Teaching Private Ryan Through The Song of Roland

Putting Saving Private Ryan in the Middle Ages with The Song of Roland in a French lit survey course resurrected the film for me. We used the French epic as a model for talking about Ryan and vice-verse and came up with some roles of violence as pro and contra war, and the role of the epic as being patriotic and a little "childish" in general.

The film itself has positive and negative reviews. It won the Catholics in Media Associates Award its depiction of the horrors of war, its profound sense of human justice, its depiction of personal integrity, and its commitment to the sacredness of individual worth. The film is framed by a pale image of an American flag with an older man at the Normandy Beach grave site and remembrances of the D-Day landing at Omaha Beach following Captain Miller and his squad on their later public relations mission to pull Private James Ryan out of France because his three brothers were already killed in combat, concluding with defending a bridge against the German army.

Some critics acclaimed its nonglorification of combat while others found the story banal. Most found the opening Normandy Beach scene the most realistic ever filmed. D-Day veterans wept at the film saying that people finally have seen the real thing. Eric Pfeffinger wonders if the film is asking us to be pacifists or to believe that this kind of violence can have moments of grace and nobility.

I was most offended at the fact that the translator needed for the quest was a desk jockey not prepared to fight. Language teachers, especially French seem to get a bad rap in films. A French tutor usually teaches her charge how to get laid etc. Pardon my French irritates my wife. The language major at DSU is not considered a real meat and potatoes major, like science or business. The coup de grace is that Captain Miller starts to translate an Edith Piaf song at the village of Rummell before the final fight. He's a Ranger, one of the toughest military groups, who chooses to bring a translator when he can speak French himself. Why would a Roland go to battle with a scholar? True, he needed German too, but the logic was not thought out.

I thought the story is a little weak. The worth of only child Ryan versus other soldiers is not as biting as Kubrick's Paths of Glory questioning the French mutinies of 1917, nor Renoir's Grand Illusion exposition of the real social class war. Speilberg's films lack story depth. We know little of why so many men were sent up against the German guns to be slaughtered (4800 casualties, 2000 on Omaha Beach). In Schindler's List, no exploration is made on the rationale for the Holocaust. Jurassic Park quickly went through the DNA explanation. Speilberg's main concern was to present the Omaha Beach sequence. The film almost received a NC17 rating by the MPAA, but the violence was ruled non-exploitative. Postmodernism is, according to Frederic Jameson, a term for our period of intense consumer capitalism. Multi-national corporations squeeze out individual national cultures. Reification is the sin - a reduction of all reality to its visual sense, so that it can be consumed. Experiences are bought. The process is avoided. Adam's sin is not stealing the apple, but thinking he could get smart by eating it. In History, reification is seen in La mode retro, glossy images of the past. We get view, but no depth. Speilberg puts us on Omaha beach with our admission price and popcorn. Virtual reality. John Gregory Dunne calls it virtual patriotism. We can support the war, but don't have to go.

Studying the epic genre in the work of The Song of Roland will give us a model to ask questions about Speilberg's film.

The Song of Roland was composed around 1100 AD and written down a century later. The story centers on the defeat of Roland's army at Ronceveau Valley
where it was acting as a Rear-guard to protect Charlemagne's army movement back to France across the Pyrenees. The plot in a nut shell:

Charlemagne had been in France 7 years fighting the Saracens when Marsile, the leader of the Saracens proposes peace, money, goods, and a promise to convert to Christianity if Charlemagne leaves Spain. Charlemagne and his Barons in council dispute the offer. Roland is a hawk and against the offer. Marsile has already killed 2 emissaries. Ganelon is a dove and wins the debate, but is offended when Roland nominates him as emissary to Marsile. Ganelon vows vengeance, and plots with Marsile as he twists Charlemagne's offer. Ganelon will nominate Roland as Rearguard, and once Marsile's forces wipe Roland out, Charlemagne's army will lose courage to come back and fight. At the onset of the battle and sight of the 400,000 Saracens, Oliver, Roland's trusted friend, asks Roland to blow the horn, Olifant, for Charlemagne's help. Roland refuses until they are on the verge of annihilation. Roland dies of exhaustion and hemorrhage, and is accompanied to heaven by Saints Michael, Raphael and Gabriel. Charlemagne arrives, wipes out Marsile's army, and then the combined Moslem armies of Baligant. Ganelon is put on trial by combat. His champion, Pinabel is defeated. Ganelon is drawn and quartered, with thirty of his relatives also executed. Charlemagne then goes off to more adventures and quests.

