Notes about the text

The story of Roland is very popular in France. Almost everyone who has attended a French primary school will
know about the most famous episode: Roland fighting bravely at Roncevaux Mountain Pass, blowing his horn
and trying to destroy his sword…

There are many different texts relating this story. The one used here is based on “la chanson de Roland” (the
song of Roland) following the Oxford Manuscript, written at the end of the eleventh century in Anglo-Norman
language (which is a derivation from old French). Chapters and versification are based on the French edition
of the text by Léon Gautier (1872). Verse numbers are indicated in brackets. Missing parts are indicated by […]
and added or modified parts by the corresponding text in [ ].

The text of the prologue doesn’t belong to the original text and has been written especially for the piece using
the Spanish language.

1 – Prologue – le Vent qui venait des Montagnes (The Wind that came from the Mountains)

Oíd, oíd la leyenda, escuchad la historia
Escuchad la historia que trae el viento de los montes,
Oíd la leyenda que cuentan las viejas piedras...
Old, old

114 Desuz un pin, delez un eglenter,
115 Un faldestoed i out, fait tut d’or mer,
116 Là siet le reis ki dulce France tient.
119 S'est ki l'demandet, ne l'estoet enseigner.
180 « Seignurs baruns [...]»
180 « [...] Marsilies m'ad tramis ses messages »
196 [...] « [...] »
210 « Faitez la guere cum vus l’avez emprise »
210 « [...] »
229 « Laissum les fols, as sages nus tenum. »
274 « Franc chevaler, [...] »
275 « Car m’eslisez un barun [...], »
329 « [...] »
335 « De cest message nus avendrat granz perte. »
Under a pine, near a wild rose tree,
Stands a throne made of plain gold
Here seats the king that holds fair France
Those who want to see him know where he is
« Lord Barons,
« Marsile has sent his messengers to me »
« - It would be madness to believe Marsile !
« Go to war against him, as you had planed »
« - Don’t follow unwise decisions,
« Let fouls speak, and believe only the wises. »
« - Frankish knights,
« Choose for me a baron,
« That will be my messenger to Marsile. »
« - It will be my step father Ganelon. »
« - I can well go there, but nothing good will happen to me. »
« - This message will bring us great misfortune. »
4 – La Trahison  
(The betrayal)  
(Chapitres XXVIII – LII)

Ganelon rides under high olive trees  
He has joined Saracen messengers,  
They have ridden so long through roads and paths  
That they reach Saragossa and step off under a yew.

Guenes chevalchet suz une olive halte :  
Asemblet s’est as sarrazins messages.  
Tant chevalcherent e veies chemins  
Qu’en Saragucce descendent suz un if.

« [Carles] vus enveiet un soen noble barun »  
« - Or diet, nus l’orrum. »  
« - Kar ço vus mandet Carles […]  
« Demi Espaigne vus durrat il en fiet  
« He will give you half of Spain  
« He will give the other half to his nephew Roland.  
« If you don’t want to accept this,  
« Charles will besiege you in Saragossa. »

5 – le Départ de Charles  
(Charles’ departure)  
(Chapitres LII – LXXIX)

Charles has destroyed Spain  
Taken the castles, raped the cities  
The king says his war is over  
And now he is riding towards fair France.

Carles […] ad Espaigne guastée  
Les castels pris, les citez violées  
Ço dit li Reis que sa guere out finée  
Vers Dulce France chevalchet l’Emperer(e).

Halt sunt li pui et li val tenebrus  
The rocks are dark, terrible are the gorges …  
This day, the French passed with great grief:  
From fifteen leagues away we could hear them marching.

Les roches bises, li destreit merveillus  
De quinze liues en ot hom la rimur.  
As porz d’Espaigne ad lesset sun nevuld  
De quinze liues en ot hom la rimur.

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De quinze liues en ot hom la rimur.  
As porz d’Espaigne ad lesset sun nevuld  
De quinze liues en ot hom la rimur.

6 – Présages  
(Omens)  
(Chapitres LXXX – LXXXVII)

Olivier has climbed a high hill  
He looks on the right over a green valley  
He sees the whole pagan army coming  
« Charles will hear it and the great army will return. »

Olivers est desur un pui muntez  
Guardet suz destre par mi un val herbus.  
Si veit venir cele gent paierur  
Si l’orrat Carles, si returnerat l’oz. »

« Si l’orrat Carles, si returnerat l’oz. »  
« - Jo fereie que fols,  
« - I would be mad if I did that,  
« - Please God,  
« - That my parents be blamed because of me»

« Cumpainz Rollant, l’olifant kar sunez :  
« - My friend Roland, blow your horn:  
« - My friend Roland, blow your Horn:  
« - That my parents be blamed because of me»

Cumpainz Rollant, l’olifant kar sunez :  
« - My friend Roland, blow your Horn:  
« - My friend Roland, blow your Horn:  
« - That my parents be blamed because of me»
7 – L’Echo des Montagnes (the echo of the mountains)
(Chapitres LXXXVII – CLXI)

« Ferez i, Franc ! Nostre est li premers colps. »
« Strike, Franks, the first blow is ours. »

« Ferez i, Franc ! Kar très ben les veintrum »
« Strike, Franks, we will defeat them. »

« Ferez, Franceis ; nuls de vus ne s’ublit ! »
« Strike, Frenchmen, no one should stay behind. »

« Cist premers culps est nostre, Deu mercit. »
« The first blow is ours, thank God. »

« [...] « Tant mare fus, [barun] ! »
« Barons, what a misfortune! »

« [...] « Mult decheent li nostre.»
« Many of our men die »

« Cist premers culps est nostre, Deu mercit. »
Charles hears him.

« [...]« Cil corn ad lunge aleine ! »
« Barons, what a misfortune! »

« [...] « Mult decheent li nostre.»
« Many of our men die »

8 – La mort de Roland (The Death of Roland)
(Chapitres CLXII – CLXXVII)

Roland walks away. He walks alone on the battlefield
He fills himself that death is near
He fills himself that death is near
Here are four large shining marble stones
He hits them ten times with grief and anger
The steel screeches but doesn’t break nor chip
The steel screeches but doesn’t break nor chip
For the third time, Roland hits the pale stone
The count Roland is lying under a pine tree
He has turned his face toward Spain
Bending his head over his shoulder,
Joining his hands, he went to his end.

9 – Retour à Roncevaux (Return to Roncevaux)
(Chapitres CLXXVIII – CCLXXX)

The emperor arrives in Roncevaux
There isn’t a single knight or a single baron
That cries with pity.
They mourn their sons, their brothers, their nephews,
Their friends and their lords.
The emperor commands his trumpets to sound
And gets ahead riding with his great army.

10 – Epilogue

(Chapitre CCX)
(Chapitre CCXLIII)

Large is the plain, large is the country
Helms shine with gold and gems
Do you see those twinkling shields, those sparkling armours?
These spears and these flags hanging from them?
The trumpets sound and their voice is clear
The sound of the Oliphant goes far and high