Nationality, Intertextuality, and the Concept of Citation: “La Dulce France” in Italian Renaissance Literature

A thesis submitted to the Miami University Honors Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for University Honors

by

Melanie Elizabeth Bowman

May 8, 2004
Oxford, Ohio
ABSTRACT

Nationality, Intertextuality, and the Concept of Citation: “La Dulce France” in Italian Renaissance Literature

by Melanie Elizabeth Bowman

This honors thesis is an analysis of how the Roland corpus, a body of medieval oral literature, that features the court of Charlemagne, was transcribed and eventually taken up by Italian authors. I concern myself with the processes of transmission and transcription of these legends as well as generic conventions involved in their appropriation. In doing this, I came across modes of historiography and authentication that were unlike those with which I am familiar. I deal with these to a limited degree. Not only do these texts illustrate the political ramifications of referencing the figure of Charlemagne, but they also provide an insight into possible oppositional readings of the Roland corpus, a subject I will discuss to a limited degree in this presentation. I posed a question for myself at the beginning of my research: Why did characters in the text “La Chanson de Roland” appear in Renaissance Italian works? Even with limited knowledge of the military and political conflicts between France and Italy at the time, I felt it was highly unusual that a French work would appear in this context. I also found it strange that France seemed to be depicted uniformly positively as the seat of a Christian empire. After close readings and further research, I found that the “France” present in “La Chanson de Roland” is far from a uniform concept, and that individuals who were not of French origin could write themselves into the work through identification with characters from the periphery of the empire, which may explain Charlemagne’s diminished stature in the Italian works “L’Entrée d’Espagne”, “Orlando Innamorato”, and “Orlando Furioso” I reference. I also found that France as it was anachronistically depicted was both a unified political body and a somewhat loose collection of provinces. Later research showed me that the Roland corpus had been appropriated long before the Renaissance and could justifiably be called part of the Italian tradition. My textual analysis led me to conclude that Italian authors, notably Ludovico Ariosto, “cited” a pre-existing concept of France in a new context that subtly changed its meaning.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Drs Britton Harwood and Sante Matteo, my two readers for their helpful comments and editing. I also appreciated the materials contributed by Dr. Joseph Duggan. Among those who provided both insightful criticism and emotional support, my thesis and French departmental advisor Dr. Claire Goldstein deserves the most recognition. She is an invaluable member of the faculty and it has been an honor to work with her.
Table Of Contents

I.  Introduction                                      p. 1
II. Transmission, Transcription, and the Performative Moment   p. 4
III. What is La Dulce France?                 p. 8
IV. Christians v. Saracens: Definitions of “France” Derived Oppositionally  p. 19
V.   Superposition of Historical France                  p.23
VI.  Narrative Interpolation: Invoking or Creating “France”     p. 24
VII. The Pseudo-Turpin, *Estoire* And Historiography    p. 29
VIII. The Roland Legend in Italian Works               p.33
IX.    Boiardo’s Depiction Of France                   p. 36
X.     The Depiction of France in the *Orlando Furioso*   p. 39
XI.    Boiardo’s Treatment of Prophesy                 p. 49
XII.   Derrida and Citationality                      p. 55
XIII.  Citation of Turpin                             p. 57
XIV.   Conclusion                                    p. 61
I. Introduction

This paper is an inquiry into works that feature a legendary figure called Roland, purportedly the nephew of Charlemagne. This legend, originally recounted orally, is available to the modern reader only through a select number of manuscripts. I have focused on the Oxford version entitled *La Chanson de Roland*, as well as a translation of a German version, called the *Rolandsield*, and a thirteenth-century Old French translation called the *Turpin Français*. These two later works were most likely composed by writing, with other texts on hand. I am mainly interested in how these works construct “France” as a concept, and I bring in relevant historical information to highlight the ways these texts modify the history we accept as legitimate. I also make reference to a number of works originally composed orally in order to comment on their distinctive features. I do this because I am concerned with how these works use a variety of techniques to authenticate their works. Most notably, they consistently refer to previous written works or base their narration on an ostensible eyewitness account.

In light of the possible propagandistic motivations of these authors, I take the referential aspects of their works very seriously, as well as what might be termed anxieties of historiographical creation. My project is also to account for the appearance of this quintessentially French figure in Renaissance Italian works, mainly Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*. This has necessitated my researching earlier Italian works and theories on the transmission of oral medieval works. In my analysis of *Orlando Furioso*, I concern myself with both how particular passages are narrated and how Ariosto styles himself as
a transcriber instead of an author. These features link the work with the oral tradition as well as specific French texts, and point to a particular conception of authorship.

The Roland legion can be found in many different sources, and narrate very different adventures. The Oxford text *La Chanson de Roland*, which I am studying, opens with a description of Charlemagne’s incipient invasion of Spain. A betrayal by a court official and father-in-law to Roland, Ganelon, and King Marsille of Spain’s false message of peace and willingness to convert follow. The work has several well-known episodes, one being an interchange between Roland and Olivier over whether Roland will sound his horn to call back Charlemagne’s troops, leaving for France via the Pyrenees. His death scene is equally evocative, and the imagery employed to describe how he and his troops look over the mountains at the “Terre Major” is striking in its use of borders. Charlemagne’s troops return at the sound of the horn too late to save the rearguard, but they do see Roland lain out stylistically like a martyr, facing France. A series of battle scenes ensue where King Marsile is maimed and his troops and lands conquered. His wife, Queen Bramimunde, chooses to convert “par amur” (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 3674), and the conflict is resolved. Charlemagne is called back to his unending quest of protecting Christendom at the end of the narration, which breaks off abruptly.

The work was either composed or transcribed, depending on the translation of the word “declinet”, by Turoldus and recopied (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 4002, p. 258-9). The Chanson is said to have been originally composed in approximately 1086, based on textual clues, but it refers to events that occurred in 778 (“La Chanson de Roland” p. 10). It as well as other works I am discussing share the characteristic of anachronism.
Strategically, this referencing of previous events/history allows an author to legitimize his or her particular worldview. I use the term History, or (hi)story, in this essay as a construction, and a concept that was not rapid in forming. One should be aware that citing legitimating histories was clearly a distinct feature of medieval epic, and possibly was in evidence at later times. Lee Patterson mentions how the *Alliterative Morte Arthur* reflected contemporary political anxieties (Patterson, 211-2). At the same time, I have not come across the particular innovations I found in Ariosto’s work, this later author takes historiography to another level. Not only does he set the scene of action in the past and draw blatantly from other written accounts, but Ariosto used this setting to comment on his present with a clear picture of the lapse of time. I do not rule out considerations of propaganda when I see this (hi)story-making in the text. I will later explore this issue, especially with the earlier French works. He accessed the world of Charlemagne through these fictional medieval documents, and possibly oral accounts. Ariosto has a clear view of the difference between past and present. His prolepsism and use of mythological speakers I take to be intentional. This strategy may build on previous works. Not only is “history” appropriated, but it is given a voice and made to give out information about future events, based on historical precedent and lineage.

I will make reference to Derridian philosophy in this essay, specifically his concept of citationality. While Jacques Derrida uses the term primarily to point out that speech acts are cited, or quoted, in a specific context, he goes on to conclude that language itself is cited (Derrida 388-9). This means that writing cannot be original or monologic. Words retain valences of meaning because of their previous contexts. I wish
to determine what context the concept of “La Dulce France” had before it was cited in Ariosto, as well as the possible sources for figures such as Tristan and Merlin in his work. Derrida also demonstrated forcefully that there is necessarily a gap between reader and author, which widens when the work falls into new hands (Derrida 376). This gap widens further without the text as an intermediary, and I will demonstrate the complications involved in the oral transmission of works such as *La Chanson de Roland*. I will use this knowledge to draw some conclusions about the anxiety the author(s) I mention exhibit over the “vraisemblance” of their work.1 Many of the texts in question had to be concerned with cultivating an aura of believability, even if they were working with obviously fictionalized works.

Derrida also looks at how philosophies are structured; they attempt to incorporate and comprehend (comprendre) their margins. Derrida concerns himself with tracing the traces left by the unconscious not just in an individual work but in the structure of language/philosophy by discovering and deconstructing the original binary opposition. My interpretations of the Roland corpus are influenced by Derrida’s approach to language, both written and spoken. I view these works as being constantly reinterpreted, cited, alluded to in the process of creating an intertext (Derrida 159).

II. Transmission, Transcription, and the Performative Moment

---

1 Obviously this is a common practice; I in this essay cite primary and secondary sources to support my argument. The difference is that in the context of university work the truth I arrive at is necessarily subjective.
The “truth” Roland narratives claim to contain is necessarily affected by the conditions under which they were created and transmitted. Joseph Duggan, in his essay “Modalità della cultura orale” states that jongleurs represented in manuscripts never hold books, though a fourteenth century document demonstrates that jongleurs may have owned them (8). He argues that legends such as the *Chanson de Roland* originated in public performances and not on paper, so there has to be a distinction between the written histories and these versions. Works such as these were sung slowly enough to be copied down on wax tablets, which could withstand the elements outdoor performances and could be erased (Duggan 2-3). Jongleurs had to structure their performance in such a way so as to attract listeners and bring newcomers up to date. For him, this accounts for the repetitious nature of the narration, but other explanations are possible.

Repetition may have facilitated memory, or had resulted from other circumstances of performance. These histories may have been recounted a laisse at a time. He does allow for the possibility that certain works were written down prior to performance, but in these cases the poet would have had to account for certain features of performance. For instance, written versions include appeals for money from the crowd and they break off at climatic times to keep people’s interest (Duggan, 10). To me, this points to oral composition, though I find Duggan’s explanation of a complex relationship between performer and poet intriguing (Duggan 4).

Evelyn Vitz claims that the Chanson were sung with accompaniment and that there was little possibility for acting. The performer of Romance was freer, according to her analysis (Vitz, “Orality and Performance” 188). Duggan’s findings support this
assertion. Romances did not have the repeated lines and the hemistiches found in gestes (Duggan 8). Michel Rousse found that the recital had a theatrical dimension. They had a standard beginning “Oyez Seigneurs” that we find in several different works (Rousse 2, Morgan 482). I think that the degree to which one concludes that the jongleurs were actors depends on whether the work in question was considered to be high or low culture at the time. In Northern Italy, “gentlemen jongleurs” who recounted the lives of Roland and Oliver were forbidden to ask for money for their performances, since they made their living by making lascivious gestures (Bradley-Cromey 6). One may conclude that the jongleurs who performed in the Chanson in particular positioned their bodies in ways that may have been highly stylized or burlesque and that these popular works were associated with low culture.

While we cannot know for certain, Peter Haidu thinks that jongleurs may have been able to act out the work they recited (Haidu 26). On one level, the pose of the jongleur as an individual with near omniscient insight into the events being described, and a demonstrable control over the circumstances under which the tale was recounted could be termed acting. Still, I refer to a specific kind of public performance, one that was associated with prostitutes and other “public” individuals who made their living with their bodies. Jongleurs employed gestures, used masks, and cross-dressed. In contrast recounting saint’s lives and the exploits of the nobility was considered legitimate. Actors in these performances were useful because they brought consolation and wisdom (Rousse 6). I see this as an example of their being vessels of ideology, these were not contentious voices and they effectively performed the function of the Church. These were the voices
that are preserved in *La Chanson de Roland*. At the same time, I ask myself whether it is appropriate to apply this kind of Marxian analysis, at least on a simplistic level. These works were highly popular, and performers recounting the adventures of Roland, Olivier and Ogier were cited as drawing people from Church services (Rousse 3). Certainly the transmission of ideology took a more circuitous route from church to public performance. Interestingly, in this case, the performers are criticized for actively seeking an audience and the transmission of the ultimate message in dominant discourse. It is possible that the jongleur was meant to serve as a passive vessel, and that acting and advertising drew attention away from the récit. Performance rather than recitation may have underlined the mutability or materiality of the work in question. It is also possible that acting merely associated the orally performed work with low culture, but I am attempting to interrogate what constituted low and high culture. Only later did the written word take precedence as a documented and reliable source.

