

**STORMING THE DARK TOWER: THE EVOLUTION OF
THE CHILDE ROLAND MYTH FROM HISTORY
PAST THROUGH HISTORY FUTURE**

THESIS

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By

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INTRODUCTION

In 1984, HUGO and Nebula award-winning science fiction author Gordon R. Dickson (1923-2001) published a novel called The Final Encyclopedia. This novel formed the climax of an epic series of books Dickson called “The Childe Cycle,” which chronicled a detailed future evolution of humanity. The Final Encyclopedia told the story of Hal Mayne, a young man of mysterious origin who, through actions wrought upon him and choices he makes, finds himself leading the fight against the forces of entropy that would destroy the whole human race.

Each novel in the “Childe Cycle” visits a different point in Dickson’s future history, but the three major books of the series are told through the eyes of one single, common soul who carries an awareness of continuity through three different lifetimes. In the words of Dickson critic Sandra Miesel, the series “treats the entire human species as one multi-celled organism undergoing initiation. This communal experience culminates in one man’s pilgrimage across the centuries and among the stars. Like the race for which he stands, the hero is a squire—a childe—seeking knighthood” (Afterward 687).

Dickson solidifies the medieval motif of knighthood in his own right by using a refrain from Robert Browning’s “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” in The Final Encyclopedia:

There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
To View the last of me, a living frame

For one more picture! In a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew, "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came."
(Qtd. in Dickson 602)

Browning's poem serves as more than just a device to set the mood of a particular scene. Dickson has patterned much of the Cycle on "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." At the end of The Final Encyclopedia Hal Mayne has blown the "slughorn" of alarm and gathered his marginal forces around a fortified Earth for a fight to determine the very future of humanity while beyond Earth's battlements the rest of the human universe has amassed an overwhelming show of force to destroy him and take back the birthplace of humanity. The imagery of the lone warrior challenging powerful, over-whelming foes that is so striking in Browning forms the basis not only for The Final Encyclopedia but also every book of the "Childe Cycle." In almost all of the books he has written in the "Childe Cycle," Dickson sets the stage for one hero or a small band of heroes to take on vast armies and many times even whole worlds, without even thinking of failure. This practice of having one chosen warrior to fight to the death in a long, lonely crusade against the Saracens of the universe captures the essence of what Robert Browning poured into his poem.

Browning himself simply tapped into a mythology over a thousand years old and captured the feeling of heroism, determination, and martyrdom that filled the very first writings about the man named Roland. To gain a better understanding of the root of the Roland myth, I will revisit the historical origins of the Roland story, exploring the events in Spain that led to battle where the actual Roland died. Then I will examine a few of the

earliest works about Roland in order to explore the differences (and the motives behind those differences) between the few facts and the fiction that followed centuries later. In doing so, I will establish the literary tradition of the Roland myth with the intention of tracing its evolution as the story of Roland is revisited in the nineteenth century in Robert Browning's haunting poem "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" and again in the twentieth century in the science fiction works of Gordon R. Dickson. I will show that Dickson's science fiction continues the medieval romantic tradition begun with the Chanson de Roland and others a thousand years ago.

I will also briefly visit other works of modern science fiction and fantasy in to show that, like Dickson, many of today's science fiction and fantasy writers are merely continuing to explore the romantic literary traditions first seen in the medieval and Renaissance period. Thus, by tracing the evolution of the Childe Roland myth from its origins to the sharp edge of a brilliant future, I will show that Dickson's "Childe Cycle," and in fact a large part of modern science fiction and fantasy, are the logical continuation of the medieval literary tradition.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY PAST, HISTORY FUTURE

Dickson first introduced the “Childe Cycle” in 1959. His novel Dorsai! was published in serial form by Analog Magazine. The story was later expanded and published in book form in 1960 under the title Genetic General. In 1976, Dickson expanded his novel and republished it in a final form under the original title of Dorsai!. This novel certainly did not make an impact as a literary piece. Although science fiction as a genre was gaining some literary recognition with authors such as Robert A. Heinlein and Frank Herbert garnering critical praise as well as large sales, Dorsai! was not such a hit even in the science fiction genre. One biographer said of the book: “Dorsai! had the unfortunate effect of almost immediately typing Dickson, at least in publisher’s hype, as a ‘war author’” (Jones 6). The categorization is understandable. Dorsai! tells the story of a professional soldier named Donal Graeme, born on a planet called Dorsai which is populated wholly by mercenaries who have evolved into such superior fighters that they are valued throughout the human universe. Through the course of the novel, Donal uses his superior mental and physical abilities to overcome his enemies and gain supreme power over all the human worlds.

Much of the action in Dorsai! is war; Donal’s rise to power is as much a military campaign as it is a political one. Given the straightforward narrative and the sometimes-

abrupt writing style, it is easy to see why Dickson found himself so categorized. In his book Science Fiction Writers, John Clute makes a note of the questionable quality of Dickson's early prose: "The central character of these novels, Donal Graeme, the 'genetic general' of the first volume of the sequence, shows most clearly the pulp etiology underlying the concept of the ultimate hero, the Ethical-Responsible Man" (345-350). However, regardless of his early style, Dickson creates in Dorsai! a universe of more than just military conflict. Dickson shows his readers a future where human culture has splintered into three main groups that Miesel describes as "archetypal Prime Characters—the Men of Faith, War, and Philosophy" (Plume 255). These three "splinter cultures" of Dickson's future "succeed in uniting the unconscious/conservative and the conscious/progressive halves of the racial psyche. The result is a fully-evolved being endowed with intuition, empathy, and creativity whom Dickson calls Ethical-Responsible Man. At that point, the human organism will no longer be a 'childe' but a spurred and belted knight" (255). In fleshing out these concepts, Dickson wrote No Room for Man in 1962, which was later republished as Necromancer (Jones 2). Necromancer finds Donal Graeme reincarnated hundreds of years earlier than the events in Dorsai!, in a body with one arm and on an Earth on the verge of bursting into the stars. Under the name of Paul Formain, Donal Graeme attempts to gain control of his empathic powers in one more step toward becoming the Ethical-Responsible Man. As Donal Graeme, he was never able to be anything less than superhuman, so his actions were those of a parent controlling billions of children. As Formain, he wants to learn to understand humanity. It is in this book that the roots of the future Splinter Cultures are explored so fully—the powers of military might, religious fanaticism, and mythic philosophy (which harnesses

the tools of psychology) each define their own movements that soon will sweep across the face of an overpopulated planet.

Although Dickson has written several novels in the “Childe Cycle,” The Final Encyclopedia is the only other work beside Dorsai! and Necromancer to directly advance the Donal Graeme story. In Encyclopedia, Donal re-incarnates himself a third and presumably final time as Hal Mayne. Young Hal is tutored by members of all three Splinter Cultures—a Dorsai mercenary, a religious fanatic from the Friendlies, and a philosopher-mage from the mysterious Exotics. A lifetime after Donal Graeme, the human universe is beginning to crumble. A new force of humans, cross-bred between the Splinter Cultures, has arisen as a group calling themselves the “Others.” The group is led by a man named Bleys Ahrens, who Miesel describes as “a princely, titanic fiend out of Paradise Lost, an archangel noble even in his ruin” (Miesel, “Darkness” 687). Hal Mayne is forced to flee his protective home when Bleys has his three tutors killed. It is during Hal’s desperate flight from Earth and his ongoing efforts first to remain free from the Others and then to oppose them as only he can that he finally becomes the synthesis of all the splinter cultures and attains that point of human evolution Dickson calls the “Ethical-Responsible Man”. He at last integrates the “separate lessons of each life—intuition, empathy, and creativity” so that he can finally be an “evolved, ethically responsible person” (Miesel 687).

In discussing the evolution of the Ethical-Responsible man, one may wonder just where Childe Roland fits, and how these books relate to the Roland mythology that dates back more than a thousand years. In the introduction of his anthology The Dorsai

Companion, Dickson indicates his inspiration is historical, but not from the historical

Roland:

When the *Cycle*, from the beginning of the real Sir John Hawkwood (who actually became Captain-General of Florence, Italy in the fourteenth century) to the fictional Hal Mayne...is at last finished, it will be seen that all the people in its books and all the things that happen there are linked by the chains of cause and effect that make up our historic process. (Dorsai Companion x)

Dickson further notes that the technological marvel that Hal uses, the Final Encyclopedia, also has historical precedence:

The Final Encyclopedia itself is foreshadowed by the very real Theater of Memory, which Guilio Camillo Delminio spent his life trying to construct in the 16th century. The line of known philosophical thought runs squarely into the culture of the Exotics, and the political factors that produced the rise of the mercenary forces and their captains (the condottieri like Sir John Hawkwood) in the fourteen to sixteenth centuries in Italy (Companion x).

From Dickson's perspective, the characters and events of his "future history" are a mere continuation of actual historical events.

John Hawkwood was a real historical figure who lived from 1320 to 1394 A.D. In Hal's own words, "this present historical phase begins with a pivotal figure named John Hawkwood." Hal goes on to give a broader history of Hawkwood to another character:

After the Peace of Bretigny, when the Black Prince captured King Jean at Poitiers and England and France were at peace, Hawkwood was one of the leaders of the White Company that went over the mountains into Italy. He ended as Captain

General of the forces of Florence, two decades later.... They call him “the first of the modern generals”. (Encyclopedia 485) ;

Hawkwood, also known as Giovanni Acuto, was so renowned in Italy that even Machiavelli took note of him in his masterpiece, The Prince:

Among those not victorious, was Giavanni Acuto, whose fidelity, since he was unsuccessful, was not put to the proof: but any one may see, that had he been victorious the Florentines must have been entirely in his hands. (42)

For Dickson, John Hawkwood and the Theater of Memory are the two historical antecedents of Hal Mayne and the Final Encyclopedia and possibly even the root of Dickson’s novels. However, though he may have consciously written from a historical perspective, the literary roots of Dickson’s story itself do not flow from Hawkwood. Like that condottieri of the Renaissance, the literary antecedent of the “Cycle” does indeed pass through Italy on its way to modern literature. The literary root of the “Childe Cycle” is the myth of Roland evident in Robert Browning’s poem. Browning, in turn, was inspired by an English fairy tale in which Roland seeks to rescue his sister from the dark tower of the Elfkings. However, the fairy tale itself has its origins in the deeper literary tradition of Roland. By the time Browning wrote his poem, Roland had become such a huge literary figure throughout the continent that his mythology permeated all of European literature. There is no doubt that Browning, like Shakespeare, believed his audience would understand the reference. The Roland of literature is a larger-than-life figure, a paragon of knightly virtuousness and bravery whose deeds have been celebrated from France to the heart of Italy.

Browning’s poem “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” is a dramatic monologue of bleak, desolate determination about a knight on a quest for a mysterious

dark tower. Against what seems to be overwhelming odds, the knight in the poem does not quit, but rather puts his horn to his lips and blows a challenge to all standing between him and the tower. Like Hal Mayne at the end of the Final Encyclopedia, Browning's Roland stands ready to fight no matter the odds. This theme follows the Roland myth much further back than Browning, though. From Ariosto to the *chanson de gestes* of Medieval France, the legend of Roland's heroism has rung for generations.

CHAPTER II

HROUDLANDUS BRITTANNICI LIMITIS PRAEFECTUS: ROLAND'S ORIGINS

The Roland of myth bears very little resemblance to the Roland of history, or at least what little history knows of him. In his analytic edition of The Song of Roland, Gerard J. Brault tersely summarizes the Chanson De Roland as “an epic poem that recounts the events surrounding the death of Charlemagne’s nephew Roland at Roncevaux in the Pyrenees” (1). As one of his sources for this summary, Brault uses the Royal Frankish Annals as an early description of the events in Spain. However, Brault notes that the description from the Annals, which he believes was written several years after Charlemagne’s death in 814, was vague and did not provide specific information. The annals simply note the massacre of Charlemagne’s baggage train and the counts of the palace who were in charge of it, and that the attack constituted a “crushing blow” that “clouded much of the satisfaction the king felt in his heart over his deeds in Spain” (Chanson xiv).

Brault notes that Einhard, a friend and biographer of Charlemagne, provides a more detailed description of the Spanish expedition in his Vita Caroli Magni, or Life of Charlemagne. Only then does Roland finally make an appearance, in all probability the first in literature since Einhard wrote his Vita a mere decade or so after Charlemagne’s death and fifty or so years after the Spanish expedition in 778 A.D. Einhard tells of how

a group of Christians called “Basques” attacked and destroyed the rearguard of Charlemagne’s army and fled unscathed into the Pyrenees mountains. At the end of his description of the Spanish expedition, Einhard writes, “In quo proelio Eggihardus regiae mensae praepositus, Anshelmus comes palatii et Hruodlandus Brittantici limitis praefectus cum aliis conpluribus interficientur” (54). Brault translates this line as “In this battle were slain Eggihard, the royal seneschal; Anselm, count of the palace; and Roland, prefect of the Breton march, and many others” (2-3). Others have translated the line similarly, referring to Roland as “the margrave of Brittany” (Einhard 55).

The clearest historical account of Roland, then, is simply an account by Einhard of Charlemagne’s unsuccessful foray into Spain and the casualties of one of the final battles of Charlemagne’s retreat. The description of the entire Spanish expedition in Einhard’s work is short; Roland’s name appears only once, and then simply as one of the dead. There may have been other more important aspects of this event than Einhard describes, though. Brault suggests that the amount of space provided for the battle is unusually large:

What is most significant in Einhard’s narrative is the amount of space devoted to the disaster, which not only suggests the impact of the defeat on the people of the day, but lists a number of illustrious victims, including Hruodlandus Brittanici limitis praefectus, the hero of the Song of Roland. (Song of Roland 3)

The fact that the Royal Frankish Annals referred to the event as a “crushing blow” to Charlemagne seems to support this sentiment. After Charlemagne’s battles and massacres of the Saxons, and his on-going consolidation of much of Western Europe, Spain marked the end of the westward expansion of Charlemagne’s empire.

As important as the battle at Roncevaux may have been, this brief snapshot of a period of Charlemagne's reign in Europe does not provide the background necessary to fully understand any historical significance Roland may have had. However, as Brault notes, even during his lifetime everything connected to Charlemagne and his realm were becoming the stuff of legend: "In the two centuries after his death, numerous anecdotes about him had been circulated and his name intimately associated with the empire" (Song 4). Eventually, the fame of Charlemagne and his peers went beyond legend and into myth and history:

The division of much medieval literature into three parts—matiere de Rome, matiere de Bretagne, and matiere de France—dates from the Middle Ages itself. At the beginning of his Chanson de Saisnes...Jean Bodel (1165—ca. 1210) says that all historical material...falls into three categories: Roman, Arthurian, and Carolingian matter. (Baker and Giamatti xviii)

This passage is telling because Bodel was born just a few decades after the supposed composition of The Song of Roland, which Brault credits to a "man of genius" named Tuoldus, who, "living in France about 1100...composed the work known today as the Song of Roland" (Brault 4). By the time Tuoldus composed his opus, the story of Roland had already grown and transformed far beyond historical fact.

As with all things human, the story of Roland is also one of politics—not just Roland's politics, but those of his world and the world of Tuoldus and all the authors that came after who wrote about the Roland myth. "There is...no need to drag politics into literary theory...it has been there from the beginning," Terry Eagleton says in his Literary Theory. Although he discusses more modern ideas of literary theory, Eagleton points out that literature in general is a part of the political world, when political is

defined as: “the way we organize our social life together, and the power relations which this involves” (169).

This perspective is useful in trying to understand the world in which the “historical” figure of Roland lived, and the worlds from which his many literary incarnations evolved. The historical Roland’s world, for all intents and purposes, started with the final collapse of Rome as an empire. In the early fifth century a Visigoth leader named Alaric appeared before Rome and “extorted a danegeld from Rome; in 419 he reappeared before the ‘Eternal City’ and put it to sack” (Cary and Schullard 551). This event marked the end of the Roman Empire in the West and created a power vacuum in Europe.

During this period of upheaval in Italy, provinces in Gaul that had once been firmly held by Rome began to change hands as, “between 406 and 419 northern Gaul was definitively conquered by the Franks, eastern Gaul by...the Burgundians, and Spain by the Suebi and Vandals” (Cary and Schullard 551). The Frankish ascendancy in Europe is the historical means by which the Carolingian empire came into being. From this ascendancy rose the setting for the birth of the Childe Roland mythology. In his history of ninth and tenth-century Europe, Geoffrey Barraclough describes the “Salian Franks” as a barbarian tribe that “swept down in the fifth century from the region between the Meuse and the Rhine and occupied northern Gaul as far as the river of Loire.” He further describes how the warrior Clovis created the Frankish kingdom and founded the Merovingian dynasty whose rule lasted several centuries until 751 (12). Einhard, Charlemagne’s biographer and personal friend, describes the Merovingians as having

“ruled until the time of King Hilderich. Hilderich was deposed, tonsured, and sent to a monastery by the command of the Roman Pope Stephen” (35).

