversals which, for Aristotle, are so important in the action of complex tragedy. This illustrates yet again my contention that the action in the *Roland* reflects, not psychological *motivation* (which frequently remains opaque in the text), but *repercussion*. Moreover, the sequence of events is set in motion by an action (Roland's warning against ill-considered advice together with his nomination of Ganelon) which is in no way connected with a flaw or moral defect.

The scene of Roland's nomination to the rearguard, with which we must now conclude our analysis of the ' exposition ' of the *Roland*, is textually the most controversial part of the whole poem. Laisse 55 introduces a pause in the narrative, marking clearly two peaks of the action — the conclusion of peace and the isolation of Roland. The seeds of the catastrophe have been sown (716) and

[40] Later these errors are compounded by two further false steps. First, Ganelon accepts gifts of wealth from Marsilie (515ff, 601f, *laisses* 48-50, 651ff; 457ff are ironical) and this prejudices the ' purity ' of his motives by giving a suspicion of venality to his actions (844ff, 3756). Second, he lies to Charlemagne to account for the absence of the caliph and thus deceives the emperor on a point which he had been charged with conveying to the pagans (492-4). Yet again, there is a striking irony in the action. The presence of the caliph was designed as an insurance against any repetition of the tactics which led to the deaths of Basan and Basilie (488ff). Ganelon, for whom their fate was a humiliating reminder of allegedly ill-considered advice and of the danger to which his stepson exposed him, destroys that insurance and shows again his lack of insight, the *legerie* with which Roland had initially charged him.

there follow the emperor's dreams, which in allegorical fashion fortell the treason [41]. The emperor prepares his withdrawal, declaring to his barons « Kar me jugez ki ert en la rereguarde » (742). With no less alacrity than Roland previously exhibited in nominating him, Ganelon retorts « Rollant, cist miens fillastre / N'avez baron de si grant vasselage » (743-4). The parallel with the first nomination-scene is such that Charlemagne is bound to recognize this sign of revenge and thus tells Ganelon « Vos estes vifs diables, / El cors vos est entree mortel rage » (746-7). At this point Charlemagne vaguely apprehend a threat, but cannot identify any specific treachery or offence [42]. It is possible that he simply feels irritated by the displacement of his favourite, Roland, from his usual position in the vanguard to the more vulnerable rearguard (as is possibly implied by 746-8) and thus recognizes a motive of malice in Ganelon's proposal. Roland's acceptance of the nomination is calm and dignified — *a lei de chevaler* — and he proudly asserts his powers of protection. It may be felt that his words « Sire *parastre*, mult vos dei aveir cher: / La rereguarde avez sur mei jugiét » (753-4) are a careful and ironic inversion of Ganelon's complaint « Jo ne vus aim nïent: / Sur mei avez turnét fals jugement » (306-7). Ganelon, however, perceives that his plan is going forward and so feels able to adopt a conciliatory tone: « Veir dites, jo·l sai bien » (760).

We now come to *laisse* 60, which is problematic and, apart from its existence in O, has at first sight little to commend it. Objections to it are of several orders. First of all, it refers to the dropping of the stick by Ganelon, whereas in no version of the *Roland* does such an event take place. It might be held, however, that the same objection applies to *laisse* 62, where the same event is

[41] That laisse 186 has been displaced and at some stage stood after *laisses* 56-7, forming a triad, has been argued by D. D. R. Owen, *Charlemagne's Dreams, Baligant and Turoldus*, « Z. f. rom. Phil. » 87, 1971, 197-208 and by Tony Hunt, *Träume und die Überlieferungsgeschichte des altfranzösischen Rolandslieds*, ibid., 90, 1974, 241-6. I may make the supplementary point here that the reference to *li angles Deu* in 1.2568 would, transposed to the new location, explain 1.836 (no earlier reference has been made to an angel).

[42] Only as he leaves Roland « en une estrange marche » does Charlemagne realize the import of the dreams (833ff).

alluded to once more and that the mistake must consequently be ascribed to the poet [43]. Second, the strong and seemingly mean-minded tone belies Roland's previous restraint *a lei de chevaler* (752). Third, *laisse* 60 is unique to O. This is the only example of a passage of such length where none of the lines finds even an echo in the other versions. Fourth, the phrase *de put aire* is unique even in the text of O. The word *put* appears nowhere else and *aire* appears only once again in the phrase *de bon aire* (2252). The authenticity of *laisse* 60 is thus not beyond suspicion [44] and many critics feel that it is psychologically unsatisfying, Roland's vilification of Ganelon being out of character. Aesthetic considerations should not, however, lead to genetic arguments.