Duggan’s explanation of the relationship between troubadours and jongleurs is helpful here. Troubadours composed works and related them to jongleurs, who memorized and performed the poem without the aid of written form. The jongleur in this case was an instrument, but he or she was often instrumental in the creation of new versions. Mistakes were more or less accepted, Duggan argues, because of the changes in the order of laisses and inserted prose passages that were retained in later versions (Duggan 5). He does not explain who copied down these later versions. There is no indication that the author was the transcriber in the instance, and he was no doubt trained to compose without writing. Duggan relates a fictive contest between two troubadours
where one steals the other’s song because he created it by singing aloud and then memorizing it (Duggan 6). This is interesting because in modern usage to write is synonymous with the act of creating the document, not simply transcribing it. Duggan reminds us that any written document was necessarily a transcript or a re-performance done by a cleric or the author trying to imagine what he would have said in a performance situation (Duggan 9).

III. What is La Dulce France?

The Chanson, recounted orally, cites an original written source, the chronicles of St. Gilles (“La Chanson de Roland” ln 2096). It also has a character that makes reference to a “Geste Francor”, a spurious Latin title of a written or oral work that the editor is unsure existed (“La Chanson de Roland” 264). This problematic source demonstrates problems in the transmission of the legend. What is also possible is that a jongleur invented this name and used a passing familiarity with Latin, or approximated with cognates, to create the non-existent cited source. The Oxford Chanson de Roland was the domain of the non-lettré, but written documents were held up as proof sufficient unto themselves. This is complicated by the fact that the documented source in the case of the Chanson is a transcription of an eyewitness account. Béroul, who I will discuss more later, also cited a source that may be imaginary. He does this even while telling the reader that he remembers the true sequence of events, not that he read of them. Vitz argues that, because of the repetitious nature of the récit, Béroul may not have been lettered, but that he saw books as a way to validate his work (Vitz “Orality and Performance 32-3”). Why
was there the need for this documentation? To a modern reader, the work is not factual, but perhaps the body of oral and written accounts had legitimized the tradition to the degree to which this kind of referencing was necessary. It is also possible that Béroul wanted to distinguish himself from other jongleurs because having access to the “original” version of the tale dispensed with the need for innovations and corruption of the narrative, a feature of performances by jongleurs. *Turpin I* was a written source from the beginning. It essentially was a gloss of the Chanson and would not have been recounted orally and then copied down, but transcribed or written directly by the clergy of Saint-Denis. This account tries to legitimize the Chanson by writing in prose Latin but authenticates itself by structuring itself as an eye-witness account, even while it makes clear reference to some kind of *estoire* or (hi)story (Le Turpin Français 14).²

*La Chanson de Roland*, at least on after a first reading, gives an unambiguous representation of France and its central role in the advancement of Christendom. By looking more closely at the work and at supplementary texts, I saw the relationship between *peuple* and *nation* problematized. I will begin by discussing definitions of “La Dulce France” in this seminal text and implications of its anachronistic qualities. Any reader of the Chanson should be aware that “La France” as it is figured in the text is an extra-literary imposition. The text mentions that the Frankish empire expanded by military conquest, but its concept of “France” has no origins. This is not because it was conceived necessarily as essentialist but because “La Dulce France” was the embodiment

² Dr. Claire Goldstein informed me that the term for this is "auctoritas", and that the credibility of a Medieval or Renaissance text was based upon a direct link between it and established "authorities", usually the bible or classical works.
of Christian values, not an inheritor of them. However, the question of intention and oversight must be brought to bear on the work. The Chanson could have undergone countless stages of redaction, transcription, and public readings, all of which were susceptible to conscious and unconscious content editing.

The legend was originally recounted orally, though written chronicles predate the extant written version of the Oxford Chanson de Roland. The Vita Caroli, written in the 8th century by Eihard, an adviser to Charlemagne, and a French version, written by Wace in 1160, called the Geste des Normanz, became very popular (“Priest Konrad’s Song of Roland” 2). Some scholars argue that works such as the La Chanson de Roland were composed without reference to these written forms. The date of composition is impossible to determine exactly, but Ian Short places it at 1086 (“La Chanson de Roland 10”). With the innovations made by jongleurs, performers who recited these legends from memories relying only on prompting techniques (Duggan “The Epic” 19), vignettes that recounted individual feats of heroes became an extended body of texts and oral accounts which cited itself and drew from different versions. For this reason I will refer to the author of this version in the plural form, acknowledging that contributors included Turold, author or translator of a previous version (“La Chanson de Roland” 258-9), the transcriber(s), performers and even the audience, who as Joyce Coleman argues, would have been able to change the tone and plot of their story based on its reactions (29).

Because many individuals reworked the oral narrative through out the process of performance and transcription, the reader should not approach the works in question as “objective” historical accounts. At the same time, the term propaganda in its conventional
The Old French word “estoire” means both history and story (Blumenfeld-Kosinski 77), and what today is called fiction blended itself with facts because of the Benjaminitian way medieval people viewed history and time (Anderson 26-9). Anderson cites the conscious conflation of Old and New Testament narratives in an experience of time where the past occurred in the present. When Anderson refers to Walter Benjamin’s philosophy of history, he most likely had in mind his “Theses on the Philosophy of History” where Benjamin compares a painting “Angelus Novus” by Klee to how we experience time. The Angel of history looks at the past as a pile of debris climbing ever higher. A wind from Paradise prevents him from interfering, as his wings are blown back by its force. The Angel is propelled against its will toward the future, from which his back is turned. The angel views time as a single event, and humanity sees it as a progression (Benjamin 257, 261).

Coleman sides with Mary Carruthers in arguing that medievals were aware of the difference in antiquity and the present, but saw it as irrelevant (Coleman 12). Patterson takes a similar view, tying the experience of temporality to ideological forces that only periodically asserted themselves (Paterson, 198). I am evaluating the influences on the Chanson which alter the (hi)story in such a way that a particular conception of France is promulgated, and believe that class consciousness and shared identity factor in more heavily than intentional misrepresentation. I have concluded from studying the context of the word “Franc” and “Francies” in work that it contains two periods in history at the same time. The possible rhetorical strategies of the author(s) may have account for this textual feature as much as their mindsets.
“La Dulce France” is a twelfth century concept that entered the text and transformed the way hierarchical relations are represented. After a superficial reading of *La Chanson de Roland*, I saw “France” as a monolithic concept, organized by a largely uniform group of men. The Frankish empire, in contrast, bound many peoples together with military, political, and ideological forces (*La Chanson de Roland* 19). These groups are infrequently mentioned in the Chanson because they according to the twelfth century mindset, have less status, though these provincials play a key role in demonstrating the power of “France” as a concept and political force. For this reason the term “Franc”, meaning both Frank and French person, appears frequently.

*La Chanson de Roland*, as I have said, mentions for the most part only French troops. This emphasis is logical in that the main action occurs with Roland and his men. Modern historians would be quick to point out that the empire also included Denmark, parts of Germany, and even provinces of France (Blumenfeld-Kosinski 76). These regions are distinguished from “France”, (“La Chanson de Roland” ln 3026 + 3085, 3045, 3052). even though one would conclude that the term uniformly covers these other regions at all times. The editor Ian Short writes that at times the text is describing Francia, a ninth century political body, and at others the Ile-de-France (“La Chanson de Roland 36-7”). Also, it serves the author(s)’s rhetorical strategies to list these groups which have been absorbed in order to extol the virtues of the French empire as a unifying force in an uncertain world.

I had questions about the degree of status attributed to the groups mentioned. I caught a word when I reread a passage that would later interest me a great deal. “Vassal”
was used to describe the Bavarian troops in a passage that later mentioned the “baruns de France” (“La Chanson de Roland” In 3028). I asked myself if these troops were subject to the French/Franks, and if there were any reason to project power over the German states, or Holy Roman Empire. I found that this word was also used fairly often, and it was an expression of social reality and was not necessarily pejorative. Feudal relations were based upon reciprocity between lord and vassal, vassal meaning a noble who participated in matters of state (“La Chanson de Roland p. 266”). When troops from far-away parts of the empire are referred to as vassals, the use of the word does not necessarily express supremacy of the French conquerors. The reference may simply reflect that the men have been incorporated into the larger framework of the empire. It is clear from the text that all of the troops are under the control of the Frankish ruler. There is, in fact, no political distinction between barun, which refers to a French troop, and vassal, which refers to a Bavarian. Bradley-Cromey develops this relationship more fully, but it does not entirely relate to my topic.

As I studied the passage, which extends from laisse 215 to 226, I noticed a hierarchy that becomes apparent on a textual level. I concluded after analyzing the repetition in a key passage, where Charlemagne’s troops form up to take revenge for Roland’s death, that there was a complex ceremony taking place where authority was delegated to form troops and then they were officialized by Charlemagne. The form is more complete in the first laisse, where Charlemagne personally tells two men to gather up specific groups of men under them: “Carles apelet Rabel e Guineman./Ço dist li reis:'Seignurs, jovos cumant…Si chevalcez el premer chef devant,/Ensembl’od vos
quinze milie de Francs” (La Chanson de Roland ln3014+15, 3019). Then he directly appoints “Ogier li Danies” to head the “vassal de Baivere”, and each successive laisse repeats this process in a condensed form by announcing the names of the corps and its leader. Charles forms the first two troops himself, and then the next seven are organized by Naimes primarily and a few others (La Chanson de Roland 3044-5, 3060-1, 3075). In later laisses, only the group of men and its leader is announced, but in the same order as the preceding laisses (La Chanson de Roland”. In. 3045,3050, 3053, 3056, 3061-2, 3067, 3069, 3073, 3077, 3083,3084, 3092). Charlemagne’s blessing or approbation is mentioned several times (“La Chanson de Roland” In. 3031-2,3066,3072). There is a distinction made between other men who established (“establist”) a corps, and Charlemagne who “made” (“faite”), perhaps accepted or authorized the group of men. The jongleur keeps the auditors up to date by telling them how many troops Charlemagne has or has made so far: “E treis escheles ad l’emperere Carles/ Naimes li dux puis establist la quarte….Li emperere ad sis escheles faites/ Naimes li dux puis establist la sedme” (“La Chanson de Roland”. In. 3035-3036 , 3060-3061). Men from different regions of France head up these corps, though at the time of transcription many of these provinces had been lost.

Nonetheless, unity and strength prevails in the Chanson. Charlemagne approves of all of his men, though he is closest to his “‘baruns de France”. Norman, Breton, Bavarian, and other troops are represented as having less status because of their relative distance from the center of power. Charlemagne delegates authority most often when dealing with the distinctly “non-French” troops. The French troops are formed directly by Charlemagne, or they form themselves. The passive voice is used twice in reference to
who made or formed it (“La Chanson de Roland” 3026 3085). The French in this last corps appear to be captains and definitely lead the charge. They come together without any direction, and Charlemagne takes his position with them in a sweeping dramatic moment. I found this use of repetition interesting because of its utility. Duggan contrasts the form of medieval gestes and romances, concluding that the former were repetitive to clue in an audience that had gathered informally and to aid memorization (Duggan 8). Here, instead of simply enabling the jongleur to remember a sequence of events, the repetition lays out a structural foundation of social relations as well as builds suspense. Could this innovation be a conscious reworking of the form of the oral work, or could it suggest that the feature is more complex and not simply present for reasons of utility? Rhetorically, ending with this troop brings in the spectator by demonstrating the unity it encourages. This is because, as I will elaborate later, the work was meant for a French audience and in a sense, this work helped create a “French” populous.

