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ASSONANCE AND RHYME OF THE
CHANSON DE ROLAND

TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH J. DUGGAN & ANNALEE C. REJHON

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Despite its status as a masterpiece of world literature, the *Song of Roland* has only been available in English in translations based on the Oxford manuscript whose text dates to around 1100. But the medieval corpus of the Roland consists of seven substantial manuscripts, two in assonance and five in rhyme. The only complete text among the rhymed versions is found in two manuscripts housed respectively in Châteauroux and Venice, and thus known as CV7, which has never before been translated into a modern language. CV7 dates to the end of the twelfth century. It introduces five new episodes and expands others substantially, transforming the substance and sense of the narrative. The role of Aude is recomposed, raising her status to one of the most important characters in the poem. Students of the epic and those taking courses on medieval literature and history will experience the vitality and mutability of the genre in the course of the century in which many of the great French epics and romances were composed.

The present volume contains complete translations of Oxford and CV7, plus an introduction, notes, and indices of proper names and place-names that pertain to both texts.

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Joseph J. Duggan is Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. His principal publications are on medieval epic and romance, the poetry of the troubadours, and the textual criticism of medieval texts. He is the general editor of the edition of all the French versions of the *Chanson de Roland*, which was published in 2005.

Annalee C. Rejhon is Lecturer in the Department of Scandinavian (Celtic Studies Program) and the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. She writes on medieval French texts preserved in Middle Welsh. She has published editions of *Cân Rolant*, the medieval Welsh version of the *Chanson de Roland*, and of the Paris version of the *Chanson de Roland*.

Sample page ▼

1 (CV7 1)

Charles the king, our great emperor,
has been a full seven years in Spain,
he has conquered the high land down to the sea.
Not a castle remains standing before him,
5 not a wall or city left to destroy
save Saragossa, which is on a mountain.
King Marsile holds it, who does not love God;
he serves Mohammed and prays to Apollin:
he cannot keep misfortune from reaching him there. AOI

2 (CV7 2)

10 King Marsile is in Saragossa:
he has gone into the shade of a garden,
reclines on a block of blue-gray marble,
more than twenty thousand men around him.
He addresses both his dukes and his counts:
15 "Listen, lords, to what misfortune befalls us:
Charles, emperor of sweet France,
has come into this land to destroy us.
I have no army that can do battle against him
nor men enough to crush his.
20 As my wise vassals, counsel me
and preserve me from death and shame!"
Not one pagan replies a single word
save Blancandrin of the castle of Valfunde.

3 (CV7 3)

Blancandrin, one of the wisest pagans,
25 has all the knightly qualities that befit a vassal.
He is skilled in helping his lord,

— 29 —

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

LA CHANSON DE ROLAND - THE SONG OF ROLAND: THE FRENCH CORPUS (EDITED BY JOSEPH J. DUGGAN)

This edition brings together for the first time all the French texts of the *Song of Roland*, edited according to the highest scholarly standards. No reliable complete edition of the various versions of the French corpus of this poem, the most important of the chansons de geste and a recognized masterpiece of world epic, has been available until now.