Bédier defended the contrast of the two *laisses* [45], interpreting *laisse* 59 as ironical. For Bédier Roland's words represent the feeling of a man fully aware of the fate which awaits him, but who demonstrates his moral superiority over the man who has trapped him by both exhibiting his courage and revealing his recognition that he is betrayed. I cannot, however, agree with Bédier that it is indispensable to the tragedy of the poem that Roland should here realize that Ganelon has betrayed him and that he is doomed to die [46]. That Roland's words in lines 753-4 are ironic is denied by Ruggieri who declares « Invece, il sacrificio di Orlando resta grande appunto perché egli è conscio

[43] The other MSS are of little help. V^4 concurs with O, but C introduces bow, glove and staff without clarifying which Ganelon is alleged to have dropped. The *saga* at first sight resolves the discrepancy by referring to the dropping of the glove, but this is illusory since in the Norse poem Ganelon actually dropped a letter ! Konrad, however, successfully clears up the discrepancy.

[44] For a summary of editorial reactions see Segre, *ed. cit.*, pp. 143f. It should be noted that Segre himself feels that the arguments against the authenticity of of *laisse* 60 are more serious than those in its favour.

[45] *Commentaires*, Paris, 1927, p. 151f.

[46] Cf. Wais, *art. cit.* who concludes that « in der älteren Stoffschicht ahnte Roland nichts von dem verheimlichten Groll des Verräters und das tödliche Dilemma in den Pyrenäen wurde damit begründet, dass Roland nicht hatte vergessen können, Stiefsohn des Verräters zu sein » (p. 483). In contradiction to this argument is the conclusion of R. A. Hall Jr., *Linguistic Strata in the* Chanson de Roland, « R. Ph. » 13, 1959-60, 159: « Roland's prescience and discourtesy to Ganelon belong to an earlier version, whereas his respect and unsuspicious conduct towards his stepfather are part of a later, more refined and subtle, conception of the relationship ».

del pericolo, ma non immagina, né ora né poi, la perfidia dell'inganno di Gano »[47]. It has to be admitted, however, that Naimes describes Roland as *mult irascut* (777), which corresponds with the phrase *ireement parlat* of *laisse* 60 (762). Without *laisse* 60 it is not clear from the text that Roland is angry and this may account for the fact that in V^4, which of course lacks *laisse* 60, Naimes adds « de so talento ell è pessimo e du » (777). Professor Kibler denies the existence of irony in *laisses* 59 and 60[48]. He considers that Roland, clearly aware of Ganelon's intention to get even with him, welcomes the appointment to the rearguard in order to counter Ganelon's plan and obliterate the slur on the family's honour occasioned by betrayal. He cannot foresee the consequences of Ganelon's intentions, but in the next *laisse* he recognizes fully their maliciousness and ashes out at Ganelon. Thus in the first *laisse* Roland is mindful of family honour and the opportunity to preserve it, in the second *laisse* he attacks Ganelon's motives. This part of Professor Kibler's argument is, to my mind, more satisfying than Professor Vinaver's insistence that we should not seek to reconcile *laisses* 59 and 60, but rather see them as alternative possibilities of what Roland may have felt and said[49]

In my opinion the major obstacle to accepting the interpretations which have been offered to explain the juxtaposition of *laisses* 59 and 60 is that they spring from assumptions concerning character and motives. If I am correct in thinking that the poet was not concerned with *character* and *motivations*, but with actions and reactions causally connected as *repercussions*, then I think a preferable interpretation of the *laisses* can be given. Perceiving

[47] Ruggieri, *op. cit.*, p. 184. Ruggieri argues that Roland welcomes the opportunity to demonstrate his heroic worth: « La risposta data a Gano è troppo immediata per essere ironica, troppo spontanea per essere ingenua » (p. 185).

[48] W. W. Kibler, *Roland's Pride*, « Symposium » 26, 1972, 147-60. I am grateful to Professor Kibler for a personal communication on this subject.

