The expression "pleine sa hanste," which occurs eight times in the Oxford version of the Chanson de Roland (lines 1204, 1229, 1250, 1273, 1287, 1295, 1498, 1534), has been variously interpreted by scholars of Old French. Godefroy listed pleine sa hanste and pleine sa lance (s.v. plein) as if they were one and the same expression and defined them as "de toute la force de la lance." However, he cited one example of plaine sa lance with the meaning "de la longueur d'une lance." Jenkins, in the glossary of his edition of the poem, defined pleine sa hanste: "the full length of his spear handle (s.v. hanste)," but "with [my emphasis] the full length of his shaft (s.v. plein)." Foulet defined it: "avec la hanste toute entière; d'un grand coup de lance," adding that "l'idée de complétion s'accompagne d'une idée de vigueur et détermination." Bédier translated it "à pleine hampe" in each of the eight passages—an expression by which he no doubt meant simply "d'un grand coup de lance" (cf. à pleines voiles, boire à plein verre, à pleine bouche, etc.).

Bédier made it clear that he did not attach any special significance to the expression when he referred to it as a vers-refrain. He declared that Stengel was wrong to insert
“pleine sa hanste” at line 1603 [1559] even though it was found in V, T, L, and n. He wrote: “On résiste à la tentation d’imiter ici Stengel, si l’on observe que d’autres descriptions de combats se passent du vers-refrain Pleine sa hanste . . . : on le cherche en vain après le v. 1266 et après le v. 1893.” He seems not to have noted that the expression was missing from the description of not two but twenty-four mounted combats in the Chanson de Roland and that actually it was present in only eight. Thus it is clear that he really regarded it as a vers-refrain in the Chanson de Roland, just as plaine sa lance is in the later chansons de geste, and that he considered the two expressions identical.

In his article on the word plein, however, Littré cited our expression and, between parentheses, glossed it: “sans briser la lance.” Although he offered no proof of this original interpretation, and although none of the commentators or translators of the Chanson de Roland has, so far as I know, adopted it, I believe this may well have been the original meaning and the meaning as the author of the Chanson de Roland used it. However, constructed on the analogy of such absolute expressions as “saus lur cors,” it was probably already archaic in the early twelfth century; and by the end of the century, it was so obsolete that it was misunderstood by the scribes and jongleurs who, after all, were naturally unaware of the fine points of mounted combat in earlier times. Rychner has pointed out how the second-rate chansons de geste were made up largely of set expressions. Our expression, filling the first part of a decasyllabic line as it did and having a fine epic sound, was naturally used over and over by jongleurs who were incapable of inventing new ones. When a six-syllable cheville was needed, they merely had to write “toute pleine sa lance.”
Constantly used by careless jongleurs, the expression lost its pristine meaning, I think, and even its original form. "Plaine la lance" is a different expression from "pleine sa hanste": *plaine* (from *plana*) is different from *pleine* (from *plena*), *sa* is different from *la*, and a *hanste* is only the wooden shaft of a lance. Godefroy cites many examples of the word *hanste* meaning "spear shaft" but never meaning "spear" and, of course, never written "lance." Even if the two expressions seem eventually to have been used interchangeably with the general meaning "with a full blow of the lance," this does not prove they were identical. Or, to put it differently, the fact that *plaine la lance* came to be used as a rather meaningless *cheville* does not prove what *pleine sa hanste* meant to the author of the *Chanson de Roland*. The fact, for example, that the word *orateur* meant only "orator" in the seventeenth century does not alter the fact that it meant both "orator" and "prose writer" in the sixteenth. Everyone knows that the meaning of a word can change from the specific to the general, from general to specific, from literal to figurative, or even from one meaning to an entirely different one. It is not surprising that an expression made up of three words should develop new meanings—especially when it develops a new form. There is no doubt, of course, that *pleine [or plaine] sa [or la] lance* came to have the two meanings given by Godefroy. He provided numbers of examples that prove this; and, besides, every student of the Old French epic has seen the expression used scores of times so loosely that it could mean either.

It is fairly certain that the expression *pleine sa hanste* did not mean "with a full blow of the lance" to the authors of the "other versions" of the *Chanson de Roland," for in practically
all cases, they omitted it. The only one that rendered it with any consistency, V, merely wrote “plena a ses asta” in seven of the eight passages, and inserted it in two additional places. We have no way of knowing whether or not the remanieur knew what it meant in the original. But the authors of the rest of the other versions and translations made only sporadic gestures towards rendering it: T reads “pleine sa lance” in two of the passages; L, “tant com tint l’aste” once; n, “the length of his spear shaft” three times; e, “with distans” once; w, “in one fall” once; and CV 'PTL “plena sa (la) lance” once. The author of the Middle High German paraphrase seems to have suppressed it in all eight passages. Now it is well known that scribes and remanieurs tend on the one hand to copy automatically whatever is obvious and commonplace and, on the other hand, to omit, correct, or modernize words or expressions that are to them obscure, unusual, or archaic; therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the meaning of our expression was neither obvious nor commonplace to the authors of the other versions of the poem. Then what did it mean to the author of the Oxford version of the Chanson de Roland?