The details of how Charlemagne’s father wrested power from the Merovingian kings and how Charlemagne himself gained the throne and eventually unified much of Western Europe into the Holy Roman Empire are not as important as the simple fact that Charlemagne and his Frankish people came from a region on the border of what is now Northern France and Southern Germany. Charlemagne’s capital of Aix (now Aachen) is located in modern Germany, and the Frankish language itself was definitely German: “Its [the Frankish nobility’s] speech was German, and Charles the Great himself certainly used normally the Frankish tongue” (Barraclough 22). Another historian writes of Charlemagne:

His birth as Frank was pure German; his favourite home of Aachen or Aix-la-Chapelle was a purely German home... He was a German conqueror of Germans, i.e. a Frank conqueror of Bavarians and Saxons.... Setting aside the Neustrian and Burgundian states, and in regarding Charles as a German, we must not fall into the corresponding error to that of those who regard him as exclusively a Frenchman. (Stubbs 35-36)

The question of Charlemagne’s Germanic origins is interesting since he becomes a hero for the French even more than for the Germans. For example, the Chanson de Roland, or at least the Oxford manuscript that is the basis of Brault’s translations, is written in vernacular French. As Holy Roman Emperor, Charlemagne also had a huge impact on Italy and his legend, and the legends of his paladins, quickly traveled over the mountains to the south to take firm root in Italy¹. Because of his Germanic origin, there must be a distinction between Charlemagne’s Franks and the people of modern day France whom

he ruled. During Charlemagne's reign, the area that is today France was called Neustria. The people of Neustria were Gauls: "[T]he basis of it (Neustria) was still as Celtic as it had been in the time of Caesar. The towns were indeed full of Roman families; the Latin language was the language of the courts and literature" (Stubbs 36).

The language of the Chanson raises the basic question of whether Roland—the historical figure—was French or German, or if the classification would have any meaning at all. The title Einhard gives him, "Brittanici limitis praefectus," Brault translates as Prefect of the Breton March, a Roman title (3). In a land ruled for centuries by Rome, in which Latin law and language still dominated all aspects of life, Roland's title would seem to suggest Roland was in fact Neustrian, or French. The fact he served Charlemagne—a conquering king from the other side of Europe—would not necessarily be unusual. There are many examples of Charlemagne conquering peoples and then placing their own conquered leaders under his vassalage. In the Chanson itself, Marsile, the Saracen king, offers treasure to Charlemagne and a promise to "become a Christian and hold his marches as fiefs from me" (v. 13:190). It is entirely possible that as Prefect of the Breton March, Roland may have been a Celtic nobleman who was accepted as a vassal under Charlemagne's reign.

However, the Bretons were not placid under Charlemagne's rule. In the Vita, Einhard describes Charlemagne's conquest of the Bretons, "who lived in a certain remote part of Gaul along the west coast and were not subject to him" (10). The translators, Einhard, note that Carolingian forces had repeatedly conquered the Bretons: "The Bretons swore allegiance to Charles at Tours, but their insubordination continued, and they rose again in 811" (126). Further, the translation of Roland's title to prefect of the

Breton Marches is consistent with other terms from Charlemagne's reign. Although Charlemagne did withdraw from Spain after the events of Roncevaux, and never did conquer the whole of the peninsula, Brault notes "he returned several years later and established a zone of Frankish influence in the northern tier of the peninsula known as the Spanish March" (1). Given that the term "March" is used to describe what Brault called a zone of Frankish influence in Spain, it is reasonable to assume that Brittany was a similar zone of influence.

The Chanson de Roland and many of the other early medieval *chansons de geste* and Romances that were replete in the medieval and early Renaissance period often describe Roland as being a nephew of Charlemagne. Einhard does not indicate any such relationship, and as Brault pointed out previously, the Frankish annals provide even less information on the Spanish expedition and its casualties. Therefore his supposed relationship with Charlemagne is an ambiguous proof at best.

Brault quotes one of the great authorities on the Roland legend, Bedier, in his notes on the introduction of Song of Roland: "In the poem Roland is a Franc de France, not a Breton" (339). Although this statement does not support Roland's supposed relationship to Charlemagne, it does make his role as a high-ranking member of Charlemagne's court more reasonable and establishes Roland himself as thoroughly Frankish. However, Roland's historical origins and nationality (if we can use the word when nations as we know them did not exist) dwindle into insignificance under the assault of legend and literature that will carry his name through the next thousand years.

CHAPTER III

SONGS AND CHRONICLES: LA CHANSON DE ROLAND AND ITS IMITATORS

In his book The Normans and the Norman Conquest, R. Allen Brown notes an interesting legend that supposedly took place at the Battle of Hastings. According to Brown, a minstrel named Taillefer rode forth before the army of William the Conqueror in 1066 and sang songs of Roland at Roncesvaux while swinging his sword as a means of encouraging and exciting the Norman troops. In the introduction of a translation of The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Portiers, R.H.C. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall, in a footnote, state that Henry of Huntingdon and Wace both mention Taillefer, who first appears in the twelfth century (xxxii). The legend of Taillefer is startling proof of the pervasiveness of the Roland myth throughout Europe by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when William the Conqueror took England and the first written songs and chronicles pertaining to Roland appeared. La Chanson de Roland (Song of Roland) is one of the earliest, if not first, literary works making up the Roland legend, and the literary root from which the legend grew throughout Europe.

La Chanson de Roland is concerned almost entirely with the battle of Roncevaux in Spain, either with the events leading to the battle, occurring during the battle, or resulting from the battle. Although several versions of the Chanson survive in manuscript form, as Brault states, "Scholars have established the relationship between the

extant manuscripts of the Roland and, in general, agree that the copy preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford offers the oldest and the best surviving version of the poem” (Song 5). Therefore, my discussion of the Chanson will focus almost exclusively on the Oxford manuscript.

La Chanson de Roland is what scholars refer to as a *chanson de geste*. The phrase refers to a poem that exists in written form but which was composed orally and sung by traveling minstrels or *jongleurs* as they were called in France. However, opinions vary as to whether the *chansons de geste* were really developed through an oral tradition or whether they were simply written as fiction by a single author. This question becomes important because it shows where the Chanson de Roland came from. Was it a complete work of fiction with no basis in legend or history? Or did Turolus take the stories and myths that already existed and craft the parts into a unified whole? The definition of the *chanson* implies an organic evolution of the epic from oral tradition to written works, but scholars disagree about the true origins of the *chansons de geste*. They also disagree about the origins of La Chanson de Roland. Brault notes two distinct theories regarding the evolution of this epic style:

- 1) *Chansons de geste* are a traditional genre, that is, they derive ultimately from songs composed in early times, perhaps not too long after the events they commemorate. They were transmitted orally from one generation to another but were reworked by each singer until they were first set down in writing in the eleventh or twelfth century.
- 2) *Chansons de geste* are the work of individual poets and belong to a genre that sprang into existence about 1100. These authors were familiar with jongleur songs, but they composed their more sophisticated poems in quite a different way, by writing them. (Chanson xii)

On the side of those who believed the work was that of an individual artist, Brault points to Joseph Bedier's great Légendes épiques as an attempt to "destroy the arguments of traditionalists who ascribed the Song of Roland to different authors" (Chanson xiii). The complex and sophisticated organization of the Chanson would seem to support Bedier's point. Although on the surface the Chanson has only three parts—the events leading to the battle at Roncevaux, the battle itself, and the consequences of the battle—Brault and many other authors agree that there are actually: 1) the betrayal of Ganelon against Roland; 2) the death of Roland at Roncevaux; 3) the punishment of the Saracens at the hand of Charlemagne; and 4) the trial and punishment of Ganelon. Brault further provides an illuminating discussion of the many different structures that have been explored by critics and philologists over the years, along with an informative discussion of the structural and narrative techniques that scholars have discovered within the Chanson (Song 47-88).

The elements of history between what really may have happened and what Turolus writes—namely, the location in Spain and the name of the hero—seem to indicate Chanson was not written in a complete vacuum. Whether inspired by existing myth or not, it seems likely that the myths and popular songs of the day at least influenced the composition of the work. Other aspects of the poem, such as changing the Christian Basques to Islamic Saracens, indicates a conscious choice. In the end, the work is in all likelihood a synthesis of both the popular tradition and Turolus's own genius. Whether one man created the Chanson as a work of fiction, or whether it was a composite poem drawn from a wide field of popular songs and stories, the fact is clear that the poem

is a masterpiece of medieval French literature that remains as compelling today as it did almost a thousand years ago.

Compelling though it may be, the Chanson de Roland presents certain views and situations that are strikingly discordant with modern thought. Although themes such as treason and greed can easily be understood, other aspects of the poem seem troubling to the modern reader. An example of this discord occurs at what some have called the central scene of the poem: the debate between Oliver and Roland as their forces are about to engage the Saracens. As the battle between the Frenchmen and the Saracens unfolds, Oliver, Roland's comrade and friend, says: "The pagans have a huge army/Our French, it seems to me, are in mighty small number!/Comrade Roland, do sound your horn,/Charles will hear it and the army will turn back" (v. 1049-52). Facing an army larger than can be counted, with only twenty thousand Frenchmen, Oliver's advice is sound. By sounding his oliphant, Roland could summon Charlemagne back over the mountain pass in time to engage the enemy, save their lives, and defeat the Saracens.

In Brault's translation, Roland replies: "I would be behaving like a fool!/ I would lose my good name in fair France" (v. 1052-54). What follows is an argument that seems to defy all common sense. Facing an army he cannot possibly defeat, Roland rebuffs Oliver's repeated pleas to sound the oliphant so that Charlemagne may come and join battle. Roland, in a seeming fit of hubris, makes what to the modern reader appears to be a recklessly arrogant and irresponsible decision to fight impossible odds without blowing his horn and summoning Charlemagne. From a military viewpoint, his actions directly result in a disaster that costs Charlemagne 20,000 knights and Roland himself, whom the poet calls the "flower" of France.

But would the “flower” of a nation lead twenty thousand men to needless slaughter out of a sense of personal pride? Many scholars believe that the poet of the Chanson purposely painted Roland in a negative light. Pierre Le Gentil states: “The Oxford poem criticizes Roland, or causes him to be criticized, in unequivocal fashion” (qtd. in Cook 128). At least on the surface, the poem would appear to support this assertion with the famous verse 1093: “Rollant est proz e Oliver est sage” (Roland is worthy and Oliver is wise). It would seem as though the poet is highlighting the folly of Roland’s decision to fight without summoning aid by comparing that decision to Oliver’s advice to summon aid and so to survive to fight another day and defeat the enemy.

After Roland refuses his suggestions several times, Oliver says, “I can’t believe there’d be any blame in what I propose..../ The armies of that foreign people are huge,/ We have a mighty small company.” Against Oliver’s desperate pleas, Roland says: “My determination is greater because of it. / May it not please the Lord God nor his angels,/ that France lose its worth on my account! / I’d rather die than be disgraced” (v. 1082-91). Later, as their men are being slaughtered wholesale, Roland finally offers to blow the oliphant, only to have Oliver rebuke him once again: “Heroism tempered with common sense is a far cry from madness;/ Reasonableness is to be preferred to recklessness. / Frenchmen have died because of your senselessness” (v. 1724-26).

Between Oliver’s anger at his friend and the situation itself, the modern reader might say that Roland’s actions are not appropriate and even damning given the amount of the damage done. There is no hope for the French to defeat the Saracens, and it is unlikely that the deaths of twenty-thousand Frenchmen would aid Charlemagne’s

campaign. However, even with Roland's seeming carelessness and reckless pride, there are other elements of the poem that celebrate him as a virtuous person. As Robert Francis Cook asks, "Are Roland's preternatural soldierly skills, his sublime prowess, his firm statements of feudal principle, his translation to heaven, really caveats?" (129).

Cook's question is a valid one. Despite the dubious quality and intelligence of Roland's decisions, the Chanson describes Roland's actions as heroic, even superhuman. Through the whole of the battle, as he watches the whole of his force slaughtered and his friends die, he suffers not a single wound. His death comes not at the hands of the enemy but by his own agony as he blows the oliphant with such might that "the temple of his brain has burst" (v.1764). Further, upon Roland's death, "God sent His angel Cherubin/ and Saint Michael of the Peril, /Saint Gabriel came with them./ They bear the Count's soul to Paradise" (v. 2392-6). It would seem the two sides of Roland as presented by Tuoldus's verses are completely at odds. Why should a man who, through pride and stupidity, gets himself and twenty thousand of his king's best men killed without reason be borne to heaven by angels while untouched by any enemy blade?

For the modern reader, there seems no easy way to reconcile the two portraits of Roland that scholars have called paradoxical. Cook sums it up when he says that the seeming paradox of Roland's hubris against the heroism and heavenly favor do not seem reconcilable because "the Song of Roland seems to have little relevance to the theme of overbearing pride and its consequences, or no congruity with it at all" (129). In trying to rationalize this seeming "paradox" some scholars have looked at the religious aspects of the poem, which are significant: "Le Gentil, for instance, believes that the hero's suffering and self-immolation for a crusading ideal guarantees his redemption" (Brault,

Song 10). Brault goes even further than Gentil. He states that Roland's actions are more than just those of a sinner seeking redemption: "Roland's *passio* is the central fact in Tuoldus's poem: The hero's suffering and death is an imitation of Christ, and his sacrifice constitutes a new kind of martyrdom" (Song 42).

In a world with a near-absolute separation of Church and State, where in fact Christianity and religious leaders are often ridiculed in the popular media, the absolute faith which directs Roland's actions and thought is difficult to understand.

Understanding his faith, though, is tantamount to understanding why he does what he does.

The poem was composed in an age where the call of one man, Pope Urban II, tore open the fabric of medieval society all over Europe and began the ages-long struggle of Christian against Muslim known as the Crusades. Hell was a very real and literal place, and the world could end at any moment when Jesu Christi returned to winnow the sinners from the faithful. In this early Christian world, there was no question about following God's laws absolutely, without regard to one's own death or the death of others. To both Roland, and to the audience hearing poems about him over three hundred years later, it was God's law to expand Christianity throughout the world at any cost. Therefore, if whole kingdoms were to be drained of men so that the Holy Land could be reclaimed, so be it:

Wisdom in the Song of Roland implies unswerving faith in God, absolute confidence in the inevitability of Christian victory, and total commitment to the view that immediate and spontaneous compliance with divine promptings is the way to personal salvation and to the edification of mankind. (Brault Song 42)

Therefore, when Oliver begs Roland to sound his horn to summon aid and Roland says, “May it not please God.../that it be said by any man alive/that I should ever sound the horn for any pagan!” (v.1073-5), he is acting with unswerving faith that the Christians will win and that it is God’s will that he and Oliver are there. Thus God wills that he and Oliver, with their twenty thousand Frenchman, fight the massed hordes of the Saracens.

Brault describes Roland’s thought process as a type of wisdom called “Sapientia,” or Divine Wisdom: “All worldly wisdom was vanity, whereas the Folly of the Cross was the only true Wisdom” (Song 41). Roland’s refusal to retreat and refusal to summon aid though he must surely have known his forces could not win was folly, but it was a divine folly, the same divine folly that led Christ to berate the moneylenders in the temples and challenge the rulers of his people: “Roland’s unswerving determination to play the role assigned to him and his exemplary death are Christ like and were intended to instruct and fortify Turoldus’s contemporaries” (Song 43). Within this context, Ganelon becomes a Judas, Roland a martyr and Oliver his loving disciple. Given the absolute faith of the time, Roland’s decision then becomes understandable if not unavoidable.

Faith is not the only reason behind Roland’s actions. La Chanson de Roland is what Cook describes as “an ethical statement, embodying values in a framework that is no less aesthetically satisfying for all that it conveys ideas” (130). Rather than reading the Chanson solely in terms of faith, Cook proposes a historical, philological reading of the Chanson in which the reader places himself in Turoldus’s intended audience nearly one thousand years ago. In reference to critics who claim that we can never truly know the attitudes of the past, Cook replies that such views “stem from overarching

philosophical assumptions about knowledge itself, rather than from any actual demonstration that history is a total failure” (132).