One studies this first monument of French literature:
the theme of "démésure" or excessive pride and heroism versus wisdom,
the epic genre,
the religious theme of Christians versus the pagans and Crusade propaganda,
Feudalistic manners and its relation to the real historical background.
how various audiences from different times have interpreted the song,
its origins and the question of authors

Démésure and the Epic

The drama between the Roland type and Olivier type is taken right after Olivier's request to blow the horn.
Roland is valiant, Olivier is wise
They both have marvelous vassalage
And as soon as they are on horseback, under armor
Would die rather than dodge aventure

Roland est preux, Olivier est sage.
Ils ont tous deux merveilleux vassalage
Et, dès qu'ils sont à cheval, sous l'armure
Mourraient plutôt qu'esquiver l'aventure.
(Henri Chamard trans. 7)

Rollant est proz e Oliver est sage.
Ambedui unt merveillus vasselage:
Puis que il sunt as chevals e as armes,
Ja pur murir n'eschiverunt bataille.Bédier, p.94)
The preux is guided by the heroic morality based on courage which is exalted by danger. He proves (preux) his vassalage by courage through danger and hates
shame. The sage is more measured. Olivier wants Roland to blow the horn for reinforcements from Charlemagne. Roland's pride causes the loss of his army. The Church denounces pride, and further the Roland type can be seen as a noble thinking himself more important than the king, which will lead to confrontations between nobles and king in the 17th century, and then the bourgeois and nobles in 1789.

Richard Schickel (Time, July 27) takes a similar stance in *Ryan* praising its cynicism and irony of the pale coloring of the flag and the high moral ground of questioning whether WWII was worth the sacrifice (like *All Quiet on the Western Front*). George Fenwick Jones reminds us that the epic genre is constructed to elicit admiration of the hero, who does great deeds for his or her nation, and discover what a nation's culture is, and its sense of human progress. He believes Roland is guided by a "shame" culture more than a "guilt" culture. The epic is more about the national ethos rather than a Christian ethos. Roland is more loyal to France than to Christianity. Therefore, the epic is not propaganda for the crusades, but a praise of the Frank army. The epic is more Frank than French. Roland does not have the cultural values of Montaigne, Pascal, and Voltaire whose values of tolerance, humility, research are more basic in French culture.

*Saving Private Ryan* is epic in nature. Our values of heroism, individualism, family values, along with the right to question the absurdity of our leaders. Captain Miller is a baseball playing high school English teacher who teaches at Thomas Alva Edison High School, and is a Captain in the hardest fighting unit of the army. He even capitalistically sells his story to his squad to save Reiben from being executed by Sergeant Horvath after the machine gun nest episode.

**Audience and History**

Robert Cook disputes the démesure theory studying the audience make-up of the 11th and 12th centuries. If Roland is guilty of reckless violence, why does he go to heaven? Using his approach we get into the history of feudalism through the epic. These songs were sung to the elite classes whose economical system of fiefs runs on promises exchanged and kept. Words like faith, honor, an earned reputation "los" are big words. The "guarant" or military protector is the most important person who protects the farmers during this period of economic growth.

In accepting Ganelon's nomination as rear guard Roland is the "guarant" of Charlemagne's army.

*Sire paratre, j'ai bien lieu de vous chérir: (v753)*

Vous m'avez élu pour l'arrière-garde.

*N'y perdra Charles qui tient la France* 

je crois, palefroi ni destrier

mulet ni mule qu'il doive chevaucher

il n'y perdra cheval de selle ni cheval de charge

qu'on ne l'aït d'abord disputé par l'épée (l. LIX)

*Sire stepfather, it is proper that I cherish you* 

You have elected me as rear guard. 

Charles who rules France will not lose 

I believe, neither palfrey nor war horse 

Nor mules that he has to drive

He will not lose a saddle horse or pack horse 

That one hasn't first disputed with a sword.

The army cannot cross the mountains and watch for the enemy at the same
In accepting the position Roland must protect the army until his death. That is the deal. When he first refuses to blow the horn for help, he is telling Olivier their duty is to fight first. Sending for help is out of the guarant's options. As "guarant" of the army Roland is also a metaphor for the "guarant" of the fief. Captain Miller also has this sense of commitment to his mission. We see this hierarchy of acceptance of absurd orders during the patrol's walk in the peaceful French countryside. Privates complain with sarcasm, while officers with subtle irony, just as Roland accepted Ganelon's nomination, by thanking him. Miller becomes the "guarant" of Ryan, and the bridge at Rummell becomes guarant for our entire army.