The passage obviously celebrates the power of twelfth century France, even if in reality the subjugated regions mentioned were little more than allies or alienated provinces. The borderlines of this ambiguous and fluid concept holds the shape of the expanded empire, but bears the mark of a distinctly French nation. The author refers to Gascony as “la Tere Majur”, the land of their lord. In a scene filled with bathos, the doomed men look over the Pyrenees into what is now France (“La Chanson de Roland” 819), which actually plays very little into the territory in which Charlemagne involved himself. According to the Royal Annals, he only made one excursion into Spain, an Arabic source adds that he was coming to support a local Muslim leader who was
revolting against “le calif omeyade de Courdoue (“La Chanson de Roland p. 8-9). St. Gilles did mention a battle at Poitiers, but said nothing about who won or lost (Ariosto p. 15).

The soldiers are also looking back at the receding troops, with Charlemagne at their head, who is watching them. Charlemagne has several visions about what is happening and the betrayal involved, but like the auditors of the tale he cannot intervene (“La Chanson de Roland” 717-36). It is important to remember that, because of the work’s form, the listeners are in fact spectators. Endowed with Charlemagne’s special fore-knowledge of events, the audience takes up his position and watches the ensuing battle. The listeners become involved in the action in a visceral way, and the passage’s main effectiveness comes from the ability to play on its conception of borders, in this case national borders. Regional and linguistic differences existed, as late as the 14th Century, a nobleman commented on the obscurity of the Gascon dialect, saying a poet spoke in “bon et beau franchois” instead of his own language or dialect (Coleman 112). It is interesting to note that in the Turpin Français, written over a century later, Gascony is represented as only having been recently conquered (“Le Turpin Français” 54). An essentialist definition of France, tied to a genius loci, is simply not present.

The token reference to non-French members of the empire might be allusions to earlier versions of the Carolingian cycle of legends, available to the performers and auditors through an extended intertext. Many of the characters mentioned in this work appear in the Rolanseild. The early years of “Ogier li Danies” for instance, are chronicled in a work called the “Chevalerie Ogier de Danemark”(Duggan “The Epic” 19). This
work was also reworked in a Franco-Paduan version, part of a group of works I will go into in more detail later. In some cases, mentioning the origins of an individual gives that person social status because of how rank was derived from land holdings. These individuals may have been historical figures, though it is more likely that they hearken back to earlier récits, to a time before a monolithic concept of France began to coalesce in this particular version.

We cannot form our own ideas about what “France” meant to the medieval audience without understanding the difference between “Franc” and Frank. In his *Lettres Gothiques* edition of the Oxford manuscript, Short only makes a distinction once, translating “la presse de Francs” as “troupes des Franques” (La Chanson de Roland ln 3370). At times, the term includes individuals who would not have historically been Franks and at others, either these other groups are forgotten, or they are excluded from the category of “Franc”. On important occasions, Charlemagne convokes high-ranking men from different regions, early on in the text and at Ganelon’s trial (“La Chanson de Roland”. ln. 3947, 3960-3863). This would suggest some degree of plurality, except that these men are routinely called “Francs chevaliers” (“La Chanson de Roland”. ln 247). Are these men a part of an aristocracy and therefore “Frankish”? During the battle where Roland dies, the French soldiers, who on some level stand in for the chorus or audience lament the deaths of Guiun de Saisonie (Saxony) and Duc Austorge, who held land on the Rhône, in fact they are called “li nostre”, “our men” (“La Chanson de Roland” 1580-85).

3 Interestingly enough, they were also called “Seignurs barons” (180) perhaps signifying that high-ranking officials were Frankish.
These men must have been included into the category of “Franc” in some way, or else simply forgotten because “France”, at least in this text is a concept that does not contain any internal contradictions. At Ganelon’s trial, Charlemagne refers to the lost men as “mes Franceis” (“La Chanson de Roland” 3742-3). He most likely meant that his best men, not simply his best Franks, were taken from him when he says after finding Roland and his troops dead that “De France dulce m’unt tolüe la flur” (La Chanson de Roland 2431). These best men, though some were obviously Frankish, were all “French”, both as members of a Frankish empire and characters in a French cultural production. Most of the central figures involved in the work are “French”, at least in a modern sense, though one might ask if “Engelers, li Guascuinz de Burdele” (“La Chanson de Roland” 264, 1289) was considered French or distinctly different. What does this name represent, “The Gascon of Bordeaux” since names were commonly tied to the land. His barons, with the exception of “Ogier li Danies” (“La Chanson de Roland”. In 170, 3033), come from different provinces that, at the time of the work’s transcription, were loosely affiliated with France. There may be considerations of class involved as well. When I bring in a later work, the Pseudo-Turpin, I will look at how nobility, piety, and the term “franceis” become fused.

Representing “France” as a political entity larger than life and contradictorily plural and monolithic demonstrates the political ideology advanced by the text. Knowingly or not, the author(s) fuse the Carolingian empire with an idealized contemporary France. At the time of the work’s creation or transcription, France was limited to the Ile-de-France, with other regions paying tribute to it or England, newly
made a rival after the remarriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine (Huchet 36). Mentioning Brittany, Normandy, and even England as conquered lands (“La Chanson de Roland”. In 2322-2334) helps the author create a sense of France’s power vicariously through representing this ultimately Catholic, and therefore supposedly universal, empire.

IV. Christians v. Saracens: Definitions of “La France” Derived Oppositionally

The battle at Ronceveaux is painted not as a minor skirmish or even a pot-shot taken by Basques looking for supplies, as Short contends, but an ideological struggle fought on many levels. The epic battle is given the stature of the end of the world (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 1423-1435). The enumeration of French and Saracen troops highlights their different worldviews. The style of the battle scenes underlines the inherent symmetry and essential disconnect between the two groups. In a sequence of laisses following the passage describing Charlemagne’s troops, the jongleur describes the troops the paiens have formed in a very similar way. Just as in the previous laisse, this serves to repeat and therefore underline the building action. One striking difference between the two is how little space is devoted to them. The author(s) seem to be trying to encapsulate the whole known world, from the “Hongres” to the “Pineneis” (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 3241,3254). By listing the members of the two groups about to face each other in such a similar form, the epic battle depicted between Christian and Pagan is brought to its resolution. The pagan troops are organized like the French, but they are essentially different, like some kind of negative image (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. p.
Interestingly enough, later works would illustrate these contrasting zeitgeists.

Roland is perfectly willing to lose his life and endanger those of others for the sake of honor. He could not live down the reproach of cowardice, which would reflect on his people as well as himself ("La Chanson de Roland" ln. 1073-1076, 1089-92, 1467-1475). The combination of knightly virtue and religious dogma, which has its basis in developments in the medieval European political structure, creates this set of circumstances (Baldwin 47). Roland is convinced that dying with honor is the best possible end for him because he was taught to see combat as his proper milieu and greatest enterprise. He tells his men "Seignurs barons, süed le pas tenant!/ Cist paien vont grant martirie querant./Encoi avrum un eschec bel et gent;/Nuls reis de France n’ou unkes si vaillant" (La Chanson de Roland” ln. 1165-1168). A medieval knight would have also believed that fighting for a righteous, or socially accepted cause, would give allow him to go to heaven. Roland is willing to die because he, unlike the Saracens, will be protected from spiritual death, which is ignorance of the “truth” ("La Chanson de Roland” ln. 1080-1).

What I find most interesting in this juxtaposition of Saracens and Christians is how worldly Roland and his compatriots actually are. Roland is strangely aware of the importance of documentation. He wishes, with particular foresight, to act honorably because of how histories will depict him based on his choices. He recognizes that future gestes will paint him and France as either heroic or villainous ("La Chanson de Roland” ln. 1465-6). Observe with what careful language Ganelon’s treason is depicted: “En sa
(Roland’s) main tint une vermeille pume:/ ‘Tenez, bel sire’, dist Rollant a sun uncle,/ ‘De trestuz reis vos present les curunes.’” (“La Chanson de Roland” ln 386-389). He describes the very process of seduction that he is employing, putting his own words into Roland’s mouth. The allegorical aspect, facilitated through strongly visual references, makes me think that the work must have been performed with gestures.

If posterity rejects him as a coward, there is no indication that this is in any way separate from actual damnation. To counteract this possibility, Roland stages a hagiography. Worldly renown was so completely bound up with religiosity because of how their history was recorded. The way Roland situates his body as he dies (“La Chanson de Roland” ln 2389-2392), and the procedures that are undertaken to honor the dead (“La Chanson de Roland” ln 2955-61, 2962-65 are not mere form and ceremony but indications of his righteousness. Roland is inscribing himself into the belief system by the way he turns toward the enemy (“La Chanson de Roland” ln 2360-64) and positions his hands. He is submitting himself to death, but also submitting to the idea of honorable death and the values of chivalry in the same way Marsile was supposed to submit to Charlemagne and take on Christian values, having “jointes ses mains” (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 696 +2392). Jürgen Habermas would remark that the public-ness of these religious acts are striking to a post-eighteenth century mindset (Habermas, 90), though it is completely in line with medieval culture.

The worldly view of the Saracens as it is depicted has no transcendent aspect. It is a hollow parody of Christian values, illustrated by the episode where Baligant names his sword “Precìuse”, copying “par sun orgoill” (“La Chanson de Roland” ln 3144-6)
Charlemagne, who wields a sword originally owned by St. Peter, a strange way of underlining Charlemagne’s status of defender of the faith by referencing the new church’s supposed militarism. This relic is called “Munjoie” by his French troops as they call out for the battle to begin (“La Chanson de Roland” ln 3091-5).

Blancandrin is willing to risk the lives of his own children rather than lose the worldly holdings he and the other Saracens enjoy (“La Chanson de Roland” ln 44-6). Ganelon encourages them in their impulse to bribe Charlemagne (“La Chanson de Roland” ln 570-1). In the last battle, the emir persuades his men to fight by telling them he will give them “muillers gentes et beles” (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 3498).

Interestingly, in the Vatican manuscript Turpin I, the Saracens ply the troops with Spanish wine and women, and this allows them to be defeated⁴.

These two ideologies confront each other in the Chanson, though religious debates never occur between Saracen and Christian. The Chanson, as I have said, is structured in order to highlight the divide between Christian and non-Christian, and arguably the dichotomy of French and pagan supports this the most. An obvious question: Why are the terms “Francies” and “chretien?” fused in this work? We learn from the Chanson that Charlemagne, along with the Francs, conquered much of Western Europe. Part of a military defeat involved forced conversion of the entire population (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 660, 3666-3670): Bramimunde, whose baptism is dramatized in the final passage (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 3673-4, 3980-3987), may represent the body politic, her gender marking the subservient position the population
would have taken. This subjugation would not have signified inferiority per se, since examples of humility and abnegation abound in the text and are held up as signs of spiritual elevation, notably Roland and Charlemagne. Political alignment involved a similar subordination. Marsile would have had to have converted and pledged to serve Charlemagne as a vassal as is stipulated by the original agreement arranged by Blancadrin and Charlemagne (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 28-34, 37-39). We learn that other regions of Europe and modern-day France were also conquered this way. The jongleur refers to the French as conquerors of empires, when he lists the various groups commanded by Charlemagne (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 3031-3032).

