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A DISSERTATION

BY

ALEXANDER HAGGERTY KRAPPE

IOWA CITY, IOWA

1921

TO
DR. FRANZ NOBILING

ALLITERATION IN THE CHANSON DE ROLAND AND IN THE CARMEN DE PRODICIONE GUENONIS

The occurrence of alliteration in Romance prose and verse has for years been a well established fact[1]. Most scholars who have dealt with Old French alliteration have considered only that of coördinated words[2]. For the purpose of finding alliterating formulas of genuinely popular character, this method of procedure is doubtless the right one, since a comparative study tells us that popular alliteration is found with coördinated words only. Köhler admits that intentional use of alliteration can be found outside this group[3], and wherever alliteration occurs as a poetic device, in Greek, Latin, Teutonic, and Provençal poetry, it is not restricted to coördinated words. What is needed, therefore, is a study on the use of alliteration as a means of poetic technique in at least one monument of Old French literature, and for many reasons the *Chanson de Roland* deserves the first place in our attention.

A discussion of the term alliteration, though necessary, may be dispensed with here, since its different definitions have received adequate treatment in most of the studies mentioned in the bibliography[4]. I take, then, as a basis the definition of Plautinus: Fit alliteratio quoties dictiones continuatae vel binae vel ternae ab iisdem primis consonantibus, mutatis aliquando vocalibus, aut ab iisdem incipiunt syllabis, aut ab iisdem primis vocalibus.

To this must be added some supplementary remarks and modifications. Riese, Köhler, and Kriete, following the example of Wölfflin, went on the assumption that each vowel alliterates only with itself, as *a* with *a*, *o* with *o*, etc., as in Latin, contrary to Teutonic usage. Scholz pointed out objections to this rule, but added that the Teutonic use of allitera-

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1. cf. the works of Fuchs, Wölfflin, Paul Meyer, Gröber, C. Michaelis, Riese, Köhler, Kriete, and Scholz.
2. Riese, p. 16; Köhler, pp. 92 and 100.
3. p. 100.
4. Riese, pp. 6-8; Köhler, p. 92; Kriete, p. 10; Scholz, pp. 385-92.

tion of all vowels with each other is probably due to the fact
that each vowel was preceded by a sort of aspirate *h* in the
Teutonic languages.[1]   I do not see any possibility of test-
ing whether the occurrence of two or more words, each
beginning with a different vowel, is due to mere chance, or
whether it must be considered as intentional alliteration.
It may be observed, however, that the feeling for quan-
tity and quality of vowels was so well developed that at the
time of the *Roland* ǫ did not assonance with ọ nor ẹ with ę or
ĕ.[2] There would be a certain contradiction in the principles of
versification, should we assume that this feeling was devel-
oped to such an extent with regard to the vowels in assonance
and was absent altogether with regard to the vowels in alliter-
ation.   I shall use, then, as a basis for the consideration of
vowel alliteration the same principles which are followed in
the assonances of the poem, so that, for instance, ẹ alliterates
only with ĕ, ę with ę, etc., bearing in mind, however, that this
is an *a priori* assumption which can neither be proved nor
disproved.

The study will have a phonetic basis, as at that early time
alliteration was supposed to have an effect on the ear, not on
the eye.   Thus *gente* and *jamais* would alliterate, in spite of
the different spelling, but not *gente* and *grant*. Becq de Fou-
quières justly distinguishes between *allitération forte* and *al-
litération faible*, calling an alliteration "strong" if the two al-
literating sounds are perfectly identical; "weak," if the one is
voiced, the other voiceless.   The latter of these two groups
does not appear to play such an important part in Old French
as it does in Provençal; it has therefore been left out of con-
sideration in this study.

1. Zeitsch. f. rom. Phil. XXXVII, 1913, 388.
2. An apparent exception to this rule we find in the alliteration,
Huns : Hongres, Rol. 3254. There can be no doubt but that initial h was
silent at the period of the poem. But in this case there would be no
longer any alliteration for the ear, unless we assume that both vowels
had the same sound, in spite of the different spelling. On the other hand,
alliteration was certainly intended in this particular case, the two words
being syntactically coördinated.

Owing to the difference in stress of Teutonic and Romance words, a requisite which is indispensable in Germanic alliterating verse, namely, that tonic syllable and alliteration must coincide, need not be insisted upon in the discussion of Old French alliteration.

The prefix does not count in cases where the root syllable alliterates with another word or root syllable, and where it is likely to have been clearly recognized as such, which was certainly the case in compounds, the simple forms of which still existed. Thus *demandet* alliterates with *main*, though of course it may also alliterate with *Deu*.

The effect of alliteration can be intensified by an accordance of one or more sounds following the initial, or of the whole first syllables. A still higher degree of intensity is reached when a word alliterates with itself, with one of its derivatives or with an etymologically related word, though some scholars consider these as special cases belonging to the realm of rhetorical figures.

There is a group of words, fulfilling such elementary and absolutely necessary functions from the grammatical point of view that they occur very frequently, being essential parts of every complete sentence. They have been left out of consideration altogether. Such words are:

1. Article, definite or indefinite.
2. Pronouns.
3. Common adverbs, such as *puis*.
4. Positive and negative particles, such as *si, ni, ne, ja, guaires*, etc.
5. Prepositions.
6. Conjunctions.

Cases of elision have not been considered either, because the word, whose vowel is elided, belongs to the above named group of indispensable words, and because the vowel, losing its character as an initial, can no longer be regarded as capable of alliteration.

Finally, cases are to be noted where the poet could not possibly have expressed himself differently, even if alliteration

Classical Latin literature

Mediæval Latin literature

All three may have furnished some of the elements out of which the Old French epic was built up. In order to gain the criteria necessary to decide which of the three suggested the use of alliteration to the author of the *Roland*, we must classify the whole material according to the number of alliterating words and their position in the epic verse.

The following tables show the alliteration in the *Chanson de Roland;* the syllables have been designated by their number in sequence; thus an alliteration consisting of two alliterating syllables the first of which is the first syllable of the verse, the second the sixth, would fall under the heading 1-6.

I.   Alliterations within one verse line

A.   Alliterations consisting of two alliterating words:

§ 1. 1-3

254   *respont : Rodlanz,* also: 292, 1062, 1088, 1106, 1394, 1591, 1752, 2006

1258 *ferez : Franceis,* also: 1937

1600 *tot : trenchat*

1695 *plaindre : podoms*

1701 *mielz : morir,* also: 2336, 2738

1851 *Rodlanz : reguardet,* also: 1978

2454 *Charles : chevalche,*

3695 *Charles : chevalchet*

3729 *quatre : contesses*

§ 2. 1-4

117   *blanche : barbe*

248   *respont : reis*

359   *mielz : moerge*

790   *passez : porz*

1132 *clamez : colpes*

1233 *ferez : Franc*

1536 *brochet : bien,* also: 1573, 1944, 2128; *brochent : bien* 3877

1586 *trenchet : teste,* also: 1956

1654 *Franceis : fierent,* also: 1662

2285 *ovrit : oeilz*

2360 *tornat : teste*

2383 *claimet : colpe,* also: 2239

2748 *quite : claim*

2974 *venir : volt*