Collegiality is the rule of order in feudalism. Charles does not decide alone, but calls council when questions need to be decided (Marsile's deal, sending Ganelon as emissary etc.). The group is more important than one person with God at the top. Cook contends that Roland is not bragging when he says I conquered all the lands etc. the "I" is a synecdoche for Charlemagne and France. He also is not bragging when he vows that the pagans are all doomed. Cook interprets that to mean doomed in the long run. He knows that he will be defeated when he accepted the position. He knows that Marsile is a liar and Ganelon a traitor. (69) Roland is the hero of the "long run" position of feudal duties and promises, always referring to God, angels and France. It is Olivier, says Cook, who has a "short run" vision. He counts numbers, with individuals being more important than the whole picture.

The démesure argument is anachronistic for the 19th and 20th century audiences says Cook (140-1). Preux and sage are words that go together. Olivier is not even in the proper hierarchy of dying. He dies well before Roland. Gautier de Hun dies next to last, fitting to the feudal code since he was the first vassal to volunteer. Ganelon is a definite villain. "Defier" means to break faith, the most grievous offense. He lies to Marsile, and out of greed and vengeance for one person he betrays a whole army.

When Roland decides to blow the horn, he is not admitting a mistake, but now calling on Charles for vengeance. Vengeance is a key value in feudalism. It is a code that keeps order, like a pitcher's duty in baseball to retaliate if his players are being thrown at. The violence of vengeance keeps order in feudal times. When Charlemagne returns and defeats Marsile, and then Baligant's entire Moslem force, we are seeing a propaganda shaping the medieval audience's crusading mentality against the Moslem forces. Roland and Miller are preservers of feudal values of honor to questioners like Olivier and Reiben. Old Ryan can be seen as a person who did all right by the system.

The 1870 audience also has a hand on the interpretation of Roland. The disputed land of Alsace-Lorrain belongs to the French or Germans. The Franco-Prussian War corresponds to the war between scholars and the birth of medieval studies. Gaston Paris 1870 Cantelena theory contests that the Song of Roland has its origin in the songs and poems composed by Germanic soldiers from 778 to the 10th century, then put together in epic cycles around 1100 AD. "Frei" is Frank and French lit's origin is German! In the 1920s Joseph Bédier developed a Route Theory basing the origin of the poem along the pilgrimage paths to Spain. He brings the origin west away from Germany. The unity of the story, his one author theory, makes it a French classic of sobriety and harmony. The "Frei" of Franks of France have a French origin.

Writers and historians appropriate texts for their own purposes and we have to study their biases. Speilberg is appropriating D-Day. What is he up to? By questioning the author of Roland we will come up with some ideas about Speilberg's role.

Authorship: Speilberg as Jongleur
The chansons de geste were performed by jongleurs, itinerant performers who composed the epics from the lyric poetry of the trouvères (north) and troubadours (south). Trouvère means to find. So, the first finders were the poets, followed by the jongleurs who were all-purpose acrobats, animal trainers and singers of tales for the elite audiences of the 10th and 11th centuries. They were from the lowest level of society and considered illiterate. They were denounced by the Church of course. The jongleurs were gifted performers who developed stock phrases or word clusters and scenes to tell such long stories. The Oxford manuscript of Roland is one of the earliest French texts, probably composed around 1100 and written down a century later. The curtain line of La Chanson de Roland is "Ci falt la geste que Turolde declinet" (Here ends the exploits that Turolde exposes). Turolde can be the jongleur who recited it, the troubèr who composed it or the monk that copied it. All had hands in it just as Ryan is directed by Speilberg, with Robert Rodat writing the script, based on Stephen Ambrose's historical works and interviews. Michael Kahn edits the scenes and Janusz Kaminski is behind the camera. Tom Sanders builder of the French village set is also a vital author. Speilberg is a talented illiterate jongleur who can seize the work of talented people and give the public what it wants - a ring side seat, no - a seat in the middle of the ring at Omaha Beach.

The hand-held camera effect gives a first hand account zeroing in on individuals in the mass confusion and butchery. It is a primitive cinema style with good effect. Likewise Roland's style is primitive with the action carried on by formulaic language and a paratactic style. Duggan defines formula as a word cluster or hemistich (half of the decasyllabic verse) found two or more times in similar metric form and functioning in a similar narrative way (10). Vance adds that they convey ideas, and allow the jongleur to carry vast amounts of material (22). There are "dire" formulas (so says Roland), repondre formulas etc., built around the many council and argument scenes that carry the plot forward. There are also bragging formulas and battle formulas and other predicate formulas that tell us of the action. Duggan says there is little evidence of a learned poet (remanier) adding material between the oral tradition and the written manuscript. The collaborated effort of the jongleurs and their formulas do not make it less artistic. Roland is an oral text, but not inferior (39-59). He says that the effect of the formulas edited together is similar to cinema (61-61). The laisses can be seen as spatial settings; the pine trees as places of council, the high hills as isolation etc.