V. Superposition of Historical France

Because the author(s) subsume individuals from different origins into an idealized France, incorporating at the same time the boundaries of an earlier empire, the text appears to include two periods in history at the same time. The author(s) did not impose their worldview onto their primary source text deliberately. It resulted, as I have said, from their experience of time. We can see an evolution of a concept of France as a monolithic concept here in this text because of the strange way peuple and empire are conflated. By making use of a universal symbol, “nostre emperere” and fusing it with an intensely personal and local concept “Carles li reis”, the work is able to retain the illusion that the French/Frankish empire did not contain its own contradictions within it. “Nostre emperere” designates Charles at the head of a Christian empire, but the fact that it is “our

---

4 I have tried to demonstrate that the different words used for Saracen and Christian women had roots in
emperor”, and its close association with “li reis”, or king of France changes the message. It implies that the Holy Roman Empire had been incorporated into Charles’s Frankish holdings. Showing the diversity of the “French” Christian empire challenges the concept of “France” as monolithic only if this overlay of two historical periods did not exist. “France la Dulce” is a homeland and well-known place with established boundaries, both Saracens and Christians refer to it as a place and as an idea (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 360). It is also able to expand and project military power without compromising its essential features by relying on the myth of the Christian empire that is so much a part of the legend of Charlemagne.

VI. Narrative Interpolation: Invoking or Creating “France”

The Chanson relies on visual imagery, which is in keeping with the performative tradition. When the jongleur recites laisse sixty-six, where the soldiers look backward into Gascony, his words create margins between France and Spain, impregnating geography which is being described (in two senses) with ideology is using visual images to represent the message (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 819). This corresponds to a comment made by Zobir in “Les Espaces de la Transgression dans le Tristan de Béroul” Geography is implanted with ideology, social position is represented by place (Chernack Zovic 4-5). The text contained copious references to green grass. This image might have been used because it was convenient to gesture at the floor or ground. Though I have read that performers of the Chanson carried instruments and did not use a codified system of gestures, as did theatrical performers (Rousse 6).
Jongleurs used gestures because several times a visual cue will also be paired with a line which interpolates the audience (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 3388). The ground was referenced metaphorically as a touchstone of sorts, it left traces that could be read. Charlemagne humbles himself by kneeling on the grass, and a few laisses later, Marsile is humiliated and weakened from his injuries (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 2447-2450, 2570-2591). He discovers the defeat and death of his men by looking at the bodies and their blood on the ground (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 2870-2872). The wild grass may also be a reference to the rough “masculine” life of knighthood (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 2492-3). Considering that the author(s) of this work are invest geography with ideological and spiritual meanings, it is likely that they focused on the importance of land as territory and the acquisition of power through advancing Charlemagne’s standard against the dark forces that seem to lurk in the shadowy valleys of Roncevaux (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 1830-1).

The audience is interpolated and the margins which define French/chretien and Spanish/Saracen are expanded to include them. The author(s) chose key moments to encourage the audience to visualize the scene (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 1538). Often, the jongleur says that the audience should have seen an event that took place when it involved a death or traumatic moment (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 1538, 1682, 2023). For instance, in the middle of describing the battle, the jongleur tells the audience that “La veîssez si grant dulor de gent” (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 1622). The author(s) include the audience directly into the scene of action. This interpellation creates nostalgia and hints that the jongleur was present. In line 2573, we see other images being
employed: “Li reis Marsile s’en fuit en Sarraguce, / Suz un’olive est descendut en l’ombre”. One is light and dark, Marsile is humbled by his defeat and lies on the grass, but he does so in the shadow, perhaps the shadow of ignorance and disbelief. He later gives up even his own gods and never accepts a new system (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 2580-2591). Also, he lost his right hand, another very visual cue, possibly repeated by the jongleur with a gesture. The right hand is a powerful way to signify social relations, in the case of Roland and Charlemagne (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 596-7), and in Ganelon’s failure to carry out Charlemagne’s commands (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 330-6).

If the spoken word creates a physical space for the jongleur, it also can invoke a shared experience. Béroul, whose poem “Tristan et Yseut” represented courtly love and fits into a tradition of high culture and an exclusive feudal caste system, was said to have been influenced by the style of jongleurs, in fact he may have had personal ties with this oral tradition (Vitz “Orality and Performance” 31). He invokes the audience’s response in much the same way as the authors of the Chanson. When Charlemagne finds his dead nephew, he sheds tears and faints. His troops react the same way watching his grief, and at one point one hundred thousand men faint all at once (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 2856, 2878-2880, 2892, 2907-8, 2932). This emphasis on the chorus, or at least on collective action of these men, when paired with the way the audience is interpolated, highlights the work’s ability to include its auditors into the collective “nous” it mentions so frequently.
Béroul relies on enlisting the support of the bystanders to influence the readers, though a political message is absent. After Tristan and Yseut are caught together and are about to be executed without a trial, Béroul brings in the noise of the *foule* to underline the couple’s virtue chiefly through dramatizing the tragedy of their love (Béroul 63-4). Later, he apostrophes the audience, saying that God heard the complaints of the people, and showed mercy (66). This seems strange, given the fact that Tristan loathes more than anything the public and degraded nature of his proposed execution (Béroul 67). These two contradictory statements seem to indicate that this is a tale made first of all for a genteel audience, but that narrative voice incorporated the jongleur’s habit of bringing in the audience in a direct way. Although the original context cannot be determined, as I have demonstrated, even “low” entertainment, such as a fabliau, begins with “Oyez Seigneurs” (emphasis mine) (Morgan 482-3). Béroul does this several times. He tells the listeners to listen chiefly when the scene being played out is very emotional, as when he describes how the two lovers lay together when they are discovered by the king in the forest (Béroul 93). As I have said, Béroul looks down on other conteurs and cites a written version as evidence Vitz “Orality and Performance” 32-3). Still, his “true” version comes from his memory, not a written document. Vitz questions whether the written form was seen as dependable, even when it was cited as authority.

In the very first line of the text, the jongleur describes Charlemagne as “nostre emperere magnes” (my emphasis) (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 1). Who could this “we” be besides the assembled auditors who shared a common language? Even if “nostre emperere” in a larger sense meant a Christian emperor, the intended audience would
likely have conflated king with emperor. The word “nostre” as well as the sense of the entire récit would be lost on someone with limited understanding of French. The many references to “nos barons” (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 2871-2, 3750) also point to the particular way a performed work could create and sustain a sense of community and a shared idea of the ambiguous concept of France. Coleman argues that, instead of deterring from its impact, the oral, performative and to a certain extent, extemporaneous nature of the work created a uniquely communal experience (Coleman 29). This language became increasingly accessible to nobility in German states, Flanders, Britain, and Italy, just as the legend itself includes and subsumes all of Christendom. Because of the historical circumstances, a simple use of “nous” allowed the intensely personal and local message to eventually reach an audience with very different initial experiences of “France”, namely invasion, as was the case in Flanders and Italy (Blumenfeld-Kosinski 77). I will look at the ways the “nous” of this and related texts becomes transformed as it is translated into other languages.

I first will analyze how this “nous” appears in a transcription of a similar version directly from old French to Latin and then old German. Priest Konrad transcribed La Chanson de Roland for a German patron in Bavaria (“Priest Konrad’s Song of Roland”. p.3). The work matches up closely with the “original” except for a few distinctive features. The translator mentions that Priest Konrad wove in many more indirect references to scripture and that his imagery invokes religious themes. For instance, the matrix of socio-political contributions in Roland’s value “glory” is reduced to invoking Christian afterlife. A newly converted Bramimunde reminds Charlemagne that his son
and the other men he lost are now in Paradise and that, logically, he should rejoice in their deaths (“Priest Konrad’s *Song of Roland*” p. 103). A modern reader might see a subversive message hidden in this particular reiteration of Christian values, but no doubt the reader is meant to be edified.

Priest Konrad’s version includes the lines that flatter the Bavarians and other groups which are not mentioned frequently in the Chanson (“Priest Konrad’s *Song of Roland*” p. 27). His text does not include the line that names the French as the best warriors because they defeat other kingdoms (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 3032). In the middle of a passage that celebrates the coming together of Christendom for a historic battle, the French author(s) reminds the reader that the French conquered Europe, including England, a contemporary rival (“Priest Konrad’s *Song of Roland*” p. 84). No such line exists in the translation, and, in my view, the emphasis on the Christian empire allows the author to include these subjugated and possibly newly-converted peoples in a way that the French version does not. For instance, the work does not repeat the phrase “nostre emperere”, but elaborates on Charlemagne’s spirituality, and the universality of his mission. Perhaps the earlier French version did not contain these lines, which point so directly to the anxieties of twelfth century France, its aristocracy especially. If these lines were not omitted, it still highlights the distinctive features of the Chanson.

**VII. The Pseudo-Turpin, *Estoire And Historiography***

The Pseudo-Turpin, written in Latin in the late eleventh century (“Le Turpin Français” p. i-ii), was translated into French and the version I am working with is called
the Turpin I, or the Turpin Français. The author ostensibly was Turpin himself, who
managed to survive the battle of Ronceveaux, an extensive embalming process and
interment (“La Chanson de Roland” ln. 2960-2970), to write down a chronicle that is
meant to be completely objective. Nevertheless, the work cites La Chanson de Roland
heavily (“Le Turpin Français” p. 2) and could be seen as a legitimization of the work.
This is possible because it was written in Latin originally, which signified its tie with the
church as well as a more legitimate form of written document. The text begins as a letter
which is supposedly written by Turpin to a colleague and underlines the veracity of the
ensuing document:

..je me hâte de vous en communiquer la veritable histoire que je viens d’achever, vous assurant que mon récit est celui d’un temoin oculaire, digne de votre complète confiance (“Le Turpin Français” p. ix emphasis mine)

From the beginning, the author seems to be anxious about the confidence readers
will have in his text. This is reflected in his choice of style and language. Prose Latin,
according to Ronald Walpole, had become the authorized form of historiography (“Le
Turpin Français” p.xi). Anderson’s analysis of Latin as a mystery language supports this
statement (Anderson 18). There is a sense in which, because of the numerous editions
made to the chronology of the Chanson, (Walpole x) the author is editing a previously
written text, making it conform to the standards of the genre in question. The veracity of
the narrative is perhaps simply one of the necessary generic features of works
representative of high culture, distinguished from vernacular poetry. At the same time,
this work may owe its notoriety to its many translations into the vulgate. For instance, it
was not recognized as a “history” until it was translated in 1274, and it had to go through
a long process of legitimization by church authority (Walpole 397). The translation of
this proto-nationalistic work was also commissioned by several Franco-Flemish lords.
They resisted the growing imperialist bent of France and distinguished in the work
between “Franc” and the values of honor in combat that the French apparently lacked.
Gabrielle Speigle goes on to argue that the use of prose lent veracity to the Flemish
aristocracy’s claim of royal lineage, since “objective” historiography as we know it today
was developing at the time (Speigle 62-3, 65-6).

