

Jones, George F., The Ethos of the Song of Roland (Johns Hopkins Press: Balt.) 1963

p. 162 (cont'd) detracts from Goethe's Faust, yet few doubt that Goethe wrote it or that Goethe was a literary genius. The best poets are not always the best critics, especially of their own works.

Crusading fervor dominates the Baligant episode. No longer do Roland and the Franks of France hold the stage, but rather Charlemagne and all the various peoples of his empire, including Saxons, Bavarians, Alemanni, Frisians, Bretons, Burgundians, and many more. Instead of a punitive expedition against the violators of Charlemagne's envoys, it is a holy war against the combined forces of heathendom. Charlemagne defeats not only the Mohammedans, but also the heathens from the Baltic lands as well as heretics and schismatics from elsewhere.

If the Baligant episode is accepted as an integral part of the SR, then the SR appears at first glance to be inconsistent in both plot and ethos. Throughout the song the poet assures us that Charlemagne can do nothing without Roland's aid. Ganelon tells Marsilie that Charlemagne will be safe as long as Roland and his twelve peers live but will lose his right arm and have to discontinue his campaign if Roland dies.⁵ . . .

p. 163 In like manner the Carmen states that Rollandus is the only hope, fame, and honor of the Gauls, without whom Gaul will fall. He alone is the glory of the Frankish nation: with him it was the honor of the world, without him it is absolutely nothing.

Misled by such statements, Siciliano considers Roland the hero of the whole poem. . . . But the Baligant episode shows that Turolde, Ganelon, the pagans, Baligant, Roland, Charlemagne, and Siciliano were all mistaken. Although deprived of Roland's help, Charlemagne promptly attacks and quickly destroys Baligant's huge army, which is many times greater than that which caused Roland's death. It is not enough for a poet to tell how independent one of his characters is: he must let the character prove it through his actions.

Those who accept the Baligant episode as an integral part of the SR must agree with Pauphilet that Charlemagne is the true hero of the song, no matter how much scholarly attention has been attracted to Roland. On the other hand, Faral maintains / ^{p. 164} that the SR should be named for Roland because he is always present, "present in his living person