In the vantance or bragging formula we can look at the first drama between Olivier and Roland to blow the horn.

Olivier says, "The pagans have great strength: The Frenchmen seem to me so very few. Roland, my compagnon, sound your horn. Charles will hear it; the army will return."
Roland answers, "This would be great madness! I would lose my honor in sweet France. Now I must strike great blows with Durendal And bloody my blade to its hilt of gold. Woe to the treacherous pagans in this pass! I swear that all of them are doomed to die." (LXXXIII)

"Roland, my companion, sound your horn. Charles will hear and make his men return."
Roland answers, "May it not please God
That kin of mine be blamed because of me,
Of that France should ever be disgraced!
Thus I shall strike out hard with Durendal,
My good sword, with which I gird my side.
You shall see the blade completely bloodied.
Woe to the pagans that have gathered here:
I swear to you that all are doomed to die." (LXXXIV)
Roland, my companion, sound your Oliphant,
So Charles will hear it who is in the pass.
I swear to you the French will soon return."
"May it not please God" is Roland's answer.
"May it not be said by any man alive
That I blew my horn because of pagans.
My kinsmen shant be blamed because of me.
As soon as I am in this mighty war,
I'll strike one thousand seven hundred blows.
You'll see Durendal's steel become all bloody.
The French are good and they will strike like vassals,
For those of Spain there will be no escape. (LXXXV)
Dist Oliver: <<Paien unt grant esforz;
De noz Franceis m'i semblet aveir mult poi!
Cumpaign Rollant, kar sunez vostre corn:
Si l'orrat Carles, si returnerat l'ost.>>
Respunt Rollant: <<Jo fereie que folis!
En dulce France en perdrie mun los.
Sempres ferrai de Durendal granz colps;
Sanglant en e rt li branz entrequ'a l'or.
Felun paien mar i vindrent as porz:
Jo vos plevis, tuz sunt jugez a mort.>> AOI (LXXXIII)
Olivier dit: <<Les païens sont biens forts
Et nos Français sont bien peu pour cet effort.
Ami Roland, sonnez de votre cor!
Charle entendra, ramènera l'armée.>>
Roland répond: <<Je ne serais qu'un fou.
En douce France adieux ma renommée!
Non! Durendal frappera de grands coups;
Sanglant sera son fer jusques à l'or.
Pour leur malheur païens viennent aux ports:
Je vous le dis, tous sont jugés à mort.>> (LXXXIII) (Chamard)

Vance says that Roland's boast that the pagans will die is in fact a negative reply to Olivier. The paratactic style is carried on by the dialog. Roland does not give the reasons for his answer (42-3). There are few subordinating conjunctions to indicate relationships between sentences. There is little ambiguity though with what is happening despite the laconic feel. (Duggan 105-106). Duggan does point out that the movement between the laisses is paratactic, but there is a hypotactic style (conjunctions etc.) of the laisses as they follow one after the other. In these 3 laisses similaires we see that Roland's response is really complex. He would lose his honor and reputation (los in l.83) [couldn't get another job], it would not please God and his relatives would also bear the guilt (l.84), and it would be shameful in the light of refusing service against pagans (1.85). The brag itself is not a boast, but a heavy way to make a negative reply.

Other vantance formulas by the pagans serve different needs. Marsile's
nephew brags so his uncle will give him the honor to fight Roland in return for fiefs and money (l. 69). Before the battle with Charlemagne, Baligant's men brag to psych themselves up.

There are more formulas in the nonbattle scenes, but when a battle is taking place, the percent of formula use is heavier. The knight usually sits on the horse with the horse being praised. There are blows to the helmet (v1954,1995, 3603,3926), wounds to the head (v1586,1956, 3617,2248), blows to the chest (v1294, 2249< 1265, 3436), brains coming out of the temple (v1764,1786, 1342, 1980, 3905), eyes coming out of the head (v1355,2011). Roland laments the dying of Bishop Turpin as he lays on the battlefield:

Le comte Roland voit l'archeveque contre terre.
Hors de son corps il voit ses entrailles qui gisent
La cervelle degoutte de son front
Sur sa poitrine, bien au milieu (between the collar bones)
Il a croise ses mains blanches, si belles(les dous furceles)
(l. 167, v2246-2250)

The count Roland sees the Archbishop on the ground
Out of his body he sees his guts ooze
The brain dripping from its forehead
On his chest right in the middle
He crosses his white hands, so beautiful

The guts here are turned into praise for what Turpin has sacrificed.