Going back to the text itself, there were several interesting uses of the word
French/franc, in this case “frans”. When the Saracens at Pampelune first see the French
knights, they marvel at their nobility and leave off fighting:

Li Sarrazin, quant il virent les genz de France qu’il estoient tant bel et tant bien
vestu, si s’en merveillerent molt, si les recurrent o grant honor et em pes sanz
bataille. ( “Le Turpin Français” 5)

Here we see again a conflation of noble bearing and virtues with piety, the outward signs
of which constitute its miraculous power. Later, in laisse XVII Roland identified itself by
his Frankish/French lineage but this very lineage is defined by its Christianity, implying a
kind of universality (“ Le Turpin Français” 10). For French readers, there would not be a
logical flaw, and perhaps the author was looking back in time here and fusing
permanently the temporary union of the Holy Roman Empire with that of the Franks. At
the close of the text, Charlemagne collects contributions for the Church of Saint-Denis.
All who contributed are released from serfdom, and called Franc, or free, a term that also
implied nobility, since these individuals were not bound by service:

Et cil qui les (contributions) volentiers estoit apelez ‘li frans saint Denis’ por ce
qu’il estoit frans de tot servage par le commandement lor roi. Donc vint le
coutume que cela terre qui devant fu apelee ‘Galle’ fu donc nommee ‘France’, c’est a dire qu’ele fu franche de tot servage d’autre gent (“Le Turpin Français” 45).

This is certainly a key passage, and one that fuses an extended territory, this time “Gaul,” with an upper-class, chivalric concept of France. The author’s choice of Gaul over Francia as the locus of an original French culture is perhaps another example of his editing the faulty popular fiction version of the Roland legend. This passage also echoes other places in the text where proper names are broken down and defined by often spurious Latin roots. The text may function as a medieval gloss of the Oxford Chanson and other versions. Roland’s name is broken down into “role en science” and Turpin “beau…pour ce qu’il se garda toute sa vie de dire et de faire villenie” (“Le Turpin Français” 51). Again the concepts of piété and prouesse are blended in the work.

This episode is very effective in terms of propaganda, the vehicle of the text contains many messages about what essential qualities rightly belonged to Frenchmen and how, to a certain degree, contributions to the church performed the same function as fighting illustriously in combat. This is perhaps the point in the text where the author draws the most from the Chanson; he appeals to the reader/auditor by invoking the emotional connection established by the Chanson and uses it to advance the cause of the church. He reinforces the idea that being of the “genz de France” entailed nobility and that the reader has this elevated status based on solely on his or her piety. I am not as entirely convinced that this is propaganda, as is Walpole, the editor of the edition. The intentions of such an anonymous 13th century author, posing behind the name of a 9th century individual, are necessarily difficult to establish. We can only draw conclusions
about the possible strategies involved in writing in Latin and using this particular frame
narrator. Quite possibly, since much of the vernacular romances were composed by
clerics of varying degrees (Vitz “Orality and Performance” 31-2), there was not the same
concern about veracity of the narrative, except as I have said, whether the work
conformed to the standards of the high-brow genre of “true” histories. Martin Gosman’s
essay does a good job of defining propaganda and establishing a few clear instances
where it occurred in the process of historiography. He remarks that “Des le début du 12e
siècle les Capetiens se rendent compte de l’importance de la legend carolingienne pour
leur proper pouvoir ” (Gosman 452). He goes on to point out that the term Franci was
invoked to describe both the area surrounding Paris and the extent of the Francia, a ninth
century political body (Gosman, Martin. p. 452-3).

VIII. The Roland Legend in Italian Works

Turpin appears again as the narrator of the Orlando Innamorato, written in 1482
or 1483 and the Orlando Furioso, published in 1533, but he is farcical and is not meant to
be credited with the genius of these works. I will look closely at how Ariosto cites
Turpin and his general orientation toward the body of French texts and oral récits that he
employed. In appropriating this myth, Italian authors made the cycle of Roland legends
part of their own canon. While the invocation of France as an abstract concept that
represents Christendom in Ariosto seems derivative at first glance, these words have a
specific, traceable context. I do not mean to suggest that Renaissance Italian authors
made no distinction between themselves and the French public. Except for several French
contes, which I will discuss in a later section, Ariosto’s intertext might have originally have been predominately Italian works (Javitch 4). I believe that he may have read or heard tales found in Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* or some version of his source, a contention that is supported by some critics. However, it is unlikely that Ariosto would have read Late Middle English.

My first piece of evidence, so to speak, is a twelfth century work evaluated by Nancy Bradley-Cromey. The “Entrée d’Espagne” was written in Franco-Italian, a language which apparently flourished during the High Middle Ages in Northern Italy, and which illustrates on a linguistic level the practice of appropriation and innovation I am attempting to outline in the literary canon. The author concludes from studying several Franco-Paduan works that Roland in Italian texts underwent a transformation, and that Charlemagne’s kingly image was undermined on a textual level (Bradley-Cromey 75). All of this is certainly relevant for a scholar of *Orlando Furioso*, but it also points out that as early as the twelfth century that the Roland legend had made its way across the Alps. Paul Grendler also supports this chronology. Apparently chivalric works were transmitted throughout Europe and they were picked up and reworked in Italy, where they remained popular. Oral legends of Charlemagne were circulated as soon as he was crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, but the chivalric tales that were circulated came across the Alps with troubadours (Bradley-Cromey 5).

More than half of the extant manuscript collections were compiled in Italy (Holmes 2), and there was a strong tradition of troubadours working in Northern Italian courts (Holmes 145). Only later were these tales copied down and printed. Few
manuscripts were produced, and the tales were meant to be read aloud, just as the orally recounted chivalric tales (Holmes 496). Pulci’s *Morgante*, may have drawn directly from the Entrée as Bradley-Cromey contends, but it also may have derived from countless *printed* works. In the *Entrée d’Espagne*, according to Bradley-Cromey, Roland undergoes an existential crisis when he is thrown out of Charlemagne’s court for insubordination. He could represent for the Italian public their own debates over reevaluations of and threats to feudalism (Bradley-Cromey 14). Roland transforms himself into a religious icon and conducts himself with pre-established codes of chivalry, but his personal quest and his particular social situation is original to the work. Seiler claims that Aurthurian and Tristanian legends were popular in Italy because they lacked a feudal system (Studies in Medieval Culture 5).

Bradley-Cromey includes in her analysis a textual study of the authors cited in *L’Entrée d’Espagne*, and has concluded that one source of this work was the Pseudo-Turpin, among other written and oral accounts (Bradley-Cromey 69). The author does distinguish himself from the public performers of the work and of the “flabes d’Artu” (Bradley-Cromey 10). He also states that Turpin came to him in a dream and recounted the tale:

Savez por quoi vos ai l’estorie començée?/ L’arcivesque Trepins, qi tant feri de spee,/ En scrist mist de sa man l’istorie croniquee:…une noit en dornand me vint en avisee/ L’arcevesque meïme, cum la carte aprestee:/ Comanda moi e dist, avant sa deseveee/ Que por l’amor saint Jaqes fust l’estorie rime (‘Entrée d’Espagne’ lais iii 46-8 + 50-3)

Is it possible that the Ariosto and Boiardo heard this work read aloud? In any case, the transmission of the legend from oral performance to written secondary source to a
transcript of a second oral performance points to the function of writing and the secondary position of author in these works. The jongleur does not boast that he had read a primary source and was thereby more able to recount the tale than other, more vulgar performers, but that he had had nearly direct access to the scene of action. Any creativity on his part would have detracted from the work being performed.

IX. Boiardo’s Depiction Of France

Matteo Maria Boiardo, who wrote *Orlando Inamorato* in 1482 or 1483, also claims Turpin as his source; this is an innovation because he uses it to underline the different direction this work is taking which, as Ross writes in his introduction, mixed Arthurian and Carolingian themes (Boiardo xi-xii). This author and is one of four major Italian authors to write on the Orlando legend. Boiardo writes that Turpin composed this tale, but hid it because of the content, unlike the famous Pseudo-Turpin. Previous extant works are mainly transcriptions of oral works. His depiction of France is somewhat convoluted, and he alternates between calling Charlemagne emperor and king. I sense that he is emphasizing the global nature of the conflict and the heterogeneity of Charlemagne’s court.

Boiardo refers to France as a realm or a kingdom, not making the direct link between empire and Charlemagne. The “realm of France” he invokes in canto VII is not exactly an empire, a kingdom, and certainly not a modern nation (Boiardo I vii 60). There is not a great deal of description of the “people” or countryside, when France is invokes it is a concept, figured by familial relations and the court of Charlemagne. Rinaldo worries what will happen to him when the fact that he is unable to show up for a
duel is heard of in France, but then he goes on to mention his “House” and Charlemagne’s court (Boiardo I v 52). Even Charlemagne’s enemies use this term, in canto XXXI, it is said that the French court will be defeated, emphasizing the importance of Charles’s nobles, of diverse origins. The invasion grips all of Christendom, including Italy, England and France (Boiardo I xvii 3). Later in this canto, the Saracens are said to beleaguer Charlemagne specifically, as if he were a kind of representative. In canto xxii, Charles the emperor brings along with him the flower of Christendom, peers from France, Hungary and Germany (Boiardo I xxiii 15). Roland in this canto is called the “flower of France” (Boiardo I xxiii 59). It is possible that this parallelism was intended to represent the contributing contingents of the empire, though perhaps it is merely indicative of Boiardo’s manner of composition.

In another episode that recalls the Chanson, the Saracens march through the Pyrenees and look down on Gascony, another episode that reminds me of the Chanson. Boiardo mentions here that in this battle between the French and Spanish king, contingents from their two realms come to their aid (Boiardo II xxix 23). When Rodomante attacks at Monaco, legions from both France and Italy defend the region (Boiardo II vi 53). In stanza 58, the Lombard’s are referenced specifically. Charles brings Christian powers with him for the battle under the fleur de lys, or zigolo doro (Boiardo, II xv 12-14).

Boiardo’s description comprises a kind of federation of Christian lands organized in this period of crisis by Charlemagne. The translation I am referring to does not make the distinction between Frank and French person, and I have supplemented the work with
an Italian/English dictionary. Charles is called France’s emperor in the translation, the original calls him “imperator di Franza”, which could mean “from France” as well. He is also referred to as the king of France (Boiardo I xv 14). In Book I, canto xxi stanza 8 he is referred to as ”emperor Charles, king of France” (Boiardo xxi 8). This language seems to mirror the Chanson’s “Carles le reis, nostre emperere magnes” (“La Chanson de Roland” In. 1). In any case, the inversion is significant. In canto xxiv, Boiardo’s narrator refers to Charlemagne as “il franco imperator”, wrongly translated as French emperor, the word Franco meaning frank (Boiardo I xxiv 20, “Dizionario inglese italiano, italiano inglese : adattamento e ristrutturazione dell'originale ”.1201-2).

In the same canto, “il franco paladino” is translated as “the French peer” (Boiardo I xxiv 34). Many of Pulci’s references to Orlando reflect this double image. In canto XXVII, “tutti francia” turns out for Orlando’s funeral, but the tomb says “Uno Iddio uno Orlando, una Roma” (Pulci, 156 emphasis mine). France is referred to as “franca contea”, the Frankish county (Pulci Canto XXIV stanza 56). This political body sounds like one part of larger empire, and diminishes France as a representation of Christendom.