The world of La Chanson de Roland may have been written about Charlemagne in 778 A.D., but it was written during or just after the age of William the Conqueror, whose campaign to take England occurred just a handful of decades before the estimated date of composition for the Chanson. In fact, William died in 1087, a year that could itself have seen the composition of the Chanson. Similarly, it was in 1095 that Pope Urban II at Clermont “made his appeal for the rescue of the Holy Places from the Infidel, the First Crusade was launched, and the chivalry of France and Norman Italy broke out of the confines of Western Europe altogether to take Jerusalem and found the Latin crusading states of the Middle East, of Outremer” (Brown 14-5). During this tumultuous time, the Normans considered themselves to be superior to all other peoples. As Brault claims, “In the eleventh century Frenchmen considered themselves to be the Chosen People, the nation selected by God to accomplish his ends, and believed that the Emperor was the *vicarius Christi*” (Song 40).

Tuoldus, then, presents this “election” by showing that “God has chosen Charlemagne and the Franks for a special task, that of establishing his rule throughout the world by means of armed conquest or conversion. This election is chiefly embodied in the figure of Charlemagne. Roland fights to defend his *los* (laws) and the reputation of his parents, of France, and of Charlemagne” (Song 40). In effect, Tuoldus is espousing a medieval manifest destiny that saw the French conquering the whole world in the name of Christ. To realize such a destiny requires brave, strong warriors. Such warriors, some scholars think, were trained in their thinking partly with the Chanson itself.

The Oxford manuscript that we have today is not the original poem, as Brault points out in his translation La Chanson de Roland. But Brault asserts that the Oxford manuscript is the best one available (xxix). Accepting this argument, we then must look at not just the intentions of Tuoldus the original poet, but possibly also Tuoldus, the Anglo-Norman scribe who penned the existing manuscript. Examining this manuscript, one scholar has pointed out certain historical coincidences that seem to augment the manifest destiny idea that the French were chosen by God to control the known world in His name. Hans E. Keller goes so far as to say that the poem we read today had as its purpose “to enhance the Roland tragedy through the addition of a drama concerning Charlemagne, in order to further Capetian interests as formulated by the political genius of Abbot Suger.” Supporting this claim, Keller quotes historian Otto von Simson, who discusses the role, if any, the Abbott of Saint-Denis might have had in the creation of the Oxford manuscript of the Chanson and what motives he might have had for that creation:

He [Abbott Suger of Saint-Denis] was not more inclined than his contemporaries to let factual proof interfere with the flight of the imagination. To realize his political aims Suger had recourse to poetry and fable. Hence these aims appear not only in the official history he wrote or inspired, but in the popular tales of the jongleurs that were launched by the abbey and soon became the most effective means by which the great sanctuary [the Abbey at Saint-Denis] established itself in the public mind. (qtd. in Keller 258)

Political machinations were as replete in the Middle Ages as they are today. Given Europe’s long history of intrigue, it would be remiss for a modern reader to think that leaders of a thousand years ago were any less sophisticated than today’s, or less capable of deviousness. In an era before mass media, *jongleurs* of the kind who sang the *chansons de geste* were as close to television and radio as the world came:

The jongleurs numbered among their many talents juggling, playing various musical instruments, singing, and tumbling, and the performance of *chansons de geste* was doubtless viewed in that light, that is, as entertainment. Noblemen enjoyed visualizing themselves accomplishing great deeds, striking mighty blows, and achieving the high renown associated with epic heroes. (Brault, Song 27-28)

In an era before nationality, when the feudal system required loyalty to people and not nations or states, Brault also notes that the Chanson had a unifying effect on Norman Europe in that it was translated into several languages (17).

Aside from confirming the faith of its audience, what was La Chanson de Roland intended to accomplish? What part of the legend served so admirably to inspire generations of people like Taillefer? Beside all the reasons Brault, Cook and other scholars have pointed out, there is one simple motivation behind the poem that all the aristocratic audiences heard, appreciated and tried to emulate—knightly courage:

Writing about 1125, William of Malmesbury relates that a cantilena Rolandi was sung before the Battle of Hastings to incite William the Conqueror's men to emulate the hero.... Other evidence also suggests that the poem had the power to stir up combatants and was composed with the warrior class in mind. In fact, this is said to have been one of the reasons that the Song of Roland was made required reading in the French schools after the Franco-Prussian War. (Brault, Chanson xxv)

Malmesbury's writing refers to Taillefer, and the effect that he records on William's men is a telling aspect of the Chanson. To put it plainly, La Chanson de Roland was written as propaganda to further either political or religious gains, or both, for the Norman rulers. Whereas Keller believes it was written as propaganda to support the Capetian kings of France and Brault asserts it was to affirm the faith of its audience, on its most basic level

the Chanson was also written to inspire courage and even an early nationalistic pride in the aristocracy of Normandy and France as a whole, and to show its readers that they were indeed the Chosen People of God, the new Israelites chosen to do God's will on Earth. If His Will happened to be wiping the Infidels from the Holy Land, then so be it.

The call for courage may have been more necessary than not. Although medieval romances like the Chanson often depict knights as fearless warriors eager for a fight, the actuality may have been significantly different. John R. E. Bliese disputes the improbable view in literature of knights as fearless, blood-lusting warriors: "Military historian J. F. Verbruggen contended that this literary picture of medieval warriors and combat needs serious correction because the knights were, after all, human beings." Indeed, one of the best examples that Bliese provides comes from a battle that occurred around the time the original Chanson was composed:

In 1102, the army of King Louis VI of France had its morale destroyed by a severe thunderstorm during the night and fled at daybreak. He [historian J. F. Verbruggen] also considered the battle at Harran between the Crusaders and the Muslims in May 1104. Although the Crusaders won, they had to spend the night on the battlefield on the enemy's side of a river. Fear overcame them, and they fled. Verbruggen concluded from this material that medieval knights had all the normal human fears of death and mutilation in combat. (2 Online)

In fact, according to Bliese's research, the possibility of flight was addressed in almost a fifth of all battle orations found from the medieval period. Would the chosen people of God flee a battle, or run away because of a spooky night spent on a battlefield?

Whatever archetypal figures are drawn in the epics that have survived today, the people of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were as human as we are today. Just as we can be inspired by patriotic music or a thrilling movie that pits an absolutely spotless hero

or heroine against a superbly evil villain, the audience of La Chanson felt themselves made more courageous by Roland's stand at Roncevaux and more inspired by the patriarchal figure of Charlemagne and his defeat of the Saracens in the name of France and in vengeance of Roland's death. Why else would the Christian Basques of Einhard be replaced with Islamic Saracens? Through conscious choice or sheer misinformation, the poet did everything possible to make those responsible for Roland's death utterly villainous. After all, how many movies or books have been produced just in the past twenty years depicting the just warrior seeking revenge for the death of a brother, wife, or in Charlemagne's case, a nephew? For that reason, if for no other, La Chanson De Roland was and still is a resounding success.

Although I have so far concentrated almost solely on the Chanson, that poem was not the only other work detailing Roland's exploits during the twelfth century. One of the other works in the century was the German Rolandslied, a translation by a priest named Conrad. Brault states that the Rolandslied and the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle, which will be discussed shortly, "are important witnesses to the process of medieval interpretation of the Song of Roland." Of the Rolandslied itself, Brault says it is "essentially a translation of the French poem" (Song 32). Even so, the Rolandslied does expand a great deal on certain points of Tuoldus's poem. The main difference Brault finds is the simplification of certain parts of the Chanson. In particular, he lists five examples. The first is Ganelon's betrayal. Brault previously likened the betrayal in the Chanson as Judas-like, but finds that Conrad is not so subtle about his feelings on the matter: "The German translator then states that Ganelon imitated 'poor' Judas who betrayed Christ for thirty

pieces of silver. Conrad even suggests that Ganelon's treachery was greater.... [T]he villain of his poem sold a large number of noble Christians to the Infidel" (37).

Brault's second comparison between the Rolandslied and the Chanson is the way Conrad describes of Ganelon—as physically attractive. Brault points out that Conrad seems to have the goal of showing that appearances can be deceiving. Third, Conrad does not hesitate to accuse Ganelon of being inspired by the Devil himself for his treasonous acts. A fourth comparison is that of "companionage": "As the French heroes prepare for battle, Conrad compares their comradely devotion to one another to the brotherly love binding priests and Levites in Psalm 133" (38). Finally, Conrad takes what is essentially a fair fight between Pinabel and Thierry at the end of the Chanson and exaggerates Pinabel's size so that, when Thierry wins, the victory in the name of justice becomes that much more miraculous.

Another contemporary work that owes a great deal of its material to La Chanson De Roland is the Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi or Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle, as it is more commonly known. For the purposes of the literary genealogy of the Roland mythology, the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle is actually more important than the Rolandslied because of the greater influence it had on future works on Roland. In fact, for the Italian poets of the fifteenth century who will be my subjects, the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle was of greater influence than even La Chanson de Roland itself. As with the Chanson, the Pseudo-Turpin chronicles the battle of Roncevaux in Spain. However, unlike its predecessor, the Turpin attempts to tell the whole story of Charlemagne's Spanish expedition: "Though the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle is almost entirely made up of these fables, it claimed to be a true history of Charlemagne and its appeal was so persuasively

made that it was generally esteemed throughout the Middle Ages as no less authentic than Einhard's Vita Karoli Magni" (Walpole xii).

H.M. Smyser, in his introduction to The Pseudo-Turpin, draws on the work of Joseph Bedier, who among others provided ground-breaking scholarship on the early medieval French epics:

The chronicle can properly be understood, he thinks, only when it is assumed to have been composed as part and parcel of a large compilation, The Book of St. James, the oldest complete manuscript of which is the aforementioned Codex Calixtinus, in the Cathedral Archives of Santiago de Compostela. The book...consists of five parts as follows: 1) the Sermons and Office of St. James; 2) the Miracles of the Saint; 3) his Translation from Jerusalem to Compostela and the Invention of his tomb after the Moorish conquest; 4) the Pseudo-Turpin; and 5) A Guide for Pilgrims to Compostela. (2)

Walpole himself describes the Turpin as a "perversion" of Charlemagne's clerical legend:

"The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle is indeed the work of a cleric...but it represents the perversion of Carolingian legend to use as propaganda for the crusade in Spain and the pilgrimage to Compostela" (xiv). That the work is a fraud is beyond doubt. The term Pseudo-Turpin derives from the fact that the writer claims to be the same Archbishop Turpin who fought with Roland and, according to the Chanson, died prior to Roland at Roncevaux. Even if the historical account of the Chanson is wrong and Turpin survived the expedition in Spain, it is beyond any stretch of the imagination that he survived another three hundred plus years into the twelfth century to pen the work Walpole calls a perversion.

However, as inferior a work as the Chronicle is in comparison to La Chanson de Roland, nonetheless it proved highly successful: "For three centuries after it was written,

[the Pseudo-Turpin] chronicle was accepted as authoritative. It was copied in hundreds of manuscripts, it was included in Latin historical compilations and, above all, after the beginning of the thirteenth century, it proliferated in a number of vernacular translations” (Walpole xv). In the Chronicle, many of the fantastic elements of Romantic imagery that did not previously exist in the Chanson appear for the first time. Where the Chanson dealt almost exclusively with matters of honor, justice, revenge and faith, in the Chronicle the reader sees flashes of emotion Roland never previously had:

The Pseudo-Turpin is important for two reasons. The first is that, in one of its seven Old French versions, we find the first instances of anger and love in the story of Roland.... Here, in Southern France, were sown the seeds of Carolingian fierceness and Arthurian passion later to blossom in the Orlando Furioso. Even more important for us the Latin Pseudo-Turpin was the source whence a great many Italian poets derived much of their material. (Giamatti and Baker xx)

The chronicle is an inferior product compared to its predecessor. Aside from the obvious fraudulent nature of its author, the writing itself was poorly done. An example of the poor nature of the composition can be found in Chapter XXV of the work. Charles, Ganelon and Turpin go through the valley and leave Roland and his forces as a rear-guard. However, when the Saracens attack Roland and wipe out most of his men, “every Christian is killed, except Roland, Baldwin, Turpin, Theodoric, and Ganelon.” In his footnote, Walpole amusingly points out: “Since Turpin and Ganelon are with Charlemagne, the inclusion of their names here is exceedingly inept” (40).

Although it is not as important a literary work as La Chanson de Roland, the Chronicle is important as a historical artifact in the attempt to trace the genealogy of Roland the hero. For, like John Hawkwood in The Final Encyclopedia, the Roland story

did make its way over the Alps and into Renaissance Italy. And, as with Hawkwood, Roland experienced a radical change in name and demeanor, as I will explore in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV
AN ARTHURIAN KNIGHT IN KING
CHARLEMAGNE'S COURT (WHO SPEAKS ITALIAN, OF COURSE)

A funny thing happened to Roland on his way over the mountains to Italy. In the three hundred years after La Chanson de Roland, Roland changed from being a martyr ready to die for his faith and for the honor of France into a star-truck lover, a knight thirsting for endless adventure and quests almost indistinguishable from those knights described in the legends of King Arthur and the Round Table. In effect, Roland became an English knight with an Italian accent. More importantly, in some cases he became just one name in an ensemble of characters acting in a kaleidoscopic soap opera set against an anachronistic backdrop of fantasy and history where any historical accuracy or truth occurred by pure accident. In the meantime, any semblance between the Italian Orlando who served in the court of Charlemagne (in Paris now, instead of the German city of Aix) and the Frankish warrior who served as the praefectus of the Breton March and who died in 778 A.D. was completely lost in the dim mists of legend. This ongoing and extensive metamorphosis that the Roland myth experienced is easily apparent in the fifteenth century and early sixteenth centuries in two sample works: Pulci's Il Morgante and Ariosto's Orlando Furioso.

Il Morgante, unlike La Chanson de Roland and the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle that preceded it, made little if any effort to be serious or religious. In fact, its author, Luigi Pulci, was anything but a religious man. According to Edoardo A. Lebano's introduction to Il Morgante, Pulci, called "Gigi," was born in August 1432 in Florence under anything but a "propitious star." Although his family had a noble genealogy, by the time Pulci arrived his father was deeply in debt. So great were their financial woes that when Pulci's two sisters married, "their husbands were added to the list of the family's creditors, since they had received only a portion of their wives' agreed-upon dowry" (xiii).

Apart from his financial woes, Pulci also had an uneasy relationship with the Church—a philosophical position that could be seen as almost an opposition to Christianity itself: "It is an established fact, as attested by the Letters and Morgante, that in spite of his religious upbringing, Luigi Pulci soon abandoned the observance of religious practices to dedicate himself, for a period that lasted about twenty years, to the study of the occult sciences" (xviii). A prime example of what Lebano is referring to in Morgante can be found in Canto V in the form of the good wizard Malgigi. It seems very obvious that, when we remember that Pulci's friends and enemies alike referred to him as Gigi—and that Malgigi literally translates to "Bad Gigi,"—Pulci is almost certainly painting a comical caricature of himself as the sorcerer: "In Morgante the poet has further developed the personality of the good wizard, emphasizing also his traditional mocking disposition. Stanza 30, 1-2 demonstrates, in fact, that Malgigi's habitual inclination to pull a prank is well known to Rinaldo" (Lebano 790). This prankster sorcerer, whose magic and knowledge of the occult makes him a formidable if not entirely dependable

power in the poem, bears a remarkable resemblance to the poet Lebano in his introduction labels an “eccentric, sarcastic, popularizing poet” (xiv). With Pulci’s views of Christianity and magic in mind, it is not surprising that the ringing declarations of faith throughout Morgante have a discordant tone to them.

Of the original story presented in La Chanson and revised extensively in the Pseudo-Turpin, some aspects do survive the trans-Alpine migration into Pulci’s poem. Roland, now called Orlando, is still at odds with his stepfather, in this book called Gano instead of Ganelon. As with the *chanson de geste* of centuries before, Gano’s treachery instigates all the action that follows in the poem. However, Gano’s treachery is compounded by Charlemagne’s seeming lack of wisdom: “In Pulci’s poem, Charlemagne becomes almost a puppet in Gano’s hands. It is in fact the emperor’s continued belief in Gano’s false accusations that drives Orlando away from Paris and gradually deprives him of the respect of his paladins” (Lebano 770).