The big epic blow happens four times, 3 by Roland, one by Olivier. The knight here brings his sword through the helmet, head, chest, bowels, and right through the horse. One victim of Roland is Grandoine, a Moslem prince who has just slaughtered some good knights, Gérin and Gérier. The French are discouraged. Grandoine is no slouch whose horse is swifter than any bird can fly. Roland takes to action:

Le compte le frappe d'un coup si merveilleux,
Qu'il lui fend tout le heaume jusqu'au nasal
Lui tranche le nez et la bouche et les dents
Et tout le tronc et le haubert aux bonnes mailles
Et le pommeau et le troussequin d'argent
De sa selle dorée
Et profondément le dos de son cheval
Point de remède: il les a tués tous deux
Et ceux d'Espagne gémissent tous.
Et les Français disent:<<Notre garant frappe bien.>>
(l.124)

The count strikes him with such power
On the noseguard that he cracks the whole helmet.
He splits the nose, the mouth and the teeth,
Through the whole body and the linked mail,
And the pummel and the silver cantle
And deeply into the horses back:
He kills them both beyond all reprieve,
And those from Spain cry out in anguish
The French say, "Our Guarant has struck well."

Speilberg uses similar tactics when we find ourselves being happy and applauding when the allies finally take over the beach and start slaughtering the Germans.

Another battle formula "brandir le coup" is when the knight stabs a felun and then twists the sword. Usually Olivier does this. When Englier is killed he rides in revenged egged on by Roland.
Il broche de son cheval de ses éperons d'or pur
Il dresse Hauteclaire, l'acier en est sanglant.
De toute sa force il va frapper le païen
Il secoue le lame dans la plaie et le Sarrasin choit**
Les démons emportent son âme (l. 117)

He digs into his horse with his golden spurs
He holds up Hauteclaire, the steel is bloody
With all his force he goes to strike the pagan
He shakes the blade in the wound and the Saracen falls
The demons take his soul away.

Olivier appears to be a little more sadistic than the others, especially the way he curses them after having killed them.
Roland reacts that he is very angry, and that Charles likes these blows. Why all the violence? Accuracy for the audience who demanded such details. Maybe it shows a unity of experience in fighting for your fief and country. It is also a display of macho force.

Cinema Sounds

Eric Pfeffinger thinks that the sounds of the bullets, the numbing noise, and the overall vaguelike quality of the sound is more effective than all the blood and guts in evoking the horror and the utter absurdity of the soldiers situation on D-Day.

Sound plays a big part in the drama of Ronceveau. The sound of Charlemagne's army crossing to safety is heard from 15 leagues off.

High are the hills and shadowy the valleys
The rocks are gray, the marches sinister
The French pass the day in great sadness
From 15 leagues one hears their march.
Hauts sont les monts et ténébreux les vaux,
Les roches bises, sinistres les défilés.
Les Français passent à grande douleur
De quinze lieues on entend leur marche.

Mille clairons sonnent pour que ce soit plus beau.
The noise is big, the French hear it.
Oliver says: "Sire, companion this shout
Seems to mean we will have an affair with the Saracens.

In Speilberg's epic the sound of the typewriters announcing the deaths of servicemen to their families will later be transformed into sounds of grief to the families. The typewriter sounds also show how far away the staff is from the real battlefield. Roger Ebert uses this idea to give a positive read to the film, showing the separation of those fighting from the ones giving the orders, and the utter absurdity of war that this film demonstrates.

Later we hear Marsile's trumpets announcing their arrival to annihilate Roland. The Pagans are arming themselves in the finest material while the french can only hear:

1000 horns sound so that it makes them more beautiful
The noise is big, the French hear it.
Oliver says: "Sire, companion this shout
Seems to mean we will have an affair with the Saracens.

(1.79)

Mille clairons sonnent pour que ce soit plus beau.
Le bruit est grand: les Français l'entendirent.
Olivier dit <<Sire compagnon il se peut, je crois Que nous ayons affaire aux Sarrasins.>>

The sounds announce a future battle, but also remind Roland of his feudal duty. He does not want any bad songs or sounds about him. This play of sound evokes a future of anxiety and battle, but also shows the bravery of the soldiers waiting in the silence that preceded it.

We have a similar situation in the silence that precedes the final battle in Ryan. We first have the sad lament of Edith Piaf about seeing her lover who jilted her everywhere (blues), then a calm quiet, and then the noise of the tanks announcing their destiny.