At the same time, France does signify the empire, this is why including the other contingents allows Boiardo to represent Italy as also embodying it. The border between France and Spain holds a great deal of symbolic meaning for Boiardo. I sense that he had access to the evocative episodes transcribed in the Oxford Chanson, though this is obviously not easily established. Boiardo informs the reader/auditor mentions through Charlemagne that Marsillio rules the country that borders France and compares war
breaking out there to a fire lit in a conjoining house (Boiardo I IV 14-5). A sense of
countiguity, not to mention consanguinity, is clear in this reference. Later, in canto VI, the
French border becomes Marsillo’s scene of betrayal (Boiardo vi 57). Orlando also has
strong ties to Rome. We learn he is supported by the Pope (Boiardo I IX 34). He is called
a Roman senator in canto xxvi, a possibly satiric reference given the fact that in the same
passage he hacks at a statue of Mahomet out of frustration while he waits to duel a fellow
christen knight over a wayward temptress. This scene may be reminiscent of Orlando’s
death scene in the Chanson, but if so, it is a scathing depiction of his corruption by love
(Boiardo II xvi 3-4). In the same canto, Rinaldo tells him he has left his noble heart in
France (Boiardo II xvi 31). This phrase invokes the kind of chivalry the work is
attempting to resuscitate, and I find the geographical and literary-historical location of
chivalric virtue interesting. It is this kind of passage that stands in contrast so strongly
with the very last reference to the French in the work. When Boiardo ends his book three,
which, presumably because French soldiers were at that time burning the city he lived in,
was never finished, he calls the French “Galli” and says they destroy everything they
value (Boiardo III ix). Galli is translated as “French”, but it really means “Gauls” and, an
alternate meaning is cock or rooster (Dizionario inglese italiano, italiano inglese :
adattamento e ristrutturazione dell'originale "1313). The significance of this pun is clear,
the French are both barbarians and cocksure.

X. The Depiction of France in the *Orlando Furioso*

Given the historical context I have just mentioned, the appearance of French
characters and themes in the Italian work *Orlando Furioso* poses several important
questions. Why would an Italian author choose a work that lauded heroes of a tradition distinct from and inimical to his own? Partly I have been able to resolve this by demonstrating that an extended intertext exists that includes both traditions and that Charlemagne was an Italian cultural icon because of his coronation as an Emperor of Rome. I also have discovered the popularity of the French language and the romantic tradition throughout Europe. Kevin Brownlee argues that French was a prestige language in the mid-thirteenth century, and that Italian authors faced a kind of generational conflict when working within the romantic tradition, or with works that cited French texts (Brownlee 253). Brunetto Latino claims he writes his work in French because it is “plus delitable et plus commune di tos langues”, yet he “corrects” the ending of his version of “Le Roman de la Rose” by bringing in Ovid (Brownlee 279). Ariosto’s many references to Virgil may not be his attempt to create a modern epic at all, but a strategic way to correct or reinterpret the French body of texts. We should also remember that Dante makes use of Roman authors in his Paradiso (Brownlee 282), and that he viewed France as a political threat (Brownlee 280). I am interested in Brownlee’s observations because they add another dimension to a work that appears to lightly satirize certain features of the French tradition in its rereading of Turpin and the pose of the narrator as an eye-witness. These oral narratives and chivalric tales are a part of Italian heritage. Jongleurs from France brought over the legend, which was soon retold by Italian artists. Cantari recounted the deeds of Tristano orally, and their works were later transcribed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. (Studies in Medieval Culture 14).
Boiardo may have heard these legends and incorporated the style of the jongleur into his work. Extant manuscripts feature “il petrone di Merlino” (Brownlee 277), an architectural site found in Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* (Malory p.262) and, more significantly, Boiardo’s introductory cantos (Boiardo I ii 12). Several instances of these written works suggest that the chivalric tradition being espoused was beginning to be viewed critically. In the *Tavola Ritunda*, for example, a character called Dinnan views Tristano’s lovesickness as a personal failing (Brownlee 148). He also argues that earlier versions of Italian works featuring Tristan employed dialogistic rhetoric. He would have done well to mention the countless characters in various French sources who perform the same function. While chivalry is almost universally upheld, Tristan’s love is often viewed as a misfortune (Béroul 39). I however think the love question in versions of Tristan is complicated, and am not certain that French versions necessarily would have presented a single interpretation against which to argue.

The *Orlando Furioso*, and its immediate predecessor, the *Orlando Innamorato*, have been generically categorized as mock-epic or burlesque. Because of the mixture of high and low brow features in the text. Boiardo began the process of bringing this piece of popular fiction legitimately into the court, and Ariosto added copious references to Virgil (Marinelli 85-6). Paul Grendler demonstrates that editors printed the work so as to appeal to general and learned audiences (Grendler 480-3). Ariosto’s work especially was different from classic romance because it could include classic references to sieges, something that chivalric romances avoided as coarse. This hybridization of genres points

---

5 The character of Brengain could be said to perform this function.
to how classics and French romances combined to create a new form (Murrin.139-43). Emulation of older authors, particularly from Latin and Greek traditions, was a part of the Renaissance humanistic understanding of anachronism, and the difference between past and present (Javitch 2). In light of this, it is difficult for me to believe that Ariosto’s work is derivative, at least in terms of its French sources and the oral and written works through which he had access to them. I argue that his use of Turpin as a cited source demonstrates a critical perspective on the form of the medieval chronicle, a subject I will elaborate on later. Boiardo also pretends to cite this source, but Ariosto has a more elaborate narrative structure.

The combination of romance and epic itself was not unusual, especially if one considers Malory’s work. Daniel Javitch speculated that critics who worked after Ariosto died were in the process of changing the qualifications of genre. The work was promoted as a modern Virgilian tale, and both the textual format and elaborate illustrations helped it to be popularly received as such. In the 1560’s the reevaluation of Aristotle’s Poetics changed the way epic was defined (Javitch 16-8). Ariosto’s work appears fragmented, and does not conform to conventional definitions of the three unities. Javitch goes into detail about how Ariosto demonstrates control over his text by structuring it in the fashion of a classic romance (Javitch 90-2). He found this necessary because of the body of criticism that began to build up about Orlando Furioso’s lack of narrative continuity and inappropriate interventions by the author. One could also successfully establish that, in a larger sense, Ariosto’s mission was to unify Charlemagne and his twelve peers by ending with a marriage in the same city where Angelica caused so much discord. If so,
his conception of unity still does not fit into the interpretation of Aristotle’s but rather
that of stoic comedy (Carroll 24).

I myself as a product of the twentieth century find no problem with the mix of
chronicle and epic, as in the case of the Turpin I, or epic and fabulous romance, as one
finds in Orlando Furioso but this again has to do with my conception of (hi)story. The
Orlando versions fit into the epic tradition because of its expanded worldview, and
positive depiction of conquest as well as perhaps most importantly the concept of fate,
which one can draw a relatively straight line from the Chanson to Orlando Furioso.

Charlemagne in La Chanson de Roland is an agent of divine authority, and cries when he
is ordered to defend his kingdom once again at the end of the poem (Vitz “Medieval
Narrative”185). Orlando Furioso as well as its immediate predecessor, form a part of a
much larger intertext which, despite its origins, features a number of Italian works. The
Roland legend, according to Waldman, was a part of medieval Italian folklore (Ariosto p.
ix). Charlemagne and his peers were defenders of Rome and Christianity (Ariosto p. xx).
This was a way to take the credit for the individual’s achievements but to also appropriate
the image of a unified Europe, in this case with Italy at its head. Because of the particular
ways Italian authors had access to legends of Charlemagne (Coleman p. 113) invoking
the concept of “La Dulce France” had as much to do with religious themes as literary
origins.

I am accessing the Orlando Furioso first through its ties to the French medieval
canon. In canto thirty-three, visitors to a locale called “Tristram’s castle” are guided
through a series of paintings that depicts French invasions of Italy. The Sorcerer Merlin
painted these pictures as a prophetic warning to King Arthur. Merlin was a fixture in many French medieval works, serving as a narrator in love poetry both recounting and interpreting (Kelly 94). These pictorial representations are themselves represented by a speaker who, despite his French nationality, gives a pro-Italian récit. A contemporary reader would have been well aware of the wars between Italy and France, which occurred shortly before the composition of the work and extended back several hundred years from when northern Italy began to lose political power (Bradley-Cromey 143). The possible motivations behind Ariosto’s particular slanting of the speaker’s account are easy to ascertain.

I will first outline my thoughts on the description of Tristram’s Castle and then explore the implications of other, related episodes. The scene is preceded by a vignette where traveling cavelari are told that they have to fight everyone inside the castle over its accommodations. The tradition, says the gatekeeper, came from an adventure of Tristan, a figure in, and perhaps a fixture of, Medieval French literature. The building became “Tristram’s Castle” after Sir Tristan fought the castle owner over denying him a room, and made his relinquishing the castle conditional on the tradition being instituted (Ariosto 32: 65-6, 73). Like other references to Tristan and Arthurian legend, the reader only has direct access to signs which are largely indexical. The castle’s name is a toponym that refers directly to Tristan’s wanderings, but the personage is never present in the narration.
In this way, Ariosto’s treatment of the Orlando legend is in keeping with his predecessor (Boiardo I xx 36). In the following canto, Bradamante, the winner of the jousts, becomes a witness to the translation of the murals. She meets with Merlin’s ghost earlier (Ariosto 7: 38-9) in the work, but here she has direct access to privileged information about the future, if not the sorcerer who divines it. The speaker, and the chambre painte (Béroul 23) whose meaning he describes, must be accessed by going through a series of tests, or proving one’s mastery of chivalric codes, as Bradamante does (Ariosto 33:5). In canto 33, verse 4, Merlin is said to have summoned the demons to paint Tristram’s castle’s chambre painte with prophetic illustrations. The author mentions that the painting style and prophesy that goes along with it is a lost art, reflecting the nostalgia of the genre and individual work.

For Ross, Bradamante works within the power structure and demonstrates the necessity of compromise (Ross 155). Bradamante does not dispute the rules of the castle, only their application (Ross 163). Her argument ends with a parody of a rallying cry from gestes “Christians are right and Saracens are wrong”, and she may have added this to her “shrewd” argument because of how proud and convincing it sounds (Ross 166). She in her role as knight naturally defends the woman in distress, but Ross interprets this not as

---

6 Boiardo, in his incomplete work Orlando Innamorato, tells of a magic fountain that Merlin intended Tristan to drink from to cure his “folle amour”.
7 This is where she stumbles (literally) into Merlin’s tomb, where his ghost tells her she will found a dynastic line. His account is interpreted by the sorceress Melissa.
8 Here we can find a passing description of a similar room decorated with paintings in the Tristan of Béroul, a possible intertextual connection.
a kind of role playing but a sign of her subordination to the authority of the local positive law in question. Ross claims that Ariosto had Tristan try to teach Clorindo a lesson on hospitality, but that he, the son of the founder of French law, only understood brute force and missed the point. Ross goes on to conclude that, because this canto was added in the last edition of the poem, when invasions of Italy were beginning anew, that the political message is more underlined (Ross 157).

Bradamante finds a way to survive within the castle without breaking its laws overtly. Other versions of this episode in the French tradition have more violent interchanges, for instance, Tristram has to slay the keeper of the Castle Pleure to end a similar practice (Malory 189-90). The most important aspect of this passage is how the structure of the castle may represent the discourse into which Ariosto has entered. He is speaking through the narrator, and his message comes through the wall of the structure itself. This is why he chose Merlin as a mouthpiece, because of his role as a narrator in French literature. In three other key passages, Ariosto articulates his message about the lineage he is glorifying by inscribing his discourse into that of a widely popular medium. The physical structures themselves speak. Derrida would conclude that the episode highlighted how the discourse of French romance exists beyond the original creators and audience. Ariosto is able to reinterpret the prophesying of Merlin and reread the structure of discourse in such a way that he is included in it.