As the spear could not be readily maneuvered by a person on foot, the expression occurs, of course, only in descriptions of mounted combats—and, as it happens, always at the end of the description of a tilt. To the modern reader, descriptions of mounted combats (there are no less than thirty-two of them in the Chanson de Roland, as we remarked above) may seem monotonously similar because we cannot envisage clearly any of the details of a tilt; but to the medieval audience, each detail was clearly understood and the entire description was fascinating. It was far more important (and natural) for them to appreciate the fine points of mounted combat than it is for
us to understand the technical expressions used to describe a game of baseball (or cricket), because in addition to being the greatest sport of the Middle Ages, jousting was absolutely fundamental in warfare.

The role of the spear is quite as necessary as that of the sword both in epics and romances—if not more so; and its use is much more varied, colorful, and spectacular. It is true that spears were not given names as swords were, but that is because the life of a spear was inevitably brief. Aside from its use for giving signals of various kinds (and our poet used it thus repeatedly), the variety of ways it could be employed in mounted combat is surprising: now a knight may merely split an opponent’s shield with it; now he may cut through both shield and hauberk without injuring his opponent; or he may cut through shield, hauberk, flesh, and bones, cutting through various parts of his anatomy (liver, lungs, backbone, etc.); or he may thrust his spear all the way through his opponent so that the point extends some distance beyond his body. He could even thrust his spear and his gonfanon through the body of his opponent. Most important of all, he could be clever enough to kill his opponent without breaking his spear, or he could be so awkward as to break his spear without wounding his opponent.

In the tournaments of the later Middle Ages, knights sometimes had three or four spears each; but on the field of battle at the end of the eleventh century, a knight had only one spear. To break it was a serious matter; it could be a matter of life and death. Today the expression “to break a lance” has come to mean merely “to have a heated argument.” Rabelais protested that even in his time people were using the expression figuratively and inappropriately. When Gymnaste was
teaching Gargantua the art of “chevalerie,” he taught him to use his spear without breaking it! Rabelais wrote: “Là rompoit non la lance, car c’est la plus grande resverye du monde dire: ‘J’ai rompu dix lances en tournoy ou en bataille’—un charpentier le feroit bien—mais louable gloire est d’une lance avoir rompu dix de ses ennemys. De sa lance doncq asserée, verde et roide, rompoit un huys, enfonoit un harnoys . . . ,” etc. (Gargantua, Chap. XXIII).

If a knight did succeed in thrusting his spear through or well into the body of his enemy, he was then faced with two possibilities: he could leave the spear in the body, or he could try to remove it so he could continue fighting with it. The most skillful knights—such as Roland and Olivier—removed the spear and went on fighting with it. But how did a knight go about retrieving his spear? This brings us to another expression that has a variety of meanings.

In five of the eight cases in which a knight kills his opponent *pleine sa hanste* in the *Chanson de Roland*, the poet tells us in the line immediately preceding (lines 1203, 1249, 1272, 1286, 1540), “[II] Empeint lo bien.” Although *empeindre* has a variety of meanings, I think the author of the poem originally used it as a technical term to describe the maneuver of alternately thrusting and jerking by which a spear was extracted from an opponent’s body. He wrote: “Empeint lo bien, fait li brandir lo cors” (line 1203). “Empeint lo bien que mort lo fait brandir” (line 1429). Although this expression is usually translated “enfoncer vigoureusement” (so Foulet, s.v. *empaindre*), it is used in many cases where it could not possibly have that meaning. For example, when Roland is about to blow his horn, the poet tells us: “Rollant ad mis l’olifant a sa buche, / Empeint le ben, par grant vertu le
sunet” (lines 1753–54). No one could possibly imagine that Roland “thrust his horn into his mouth vigorously” like an inebriated New Year’s Eve reveler! He surely put the horn against his lips carefully—as any skilled bugler would do. Bédier translated correctly—and elegantly, as one would expect: “Il l’emboche bien.”