Although the Chanson does illustrate Charlemagne’s great age, it also paints the portrait of a man of immense wisdom and faith, to whom the angels themselves speak instructions and encouragement. The Pseudo-Turpin takes a more plebeian approach, as if a Hollywood producer were given the task of transforming Charlemagne from an aging and magnificent king to an action star. Chapter X of the Turpin, for instance, details how Charlemagne personally sneaks into a city held by the Saracen king Aigolandus, then escapes a battle and gathers a great army before defeating his enemy (Smyser 25).

In contrast to an aging saint or a Braveheart-style action hero, Charlemagne fares very poorly in Pulci’s sardonic hands. In Canto III Charlemagne and his entire court assume that Orlando is dead simply because their messenger does not immediately

answer as to the count's whereabouts: "Trembling, astounded, for his nephew dear Charles raised his humble requiem to God, while in his spirit cursing the day when he left his court without suppressing Gan" (Stanza 23). Gano taunts Rinaldo, in this poem Orlando's cousin, while convincing the emperor that his grief for Orlando is misplaced. In a rage, Rinaldo seeks to strike the traitor down. In this scene we see more vividly Charlemagne's doddering lack of sense. Rather than seek the truth behind the conflict and the accusation, the old emperor shouts, "This insult is too grave! Rinaldo of my home makes havoc, and by doing so hardly honors me!" (28). All thought of his grief for Orlando evaporates in a mindless rage.

If I had to pick whether the Pseudo -Turpin or Chanson was more like Pulci's epic, I would have to say the Pseudo-Turpin if for no other reason than the Turpin contains more elements of fantasy and develops more thoroughly the story of Charlemagne in Spain. In the chronicle, for instance, Roland fights a giant named Ferracutus. Roland tries to explain the Christian faith to the giant but is unable to convince him to convert (which is not entirely surprising considering the poor argument the Pseudo-Turpin made on behalf of the Faith). The fight continues for some time until Roland kills Ferracutus (Smyser 33). Nowhere in the Chanson does Roland or any of the other knights fight the giants described in later works. Needless to say, Einhard certainly did not speak of giants in Charlemagne's Spanish Expedition. Pulci, however, cares little for history or fact. His characters fight giants in nearly every canto, with dragons, lions and sorcerers thrown in for good measure.

It is not just Orlando who fights the giants. Rinaldo, Orlando's cousin, leads Oliver (who in the Chanson fought along side and died shortly before Roland) and a

knight named Dudon on a quest to bring Orlando home from his travels through pagandom. Along the way, Rinaldo encounters yet another giant attacking the abbey at Clairmont. In the Pseudo-Turpin, when Reinaldus² encounters a giant, he is easily overcome and carried away as a prisoner (Smyser 32). However, when he and his daring trio meet the giant Brunoro in Canto III of Pulci's poem, he easily kills the Saracen while Oliver and Dudon fight the giant's army: "Rinaldo sliced so many more that day, and each one floated in a pond of blood," while "Oliver with his sword...performed such wonders you will never guess; he made a boundless pool of pagan blood. Dudon was braver than the bravest bull. Thus the whole pagan throng was chased away" (51). The Rinaldo of Pulci's poem, who is as major a character as Orlando himself, did not derive from the original French sources in the Chanson or Turpin.

There is speculation that Pulci derived much of Morgante from another poem simply called Orlando. According to Lebano, the German philologist Johannes Hübscher pointed out in his printing of the anonymous Orlando "the extensive textual similarities between the stanzas of Orlando and those of Morgante." Paolo Orvieto, though, believes "the relation between the two poems ought to be reexamined, if not overturned.... The critic proposes that both poems drew their material from another poem, a certain Cantare d'Orlando, which has been lost" (Lebano xiii). Even with their similarities, however, the two poets have vastly different attitudes concerning the religious aspect of their respective poems:

With regard to the question of religion, the difference between Luigi Pulci and the anonymous author of Orlando, as well as other authors of cantari popolari, is substantially one of attitude and tone. Whereas these authors quote from the

sacred texts with the utmost respect, Pulci, as Gaetano Mariani also points out, does not hesitate to poke fun at religion and to parody the sacred texts. (766)

Two characters who, though relegated to secondary roles, the two giants Margutte and Morgante stand out as two of Pulci's best characters and also play intrinsic roles in the poem as a whole. The first and lesser of the two, but by far the most colorful, is Margutte, a half-giant who befriends the title character, Morgante: "If one of the animating forces of Pulci's poem is Morgante's comic appearance, the other is Margutte's amoral spirit" (Baker and Giamatti xxv). In a story filled with Christian paladins and pagan warriors who either convert on a whim or are mercilessly slaughtered, Margutte is completely without religion, or any religion-based morality. In Canto XVIII, Morgante asks this half-giant, who is only thirteen feet tall, if he believes in Christ; this is how Margutte answers:

In one-two-three,
I less believe in what is black or blue
Than in a capon-boil or roast, who cares...
I believe...in the cake and pie—
The mother, one; the other is her son;
The true *Our Father* is a liver stew. (115-6)

As Baker and Giamatti point out, "Margutte is Pulci's original creation. He is found nowhere else, though of course the poet tells us that the story of Margutte came from the original of Alfamenonne, an Egyptian writer on Chaldean, Syrian, Greek, Hebrew and Latin, and finally came into the Florentine" (xxv). The two friends consume literally everything before them in their travels, from whole elephants to mythical basilisks. As amoral as Margutte is, though, there is a core of honor within him. In their first meeting in Canto XVIII Margutte provides Morgante with a long list of his multitudinous sins and

crimes, but he concludes by saying: “But let me tell you at the very end: never, never have I betrayed a friend” (142). From that point until his death, Margutte remains Morgante’s faithful friend and companion.

Margutte’s death is in itself a lasting testament to the genius of his creation. Playing a practical joke on his friend, Morgante removes Margutte’s boots and hides them away. While looking for his footwear, Margutte sees that a monkey had taken them and was trying them on: “He laughed so hard, / his eyes began to swell and, swollen so, / seemed just about to burst out of his head— / yet at that play he looked, amused and glad.” Finally, the scene becomes too much: “Margutte’s laughter reached such a commotion, / there was right in the end a great explosion, / which soon rebounded like a cannon blast, / such was the mighty thunder all around” (XIX.147-49). Glutton, thief, sinner beyond compare, the greatest testament to Margutte was not his life, but the effect his comical death had on his friend. Seeing his friend dead, Morgante “did not want to cry, but cry he did, seeing himself so lost and lone without him that nothing he would do would matter now” (150).

Morgante himself, although relegated to a supporting role in Orlando’s and Rinaldo’s drama, is still central to the whole poem. Morgante is one of three giants who torture the monks of an abbey whose abbot, Orlando’s cousin Clairmont. In Canto I, Orlando kills the first two giants and then confronts the third. In the first of a long line of bizarre, unconvincing and even humorous conversions, Morgante, because of a dream of a poisonous snake, converts to Christianity at the very sight of Orlando, and offers no resistance to the giant-killing knight.

Whatever faith he professes, though, seems not really to matter to the giant. Rather than mourn for his dead brothers, Morgante cuts their hands off to take to the abbot as proof of their deaths while leaving their bodies “for beast and bird as food” (I.53-54). When arming himself in the abbey, Morgante selects a hauberk made of “all-broken, rusted mail.” For a helmet, he finds “a big old hat of steel that in a corner full of rust had lain.” Finally, the giant arms himself with a giant sword and the clapper of a bell as a metal club. The scene is so amusing to Orlando that the knight says, “You would make a lovely mushroom. Look what a small cap upon so long a stalk?” (II.9-11). From that moment until his death, Morgante remains faithfully devoted to Orlando, just as Margutte remains devoted to him.

Morgante’s death is truly ironic. In Canto XX, while on a ship buffeted by strong winds and high waves, Morgante bails the water from the ship, then uses his own giant body as a sail to allow the ship to continue on its way. As if the storm were not bad enough, Pulci (in the form of fortune) throws a whale at them: “But Fortune, ever envious of us...sends up a whale against them suddenly: toward the ship most angrily he comes and starts to toss her with his back at once” (45). This bizarre scene, echoing back to Jonah and planting the seeds for Melville centuries later, provides Morgante his greatest moment of Christian altruism. He jumps onto the back of the whale itself and uses his great bell clapper to hit the animal in the head: “I have brought the ship so far, and now...even if I have to lose my life, I’ll see that she’s not smashed so near the shore” (47). In this selfless act, the brutality with which he has lived all his life seems washed away, a baptismal confirmation of the faith he so witlessly adopted at the beginning of the poem. Here at last is an act almost worthy to be considered Brault’s *Imitatio Christi*,

an action of faith and love whereby Morgante is willing to give his life so that others may live. However, it is typical of Pulci that Morgante does not actually die during this act of martyrdom. Instead, his death is much less meaningful. As he walks to the shore after the storm, the seemingly invincible giant meets his end by an altogether unexpected means:

But he cannot escape his evil fate.
To kill the whale, he had removed his boots,
And now, so near the shore, a little crab
Bits him right on the heel. Out of the water
He comes, and sees that, yes, [i]t has been a crab:
He gives no thought to it, but his pain grows.
He starts to laugh about it with Orlando,
Saying, "I bet a crab has killed Morgante,
Maybe determined to avenge the whale,
According to some ancient fear I had" (XX.50-51).

Thus, just moments after killing the greatest and most powerful animal on earth, the giant is laid low by the smallest and humblest of animals.

Critics have referred to Morgante as a poetical device³ and little more. Rather than a device, even in his secondary role Morgante is a central component to Pulci's poem. He is their protector, an earth-bound force of God watching over his Christian paladins during their adventures. In many ways Morgante begins to take on the same qualities as the paladins who are the heroes of the poem. All the examples of Morgante's temper, those of Rinaldo's temper are just as severe. And all the examples of chivalry shown by Orlando and his fellow paladins, Morgante, too, demonstrates. In Canto XIX, he and Margutte come across a beautiful young maiden named Florinetta. Upon seeing the young maiden chained to a rock and guarded by a lion, the two quickly move to save

her. The lion Morgante kills with a single blow of his bell clapper. In an ironic bit of foreshadowing, he says to the lion: “What were you trying, crazy beast, to do? A crab presumes to bite a whale!” (7). They learn that Florinetta was abducted and is continuously lashed by two giants named Beltramo and Sperante. Morgante and Margutte fight and kill the evil giants, acting as champions for the fair maiden Florinetta. The two then promise to return her to her home, just as any other paladin would have done. That on their journey they kill and eat a giant turtle, a basilisk, an elephant, and camel simply attests to the huge appetite they require to maintain their massive statures.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Morgante as a character is the foreshadowing caused by his senseless and random death. When Morgante uses his own body as a sail, the spectacle is so astounding that the pagan captain Greco begins to laugh. In response to this, Orlando also laughs and declares in a ringing tone that “Nobody dies where our Morgante stands” (XX.44). Eight cantos later, all the principal characters fight in the battle at Roncesvalles with disastrous results. Without their protector, it seems, few can hope to survive.

Extravagant as many of the episodes of Il Morgante are, near the end of Canto XXIV familiar events begin to occur. Charlemagne learns of pagan armies massing and calls a counsel in his capital (now Paris instead of Aix). The Franks are now fully Frenchman. But the pagan king Marsile, now called Marsilius, from La Chanson is still the enemy in Pulci’s poem. And, as with previous works, it is Gano’s treachery with Marsilius that sets the stage for the tragedy to come. Pulci plays on Brault’s *imitatio* theme with allusions to Orlando being crucified when he says: “Maybe Orlando, being old and wise, already knew his own impending fate, but did not show what lay deep in

his heart; he was awaiting now his crown of thorns” (XXVI.7). And as with the older poems and chansons, when urged to blow his horn by Oliver and the other Christians to summon aid, Orlando refuses: “If even I saw Death in front of me, with his well-sharpened scythe or with a knife, I’d not ask Charles to help me out of this: I never blew the horn for cowardice.” Later, just as Roland had waited until the battle was all but lost, Orlando waits until his Oliver has died and has no hope at all before he blows his oliphant. In a nod to the less authentic but more popular Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle, Pulci ascribes his description of what comes next to Turpin himself:

Oliver’s breathing stopped, and so alone our Count Orlando at that moment felt that he resolved to blow the horn at last to make his Carlo of his case aware: so hard he blew, the sound reached Carlo’s ears; but through his mouth and nose his blood came out—Turpin has said—and the horn cracked and split the third time that the count blew into it. (XXVII.69)

It is only at the end of Pulci’s poem that he gives back some of the majesty that Charlemagne lacked in the previous cantos. Orlando dies after the battle, survived by Turpin and Rinaldo, among a few others. This also seems to lend itself more to the chronicle than La Chanson de Roland. Pulci’s poem was not meant to serve as a religious epitome, like the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle, nor does it resemble the precise and detailed account of Roland’s death as sung in La Chanson de Roland. Pulci wrote an epic adventure for the sole purpose of entertainment. These characters are more interested in adventure than faith, and often more cognizant of their reputations than their honor. Even so, Pulci’s poem stands as a unique monument to one poet’s humor and

unique view of the world. As Baker and Giamatti point out, “It is the tone, mocking and world-wise, which gives this poem distinction” (xxiv).

As popular as Pulci’s Il Morgante was to his peers, the poem that had a more lasting impact on the Roland legend in the following ages was the Orlando Furioso, by the Ferrarese poet Ludovico Giovanni Ariosto. Although Orlando and Morgante share the same subject matter, the two poets themselves could not have led more different lives. Ludovico was born into a rich and powerful noble family that ruled until well into the eighteenth century, when Niccolo Ariosti died in 1786 (Gardner 3). Ariosto himself was born on September 8, 1474, and studied law. Unlike Pulci, he never had creditors hounding his every step. His father was a count, and among other posts, served as a judge and ducal captain (Baker and Giamatti x). Ariosto himself led an active life that left little time for his poetry. He served the powerful Este family in many roles, some secretarial and some diplomatic: “Some of his duties were dull; many, such as the diplomatic missions to Milan, Mantua, Bologna, Florence, and Rome, were dangerous; and all were wearing” (xiv). Even so, he managed to craft a poem that survived for centuries as “the last great flowering of the troubadours” (Kres ix).

Just as Pulci and other poets had done, Ariosto expanded the Roland legend well beyond its original parameters. Orlando became more than just an epic of Orlando’s adventures and his last great battle—it became a fusion of two completely different traditions that had become popular in Italy: “[Ariosto] is said to have taken the hero in love from the Breton matter of Arthur and to have combined it with the hero as fierce warrior from the matter of France concerning Charlemagne. Thus, in his poem the

mighty Orlando is furious, mad—because of his passion for Angelica” (Baker and Giamatti xviii).

Like Pulci, Ariosto uses as his authority the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle much more than the Chanson that had preceded it, but he views this “authority” with less than absolute faith: “[I]t is to this chronicle that Ariosto will often refer—for ‘Turpin’ is always (and always ironically) the poet’s ‘source’ and ‘authority’ as the chronicle had been in fact for those who preceded Ariosto” (xx). However, Orlando Furioso itself was born of another man’s work entirely.

Count Matteo Maria Boiardo, like Ariosto, was a poet of Ferrara. And like Ariosto’s father, who was a contemporary, Boiardo served the Este family. Boiardo even served as a “courtier to a condottiere, but probably never served on the battlefield” (Ross 10). His great poem, published during wartime, is the Orlando Innamorato, or Roland in Love. As with Pulci before him and Ariosto after, Boiardo attributed his source to the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle, but in a much more blatant fashion. His great unfinished poem begins:

The First Book: On Orlando Innamorato:
Containing the Various Adventures and the Cause of
His Falling in Love, Translated from the True Chronicle of Turpin, Archbishop of
Reims, by His Excellency Count Matteo Maria Boiardo,
Count of Scandiano, for the Illustrious
Lord Ercole, Duke of Ferrara. (Ross 33)

In Boiardo, the religious invocations seen in Pulci and almost all the Roland legends prior to him are abandoned for a more direct literary approach: “You who assemble—lords and knights—to hear things new, things of delight, be still, attentive, listen to the rare events that prompt my song (Canto I Stanza 1). Also missing are

Ganelon's treason, Charlemagne's Spanish expedition and the entire battle of Roncesvalles. The poem concerns love alone. In an effort to destroy Charlemagne's court, an evil king named Galafron sends his beautiful daughter Angelica and his son Argalia to the emperor's court with a list of enchantments that make all of Charlemagne's knights fall in love with her. The plethora of adventures that follow boil down to that single motivation: love. The Innamorato is an abrupt departure from almost all of the Roland legends that have gone before. Where Roland was a warrior and hero interested in his own faith and his king in La Chanson and the chronicle and where Pulci's knights were interested in adventure, glory, and fame, Boiardo's knights are dominated by earthly passion that has no religious or moral backing or indeed relevance at all. Orlando and his cousin Rinaldo pursue Angelica when she flees Charlemagne's court, even though in Boiardo Roland is married! Boiardo's poem is a romance in the truest sense of the word.