---

9 Bradimante displays proess when she defeats her rivals, but she is equally courtly. When a dilemma arises because she is a woman cavaliaro, she puts an end to the beauty contest by saying she entered as a soldier and the woman as a lady.
As fantastical as many of the episodes which include Merlin are, they contribute in an essential way to the work’s eulogic function. The first significant episode occurs in the third canto, where Bradamante literally falls into Merlin’s tomb. In it, she learns that she is to marry Ruggerigo and found a line of famous individuals, most notably, the Estes themselves. The audience also learns that Merlin’s ghost warned Melissa of Bradamante’s coming, and may have more prophetic powers (Ariosto 3:9). He introduces Bradamante to the prophesy and says explicitly that “from your womb shall spring the fruitful issue destined to bring honour to Italy and to all mankind” (Ariosto 4:3). He later mentions that both she and her husband were descended from the Trojans (Ariosto 12:31). Both of these effectively show how important the Este line is in the past and future, situating at the time of Charlemagne makes this an ancient prophesy, and it reaches even further back in time and latches itself to the still more ancient (hi)story of the Trojan war. Melissa conjures up the spirits who parade past (Ariosto 3:16). Ariosto deliberately makes it uncertain where these spirits come from, since their presence detracts from the solemnity and “truth” in this passage, as well as the holiness of the structure, a chapel (Ross 143). Merlin and the other sorcerers replaced references to God in medieval romances (Huchet 38). This will not be the last time that prophesy is contained in a structure and in all cases it remains within the structure of discourse. These spirits are not more inappropriate than the mix of popular French literature and the milieu. By inscribing the family within this discourse, Ariosto is able to give them the illustriousness of some of the most famous men in (hi)story, legitimate or otherwise.
At the end of this key episode, Melissa gives Bradamante a magic ring (Ariosto 3:64). Ariosto has very carefully structured the scene so that Merlin does not have to do anything physical, since he is a ghost walled up in a chapel. Melissa does everything necessary in the present, and Ariosto refers to what Merlin did at some past time, before he was tricked by the Lady of the Lake (Ariosto 3:9). Later, Melissa visits Bradamante again and tells her about her distaff line of descendants (Ariosto13:58).

Merlin carved the fountain in canto 26 a group of travelers come across, where lifelike, but mute people are engaged in a kind of battle. Maugis, another sorcerer (Ariosto 26:39), has to explain the meaning of the fountain, and then it is further supplemented by the author. These layers of meaning and interpretation are important, and I question whether Ariosto means the reader to assume he is citing Turpin here. The ambiguity in this particular situation problematizes the prophetic message, unless this too is viewed with a degree of realism. The chose of magician may also be subversive, in the manuscript Douce of Renaut de Montalban, Maugis is a spy who creates enmity between Charles and the sons of Aymon (Noble 71). Charles’s inability to control his emotional outbursts and his dignity diminishes his central role, just as his depiction in l’Entrée d’Espagne (Noble 72-3).

The frieze covering the fountain corresponds to contemporary events. On it, Henry the Eighth of England and François I as well as many others fight a beast that represents avarice. Hoffman views the selection of these men as a commentary on corrupt political figures, one that questions the real-life application of the prophesy (Hoffman 182). This fountain gives another register to the current events, and it validates Merlin’s
art because it “proves true” insofar as the individuals in question, like the other leaders depicted on the wall of the castle, exist in the recent past or present and that they conform to the critical depiction. The structure of the prophesy may be a way to deflect criticism. Ariosto cannot be responsible for his source if he has at least two intermediaries. He may not feel the need to claim authorial control over the text. Perhaps in incorporating all of these citations and demonstrating that he could set them to artful verse he was taking ultimate responsibility for the work.

X. Boiardo’s Treatment of Prophesy

Boiardo’s work contains prophesy of past events in this more distant past, and other interesting distortions of time, but they are not dealt with in the same symbolic way as Ariosto’s. For instance, one might say that Ariosto’s cantos that refer to the Rocca di Tristano and Merlin’s tomb are reminiscent of Febosilla’s enchanted castle, but no one except the purported transcriber of Turpin describes the paintings, and the messages are less contemporarily focused (Boiardo II xxv 43). In Boiardo’s work, Rinaldo enters the castle after defeating a dragon, and he learns that his descendants will ride under the banner of the Fleur de lys and knock off Fredrick’s diadem (Boiardo II XXI), a historical figure who I identify as Barbarossa who fought with the Lombardi. He disputed over the claiming of heritage and had Charlemagne canonized (Gosman 453). David Abulafia Claims this was done by an illegitimate rival pope (Abulafia 69). Barbososa tried many ploys to increase his power and prestige as Holy Roman Emperor, including demanding fealty from Lombardi communes. This may be the conflict that occurred between his
forces and Lombardi soldiers in 1158. Frederick’s failure to achieve these fees affected his status as lineal descendant of Roman emperors (Abulafia 73).

Boiardo cites Turpin less frequently than Ariosto, but the form of the citation is the same. In canto XIX, he tells the reader “Turpin’s narrative guides me” (Boiardo XIX ix 2). His perspective on aurality is similar as well. At the beginning of canto XVI in book II, he reads the canto “singly” (Boiardo II xvi 1). Charlemange’s confessor is mentioned but not named. Boiardo may not have had access to the sacred body of literature that names St. Gilles, a chronicler of Charlemagne, as his confessor. This priest is fat, slow and cowardly and Boiardo’s narrator writes that Turpin does not know what happened to him. He is literally written out of history by a fellow clergyman, or perhaps a competing historian. This aversion to priests is also found in In Pulci’s Morgante, when Rinaldo calls Orlando a friar, he means he is a coward (Pulci Canto VI).

From the perspective of the Renaissance Italian author, the collection of texts which formed the older French tradition, while it imposed itself via narrative devices, stock phrases, and treatments of the love relationship, was viewed a remnant of a past that could not be directly accessed. One concrete example of this is Hector’s armor, which was lost in the siege of Troy, assumed by Orlando, whose sword also becomes a Greek relic instead of a religious one (Boiardo I i 4 + 18).

The medieval past becomes fused with that of Charlemagne’s reign not only because the later cannot be read outside a body of texts from the former, but because both represent the same system of chivalric values and beliefs. The author harkens back to an idyllic past which, as Hoffman points out, refers to all periods mentioned and none at the
same time (Hoffman 178). These episodes are also mainly pictorial, excepting the encounter with Merlin’s ghost. What I notice in all of these episodes is that the prophesies meant to be readable for all generations are neither in Latin, Greek, or French. This may well be a way for the author to undermine the structure, perhaps even unintentionally, from within. Why would Merlin have refrained from writing, and in French, if the readers here are French, if the real readership is not the Italian audience with whom Ariosto must interact and to whom it is essential to relate the Este foundation myth?

I also feel it is significant the way all of these episodes are interpreted, some several times. The truths they relate become relational. Having drawn these conclusions, I want to explain some of the reasons behind including this kind of prophetic vision to the work. Obviously, the episodes serve to establish a certain view of destiny and the inevitability of certain pre-established events, but it also advances a particular version of history, one where neither time nor place retain their ”appropriate” form. Ariosto chooses to insert details about contemporary events into his narrative, a feature that Peter Marinelli describes as the present being prefigured in the past (Marinelli 86). For him, Ariosto was obviously fully aware of the difference between the events in the ninth and sixteenth centuries but is more concerned with “poetic truths”. For instance, Ariosto mentions an invasion of Moors and Turks. This was apparently an unlikely combination in the ninth century, but instead of referring to how other works conflate outside threats, Marinelli points out that Ariosto is making a subtle comparison between Charlemagne and Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire (Marinelli 95). The Turks were a
contemporary threat, and adding them into his version of the exemplary tale of the founding of the western Christian empire allowed Ariosto to re-contextualize the Roland legend and to set political conflicts in a new light.

Understanding the oral tradition is key to an interpretation of these representative works. The degree to which spontaneous innovation changed the course of the tale may be high, however there are rhetorical devices that show the oral roots of the extant written copies. I have noticed, for instance, that, though the performers were very involved in the récit as they performed it, they seem to push the limits of language to describe a particularly moving scene, For instance, the phrase “Que dirais-je de plus?” or ”j’imagine la scene “ was very frequently used in several different works (Béroul 126, 146). Strangely enough, Turpin uses this turn of phrase as well (“Le Turpin Français” 9, 34). The fact that Tristan makes use of the tradition and does many public performances also confirms this (Béroul 146-58). Duggan would say that the reason why King Mark did not read Tristan’s letter but relied on the cleric (Béroul 115) and that Tristan did not write the letter himself but composed it (Béroul 111-112) was because writing and reading were activities appropriate only for the clergy in their officializing capacity (Duggan 2). Béroul again conforms to the style of the jongleur when he curses the forestier and tells the listeners they would hear of his punishment in the next tale (Béroul 96). Also, because the audience is being addressed directly, his curses are most likely meant to influence the audience.

As I have said, the Jongleur was adept at emotionally swaying the audience. They were performers in every sense of the word, and many fabliaux mention their role as wits,
though they also mention their poverty ("Saint Pierre et le jongleur" 71), thus perhaps their dependence, regardless of what Ruess says about their political influence. Ariosto’s work reflects these two aspects of the jongleur. He is light in tone and yet inserts passages that openly praise the Este family.

The last lines of each canto indicate Ariosto assumed that these cantos were meant to be read aloud or even sung. The canto might be a kind of recitation, as Ariosto tells his listeners to “come to the next canto to listen to me” (Ariosto 9:9). In canto 19, he says he expects interested readers in the next canto, as if this were a public reading (Ariosto 19:108). He repeats this in canto 22, says that “In the next canto I shall await those of you who are enjoying my story” (Ariosto 22:98). What does he mean by “in” the next canto? Could he imagine some kind of sprite locked into the pages of the work? Although Ariosto may be copying the oral tradition, or envision a narrator within the text reading it for each private individual, this still points to the ambiguity between reading and listening, which can be seen as in a state of transition or convoluted. Ariosto’s orality is a kind of stylistic conceit. Considering how the work’s popularity stemmed from print technology, which attempts to fix oral communication in space and time, this aspect of the work seems incongruous. At the same time, the ability of this new form to circulate the work widely strangely mirrors the mobility of the jongleur.

On one occasion, the narrator says he must stop because he has to retune his strings (Ariosto 26:137), suggesting he is either singing these lines or otherwise identifies the work with the oral tradition. Because of the many literary influences present in the work, the narrator may be a kind of courtly jongleur or reminiscent of Homer. In canto
24, Ariosto says that “But I see that I have reached the end of the canto”, suggesting here that he is writing for a speaker, not necessarily himself, who is looking down at the page while speaking to an audience. Ariosto also imagines himself doing this, transcribing Turpin and providing the reader with commentary. In canto 33, he says that he “must not depart from my custom”, following by saying that he will end the canto “my page being quite filled up” (Ariosto 33:78). There may be two reasons for this ending, both relate to the act of writing, physically and structurally, he had set out to write a consistent number of cantos and pages.

The immediacy of the oral tradition is clearly present in this work. Several times, Ariosto ends the canto by saying that it is too lengthy or dull and differs the tale to another time (Ariosto 10:115). He also ends a particularly bloody canto by saying that if anyone wants to hear his “pleasant tale”, that they should return later (Ariosto 16:89). He seems to be commenting on the lack of pleasant details in the episode, or else is being satirical. Still, the emotional response of the audience is key to making these lines fit the circumstance. In canto 28, he compares himself to a prolix monk, who, in the same canto, was seized in anger for speaking too long and sermonizing. The humor in this comes from a public reading, where the same circumstances are in place and the same kind of frustration would have resulted. Possibly the most interesting passage is the end of canto 14, where he is recounting a bloody battle where Saracens are killed en masse. After describing their screaming in detail, he says he has to rest so that he can soothe his hoarse throat. He is certainly showing the link between performance and performer, and makes the episode very personal, almost physical. He may also be distancing himself
away from this scene of violence, just as when he uses tactics to increase the narrative
gap between himself and the landlord (Finucci 217-9).