[49] E. Vinaver, *La Mort de Roland*, « CCM » 7, 1964, 142f. Wais, *art. cit.*, finds *laisses* 59 and 60 contradictory and states that « die zweite den Gedichtanfang zu retten sucht, in dem der Erzähler die Antagonisten einander hatte beschimpfen lassen. Die an erster Stelle stehende Laisse aber bezeugt, dass Roland tatsächlich 'naiv' war, genauer gesagt: arglos, und dass also der Groll seines Gegners heimlicher und der Verrat verschlagener ins Werk gesetzt gewesen war » (p. 476).

that Ganelon's nomination of him is an obvious retaliation for his own nomination of his stepfather to the embassy, Roland seeks to differentiate his reaction as markedly as possible from that formerly displayed by Ganelon. The whole of the 'exposition' of the *Roland* teems with verbal cross-references, it is, indeed, a network of references to actions and reactions, a succession often of transactions *quid pro quo*. Roland seeks to give point to his memory of the humiliation caused by Ganelon's former intemperate reaction to his nomination by carefully tempering his own in deliberate contrast[50]. But this fails to provoke Ganelon, who responds with unusual courtesy (« Veir dites, jo·l sai bien »), which deprives Roland of his triumph whilst at the same time proclaiming by its manifest insincerity Ganelon's evil machinations. Roland therefore makes another attempt (*laisse* 60) to contrast his reaction with that of Ganelon and recalls for the discomfiture of the latter his dropping of the glove (*bastun* in the text).

In my opinion the question of whether Roland foresees his betrayal and the disaster to come is simply not raised by the text. Throughout the 'exposition' the poet displays the antagonists locked in a conflict of the moment, concerned with the present, not the future. Roland's only concern is to preserve his superiority over Ganelon, whilst Ganelon's is simply to obtain revenge. It seems to me alien to the poet's procedure so far to suggest that Roland foresees his betrayal and I would take the contrary position to that of Bédier: it is essential to the tragedy that Roland does *not* here foresee his doom. There is a certain sense in which both Roland and Ganelon are blinkered by the force of their antagonism and thus neither looks clearly to the consequences of his actions, but seeks primarily to secure immediate advantage over his opponent.

With the evidence of the nomination-scenes before us what conclusions can we draw from our study? The so-called 'exposition' of the *Roland*, comprising the negotiations with Marsilie and the two nomination-scenes, represents a network of verbal correspondences, relating to the actions of the protagonists, which

[50] Ganelon is pessimistic about his chances of success, whilst Roland is completely confident about his own powers: contrast ll. 289, 310ff, 329f, 359 with *laisse* 59.

demonstrates the poet's concern to establish, *pace* Professor Vinaver, « an articulate causal scheme » behind the action. The sequence of causally related motifs allows the poet to concentrate on action and its repercussions rather than on character and intentions. It is therefore correct to speak of motivation of the protagonists only in the sense of causation of their acts, not in the sense of their psychological intentions. Too much emphasis has been placed on the *Roland* as a *psychological* drama [51], whereas, in fact, its essential power to move us stems from the fact that it incorporates a tragic conception which follows the Aristotelian formula. Aristotle stresses that it is the plot (*muthos*) and action (*praxis*), rather than character or language, which provide the essence of tragedy, and it is thus the disposition of events which leads to the *oikeia hedone*, that pleasure which is proper to tragedy. It is this tragic *process* which the poet of the *Roland* has striven at all times to convey. Dr. Laín Entralgo rightly declares,

> « . . . the internal necessity of the tragic action does not carry with it a sure predictability of the various incidents composing it. On the contrary the emergence of the tragic effect demands that some one of these incidents be unforeseen and surprising to the spectator, but for all that without failing to seem freely and intentionally decided by the character. » [52]

We can now understand why the poet of the *Roland* deliberately leaves unfathomed and unrevealed the intentions of his characters. What we learn of the characters is necessary only for the *ananke* of the action which must evolve in a way which is « credible and necessary ». Ganelon's treachery is clearly predicted, but the moments of *anagnorisis* which lead Roland first to refuse to sound the horn and subsequently to sound it are not. The *hamartiai* of the hero, his nomination of Ganelon and his miscalculation of the military odds in the ambush, are unexpected.