The Innamorato was never completed—Boiardo's life simply did not allow him the time. But his fellow Ferrarese poet, Ariosto, took it upon himself to complete what Boiardo was never able to do. However, it is a mistake to think Ariosto's poem is merely a continuation of Boiardo's. As Gardner points out, "The Furioso is thus no mere sequel to the Innamorato, but an independent poem continuing the matter of the Innamorato" (267). Even so, the Orlando Furioso begins with the same Angelica from Boiardo's poem, who caused such torment in Charlemagne's court, fleeing from Rinaldo.

Ariosto also continued another tradition that Boiardo had begun with the Innamorato: "[S]ince Boiardo had already intruded Arthurian material into the Carolingian framework of his poem, there was nothing to keep Ariosto from transporting Merlin's tomb to France" (Harrington, trans.). This example of the Arthurian intrusion in

the Carolingian story is in Canto III, where Merlin and the legend of the Lady of The Lake are explicitly mentioned: “This is the...cave / which Merlin, that enchanter sage, did make: / Thou may’st have heard how that magician brave / Was cheated by the Lady of the Lake. / Below, beneath the cavern, is the grave / Which holds his bones” (Stanza 9). And of Roland himself, only his physical might remains from previous stories and legends—the faith and Christian selflessness that marked his death in previous works is instead replaced with an overwhelming and most un-Christian rage when he finds the target of his lust married to another man: “So fierce his rage, so fierce his fury grew, / That all obscured remained the warrior’s sprite” (Canto XXIII Stanza 134). It is not surprising then that Ariosto, like Boiardo before him, makes no mention of Roncesvalles at all. Orlando’s heroic death is not only a non-issue for Ariosto, Orlando himself is almost incidental in the whole poem.

The Orlando Furioso is a romance at heart; an epic-length fairy tale in which characters descend to the underworld and fly to the moon, as when Astolfo goes to the moon in order for “Orlando’s missing senses to restore” (XXXIV.66). Yet, there is also in Ariosto’s poem a sense of regret and longing for an idealized past that never could have been, and a realization that whatever glory any past may have had was by Ariosto’s own time already quickly fading. Partly, Ariosto blames the loss of chivalry and the medieval martial arts on gunpowder:

How, foul and pestilent discovery,
Didst thou find place within the human heart?
Through thee martial glory lost, through thee
The trade of arms become a worthless art:
And at such ebb are worth and chivalry,
That the base often plays the better part.

Through thee no more shall gallantry, no more
Shall valour prove their prowess as of yore. (XI.26)

In this anguish is heard a serious note of loss from the poet himself, totally apart from the otherwise fanciful adventures that populate his work. In writing his fantasy, Ariosto is also describing the failure and collapse of the chivalric code. As Baker and Giamatti put it, “the chivalric way of life has no meaning in the modern world: gunpowder has made the whole conception obsolete” (xxxvi). Ariosto expresses a sense of loss and mourning over an ideal of what should have been and what can never be again. More than his discussion of the effects of modern warfare, Ariosto shows the effects the Renaissance sensibility has on the paladins themselves. The Roland of Tuoldus who was willing to die rather than show a break of his own faith, courage or loyalty, instead becomes a raving lunatic. More than that, even the bonds of loyalty that cemented the chivalric code are broken: “the knight whom the Chanson de Roland had made the model of loyalty to his lord now forsakes Charlemagne in his war against the Infidel—all to pursue a lady” (xxxvi). Ultimately, Orlando is painted as a figure of the “extremes to which a man’s folly can bring him” (xliv).

The Italian poets at once expanded the scope of the myth of Roland while at the same time debasing the character of Roland. Pulci, Ariosto and the other poets changed Roland from a loyal chivalric lord willing to die for king and God into a swashbuckling adventurer seeking only temporal, physical pleasures. Einhard would not have recognized the man Pulci or Ariosto wrote about, but at the same time it is also possible he would not have recognized the peer who was the hero of La Chanson. Any question of historical accuracy had long since been abandoned, and now in the hands of the Italians Roland’s name became a symbol for what should have been but never truly was:

Roland meant chivalry; Roland meant courage and strength. Perhaps most importantly, Roland meant adventure. However, as they expanded the mythic aspects of Roland's name, the Italian poets at the same time debased his character. No longer was he the hero who, in the name of God and Charlemagne, sacrificed himself, his friends and 20,000 French soldiers in what Brault has called an act of *imitatio Christi*. Although still strong and brave, the Italian poets took from Roland the one aspect that made him truly great—they took away his unyielding faith and allegiance to God.

Even with the debasing of Roland's character, it is not surprising that it was the Roland of the Italian poets who inspired Europe in the following centuries more than the hero of the *chansons* and chronicles that preceded them. Although no longer a hero of faith and righteousness, Pulci's and Ariosto's Roland was much more entertaining, and it was this aspect of the poems that kept them dominant in the following centuries. This dominance lasted until the middle of the nineteenth century, when La Chanson de Roland was rediscovered and published. However, Ariosto did provide inspiration, as did the Chanson, for Robert Browning, who in the nineteenth century took the Roland myth and distilled it down to its spiritual essence.

CHAPTER V

THE DARK TOWER ARISES: ROLAND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In tracing the literary roots of Gordon R. Dickson's The Final Encyclopedia, I have examined the earliest biographical information available on the Frankish warrior Roland, and the medieval poems associated with his growing legend. This has meant starting with Einhard's depiction of the actual battle of Roncevaux, which occurred during Charlemagne's largely unsuccessful campaign in Spain in 778 A.D. Then, just over three hundred years later, the most famous of the *chansons de geste* to center on Roland was likely written around 1100 A.D. Just over three hundred years after that, the medieval myth of Roland, along with the Breton legends of Arthur, exploded into an idealized vision of chivalry in Italy. Pulci wrote Il Morgante in the 1480s, likely within just a few years of Boiardo's writing of the Orlando Innamorato. Just a generation later, in the first years of the sixteenth century, Ariosto completed his masterpiece, Orlando Furioso, which used as its background Boiardo's poem. It is in these last poets that Roland became what a modern reader thinks of as a true paragon of knighthood—the wondering adventurer of unequalled courage and strength, clad in a suit of armor that the real Roland would never have imagined. The fact that our vision of medieval romance matches the portrait painted by the Italian poets is not surprising—the Italians shaped our

perceptions of Roland as surely as did the original medieval poets who first sang, rhymed and wrote about those early legends.

On first inspection, it might seem as though the English-speaking world's view of chivalry is based on English legends. After all, isn't the story of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table English? If there was an Arthur, he was "probably a British or Roman-British king who resisted the Anglo-Saxon invasions of England in the sixth century" (Abrams, et. al. 391). The true figure of Arthur, much like Roland, became lost in the fictional French and Italian romances, of which the legend of Roland and Charlemagne is an example. By the time Sir Thomas Mallory wrote Morte D'Arthur in English, he was working from a huge corpus of French and Italian material that informed every verse. Pulci, for example, was writing Il Morgante within just a few years of Mallory's work, and it is entirely possible that in his last years of imprisonment, Mallory had been exposed to Pulci and possibly even to Boiardo or to many of the other Italian and French poets who had written about both Carolingian and Arthurian material.

Perhaps the greatest English example of chivalric romance is Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queen. However, Spenser's work was modeled structurally on Boiardo's Orlando Innamorato. The various adventures of the numerous knights and ladies that populated Boiardo's and Ariosto's works "established the varying and inventive conventions used in Edmund Spenser's Faerie Queene. Influence is too weak a word, argued [C.S.] Lewis: rather than list countless similarities, we should say that Spenser fought in the armor of the Italians" (Ross 1-2). Likewise, the fifteenth and sixteenth century Italian poets influenced every aspect of the Roland legend in the centuries that followed. This idealized vision of Roland maintained its dominance through the

nineteenth century until the rediscover of La Chanson de Roland. However, the legend as a whole, both that framed by the Italians and the older, purer story of the Chanson, found a final and distilled summation in Robert Browning's haunting poem "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came".

In many cases in our literary past, history has had as much impact on the author as the author has had on his or her works. In the nineteenth century in France, this was especially true, as shown by D. A. Kress. The century was dominated first by revolution, and then Napoleon's wars of conquest. Kress points out that Napoleon, in an effort to build his own mythological image, linked himself to Charlemagne as a national French hero: "Napoleon encouraged the comparison, making a pilgrimage to Charlemagne's tomb.... Carrying away Charlemagne's sword and appropriating his insignia, Napoleon left Aix-la-Chappelle with more than titles and recognition" (3). Just as modern Americans mythologize figures such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, the French looked into their own past for answers as the bloodshed of their ongoing revolutions filled the streets and the whole nation wavered between empire and republic. What the people of France found was a literature dealing with their national heroes but written by foreigners. In a modern context, this would be like reading history books in school about the battle of the Alamo or the American Civil War written by a Brazilian poet who had never been to America and had heard the story only through a dubbed John Wayne movie. This strange circumstance, then, "explains why the nineteenth century boasts more translations of the Orlando Furioso than any other century. These translations span the century and offer a kaleidoscopic vision of Ariosto in France" (Kress x). Through Ariosto, Roland's very name became more than a myth—it became a

title of honor in the Napoleonic army: “Lannes, for instance, was known as the ‘Roland de l’armee de l’Italie’ because of the physical courage that he showed through his career.... Another general who enjoyed the moniker of ‘Roland de l’armee’ was the count of Saint-Hilaire” (5).

Kress points out that the plethora of Ariosto translations occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century, until 1837. This year is important because, as Kress notes, “in 1837 Fancisque Michel published his edition of the Chanson de Roland, a work that had long been lost among the manuscripts of the Bodleian library of Oxford” (21). Prior to that, Kress provides a long list of French authors who translated all or parts of Ariosto’s poem, including Jean-Baptiste de Mirabaud, Louis d’Ussieux, le comte de Tressan, Charles-Joseph Panchoucke, and Nicolas-Etienne Framery, among others (20-21). A prime example Kress provides of one of these translations is that of Charles-Homore Laborie, published in 1802. The poem is an “imitation” of Ariosto more than a straight translation, and it “attempts to recast the Orlando as an eminently modern work with contemporary political implications” (30). Kress further provides examples of this work, with blatant allusions to Napoleon’s grandeur and his role as a second Charlemagne who will lead France to a new and glorious future: “It seems entirely appropriate that the first rendering of the Orlando to appear in nineteenth-century France was so highly influenced and deformed by the events of the time. Although Laborie’s effort is nothing more than a vulgarized imitation, the fact that the translator chose to weave his ‘national poem’ upon the framework of Ariosto shows the extraordinarily high esteem of the French public for the Roland furieux” (31).

After the publication of La Chanson de Roland Ariosto's popularity among the French began to decrease, and for good reason. Where before the only literature of their hero had been in Latin or Italian, now they found what appeared to be the true root of the national icon in their own language. As Kress says, "no longer would the Roland furieux be considered the preeminent work detailing the exploits of Roland; no longer would France be forced to look to an Italian poet for her national epic; the original, eminently French version had been unearthed" (39). Still, Kress argues that Ariosto continued after 1840 to have an influence on writers such as Victor Hugo and Balzac (95-96).

Ariosto's influence was not limited to France, however. Several translations of the poem were made in English. Sir John Harrington wrote a translation in the late sixteenth century, and the translation I used in this thesis was penned by William Stewart Rose and first published between 1823 and 1831 (Baker and Giamatti xlvii-iii). These English translations, possibly Rose's in particular, most certainly influenced the writing of Robert Browning. Browning acts as a conduit between the Italians and Dickson's work a hundred years later. It was in Browning that the Childe Roland myth was boiled down into its spiritual essence, and put to paper in a way never before conceived.

Browning was writing during the latter half of the nineteenth century, in the midst of the Victorian period. He was reared in a home filled with literary classics, which almost certainly included translations of Ariosto: "The elder Browning (Robert Browning's father) was an impassioned lover of medieval legend and story.... His library was large and richly stored—the house, indeed 'crammed with books' in which the boy browsed at his own will" (Whiting 6).

The literary upbringing produced poetry that seemed to take the historical tradition and distill it into that tradition's essence. For example, Browning's poem "How They Brought The Good News From Ghent to Aix" has in Browning's own words, "no sort of historical foundation" in the Roland myth even though Roland is a major character of the poem. Even though a group of knights are riding to bring "good news" to Aix, which was Charlemagne's capital, the Roland in this poem is the lead rider's horse: "Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood" (Cambridge Ed. 164-65). The poem details a break-neck ride to deliver unknown news to Aix. Two of the three riders' horses collapse, and only the narrator and his horse Roland persevere. The poem is, in effect, a dramatic race that could have happened anywhere, at any time. However Browning is able to turn a race into a stirring adventure of virtue, courage and sacrifice simply by evoking the names Roland and Aix, even though the poem has nothing to do with either. Further, by anthropomorphizing the horse and using a name Roland, which is steeped in a thousand years of tradition and myth, he imparts the courage and sacrifice of that mythic hero onto a brute animal that was simply being driven by a desperate rider. By using these names, Browning takes a simple narrative and drapes it in the chivalric clothing it would otherwise not have.

Browning's greatest use of the Roland legend, though, occurs in the dramatic monologue "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." This poem is the greatest achievement in the Roland mythology in the nineteenth century—it forms a bridge between old and new. Browning himself was "a proficient classicist," but his goal in poetry was to "make it new": "It was Browning's special virtue to touch...both ends of this diverse and long-lived movement" (Strange xv). Thus Browning was able to take a

knight who had been the focus of stories for hundreds of years—and in the course of a few verses, just a tiny fraction of what Ariosto or Pulci might have written down—and make him at once wholly modern in his cynicism and classical in his courage and self-sacrifice. And yet, in his poem Browning also captures the hopelessness captured so evocatively in the very root of the legend, La Chanson de Roland.

Nowhere in the poem does Browning actually state the protagonist's name. We do not ever know if this mysterious knight on his quest is Roland, or Rinaldo, or any particular knight at all. The only names specifically mentioned are fictional friends of the knight's long dead friends and peers—Cuthbert and Giles. The fact that at the end he blows a song on his horn, “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came,” is not absolute proof that the knight is Roland. The knight could as easily be Taillefer the *jongleur* as Roland.

Once when asked of his intention in writing the poem, Browning said: “I was conscious of no allegorical intention in writing it.... ‘Childe Roland’ came upon me as a kind of dream. I had to write it, then and there, and I finished it the same day, I believe. But it was simply that I had to do it. I did not know then what I meant beyond that, and I’m sure I don’t know now. But I am very fond of it” (Whiting 261). Although he may not have had a conscious allegory in mind, Browning did make a comment at the beginning of the poem that seems to allude to a source of inspiration. At the beginning of the poem, Browning instructs readers to “See Edgar’s song in Lear.” Edgar, who is playing the part of a madman in Shakespeare’s King Lear, sings:

Childe Rowland to the dark tower came;

His word was still, “Fie, foh, and fum,

I smell the blood of a British man”. (Act III Scene IV ln181-83)

The song refers more to an English fairy tale than to La Chanson or any of the other literary works on Roland. However, the fairy tale in question is as much rooted in the Roland myth as Ariosto or Pulci. The story of Childe Rowland and the Dark Tower is a real fairy tale set in the British Isles, in which a Childe (a youth of noble birth) named Rowland “seeks the Dark Tower in order to rescue his sister Burd Ellen: see Joseph Jacobs, ed. *English Fairy Tales*” (McComb 470). It was almost certainly this fairy tale or a variant thereof that Shakespeare referred to. By linking his poem to Shakespeare, Browning is in effect tracing the lineage of his poem to that of the fairy tale rather than Ariosto, Pulci, or La Chanson.

However, as any expecting father who is looking through a book of baby names can tell you, the name Roland is of Germanic origin⁴. Although Einhard wrote in Latin and referred to the hero as Hroudlandus, there has never been any question that the popular form of Roland was Frankish in Origin. The French adopted it, and it was likely through the Normans that the name and in fact the fairy tale made its way through the British Isles. Whether inspired by Ariosto or the fairy tale, there is no mistake that the questing knight errant is an integral part of the Italian romance. It was the Italians and possibly the 1837 publication of La Chanson that influenced the execution of Browning’s poem (which was written in the summer of 1853) if not the germination of the idea itself.