Many of these cantos were meant to be read before a group of people, and I think
that the way the author pretends to have direct access and reveals his or her identity is
very like the jongleur tradition. The audience gets a picture of the scene from an actor’s,
but also in the visual way the performers explain situations, as I explained above.
Ariosto is in particular very visual, but what is more significant to me is that, in
describing a scene as if they are taking part in it brings the representation to a closer level
to the audience. They also are citing a source when they do this, pinning down the action
to an understandable sequence of events. An actor maps the scene of action onto his or
her body and treats the immediate environment as the scene of battle. The conscious
pose of the authors allows the reader of their work to bring the scene of action closer by
appearing in the room with the audience and saying how he or she can see what is going
on.

XI. Derrida and Citationality

Derrida developed his concept of citation to de-construct the classic, monolithic
school of though on writing and authorship. Writing, according to his essay *Signature,*
*Evenement, Contexte*, cannot be reduced to formula because of the lack of control the
writer has over the field of symbolism he or she works with (Derrida 379). Meaning is
represented by the difference between signs and their interrelations. This difference is
caused by differance, which means both difference and differing, and controls (though it
does not exist) the field of symbolism (Derrida 22). Derrida argues that all writing is a form of citation, since no one invents language every time they put words on a page. The context and order change, and meaning change with it.

Derrida asks the reader to reevaluate his or her understanding of grammar and the derivation of language, and this may explain, in part, the complexity and obscurity of his prose. His work is also bewilderingly iconoclastic; he argues for more than the need for multiple interpretations of a piece of writing with a single original objective. He rather shows that a piece of writing involves a kind of negotiation between writer and reader (Derrida 372-4). I find the relationship a post structuralist perspective on writing and the authors in question interesting, because of a surprisingly similar treatment of intellectual property.

I also think that the way Ariosto refers to the “book” he is transcribing, most notably in canto 36, where a landlord recounts a story concerning two men and their exploits with various lewd women, is an interesting illustration of citation. It is important to establish who or what book is he citing. At this point in the story, he is no longer working with Boiardo’s incomplete text. He may be referencing the popular story that may have been written on by Boccaccio (Finucci 216). If this is the case, how can one “cite” effectively a story which has been reworked countless times, even if a particular version is copied down? Ariosto tells the reader he is citing another source because it puts the “blame” for it somewhere else. According to Finucci he is also warning the reader not to read too closely into his reworking of the story because of how its
misogynist meaning is transformed into a commentary on Oedipal conflict and masculine panic (Finucci 217-23).

XII. Citation of Turpin

Waldman explains this unusual feature of the text by saying that Turpin is cited every time Ariosto is unclear of his facts. I hope to demonstrate that, while Ariosto might be interested in realism or at least realism in fiction, he does not validate any of his often fabulous claims with this particular character. It may seem that, because the mythologized founding of the Este line is supported by the testimony of characters with even less authority, Merlin for example, that Turpin would be taken equally seriously, but this is not the case. Looking at how Turpin became synonymous after Boiardo with spoofs of romantic literature perhaps chiefly because of the high standing he had in works such as the Turpin chronicles, it becomes clear that he is present in the text for other reasons. Citing him is a way for Ariosto to remain within the tradition Boiardo and the author of the Entrée began.

Some citations were doubtless meant to make the audience laugh, they are improbable in the extreme and the author/narrator is fully aware of this. For instance, Ariosto prefaces his account of Ruggerio’s prowess with this famous caveat: “Our worthy Turpin, who knew the truth but let men believe what they would” (Ariosto 23:38). This line puts the event being recounted into doubt, saying that only Turpin believed this to be true, which undermines his traditional role as the eyewitness who also benefited by having gained truth in a religious sense. Ariosto further discredits him as a source by
what follows. He says that we might “call him a liar if we heard him”, and that he was being cautious and understating the events as best he could. Ariosto’s role as an author is highlighted by his choice of tone, even while he seems to be seriously discussing the work of his predecessor (Ariosto 26:23). Ariosto may also be remarking that the fact the work was written down, instead of orally recounted, and in a formal context made the reception of the Pseudo-Turpin quite different from other works of fiction.

In a later canto, Ariosto tells the audience that Turpin wrote “truthfully at this point” that two men who are thrown up into the air come down incandescent because they reached the sphere of fire (Ariosto 30:49). On some level, even though he elsewhere insists on the validity of his source, he acknowledges that he is less than reliable and highlights this by calling his extraordinary episode true. Ariosto writes, when describing a mythical bird, that he himself has never seen one, except in the pages of Turpin. Then, interestingly, he speculates that the bird must be an incantation, so he enters back into the discourse of romantic fiction, which, unless he accessed Turpin directly and solely from Boiardo, in which case he does not do this on purpose, discredits Turpin extremely (Ariosto 33:85).

In an important scene where St John takes Astolfo to the moon to retrieve Orlando’s wits, Turpin is again mentioned satirically. Astolfo, is a buffoon character in Boiardo and his own wits are said to have just gone back into their place (Ariosto 34:86). On some level Ariosto is implying that this character did not have wits from the start. In the same passage, the author mentions that Turpin wrote that Astolfo regained his wits, that there was a discernable difference between before and after, and that he later lost
them again (Ariosto 34:86). Except for his losing his wits a second time, the account is the least likely outcome possible.

I have established that citing Turpin is a form of comic relief. He apparently copied down, as an eyewitness, a great deal of improbable and extraneous information. His perspective is questioned in these references: These episodes underline the impossibility of having a narrator of this kind. For instance, he is said to have written that there were seven survivors in an episode where there was pandemonium and it was not clear who would be spared and who would be crushed (Ariosto 13:40). How did Turpin have this bird’s eye view of this private scuttle? Did he come up behind with a push broom and count the dead? His recording these statistics seems the most unlikely thing in this situation. In a battle between Pinabello’s relatives and Orlando, Turpin ostensibly gives the number of causalities (Ariosto 23:62). The scene is very like the one in canto 13, where many injured men escape and are dispersed in the woods. How could Turpin have observed all of this, since we are to infer that he is a soldier from a reference in canto 18, stanza 155, as well as the French tradition (Ariosto 18:155)? He also would have counted all of the enemies fleeing a battle, but it grew dark and he could no longer count (Ariosto 31:79). Perhaps here is one occasion where a generic shift takes place, or at least we are to take this instance of counting men as an indication of vast numbers and the tremendous victory taking place.

Some of the references to Turpin demonstrate an impulse towards realism. At the same time, because Turpin is an acknowledged construction, comedy can come from even a plausible account. Ariosto writes that Turpin did not know the names of several
casualties, except that of a man who studied in his court (Ariosto 18:175). Here Ariosto is using him for more than a comic device, since it is reasonable to believe that he would have remembered this particular person. Still, how could have Turpin seen these events unfold? In a later canto, Ariosto pretends to have rearranged the sequence of events, assuring the readers that Turpin had different priorities but that he still “relates the whole of this story” (Ariosto 23:38). This is a very interesting way to describe his authorship, it is rather like Marie de France’s claim that she added nothing but was responsible for editing and selecting her material (“Lais de Marie de France” Prol. 10-16). Why does Ariosto feel the need to tell the reader this? Even if the object is to amuse the audience, it also highlights the role of the author/narrator and makes the récit seem more written, if not more factual. In canto 28, Turpin is said to have heard about a man surviving a fall in a remote part of Spain from other people (Ariosto 28:56). Later in the same canto, Turpin is said to have copied down a tale, which, as Finucci demonstrates, came from Renaissance popular fiction (Finucci 217-23). Here it may be a possible that Ariosto was using this overtly fictitious narrator to take the blame for the misogyny of the tale, but if this is true, then it could only be a partial explanation. The audience is obviously not going to take the reference seriously if they recognize the popular work, copied by Boccaccio. It could not have predated Turpin’s work, written in the twelfth century and supposedly written in the ninth century. The possible humor here is only accessible to a certain segment of the audience.

Why does Ariosto use a frame narrator? Perhaps he finds it convenient at times to further distance himself from the story. Again, the question of authorship and
believability are conjured up with even the slightest mention of Turpin, a more or less canonical figure. Ariosto uses these references to highlight his own ingenuity and the “newness” of this old form in the hands of the author. It is also possible, as Morgan argues, that Ariosto is merely keeping within an Italian tradition of stressing a strong narrative voice (Morgan 481). His multiple frame narrators draws attention to this feature of this body of literature as well as creating necessary distance between himself and his work. The tradition comes from the oral versions of the Roland legend, where the appeals to the audience, use of the positive with one of the main characters, and references to authority (Morgan 482), in the case of all the works considered in this essay written authority predominates. The epic narrator is also omniscient, he or she can foretell the future and interprets it (Morgan 485). This describes Ariosto more than even Boiardo with his multiple narrators and mediated prophesies. Morgan writes that the narrator is a sign of mastery of composition. She supports this by saying that an author expects more from his readers because they can flip back and forth in the work, even when they take up the pose of the jongleur (Morgan 490). When Boiardo asks the readers in his concluding stanza to only read half of his canto, which is far too long, he may be acknowledging the reader’s ability or desire to skip ahead even while he is pretending to read the work aloud to this audience (Boiardo I xii 90).

XIII. Conclusion

I have attempted to analyze this extensive body of texts in depth, sensitive to the generic features of the works in question. Close readings have allowed me to make
parallels between the style of the jongleur and the narrator in Ariosto’s famous work. Not only does such an analysis demonstrate the artificiality of a concrete separation between high and low culture, but it also helps me conceptualize how the French literary tradition was adopted and reworked by Renaissance Italian authors. I have posed these questions because the Roland corpus appeared to have very strong ideological and proto-nationalistic leanings, and its appearance in Italian works in the periods in history I have outlined seemed inappropriate. Strong motivations exist that may effectively explain why Ariosto and Boiardo chose both the form of the chivalric epic and the particular legend of Roland. The anachronisms I have outlined in Orlando Furioso suggest that the feudal values espoused in French cultural productions had a strong attraction, and may have been politically useful. At the same time, I have also found that possible critiques are present in these appropriations. The careful process of authentication, exemplified in Turpin’s narrative, which was composed as an authoritative version of Roland’s death, becomes a humorous plot device in Boiardo’s and Ariosto’s works. Fate is a central concept in chivalric literature, but Ariosto uses the mouthpiece of the prophesier and the narrative structures that make such a prophesy possible, to put forth his own, subtly revisionary history of French and Italian relations. These features present in Orlando Innamorato and Orlando Furioso demonstrate that Italian authors who appropriated the Roland corpus employed a great deal of textual strategy. Though they cite the concept of an idealized, ahistoricized France, the context they place it in changes its meaning. It is through an understanding of this context, as well as the greater intertext these authors
that we address the interrelated issues of dominant discourse, nationality, and literary history.
WORKS CITED


Coleman, Joyce. “Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France” Cambridge, University of Cambridge, 1996.


Duggan, Joseph “Modalità della cultura orale”


Grendler, Paul F. “Form and Function in Italian Renaissance Popular Books” Renaissance Quarterly. 46:3 1993, Fall.


"La Chanson de Roland" Ian Short trans. La Flèche (Sarthe): Lettres Gothiques, 1990.


Studies in Medieval Culture Kalamazoo Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University, vol 5.