When Roland blows his horn to send for Charlemagne to avenge the betrayal, the horn sound means there was a betrayal.

Count Roland's mouth is now gushing with blood. His very brains are bursting at the temples. He sounds the Oliphant with grief and pain. Charles hears it and all the French listen. Thus speaks the king: "His horn has a long sound."

Naimes replies: "A great baron winds his pain. There must be a battle, I am sure of this. This man has betrayed you and seeks your fall. To arms, and let your battle cry be heard. To the rescue of your noble household! You've heard enough for Roland is in pain."

Le comte Roland a la bouche sanglante
Sa tempe s'est rompue
Il sonne l'oliphant douloureusement, avec angoisse.
Charles l'entend, et les Français l'entendent.
Le roi dit << ce cor a longue haleine!>>
Le duc Naimes répond: <<C'est qu'un vaillant y prend peine.>>

Il livre bataille j'en suis sûr. Celui-là même l'a bien trahi qui maintenant vous demande defaillir à votre tache.

Armez-vous, criez votre cris d'armes
Et secourez votre belle messie
Vous l'entendez assez, c'est Roland qui se déespère.

We must have had musical background and score here like at the movies. These laisses similaires also show the tragic strain on Roland. Vance reminds us that in absence of inner psychological betrayal, the sounds producing blood on Roland serve (53-4). Violence and blood then are used as signs of inner torment. It makes me think of agony associated with the agony in the garden of the bible,

Last Supper, the Death of the Heroes, the Planctus

Gerard Brault compares Charlemagne and Roland as Christ-like figures at the Last Supper. They may not know the betrayer at the time, but what matters is their determination to play the roles assigned by God to the bitter end (96). Bishop Turpin is their spiritual advisor and he too has this religious sense of mission. In the lull between the battle preceding the final defeat he absolves everyone’s sins, gives communion, and reminds them of their duty to God and king in a last supper type ritual.

Miller's quest also has religious qualities. Before the final part of
their journey to Rummell they spend a night in a Church, since the hotels were in ruins. There is a profound religious sense as the medic Wade copies a bloodied letter of the dead Caparzo, as Reiben and Melish talk about their families and the need to say to talk to the living, and as Miller and Sgt. Horvath talk about the ethics of sending some soldiers to their death in sacrifice to a greater number kept alive. Later in the town of Rummell, in ruins (set by Tom Sanders) we have a real "Last Supper" feel. Edith Piaf's blues song in the background, the soldiers eating and talking, Captain Miller trying to squeeze some good French coffee out of a machine all lead to a quiet comraderie before the storm we all know is coming. There is an epic religious-like acceptance of their duty.

In the French saga, Roland is the last to die. He dies from exhaustion and hemorrhaging for having blown the horn so loud it burst his blood vessels. He tries to break Durendal so it won't fall in enemy hands (l.171). He talks to his sword that was given by angels(l.172). He cannot break the sword (l.173). He is under a pine facing the enemy, he confesses his sins, thinks of his conquests, gives his glove to God, and is taken to heaven by the angels.

Under a pine lies the count Roland,
Les yeux tournes vers l'Espagne. Il se prend
A rappeler mainte ressouvenance:
Tant de pays conquis par sa valeur,
Les gens de son lignage, et douce France,
Et l'empereur, qui nourrit son enfance...
Clame sa coulpe, et crie à Dieu merci
De tous périls sauve mon âme aussi..
Sa dextre alors, présente à Dieu le gant,
Et de sa main, saint Gabriel le prend.
Le chef penché sur son bras, le doux preux,
S'en est allé les mains jointes, à sa fin.
Dieu lui envoie son ange Cherubin (Raphael)
Et saint Michel du Péril. Avec eux,
Vers lui s'en vient encor saint Gabriel;
Et tous les trois portent son âme au Ciel. (l. 176)
Under a pine lies the count Roland
The eyes turned towards Spain. He starts
To have many remembrances:
So many countries conquered by his valor,
The people of his lineage, and sweet France
And the Emperor, who nourished his childhood...
He professes his guilt, and shouts to God thank you
From all perils, save my soul, too...
His right hand then, he presents God his glove.
From his hand Saint Gabriel takes it.
The head bent over in his arms, the gentle knight
Went, hands joined, to his end.
God sends him his angel Cherubin (Raphael)
And Saint Michael of Peril. With them,
Towards him comes again Saint Gabriel
And all 3 of them take his soul to heaven.

