



The Song of Roland

Gerard J. Brault

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Published to observe the twelfth centenary of the Battle of Roncevaux, the event that inspired the Chanson de Roland, this edition provides the first systematic analysis of the entire poem. Professor Brault's edition also incorporates the considerable scholarly work done in the half century since the Bedier and Jenkins editions appeared.

The underlying theme of this new edition is that the poem is a Christian hero. As imagined by the poet Turolodus writing about 1100, at the time of the First Crusade Roland, the nephew of Charlemagne, had no faults and accomplished mighty deeds in warring against the Saracens. The introduction compares the known historical facts about the Battle of Roncevaux with the Roland legend, with various versions of the poem, and with the Oxford text. Christian thought and sensibility are shown to permeate the Chanson de Roland, in its character portrayal and narrative development, as well as in its tone and diction and to provide its thematic unity and metaphorical consistency. Influences of the oral tradition of the chansons de geste are demonstrated, as are evidences of the accompanying gestures used by the jongleurs in interpreting these works.

The Commentary organizes discussion of the 4002 verses into 49 units. The method of analysis is eclectic, combining thematic criticism with philology, exegetical interpretation with iconography. The 66 illustrations, primarily from Romanesque works of art, clarify key passages.

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