Just as Ariosto created an original work using Boiardo’s Orlando Innamorato as the starting point, in “Childe Roland” Browning takes the myth and legend he found in Ariosto and in the Chanson to create a wholly new work that is completely different from its predecessors, while at the same time capturing the essence of everything that went before.

The poem starts off with the dark cynicism that has since become absolutely modern, anticipating the Lost Generation of poets who wrote during and after the first World War:

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby. (v 1)

At once Browning establishes a tone wholly at odds with the light-hearted adventure that abounds in the poems of the Italians three hundred years before. Where in Pulci the old man would have been an evil wizard and Roland his senseless dupe, and where in Ariosto Roland might have killed the man in a jealous rage, in Browning there is simply an acceptance on the narrator's part that the "hoary cripple" is a liar and is gleefully trying to misdirect his quest.

Many scholars have concluded that Roland's following the directions given by a figure so openly malicious is a form of despair. Barbara Melchiori goes even further when she writes: "Childe Roland's turning off toward the Dark Tower is a form of suicide...the reversal and overturning of all the values which Browning accepted and in which he believed" (Qtd. in McComb 470). This idea is not without merit—the narrator moves through a nightmare landscape that merely reflects the horrors that haunt him from his past. Indeed, his past is as much an enemy as anything he meets through the course of the poem. He tries to recall better times with his friend Cuthbert, only to remember the other knight's disgrace. His second attempt with his friend Giles is even less successful:

“Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what / hangman hands / pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands / read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!” (Stanza 17).

Finally, Roland reaches the dark tower, although he realizes too late it is a trap. John King McComb makes a compelling argument when he writes that what Roland encounters is not so much a physical army as the memories of all the friends he has lost:

Not hear? When noise was everywhere! It tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,
Of all the lost adventurers my peers.—
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! One moment knelled the woe of years. (33.193-98)

McComb argues that recurring throughout the poem are painful memories, and that the poem itself is the fourth and most painful of Roland’s remembrances: “Roland is speaking from some point in his time after the final event of the poem...Roland believed that this encounter with the detested past would be the last. The moment at the tower contained the ‘woe of years’ and yet...also sounded the knell that would announce the end of the woe” (469). This argument provides a simplistic view of the poem; because Roland is the narrator, he must have survived the dark tower to tell his tale from a later date.

McComb dismisses as a poetic device the idea that Roland may be recounting his experiences from the dead and responds to Harold Bloom’s assertion that Roland is destroyed in the poem by asking, “If Roland has been annihilated, how can he recount his catastrophe at all?” (460). The simplest answer to McComb’s question is that Roland is not recounting his catastrophe, Robert Browning the poet is, and once that context is understood, the question of whether Roland is killed at the end becomes less important.

In fact, I agree with Bloom that Roland is destroyed at the end, either spiritually or physically. Nor can I completely dismiss the idea that by following the hoary old cripple's directions, Roland is in a sense committing suicide. However, the idea of the Dark Tower had always been the goal of the quest and Browning himself made no effort to hide that fact. For example, Roland recounts how he suffered so long in his search, and had "Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ / so many times among 'The Band'—to wit, / the knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed / their steps" (7.38-41).

It seems clear that the dark tower had always been the goal of the quest; but just as the Grail was a goal beyond the reach of all but one of Arthur's questing knights, so too was the dark tower beyond the reach of all but Roland. His acquiescence to the instructions of a man he knows is lying in order to set a trap is merely an acceptance on his part that the quest, the goal that has occupied the whole of his life, is now over. In a sense, his life itself is over. Without that dark tower to quest after, what else does Roland have? In this, I agree with McComb that Roland has only his memories. This sense of loss and remembrance is similar to past poets who dealt with Roland, especially Ariosto. In their edition of the Orlando Furioso, Baker and Giamatti point out the darkness inherent in simply being human, as demonstrated in Orlando's character:

[T]his vision of the huge, stricken man, sun-blackened and naked, dragging the dead horse as a child would a broken toy, stamps itself upon the memory as Ariosto's master image for the loneliness of man, man lost even to himself. Here, in the solitary figure of Orlando, we see the extremes to which a man's folly can bring him, and we have an insight into all the power latent in the delightful world of the poem, and into all the despair" (xliv).

Ariosto viewed the new ways of war, with increasingly destructive weapons, with a sense of regret and looked back with a melancholic longing for what he imagined to be better days. When he writes about the battle of Paris, he at once mourns the greater loss of life implicit in modern war while castigating leaders who send their men to die so brazenly: “Of twenty thousand warriors thither sent, died nineteen thousand in the fiery pit...but so their leader willed, of little wit” (XV.4). Browning echoes this sense of loss in *Roland*. The “Band” of knights with whom Roland began his quest are all dead; he continues his quest almost through habit. Although he does not condemn the leader who sent them on this quest, nonetheless such condemnation is implicit in Roland’s own failure to feel “neither pride nor hope rekindling at the end descried, so much as gladness that some end might be” (V. 3).

The end of the poem is ambiguous enough to lend itself to several conclusions. Harold Bloom believes that Roland was utterly annihilated⁵. McComb in his article believes that Roland survived the tower. Otherwise, McComb believes Roland would not have been able to narrate his story from the “moment after the arrival at the tower in which Roland, whether alive or dead, is conscious once again of his whole past” (469). Also, as previously noted, Melchiori believes the very act of Roland’s leaving the road at the directions of the hoary cripple is an act of suicide. These arguments proceed with the assumption Roland’s turning off the road and riding to the Dark Tower is an admission of failure, that it was never the goal of the quest. Of course, Browning himself contradicts this last by stating quite plainly that Roland and his entire band had always been searching for the Dark Tower.

The idea of Roland's seeking death at the hands of his enemies is not entirely implausible. In the original fairy tale, Roland is seeking his sister. McComb states that Browning probably knew the story but "modified the traditional story for his own purpose" (470). He modified it by importing the classical sources of the fairy tale itself—that is Ariosto and La Chanson de Roland. In fact, the latter bears many similarities between Roland's stand at the Dark Tower and Roncevaux. Browning's Roland, upon meeting his lifelong goal, sees the dead faces of his past "in a sheet of flame; I saw them and I knew them all" (34.202). This feeling of overwhelming loss can also be found in Roland's last moments at Roncevaux as he looks upon the twenty thousand dead French knights who fell at his side:

Count Roland sees his peers dead
And Oliver, whom he loved so well,
He was moved with pity, he begins to weep.
His face lost all its color.
He suffered such pain that he could no longer stand,
Willy-nilly, he falls to the ground. (Brault, 164.2215-2220)

Yet, even while facing the agony of his past, Browning's Roland at the end refuses to surrender, refuses to stop fighting: "And yet, / Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set, / And blew, 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came'" (30.202-04). This final image evokes a heroic courage rather than a suicidal impulse and captures the very essence of the oliphant sequence in the Chanson. And, just as in Browning, the Roland of the Chanson continues to fight even without hope of victory: "We are to receive martyrdom here/And I know very well now that we have not long to live / But damn whoever doesn't sell his life dearly first!" (143.1922-24).

Robert Browning had good reason to be fond of “Childe Roland.” The poem has spurred debate and admiration for over a century. Regardless of which interpretation is made regarding the end of the poem, Bloom said it best when he said that “Childe” is “Browning’s darkest and most powerful romance...the fullest phenomenology of a consciousness of creative failure available to us in our language” (qtd. in McComb 470). This magnificent, dark romance pulled together elements of over a thousand years of myth, with images inspired by the recently published La Chanson de Roland and romantic feelings inspired by Ariosto and the Italians. In Browning’s brilliant imagination, these elements were drawn down into an intense verbal painting of regret, painful memory, and a basic human need to fulfill a purpose with one’s life. In accomplishing this portrait of a man at the end of his quest, and quite likely at the end of his life, Browning captures humanity at its greatest and simultaneously its lowest point, just as the Roland myth through the centuries had brought the hero through the high of spiritual conquest and salvation to the lows of madness, rage and despair.

Browning has formed the perfect bridge for the Roland myth to travel into the twentieth century, and to form the literary platform on which Gordon R. Dickson built his “Childe Cycle”.

CHAPTER VI

THE DARK TOWER OF BABYLON:

DICKSON'S THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

At the end of Tennyson's Idylls of the King, Sir Bedivere calls out to the stricken Arthur, who is being carried away on a barge to Avilion: "Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes? For now I see the true old times are dead, when every morning brought a noble chance, and every chance brought out a noble knight." Arthur responds from the barge: "The old order changeth, yielding place to new, and God fulfils himself in many ways, lest one good custom should corrupt the world" (313-14). Tennyson, like his contemporary Browning, was working as a receptacle for almost a thousand years' worth of literature and tradition. Also like Browning, Tennyson recycled the story of Arthur in a way future generations would be able to revisit and enjoy. From Tennyson sprang T.H. White's wonderful Arthurian novel The Once and Future King and the musical Camelot. Although not a direct source, Tennyson also laid the foundation for the hundreds of Arthurian novels that came after, from Mary Stewart's marvelous Crystal Cave and its three sequels, to Marion Zimmer Bradley's opus The Mists of Avalon.

Browning, too, had followers in the twentieth century. Stephen King's Dark Tower series is, in King's own words, "a longer tale inspired by and to some degree dependent upon Robert Browning's narrative poem 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower

Came”” (Waste Lands 1). King’s story is an admittedly unsubtle imitation of Browning—the hero is a gunslinging “knight” named Roland who is seeking a Dark Tower through three volumes of the series—with striking similarities to Pulci and Ariosto which I will discuss in the final chapter. However, Gordon R. Dickson’s “Childe Cycle” creates a more subtle and evocative homage to Browning and to the Roland myth that preceded him. Dickson’s The Final Encyclopedia and the other novels of the “Childe Cycle,” use Browning’s poem and the story of Roland through the ages as a source of literary inspiration. Sir John Hawkwood might have been the historical germ of Dickson’s ideas, but the presentation owes much to Roland.

Dickson writes the novels that make up the “Childe Cycle” with a specific goal in mind: “to use known history and logically generated future history to argue that the human race not only was presently in, but had been, at least since the first upwellings of the Renaissance in Europe, in a process of evolution” (Companion ix). The “Cycle” begins with the very first novel in the series, Dorsai!, which introduces the character of Donal Graeme. Donal, by his own estimation, was:

Dorsai of the Dorsai, his mother a Kenwick, his father a Graeme, names so very old their origin was buried in the prehistory of the Mother Planet. His courage was unquestioned, his word unblemished... his very blood and bones were the heritage of a long line of great professional soldiers. (5)

He is the penultimate end-product of evolution on the small, ocean-laden world of Dorsai, populated during the diaspora of the human race by mercenaries who developed into a culture and civilization never seen before, although its roots are similar to the clans of Scotland, as the main character’s name implies.

Donal's universe is one of conflict and competition. Sixteen worlds have been colonized by humans using a faster-than-light means of travel known as phase-shifting. As happened during the early colonization of America, like-minded groups moved together to their own worlds, forming what in Donal's day are known as the Splinter Cultures, of which the Dorsai are one. Other splinter cultures include the technocrats of Newton and Cassida, the philosopher-mages of the Exotics on Mara and Kultis, and the religious fanatics of Association and Harmony. Other Splinter Cultures exist, but in smaller numbers that make up less viable and therefore doomed civilizations. Most colonies, however, are less specialized and so more open to outside influence. The colony on St. Marie, for example, is predominantly Catholic and agrarian, but does not deny outside assistance or interaction. The planet Ceta is a merchant world where capitalism is allowed to run unchecked. By its very nature, though, such a society has to remain open to the other colonized worlds to survive. Like the city-states of Italy during the Renaissance, each world competes both economically and sometimes militarily. Thus the Dorsai provides a constant stream of young mercenaries to other worlds to fight other people's wars, just like the real life John Hawkwood to whom Dickson alludes.

Donal Graeme is more than just a mercenary, though. By the end of Dorsai! he has become the de facto leader of the entire human universe. He has become an "intuitional superman" responsible for "sixty billion children to raise" with "no friend to relax with, complain to, to blow off steam to, so that the next day's chores would be more bearable" (233). This book, however, is merely the beginning of this story. The next novel in Donal's evolutionary tale is the Hugo-award winning Necromancer. Donal has sent his consciousness back to 2093 A.D. to attempt to change history. Here, he

encounters the root figures that will eventually form the Splinter Cultures, and then changes them all in his own effort to learn empathy—a skill he never had during his first lifetime. However, his original power remains, for he is still “a man who has conscious intuitive process and can immediately realize all the end possibilities of an action the moment he considers it” (187).

In The Final Encyclopedia, Donal realizes the mistakes he made as Paul Formain in Necromancer. Using “conscious intuitive processes,” he forces his own body back into a state of infancy to begin a third and final life as Hal Mayne. Growing up, Hal has no memory of his previous life, which is exactly what Donal wanted since this last life was an effort to harness the creative power of art as well as to become fully human and not the superman Donal was. Only as a human leading other humans can he hope to fight the forces of history that threaten the race itself.

By the time of Encyclopedia, over 250 years have passed since the events of Necromancer and seventy years have elapsed since Donal Graeme in his first incarnation unified all the human worlds. The Splinter Cultures are gradually beginning to break down and fail. The Dorsai are starving to death for lack of work; the Exotic worlds are losing the financial superiority that for so many years granted them the independence necessary for them to study and contemplate their goal (which was the final evolutionary path of humanity); and the religious worlds of the Friendlies are also starving, while simultaneously being torn apart by civil unrest. Earth itself grows restless, while in orbit above the planet is the mysterious Final Encyclopedia, run by a newsman named Tam Olyn who is well over a century old and who remembers meeting Donal Graeme as a young man.

Behind the restlessness of Earth and the economic and social breakdown of the Splinter Cultures is a motivating force—a new group of human beings have emerged from the selective cross-breeding of the Splinter Cultures. They call themselves the Others, but they are led by a single brilliant man named Bleys Ahrens. Sandra Miesel describes Bleys as a Miltonic villain whose “very name marks him as a ‘wrongful blaze’ that sheds ‘no light, but rather darkness visible’” (“Darkness” 688). Bleys is Hal Mayne’s counterpart in the “racial question” to be decided. He equals Hal’s considerable size and intelligence and holds absolute, unbending control over everyone around him. As Hal says to Ahrens late in the novel, “you’ve begun to spread your own personal faith in the inevitably necessary cleansing of the race, followed by a freezing of it into an immobility of changelessness... you’re able to see the possibility of a final death resulting from that state of stasis, if you achieve it” 679). Bleys represents a polar opposite to Hal Mayne’s evolutionary position, and so the two diametrically opposed men begin a fight for the dominance and survival of the race.

Previously, I discussed the “Childe Cycle” as a story of human evolution; although it is a science fiction novel set in deep space, there are no aliens and computers, and robots have not taken over the universe. In fact, there is a remarkable lack of technological advancement throughout the series. If not for the fact the story was set in space and in the future, it would not be considered science fiction at all, but rather a novel of human development and racial consciousness within a Jungian framework, which I will discuss later in this chapter. The historical development Dickson cited as the beginning of his story was that of Sir John Hawkwood, the English mercenary who had fought for and possibly saved Florence during the early years of the Renaissance. The

literary structure of the novel, however, is that of a knight's quest. Hal is forced from his home by treachery, and must travel through the universe in a quest to gain knowledge and power to finally assault and destroy his enemies. Just like the Orlando of Pulci and Ariosto, Hal quests through the "Pagandom" of the human colonies, of which he can never truly be a part, while fighting battles where he may and using his superior strength and intellect to overcome his adversaries. However, like Browning's poem and La Chanson, there must be a final accounting—a final battle in which Hal and Bleys must face off. This structure of the hero being forced from home and into a series of adventures before returning for a final battle places the literary history of the novel firmly within the framework of the Roland mythology.

Near the end of the novel, Hal Mayne (who by this time has discovered the memories of his previous lives as Formain and Donal Graeme) has a telling dream in which he is finally approaching the dark tower "which he had been approaching in his earlier dreams, across a rubbled plain that had become a wild land of rock and gullied earth." Along the path of his dream, he sees a horse waiting with a "saddle with a high cantle and armor on its chest and upper legs. It stood tethered to the lintel. When it caught sight of him, it threw up its head, struck its hooves on the broken paving beneath them and neighed three times" (609). As he approaches the dark tower in his dream, he meets Bleys Ahrens locked behind bars he cannot see, and they speak of the cries they both hear. "They were only creatures of history, just as you and I are," Hal tells his nemesis in the dream. "It's everyone who lives now, crying out to be freed from the chains that always held them" (610).