In the paratactic style of the song, Charlemagne comes immediately and wipes out Marsile's forces which had already started to run. There is a father-son relationship with the two. Roland saves France for his Father, with the Father's duty to avenge his death so France will be protected.

Miller and James Ryan are like father and son, except this time the father
protects the son with his dying words saying "you better have been worth it." I don't think Roland would have demanded that, but Miller is just as heroic as he saves Ryan and the bridge. He lays dying, but still shooting his pistol at the oncoming tank. He too dies facing the enemy. Immediately at his death, planes fly over to save the remaining troops. They held out long enough and did their duty. I look at the planes as angels who take Miller to heaven. The next scene (accompanied by General Marshall's paternal Abraham Lincoln voice announcing the good news to Mrs. Ryan, is switched to the crosses at the Normandy Beach grave site, with Ryan saluting his hero. He asks his wife if he was worth it, but we all know he was.

Duggan studies the literary motif planctus, the pronouncement of funeral regrets upon the body of the fallen hero. The goal of the planctus is to positively reinforce the exploits of the hero. Charlemagne's planctus over Roland is the longest and contains all the elements studied by Paul Zumthor (160-4). He returns to the battlefield of fallen soldiers after having routed Marsile (1.206-211).

1. Narrative link -
   A. finding the dead hero
   He looks on the earth and sees his nephew lying
   Il regarde à terre, voit son neveu gisant. v2885
   B. announcement of the dirge
   Si doucement il dit sur lui l'adieu.2886
   So sweetly he says on him his farewell

2. Direct address
   Ami Rolant que Dieu te fasse merci2887
   Roland, friend let God have merci on you

3. Prayer for the soul
   Ami Roland, que Dieu mette ton âme dans les fleurs
   Au paradis, entre les glorieux2898-9
   Friend, Roland, let God put your soull in flowers

4. Statement of praise
   Nul homme jamais ne vit chevalier tel que toi
   Engager les grandes batailles et les gagner 2888-9
   No man ever has seen a knight like you
   Engage in great battles and win them

5. External signs of mourning
   Charles ne peut s'en tenir, il se pâme2891
   Charles can't stand, he faints

6. Indication of interior grief
   Il tire sa barbe blanche2930-1
   De ses deux mains arrache les cheveux de sa tête
   He pulls his white beard
   With his hands he tears out his hair

7. Allusion to distant homeland
   Quand je serai à Laon, mon domaine privé 2910
   When I am back in Laon, my private home

8. Ubi Est (what will I tell them about you?)
   Il demanderont: <<où est-il, le comte capitaine?
   They will ask me where is he? the captain count
   Ils demanderont: "Où est-il, le comte capitaine?"

9. Answer-Je leur dirai qu'il est mort en Espagne
   Et je ne règnerai plus que dans la douleur 2911-12
   I will tell them he died in Spain
   I will reign no longer except in pain
10. Misfortune of survivors
Qui conduira aussi puissamment mes armées,
Ah! France comme tu restes dépeuplée 2926-8
Who will lead as powerfully my armies
Ah! France, how you remain depopulated

11. Reference to the killer
Celui qui t'a tué, c'est la france
C'est la France qu'il a jetée dans la détresse
2935
The one who killed you, it is France
It is France that he threw in distress

12. Speaker's desire to die
J'ai si grand deuil, je voudrais ne plus vivre    2936
I have such great sorrow, I would like no longer
to live

13. Narrative conclusion
Geffroï d'Anjou suggests that they be buried there in a mass grave. Charles
gives the order by way of horn. (l.211)
__Saving Private Ryan__ is a planctus over the grave of Miller and the whole
Normandy Beach graveyard. The soldiers are canonized. Older Ryan finds the
grave, direct addresses Miller in the film's re-animation of the events
(apostrophe), has praise of Miller in his eyes, and suffers interior-exterior
grief (tears-film). There is an allusion to the Iowa homeland they are
fighting for, and Miller wonders how to answer difficult questions about
violence and mutiny (the film does the ubi est for us explaining all the
complex situations that happened to him). The reference to the killer can be
seen in the Nazi set-up of finding the Hitler youth blade on the German. The
misfortune of the survivors is in the guilt they feel, wondering if the
sacrifice was worth it. The voice-over of George Marshall reading Lincoln's
letter of consolation to Mrs. Ryan concludes the flashback. The film starts
with an individual unit looking out for themselves and ends in fighting for
the whole country backed by the big unifier Lincoln. The French epic goes from
Roland's exploits to a more central king and his more Capetian tragedy.
Roland's individual exploits transform to a combined French effort under a
central Capetian king, and France is born.