The infinitives empeindre (empaindre) and empoindre and the nouns empeinte (empainte) and empointe were used with such a variety of meanings in the course of the Middle Ages that we can not be absolutely sure what the words meant at a given time and place. But there can be no doubt that getting the spear out of the body of the enemy was a matter of great importance; indeed, poets sometimes mentioned the fact that knights even had to work their swords out of the body of their opponents. And in many cases, when a poet says a body falls dead to the ground, it is just after he has said the successful knight did something (empeint, for spears; brandist, for swords) that could remove the weapon so that the body of the opponent was free to fall to the ground. Repeatedly in the Chanson de Guillaume, we read that a knight who has killed a pagan with his spear: “Empeint le bien, si l’ad trebuché mort” (line 440); and “Empeint le bien, par grant vertu l’abat” (line 1125). Likewise, in Aliscans, 1464–66, we read: “Parmi le cors mist la lance pleniire. / Ains ke li glous ait guerpi l’estri­viere, / Saisit le ber l’espil [espiet] od la baniere.” And again, Aliscans, lines 5159–60, we read: “Parmi le cors li mist le fust fraisnin, / L’espié traist fors od l’ensengne sanguin.” Such details make it clear that the removal of the spear was a very important matter. In Florimont, a tilt ends with an awkward maneuver that is just the opposite of the fine technique exhibited by Roland and Olivier: “De l’espié l’empaint en tel
guisse / Que tote s'anste frosse et brisse" (lines 6661-62). It is not only force that can break spear shafts; awkwardness can do it.

Let us see precisely how the expression is used in the Chanson de Roland. Here is the description of the first mounted combat of Roland—a complete description, step by step, of a tilt carried out by a knight of the greatest conceivable physical skill. (The nephew of Marsile has just made an insulting speech about Charlemagne).

Quant l'ot Rollant, Deux! si grand doel en out!
Son cheval brochet, laiset curre a esforz,
Vait le ferir le quens quanque il pout.
L'escut li freint e l'osbere li desclot,
Trenchet le piz, si li briset les os,
Tute l'eschine li desevret del dos,
Od sun espriet l'anme li getet fors,
Empeint le ben, fait li brandir le cors,
Plein sa hanste del cheval l'abat mort. (lines 1196-1204)

This is usually translated as follows: “When Roland hears that, God! he has very great grief because of it. He spurs his horse, lets him run full tilt, and goes to strike him [the count does] as hard as he can: he breaks his shield and cuts through his hauberk, he cuts through his chest and breaks his bones, he severs the spine of his back. With his [very] spear, he drives out his soul. He thrusts it well, shakes the body, and with a full blow of his lance, he knocks it down dead from the horse.” But I think the last two lines mean: “He thrusts and jerks it skillfully, shakes off the body, and, without breaking his spear
shaft, drops it from his horse stone dead. (The verb *abattre* is still used with the meaning “to fell [a tree],” “to bring down,” “to drop [a man or an animal]”).

After he has described in detail the heroic course of the spear through the shield, the hauberk, and the body of the Saracen, it seems to me impossible that a good poet could then remark lamely that the hero had done it with a full blow of his lance. And if he happened to be so inept once, would he have made the same slip eight times in the poem—in the very places where he was trying to describe most impressively the skill of his greatest heroes?

It is obvious that Roland did not break his spear shaft, because after this first blow of the battle, he goes on fighting with his spear. The poet tells us that he kept on fighting with it as long as the spear shaft lasted, but that after fifteen tilts, he has broken and destroyed it (line 1322). Only then did he draw Durendal (line 1324).

Olivier’s fighting follows the same pattern as Roland’s, except that even after he breaks his spear shaft, he goes on fighting with the butt end of it. He uses it as a club to bring down the pagan named Malun “along with 700 of theirs” (!) and finally shatters the butt end of his spear in killing Turgis and Esturgoz (line 1359). Roland even jokes about his fighting with a *baton* and asks where his sword is. Olivier declares that he is so busy fighting that he hasn’t time to draw it! Fighting with swords is never so gay—and varied—as fighting with spears.

The archbishop Turpin likewise kills his first opponent *pleine sa hanste* as do Geriers, Anseis, and Engeliers. Only twice does the poet use the expression in describing the blows of pagans who kill Christians (Climborin killing Engelier, and
Valdabron killing Samsun); and in each of these cases, the mighty pagan is immediately brought down—Climborin by Olivier (line 1552) and Valdabron by Roland (line 1586). Thus, by showing Olivier and Roland killing with their swords two highly skilled pagans who, having their spear shafts intact, should be able to keep them at a safe distance, the poet enhances still further the courage and skill of the two Christian knights. At least it is clear, I think, that the poet did not regard the expression as a vers-refrain.