Even if Dickson had not specifically quoted Browning on page 427 and had not been referring to dreams and images of Browning's throughout the novel, this last dream sequence would have cemented Dickson's literary dependence on "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" as a stylistic precedent for his own novel. For the sound both figures refer to in the dream is the sound of the history of the whole human race, which Hal Mayne first hears upon entering the orbiting station called the Final Encyclopedia as a teen-ager.

The Encyclopedia is a compendium of all human knowledge, an encyclopedia of the race itself that, like the Tower of Babylon, seems almost to represent the divine aspirations of the human race. Scholars can access instantly any aspect of human society from any point in history, and make connections that scholars previously had never been able to make. It is in this magical place that Hal encounters the tool that will help him save the human race.

Upon entering the center of the Encyclopedia, Hal hears voices: "Not tens of them, not hundreds or thousands, or even millions—but billions and trillions of voices in countless languages, arguing, shouting, calling to him. Only, they did not merge into one great, voiceless roar.... They each remained distinct and separate—unbelievably, he heard each one" (18). This passage, which foreshadows Hal's dream-encounter with Bleys, seems to show the Final Encyclopedia as the Dark Tower Hal had been questing for through three lifetimes; the voices of the sum of humanity that are contained in the Encyclopedia become like the "noise" that "toll[ed] increasing like a bell" and assaulted Roland as he viewed the end of his quest. Like Roland, the goal of the quest could not truly be reached until the questor was himself ready for it. Hal would eventually leave

the Encyclopedia, and it would be over three years of hardship and adventure before he returns.

Hal's dreamscape is similar in its barrenness to that landscape Roland travels through in the poem; in fact Browning's entire poem has the elusive feeling of a dream. However, Dickson does openly acknowledge his debt to Browning by placing the poet in the lineage of thinkers that influences Hal Mayne:

Browning had been a Childe all his life—an aspirant to a greater knighthood—although that part of him had passed, invisible before the conscious eyes of almost everyone, with the exception of his wife. As Hal was, himself, a Childe now, though in a different time and place and way, and never as a poet. It was no Iron Mistress that drove Browning, and perhaps even himself, after all, but the fire of a hope that would not let itself be put out. (602)

The feeling of loss and regret that Hal feels when he travels among the Splinter Cultures is also reminiscent of Browning's poem and that of Ariosto. In his last trip to the Dorsai, where he has convinced the people of the planet to join him even though it means the loss of their world and way of life, the assembled leaders of the world formulate a contract that will dictate the rest of their existence as a people: "we've lived by contracts for three centuries, here on the Dorsai," one leader says. "We'll die, if necessary, by proper contract" (570). Next, Hal travels to the worlds of the Exotics to ask them to give their whole existence to his vision, just as the Dorsai had "agreed to give up everything they have, including their lives, so that the race as a whole may survive. What I've come to ask of you is no less—that you strip yourselves of everything you own and everything you've gained over three hundred years so that it may be given away to people you do not know and whom you've never spoken to; in the hope of life for others"

(586). The Exotics, who for centuries have studied and sought for the advance of the race, agree to their own ultimate destruction as a culture.

Near the climax of the novel, Hal is on the verge of encasing the entire Earth in a protective shield to hold off the immeasurable forces of Bleys and the colony worlds he and the Others control. In explaining his choice of planets to protect, Hal says to his followers:

You all know the centuries of the Splinter Cultures are over. Their day of experimentation is done. Your kind lived, grew and flourished for the ultimate purpose of taking one side of the great survival question of which road the race as a whole is going to follow into its future among the stars. Not to you and your children, unique and different, but to the children of the race in general, the future belongs (623).

This acknowledgement of changing times and the anguish over a lost way of life echoes what McComb has called Roland's "increasingly painful memories." McComb has argued that Roland's climaxing encounter at the dark tower in Browning's poem is an encounter with "all the names from his past" and "all the friends he has had and all their failures" (468). Hal too feels bitterness over the loss of the Splinter Cultures, which he largely blames on himself: "You see as Formain, he—I—did it again. Donal'd played God.... Then when he saw what he'd done it sickened him, and he decided whatever else he did, he wouldn't be guilty of doing it again. Then, as Paul Formain, he went and did just that" (558-9).

Dickson's work owes more to its existence than just Browning's poem, though. The Roland mythos is more pervasive than that. The structure Dickson uses of the youth forced to flee, and then returning triumphantly, is a recognizable pattern. Joseph

Campbell's The Hero With a Thousand Faces, summarizes the pattern Dickson uses as that of Departure, Initiation, and Return. Campbell points out that many adventures begin with a mistake: "A blunder—apparently the merest change—reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood" (51). So, too, does Hal Mayne's adventure begin, when his three childhood tutors are accidentally killed by Bleys Ahren's men. In his flight, Hal travels to several worlds in a rite of initiation. As Campbell notes, "this is a favorite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region" (97). Hal is tested, first on Colby, where he must learn to mute his brilliance to fit into normal society while allowing his body and mind to finish maturing. Then, fleeing from the hunters who discover him on that mining world, he travels to the Friendly world of Harmony. Here he becomes a member and ultimately a leader of a militant band of religious fanatics fighting against the servants of the Others. It is on Harmony that he is tested to his limit—he is captured after a daring raid on a militia outpost. Mortally ill with pneumonia, his captors refuse to provide any aid and watches from outside his cell as Hal's lungs fill with fluid and his body hovers on the brink of death.

His supernatural aid comes in the form of his previous lives, the almost magical figure of Donal Graeme that sits waiting in the back of his mind for the right time to emerge. Under the stress of the fever, Hal begins to sense the memories of a past he could not have lived, and new understandings become available that he could not have

grasped at any other time. It is this new knowledge of himself and his world that helps his body break the fever.

Escaping his captors, Hal Mayne returns to Earth and the Final Encyclopedia that had lured him since he last visited it. He returns as what Campbell would call a master of both the world of Reality on Earth, and the world of magic in the Encyclopedia in orbit. In a way, this story is similar to the one of Jesus that Campbell uses as his example: “Jesus the guide, the way, the vision, and the companion of the return. The disciples are his initiates, not themselves masters of the mystery, yet introduced to the full experience of the paradox of the two worlds in one” (230). The people Hal gathers around him, which notably are almost all women, are his initiates. Although they do not fully understand the mystery of him, they know he does understand, and they have the same faith in him that Peter and the other Disciples had in Christ.

Much of Joseph Campbell’s theories follow a Jungian approach, exploring the idea of archetypes and the racial collective unconscious that the great psychologist had postulated earlier. However Jungian Campbell’s theories may be, Dickson’s literary style is not based strictly on Campbell’s ideas, Campbell simply and effectively described the type of stories Dickson writes. Roland is an archetype, a hero who must depart, undergo initiation, and then return. For the Chanson de Roland the initiation was battle and his return was death, but for the Italians his initiation and return were closer to that of Dickson’s Hal Mayne. Thus, Dickson’s structure is indelibly linked to the corpus of Roland literature that preceded it. For instance, in both Il Morgante and La Chanson de Roland, it is the treachery of a single character, Gano or Ganelon, respectively, that initiates the action or “departure” of the hero Roland. In Dickson, it is the treachery of

Bleys Ahrens that initiates Hal Mayne's flight from earth and the beginning of his adventure. Bleys already had an interest in Hal even before the events in Colorado that led to the death of Hal's three tutors; it was that interest that made Bleys choose the site of Hal's home for his meeting with his brother Dahno, who at the time controlled Other leadership. In this case, though, Bley's betrayal was not directed at Hal, but of his own brother Dahno, who eventually Bleys will destroy in order to wrest away control of the Others.

Although there are no giants as such in Dickson's story to compare with those in Pulci and Ariosto, there is a figure who is like a giant in many ways. John Heikkila is a team leader on the mining world of Coby. Where no other leader will accept Hal as a worker because of a fight Hal had been in earlier, Heikkila takes the risk of bringing Hal onto his team. Although grateful for an opportunity to work, Hal feels intimidated by the other man's "great chest and arms" that "seemed to blot out half the scene behind him" (89). Later, John tells Hal that at fourteen "I could pick up two grown men at once and carry them around" (128). For the three years that Hal remains on Coby, John acts as a guardian and a mentor to the younger man, and when the Others try to flush Hal out in an elaborate trap, it is John who physically saves Hal, just as when the whale had attacked their ship Morgante saved Roland and the rest of the crew.

The Encyclopedia bears some similarities to the Orlando Furioso as well, though not as apparent as those with Pulci or Browning. The context of Dickson's novel is significantly different than that of Ariosto's poem. The Orlando Furioso is about passionate love and the madness of jealousy. Although Hal Mayne is motivated by love, his is an altruistic love for all human beings that motivates him to save the race at all cost,

even should that cost be his own life. Roland's actions, or Orlando as Ariosto calls him, is spurred by jealousy over Angelica. However, the two characters do share a certain similarity: their capacity for rage.

In Canto XXIX of the Orlando the hero saw the woman he had been lusting after through the whole of the poem with the knight she finally fell in love with, Medoro. Orlando pursued Angelica with unstoppable rage, and when Medoro tried to stop him, the count "smote with clenched fist/and force which nought can meet/ —Smote on his horse's head, a fearful blow/and, with skull smashed like glass, that courser fleet/was by the madman's furious stroke laid low" (v63). Similarly, Hal experiences a black, maddening rage in his pursuit of a woman—a charismatic Friendly named Rukh Tamani whom Hal needs to help him start the revolution on Earth to support his battle. Upon his return to Harmony to find her, he learns she has been captured and is being held in a detention center. When he finally rescues her with the help of her former command, he finds the "warrior of the Lord" whom he had loved while on Harmony "almost skeletal; bruises and half-healed lacerations and burns had distorted her features and her hair was matted with filth" (530). The terrible condition of Rukh brings back memories of his three tutors, and a cold rage sparks in his chest: "Deep within him, the breath of coldness that had woken in him momentarily in Athalia's outer office came back, coalesced to a point, and kindled into icy fire" (531). Single-handedly, Hal makes his way through the detention center even though he has already succeeded in saving Rukh, with the sole intention of wreaking revenge on those who hurt her, and by extension, hurt him. The rage is a type of battle madness common among the Dorsai; it is such a rage that, as a

child, set Donal Graeme on the path of his life—a rage and a determination never to let good men die unnecessary deaths again.

Where the orbiting Final Encyclopedia is Hal's dark tower—the tool he is going to need to unlock the answer to the question the human race has posed to itself—the Dorsai are like his 20,000 Frenchmen. His peers, the paladin knights who serve and protect him, are all women: Amanda Morgan, his lover and soul mate, not to mention a fifth-generation Dorsai warrior; Ruhk Tamani, a charismatic warrior of the Lord from Harmony; and finally the Exotic Adjela from the Encyclopedia. Similarly, the Earth becomes Hal's Roncevaux, and the endless forces of the Others and their subject worlds are the vast armies of the Saracens who attack through treachery and overwhelming force. These comparisons, of course, are to the principal source of all the Roland literature through the ages—La Chanson de Roland. To assert that Earth is Roncevaux is of course an oversimplification. After all, Roland and his entire force is massacred at Roncevaux in the Chanson, whereas it is highly unlikely that Gordon R. Dickson would write a whole series over the course of four decades only to have all his main characters die and their goal die with them. Nor could there be any possibility of a greater power, such as a celestial Charlemagne, coming to pass judgment and seek revenge on Bleys Ahrens for destroying Hal. Hal Mayne is a composite character in several ways. Not only is he Donal Graeme and Paul Formain in addition to being Hal Mayne, he is also like both Roland and Charlemagne—that portion of him that was raised by three tutors on Earth is the young knight errant, the Childe questing over a solution to the evolutionary problem the race has posed itself. However, within Hal is the consciousness of Donal Graeme, and in Donal is the wisdom of ages and the power of empire; in short, a celestial

Charlemagne. Dickson's opus ends with the Exotic worlds stripped of all their assets, almost all able-bodied Dorsai amassed in a protective fleet around earth, and the magic of the Encyclopedia encasing the whole Earth in a phase-shift shield impervious to conventional attack. Rather than a short, swift battle with the French totally unprepared, Hal has brokered himself the strongest defensive position in the universe and is prepared to fight for decades to come.

Even so, some comparisons can be made to portions of the Chanson and Encyclopedia. Rukh Tamani, for instance, bears a resemblance to Archbishop Turpin. Both are warriors of God, willing with a joyful glee to give their lives while killing their enemies. In fact, the idea of a warrior priest is as old as the priesthood itself, and more than one Pope has donned armor and a sword to do battle in the name of God. In this sense Rukh is more like Roland even than Hal Mayne is. Hal is his own religion; he acts not according to faith in God, but faith in himself and his vision for humanity. Rather than what Brault calls *Imitatio Christi*—that is, the destruction of self for the sake of martyrdom which motivated Roland to decide not to sound the oliphant at first even though he knew he was going to lose at Roncevaux—Hal Mayne patterns his actions on the assumption that he will be victorious. There is no thought of sacrificing himself, only the Splinter Cultures which he believes must die so that the race as a whole may live. Rukh, on the other hand, is the absolute martyr. When Hal saves Rukh from the detention center on Harmony, she is so badly abused as to be on the verge of death. Yet, when he saves her, she whispers, "I testify yet to thee, my God" (530). Her faith is so strong, so absolute in herself and her perception of God, that death itself becomes meaningless.

Faith is the one subject that Hal has not fully mastered, although he appreciates it and recognizes it as a tool he must use in his battle against the Others. His test of faith comes on the same night that he saves Rukh. In a cold rage, he stalks through the center killing the local militia wholesale. However, when he returns to the command where Rukh is being loaded onto a truck to escape, a man named Amyth Barbage interrupts the rescue with a laser pistol capable of killing half the command. Barbage is the same man who almost watched Hal die in his cell. He is like Rukh in his faith—he is what the Friendlies refer to as an Elect—one whose faith in their God is so absolute the idea of God merges in their mind with their very being. For the Elect, death is without meaning and is more often accepted with fervent joy. However, Barbage's faith is no match for Hal's strength and power; Hal easily disarms the man who is personally responsible for Rukh's horrific treatment and for the deaths of many of their command. Hal holds the man over his head, ready to break him in half. Even in her weakened state, Rukh stops him. Stunned, Hal cannot understand why she will not let him kill this terrible enemy. She explains to him: "You cannot touch him. Put him down... [N]ot even the saints are always right. I tell you you cannot touch this man. He is of the Elect and he hears no one but himself and the Lord. You think you can punish him for what he did to me and others, by destroying his body. But his body means nothing to him." Stunned, Hal still refuses to believe her. He insists something must be done. Rukh replies: "Then do it. Something far harsher than destroying his mortal envelope.... Leave him then to the Lord. Leave him, by himself, to the voice of God" (537-38). Hal never understands this exchange, and later on Earth when Rukh survives an assassination attempt while swaying

all the people to Hal's cause, he is stunned to find that Barbage has converted just as did the Apostle Paul, from being a persecutor to Rukh's most fervent and devoted follower.

Hal Mayne succeeds as warrior, visionary, and in a sense prophet. But in this one area of faith, he must give way to the greater figure of Rukh Tamani. He recognizes this fact and leaves the crusading among the people of Earth to her while he continues to seek the answers to the human quandary in the Encyclopedia.

Dickson wrote more than 80 novels and 200 short stories and novelettes. He has won every science fiction award in America, and some in England as well. Although I have only discussed three of his "Childe Cycle" books, in fact there were several novels in the series that worked outside of the immediate Donal Graeme/Hal Mayne story.

Tactics of Mistake told the story of Cletus Graeme, the patriarch and founder of Donal's family on the Dorsai, and the creator of all the Dorsai came to become. Soldier, Ask Not is the Hugo Award-winning novel of Tam Olyn, the director of the Final Encyclopedia during Hal's life, but who in his youth led a campaign that could conceivably have destroyed the entire Friendly Culture, except for one man of faith who stood in his way.

There were other anthologies of short stories, and several novels that came after The Final Encyclopedia, including Chantry Guild about the effects Hal's actions had on the Exotic worlds, and several novels about Bleys Ahrens' rise to power. However, Dickson's plans to write historical and contemporary novels as a means of expanding his evolutionary story within the greater "Childe Cycle" ended with his death in January 2001.