Tenebrism in Roland and Ryan: bourgeoisie vs.
Christian Values
Using the term tenebrism from the paintings of LaTour and Caravaggio where
figures are engulfed in shadows in scenes where there is partial illumination
showing a tension between Church and Aristocratic values, William Paden
applies it to Roland showing the play of light and shadow as being metaphorical
of the ambiguity of the values. Sometimes measure is good, sometimes bad.
Roland breaking his sword is a sign of his quest to get out of the shadows of
his predicament (346).

Speilberg's pale flag, and the black and white shots of the squad in
shadows after the men bury the medic and Miller has told his story indicate
the ambiguous sentiments of patriotism.

Tenebrism can apply to ambiguous values that are hidden or repressed in
both epics. Jean Alter accuses Ganelon of being the bad guy who represents the
bourgeois spirit that the Church wishes to suppress. Olivier does not die next
to last (therefore not the 2nd most important person), he is the first to lose
a fight and he was hit in the back (1316). Is he a coward? He insults the
Saracens much more sadistically than Roland (255).

Il secoue sa lame dans la plaie et l'abat mort
Il dit ensuite, "Païen, maudit sois-tu
Je ne dis pas que Charles n'ait rien perdu
Du moins, tu n'iras pas, au royaume dont tu fus,
te vanter à aucune femme à aucune dame
De m'avoir pris un denier vaillant
Ni d'avoir fait tort à moi, soit à personne au monde."

1959-1966

He shakes the blade in his wound and beats him dead
He says then, "Pagan, cursed be you
I am not saying that Charles has lost nothing
At least, you will not go to the kingdom where you came from
Nor brag to any woman or lady
Of having taken and valiant denier?
Nor having done wrong to me or anyone in the world.

There is more violence in his sarcasm. Insults can last longer than blood wounds, and are typical tools of business people. As for "sage," many Sarrasins have the word too (256-7). Where there are sages, there are felons (259). Alter concludes that feudal values are eroding and "proz and sage" are no longer in equilibrium (261). The Saracens and Ganelon have bourgeois values in their wealth, wives, etc (265-6). To be ensarrasiné is like being embourgeoisé (sarrasinized and bourgeoisized). When Thierry (outskilled but not out-Goded) kills Pinabel, Ganelon's warrior in the trial by combat, it is God or the Church which is killing Ganelon's values. Alter's thesis supports Cook's that Ganelon is a "short-run" minded bougeois interested in individual wealth with no concern of after effects.

Alina Clej interprets the epic as a cover-up for the incest of Charlemagne. Through his sister Charles begot Roland. He makes him a hero to repress his guilt. Clej concludes that the epic in general is repressing France's colonial expansion and plunder into Spain 3 centuries earlier.

I think both epics are repressing the real source of violence - the greed of runaway capitalism seen in the bear and bull markets.

Bear and Bull Market: the New Guarant

Gerard Brault sees avarice as a major motive of Ganelon's betrayal (101). From a Feudal point of view pride and avarice are the major capital sins. Avaritia, those who rely on their own wealth, is in direct opposition to Caritas, or communal love and charity. The violent aspect of avarice is seen in the bear. When Ganelon is arrested he is chained like a bear (v1827). In another vision, after Roland's death, Charles dreams he is holding a bear (Ganelon), when 30 bears attack wanting their relative back. A greyhound fights them, but Charles does not see the outcome. (L.186, v 2555-69). The feudal age is changing with fighting lords replaced by accountant and lawyer lords. In the Bear market it is the really vicious who sell things they don't own to buyers unaware prices are falling. At least with Bulls we know where they are going and get out of the way.

Sergeant Horvath says constantly "we're in business" when his soldiers get into position to fight. He then tells Miller, "maybe we need a new line of work." Metaphors?

The new violence is the bears taking away the wealth and we will need adult guarants who don't idolize heroes, but teach us how to interpret the texts we read. To see Speilberg's Dreamworks assaulting the beach of Disney might be the real violent background. We need a Corporal Upham type, but Speilberg has turned him into an epic hero. We need translators and language teachers, who don't shoot guns, but ideas.
Eugene Vance views the epic as a focal point between the first and second feudal ages (62-63). The first half of Roland is like the first feudal age with vassals and fighters dominating, and little patriotic values. Oliver would represent newer bourgeois values. The second half with Charlemagne dominating shows the newer feudal age where the lords are more lawyerlike, where there is a need for solidarity and federalism under a central capetian authority. After the 10th century the heroic ideal lessens in importance as Europe starts to rebuild. The epic is like romanesque art - simple and clear, whereas the romance in the 12th century is more complicated and psychological.