Aristotle considers that, whereas in life character creates

[51] Cf. Segre, *Schemi narrativi nella 'Chanson de Roland'*, in id., *La Tradizione* . . . , pp. 3-13.

[52] P. Laín Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*, ed. and transl. by L. J. Rather and J. M. Sharp, New Haven-London, 1970, p. 224.

action, in art it is action which creates character. The ' exposition ' of the *Roland* consists of a chain of reactions to what is openly *said*: it is not a revelation of character. For example, Ganelon's first speech includes the *reprise* of the significant motifs in Roland's opening address: *cunseill* (228 / 205), *loer* (226 / 206), death (227 / 209, 213), imprudence (229 / 206). Naimes's intervention rests on the *reprise* of Ganelon's reference *as sages* (229) in the term *saveir* (234) and the Christian reinterpretation of *orguill* (228) in this context as *pecchét* (240). The notion of *saveir* is then taken up by Charlemagne who calls Naimes *saives hom* (248) and contrasted by Oliver with the description of Roland as *pesmes e fiers* (256). Ganelon's candidature is approved as that of a man who is *saive* (279), but he labels Roland *fol*, which provokes a reaction exploiting the terms *orgoill, folage* (292) and *saives hom* (294), which in turn leads to the *reprise* of the motif of *legerie* (300). And so the ' exposition ' continues, centred on a constellation of key terms invoked by the characters or the narrator: *saveir* (369, 426, 569, *sage* 648), *cunseill* (379, 604), *orgoill / mort* (389f, 474, 577f), *legerie* (513) [53] *pesmes* (392), *folie* (569), *parastre / fillastre* (743, 753).

The *Roland* is striking, in my opinion, for the intellectual clarity of this conception [54], despite the critical tendency to emphasize the emotive aspects of its organization and the psychology of characterization. The poet is at pains to derive the tragedy of Rencesvals from the gathering momentum of a series of causally related actions which are often insignificant in themselves: the tragedy is not derived from human vice or from morally imputable faults. The quarrel between Roland and Ganelon emerges from a straightforward difference of opinion, neither problematic nor unjustifiable, and unrelated to moral qualities. The irreversible step is taken by Roland in nominating Ganelon to the embassy to Marsilie. This is a *hamartia*, an error, for which

[53] Ganelon, Roland and Marsilie all show at some point an error of judgement which is described as *legerie* (see 300, 513, 1726).

[54] Aristotle's emphasis on perspicuity is well maintained by Avicenna in his Commentary, *ed. cit.*, p. 108: « The conclusion of a poem should indicate its summation by showing, as in rhetoric, what has been resolved ». This is clearly the function of the trial-scene.

there is no moral motivation, but which has momentous consequences out of all proportion to the nature of the act itself.

Roland's *hamartia* is aptly recognized by Oliver as *legerie* (1726), which does not, in my opinion, denote a specific, morally ascribable flaw. The poet sought a word which would convey the sense of error, lack of insight, the notion of *distraction* [55]. Roland's judgment is clouded by his preoccupation with his own implication in a conflict which has led his own kinsman to betray him. This may be a fault: it is not a moral flaw. Roland has every reason to adopt a serious view of his own agency in the emergence of the quarrel and the treachery. Similarly, it may be felt that lack of judgment lies behind his nomination of Ganelon. In so far as the *hamartia* has *some* connexion with the character of the hero and relates this to his destiny, we might say that Roland's misjudgment of situations stems from the fact that he is *pesmes e fiers* and extremely sensitive to shame. In the first nomination-scene he is both scorned by Ganelon and rebuffed by Oliver and Charlemagne: he can do no more, so he will let Ganelon preserve the family honour and undertake the mission to Marsilie. In the ambush, the shame of seeing in the treachery a ' family affair ' leads him to silence Oliver's open declaration that it is Roland's kinsman who has betrayed them and to seek to repair the damage by himself rescuing the rearguard. Roland is a genuine *tragic* hero: by virtue of his actions, not his character.

TONY HUNT
University of St. Andrews

[55] Avicenna, *ed. cit.*, p. 106 discussing *hamartia* says that the misfortune depicted is « what is connected with error, straying from the path of duty, and losing sight of what is more noble. Recognition corresponds to that ».