In a nod to Dickson's use of Jungian theory and Joseph Campbell's work, Miesel says "As the millennia passed, initiation became the universal story, the tale of the hero

of a thousand faces” (Darkness 686). It is an acknowledgement of the debt Dickson owes not specifically to Campbell or Jung, but to the tradition of the hero that formed the foundation of his own work. The “Childe Cycle” was, like Dickson himself, filled with enthusiasm and hope for a better future: “Dickson describes himself as a ‘galloping optimist,’ unshakably certain that ‘man’s future is onward and upward.’ Right must inevitably triumph” (Miesel, Plume 243). Dickson was, at last, consumed with an overwhelming faith that humanity could and would become better than it is. It was this faith that illuminated every one of his many stories.

Although Gordon Rupert “Gordy” Dickson will never be able to finish the Childe Cycle, like Boiardo’s and Ariosto’s unfinished masterpieces of the past, his contribution to the Roland mythology and the genre of science fiction at large will be long remembered and appreciated.

EPILOGUE:
NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

Carl Gustav Jung first coined the phrase “collective unconscious” to describe a part of the human psyche that “has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all humans and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us” (4). Although Jung is not the first person to coin the term “archetype,” it is through his usage that the word acquired its meaning in the modern context. The word “archetype” is useful, Jung tells us, because it shows that the contents of the collective unconscious “are dealing with archaic or—I would say—primordial types...with universal images that have existed since the remotest times.... [A] well-known expression of the archetypes is myth and fairytale” (5). It is not surprising then that the road I have traveled through this thesis began with a small kernel of truth and exploded into a corpus of archetypal myth with La Chanson de Roland, Il Morgante and Orlando Furioso and into the realm of fairytale with Browning’s “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” before coming to Dickson’s The Final Encyclopedia. Dickson’s novel, and in fact the entire “Childe Cycle” deal extensively with Jung’s collective unconscious and the archetypes Jung first described but which Campbell explored so thoroughly. Campbell wanted to explore the old myths and religions in an effort to

extract archetypes that would still pertain to the modern “collective unconscious” of, among others, Jung’s theories: “Freud, Jung, and their followers have demonstrated irrefutably that the logic, the heroes, and the deeds of myth survive into modern times” (Campbell 4). Jung defines “collective unconscious” as a type of Freudian unconsciousness that “has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is...identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature” (Hull trans. 4). Dickson takes this concept and expands it further to say that this “suprapersonal” substrate can act with a will; the human race as a whole may direct its own destiny. Hal Mayne’s character, so like the hero Campbell describes, is fighting to redirect the “racial consciousness,” that is, the unified will of the race as a whole, in order to save the race.

When comparing Dickson to Campbell, it appears as though Dickson was using the Table of Contents from The Hero With A Thousand Faces to write his own novel. This wasn’t the case, of course. As I said before, it was not that Dickson followed Campbell’s outline but that Campbell so perfectly described the type of writing that Dickson and most other fantasy and science fiction writers use. However, Campbell’s observations were not based on science fiction novels alone, but on the whole corpus of human literature, myth and fable. Roland is an archetype character, but he is not the only one. Most novels that can be called fantasy or science fiction contain archetypes. These novels are a continuation of an old tradition that dates as far back as Roland’s own story, if not further.

To examine science fiction and fantasy within its historical origin, I must first define the *science fiction* and *fantasy*. Fortunately, those who are in a far better position

to do so have already done so. Brian Aldiss, a long-established and prolific author of science fiction and criticism, together with David Wingrove, examine the history of the whole genre in Trillion Year Spree. The definition they provide for science fiction is “The search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode” (25). Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein is among the most Gothic of novels but is also often cited as among the first true science fiction novels.

H.G. Wells, another of the pioneers of science fiction, makes a good point concerning the nature of the genre: “[B]y the end of the last century it had become difficult to squeeze even a momentary belief out of magic any longer. It occurred to me that instead of the usual interview with the devil or a magician, an ingenious use of scientific patter might with advantage be substituted...I simply brought the fetish stuff up to date, and made it as near actual theory as possible” (Aldiss and Wingrove 26) . Thus science takes the place of magic in fiction. If Arabian Nights were to be retold in modern terms, it would be as an anthology of science fiction short stories by Phillip K. Dick and William Gibson.

Aladdin would be a hacker and the Genie would be a supercomputer artificial intelligence. However, even centuries ago when magic was more prevalent than science in literature, there were science fiction forerunners. Aldiss points to the example of Daniel Defoe, who, though better known for his description of the fire of London and Robinson Crusoe, in 1705 wrote what in today’s terms would be a science fiction story in which a man travels to the moon with a machine rather than a magical device.

Aldiss distinguishes between fantasy and science fiction, even though the two are integral parts of each other. Fantasy, he says, “generally implies a fiction leaning more

towards myth or the mythopoeic than towards an assumed realism” (26). In short, although science fiction is a type of fantasy, fantasy does not necessarily have to be science fiction. Even so, science fiction has the unique ability to allow writers to explore issues that would be difficult for political or emotional reasons to explore on earth. As Aldiss says, “Other planets make ideal settings for brooding landscapes, isolated castles, dismal towns, and mysterious alien figures” (35). Dickson’s novels, for instance, are not what Aldiss would call hard-core science fiction. Dickson’s technology serves as a means to an end and is actually quite spare in the stories. Phase-shift travel simply opens access to different worlds, which if Dickson had set the novel in fourteenth century Italy would have been city-states like Florence or Naples instead. His weapons are little more advanced than what we have today, and computer technology is simply not a factor in his stories. The goal of the “Childe Cycle” is sociological and psychological rather than in the manner of novels of Gregory Benford or Ben Bova.

It is no surprise then that Dickson’s work falls so well within the literary genealogy of the Childe Roland mythology. Likewise, Stephen King’s Dark Tower series, which includes titles such as The Gunslinger, The Drawing of the Three and The Waste Lands, also lends itself toward more literary comparisons than some hard-core science fiction novels. The series is one of pure fantasy filled with Pulci-like sorcerers and warriors; a “Childe” named Roland, whose sword is his gun and whose goal is to reach the Dark Tower, rambles through a nightmarish world that is strangely similar to our own, while occasionally passing into our world to recruit help in destroying the sorcerer Walter. “Roland is clearly a knight,” King tells his readers in the introduction of The Waste Lands, “one of those charged with holding (or possibly redeeming) a world

Roland remembers as being ‘filled with love and light’” (1). King’s series harkens back to the meandering adventures of Pulci and Ariosto. In a possibly unrelated but still interesting coincidence, one of the threats Roland encounters in the second book is a “horde of crawling, carnivorous creatures—‘lobstrosities’” that seriously wound the hero (2). The scene is remarkably similar to the end of the giant Morgante—at the claws of a crab. The “lobstrosity” in King takes two of Roland’s fingers and several toes in its hunger (Drawing 16-18). Still, Browning remains King’s primary inspiration. For his character of Walter the wizard is the “hoary cripple” who “lied in every word” to Roland on his quest: “It is this malicious liar, this dark and powerful magician, who holds the true key to End-World and the Dark Tower, for those courageous enough to grasp it. And for those who are left” (Waste Land 422).

Many other strains of science fiction and fantasy have their roots buried deeply in medieval romances and even older literary traditions. One literary source that has inspired writers for centuries and continues to do so is the Bible. From this literary work, which dates back easily over one and a half millennia can be traced such science fiction classics as Robert A. Heinlein’s Job: A Comedy of Justice. In this novel the main character is tested just as Job was, only to find out that the testing is at the hands of a prankster Jesus and the Norse god Loki, since Satan was tired of torturing people. The hero’s descent into Hell after his Nordic lover is very similar to Dante, if Dante had envisioned hell as a capitalist resort where you can have a great time if you’re willing to work hard and pay for it. Heinlein’s classic, A Stranger in a Strange Land, is also inspired by a narrative of the Bible—that of Jesus Christ himself. Only, the savior of Heinlein’s novel is raised by Martians and founds a religion of love and cannibalism. His

end, though, is entirely Christ-like in that he is destroyed by a society unready to accept his message.

As I mentioned in my previous chapter, the influence of Thomas Mallory and Alfred, Lord Tennyson, on the Arthurian legend is alive and well in such works as Mary Stewart's Merlin novels, beginning with the enchanting The Crystal Cave. Marion Zimmer Bradley, a grand-dame of science fiction, applied her hand to the legend with The Mists of Avalon, and there rarely goes a year without a new Arthurian novel on a bookshelf in a bookstore. Although these new novels follow the thematic and structural elements common to modern writing—such as a unified plot and central characters—they are no different in spirit than the rambling adventures of Mallory, Tennyson, Pulci or Ariosto.

Two novels that follow the mythic and mythopoeic that Aldiss discusses are Marge Piercy's He, She and It and Roderick MacLeish's Prince Umbra. Piercy's book shares with Shelley's Frankenstein a common ancestor—the Judaic myth of the golem:

In 1580, a man was supposedly made out of clay on the banks of the River Moldau. A Rabbi pronounced an incantation, whereupon the figure came to life. It was without the gift of speech. No doubt Mary Shelley was familiar with this tale, although it was not given modern form until Paul Wegener's film interpretation, Der Golem, in 1914. (Aldiss 183)

The word golem, according to Gershom Scholem, first appeared in the Bible in Psalms 139:16, meaning something unformed and imperfect. Scholem notes that the legend of the golem first appeared in medieval Talmudic writings (352). The ritual of raising the golem described by Scholem is incorporated almost in its entirety by Piercy as she juxtaposes the fantasy elements of the magically created golem named Joseph in the

sixteenth century with the science fiction elements of a scientifically created robot called Yod in a post-apocalyptic future. The story of Joseph is told as a bedtime story to Yod as the robot develops more and more human-like attributes, until his transformation becomes so complete he becomes the lover of the main character, Shira. In using the story of the golem—a myth firmly entrenched in medieval Jewish literary and kabalistic tradition—to expand the story of the robot in the future, Piercy not only is able to explore the dangers of creating new life where life did not exist before, but she is also able to expand and make new the medieval literary traditions from which her story sprang. Also from the literary legend of the golem came almost all of Isaac Asimov’s Robot stories, as well as the basic idea for any other science fiction story in which human beings create a new life and then have to deal with that new life for good or ill.

Another book firmly grounded in the mythic aspects of literature is Roderick MacLeish’s Prince Ombra. If ever Joseph Campbell wanted a novel to point to and say “See! That’s what I was talking about!” it would be Prince Ombra. The story, which bears striking resemblances to Campbell’s theories, is that of a young boy named Bentley Ellicott who is born with the reincarnated soul of the mythic hero of all the ages, the one figure who is born again and again to fight for the forces of good against the “lord of every mortal nightmare” known as Prince Ombra. His upper lip is smooth because the archangel Gabriel never placed his finger there and told him to forget all he knew, so Bentley is born with all the knowledge of heaven and earth, with powers of magic to fight the darkness growing in the world. The story is deeply entrenched in all the mythic tales from cultures all over the world, including those of Arthur and Roland, and many others beside. However, MacLeish uses the fantasy genre to explore the heroic ideology in a

way a more mundane fictional approach would never allow. The result is a work of magic and myth both completely original and yet deeply imbedded in the literature of the ages back to Homer.

There are many other science fiction and fantasy novels that can trace the lineage of either story or form back to Medieval or Renaissance writing. Dystopian writing such as Orwell's 1984 and Huxley's Brave New World owe a debt to Thomas More's Utopia which was first published in 1516, which in turn was firmly entrenched in the tradition begun by Plato's Republic and Laws and continued in Aristotle's Politics. Jonathan Swift took a similar approach in Gulliver's Travels. Between these two authors arose a whole category of science fiction and fantasy, which examines the potential uses and abuses of social institutions.

For those readers who enjoy what has come to be called "High Fantasy," or fantasy adventures similar to J.R.R. Tolkien's famous novels, they may thank Edmund Spenser for the Faerie Queen, which solidified into common English tradition the idea of elves and fairies that before then had been relegated only to fairy tales. The number of modern works in this tradition are so numerous as to be almost uncountable: the authors who write them include David Eddings, Raymond E. Feist, Tad Williams, and Terry Brooks, just to name a few. All the books involve magicians or sorcerers, enchanted objects and heroes or knights on a mythical quest. Eddings, for example, took elements from multiple traditions and created a world where the hero travels from a Germanic people similar to those in Tolkien's Middle-Earth to a medieval feudal society Ariosto might have written about and through the equivalent of the Roman Empire at its height—all to recover a stolen magical gem that in the hands of an evil god could destroy the

world. That hero, Belgarion, eventually must battle and destroy an evil god named Torak, who tempts Belgarion before the final battle. This tempting is common—Campbell uses the example of how the god of love and death, Kama-Mara, attempts to seduce and destroy the Buddha. When force fails, “Mara then deployed his daughters, Desire, Pining, and Lust, surrounded by voluptuous attendants, but the mind of the Great Being was not distracted” and so the Buddha eventually defeats his tormentor (32). Christ too suffered temptation at the hands of Satan. Thus Eddings follows the age-old archetype of the hero defeating the god.

Many people have tried with varying degrees of success to lump all of science fiction and fantasy into a single, easily defined category. Aldiss’s definition is among the more appropriate for this genre because it is so open-ended. Dickson was searching for a definition of humanity as he thought it could be, a Moral-Ethical human being capable of living in a Utopian society that we are not yet capable of realizing. Similarly, the other works I have discussed seek out a definition of mankind through acts of valor and sacrifice, love and loss, or through the sheer delight of adventure. Aldiss admits that his definition of the genre is open-ended, but such a definition is necessary. At its root, science fiction and fantasy are more than just a collection of escapist writing and speculative fiction; these genres embody of all our dreams and nightmares of the future, and all our regrets and remembrances of the past. Because these aspects have existed since the first human being looked up and said “What are those lights in the sky?” there have always been stories to explain the world around us. Early myths told of the fantastic not as escapist literature but as a means of explanation and instruction. That tradition, which has seen thousands of years of history, continues to this very day. No longer do

we use stories of the fantastic to explain why the stars move at night or why volcanoes erupt or earthquakes occur; we use the fantastic to explain why we do what we do and why we dream what we dream. What will the moon be like? Are we alone in the universe? Why are we here and where are we going? Such questions have been asked since time immemorial, and science fiction and fantasy novels have taken on the formidable task of trying to answer them. Their writers separate human beings from all that we know and place them in environments never before seen, and then study those characters at a depth not possible in “reality.”

Ultimately, science fiction and fantasy are as inescapably linked to our literary past as we are. For every story that is written and published under these genres, a medieval or Renaissance literary precedent can be found somewhere in the world. Truly, there is nothing new under the sun, for to this day we are still trying to answer the same questions we have always asked. However, although the questions do not change, the answers must change as our society changes. Finding new answers to age-old questions is the on-going task of science fiction and fantasy writers. Thus, although Dickson and every other science fiction and fantasy writer is firmly a part of the literary tradition that has helped shape the whole of our society, their questing for new answers to the questions every human being has ever asked makes them a bridge from the ancient past to all the brilliant futures that could be.

End Notes

¹ Pulci and Ariosto are two examples of Italian poets whose works on the Roland legend I will explore further in later chapters.

² Reinaldus (or Rainaldus) does not appear in the Chanson de Roland. He is mentioned briefly in the Pseudo-Turpin in a roll of names very similar to the roll Einhard provides in which Roland's name is so briefly mentioned.

³ See Lebano's notes for stanzas 29-57 in Il Morgante 866.

⁴ This expectant father used Bruce Lansky's The Very Best Baby Name Book in the whole wide world, Meadowbrook Press: New York, 1990.

⁵ See Bloom's "Browning's 'Childe Roland': All Things Deformed and Broken" Prose 1.29-44. 1970. New York.

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VITA

Charles Edward Marrs was born in Gallup, New Mexico, on December 8, 1971, the son of William Marshall Marrs and Sylvia Leigh Marrs. Although not a Navajo, Charles was raised on the Navajo Reservation in Arizona until age twelve, when he and his family moved to Texas. After graduating with honors from Copperas Cove High School in Copperas Cove, Texas, he entered Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, for his freshman year. Beginning his sophomore year, he transferred to the University of Texas at Austin where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in May 1994. He began employment with the Teacher Retirement System of Texas in September 1997 and entered the Graduate School of Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas, in the Spring of 1998. He married Cynthia Louise Hebel in September 2000 and they are expecting their first child in October of 2002.

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