In other early texts, there are numerous passages in which *pleine sa hanste* or even *plaine sa lance* is opposed to "sa lance brise" (*froisset, fraint, estruset, escantelet*, etc.) It is interesting to note that in the *Roland*, after the twelve peers have each killed a pagan, a valiant Saracen named Margariz attacks Olivier in fine style but fails to wound him, breaks his spear (line 1317), and runs away! When Roland declares that Olivier is a fine knight for breaking spears (line 2210), he surely must mean for breaking the spears of his opponents—as here. In the decasyllabic version of the *Roman d'Alexandre*, which, according to P. Meyer, is particularly precise in its descriptions and in its use of words, Nicolas breaks his spear in tilting against the hero, but Alexander's shaft is strong and he unhorses Nicolas *plena l'asta* (lines 750, 759, ed. Meyer). In *Aliscans*, Naymer kills Caenon *plaine sa lance*, but *sa lance brise* when he tilts with Aukin. Guiélin attacks the grotesque Tabur and nearly kills him but his spear shaft breaks (*Willeme*, line 3181); then Guillaume comes to the rescue, but although he has killed Corberan *pleine sa hanste*, he breaks his spear in three pieces on the grotesque Tabur (line 3184). (Tabur is finally killed by Reneward with his famous *tinel.*) Little Gui slays two pagans without breaking his spear shaft,
but the third one he kills breaks it as he falls: “Quant le gluz chaï, la hanste li estruse” (Willame, lines 1825, 1830, 1842). Gui is so small that he is perhaps not strong enough to retrieve the spear before the pagan falls forward on it and breaks it. Earlier in the battle, Guillaume kills sixty opponents with his spear (line 1804), and only when his horse is killed under him does he draw his sword (line 1809).

In Raoul de Cambrai, many blows are struck pleine la lance but in none of these, nor in any of the hundreds of descriptions of mounted combats in epic and romance I have examined, have I been able to find a single one in which a blow struck pleine sa hanste caused the spear shaft to break and only one in which a spear broke when a blow was struck pleine sa lance. We shall return to this case in a moment. It is possible that such examples exist; but if our expression had the meaning “de toute la force de la lance” throughout the Middle Ages, we could surely expect poets to say frequently that the spear shaft had broken as a result of such powerful blows.

Chrétien de Troyes, who is always careful to be specific in his descriptions of any activity, often shows that he knows the importance of using a spear correctly. When Yvain must fight three knights at once in order to save Lunete’s life, he breaks all three of his opponents’ spears with his shield (!) and keeps his own intact (Yvain, ed. Roques, lines 4476-79). Erec’s skill is equally remarkable: the first of the five robbers misses him completely (Erec, ed. Roques, line 2859), but Erec kills three of them without breaking his spear. When the other two flee, he pursues them and breaks his spear by stabbing one of them in the back as he flees (line 3046). Chrétien shows specifically how a knight retrieves his spear by twisting it out of the wound: “Au retrere a son cop estors / e cil chei” (Erec, lines
2868–69). In the combat between Erec and Maboagrain, at the first clash they both pierce the other’s shield but do not wound each other. Then: “Chascuns au plus tost que il pot / A sa lance sachiée a lui . . .” (lines 5900–1). Chrétien never used *pleine sa hanste* nor even *pleine sa lance* so far as I know. For an expression of distance, he used “tant con hante dure”: “Erec, tant con hante li dure / le trebuche a la tere dure” (Erec, lines 2135–36). It is curious that, some eighty years earlier, the author of the *Chanson de Roland* used this very expression to mean, literally, “as long as his spear shaft lasted”: “Fiert de l’espict tant cume hanste li duret” (line 1322).

If it is obvious that the spear played a paramount role in mounted combat throughout the Middle Ages, it is equally clear that the author of the *Chanson de Roland* was fully aware of its importance. Repeatedly, when he wanted to evoke the emotion of terror or dread, he would refer specifically to the destruction of spear shafts. In Charlemagne’s nightmarish vision before the first battle, Ganelon appeared and jerked his spear from his hands with such force that he shattered it to splinters (lines 720–22). In his terrible dream before his battle with Baligant, he saw spear shafts of ash and of fruit wood burning (line 2537), and again, the shafts of sharp spears breaking (line 2539). When Gautier de l’Hum comes down to Roland for protection at the end of the battle, in order to show that he has fought a good fight, he merely says: “Ma hanste est fraite et percet mun escut” (line 2050). In the general description of the desperate first battle, the poet mentions, in particular, that many spear shafts are bloody and broken (line 1399); and in evoking the atmosphere of the battle with Baligant, he wrote: “Deus! tantes hanstcs i ad par mi brisecs”
Such remarks were repeated so often in the later *chansons de geste* that they no longer seem to us very significant. Thus, if we would like to understand expressions with their original freshness, I think it is necessary to divest our memory of subsequent usage.

Here is the passage in which the Count of Normandy strikes Gormont *pleine sa lance* and yet breaks his spear shaft. It occurs in the all too brief *Gormont et Isembart* fragment.

Now if the Count had really knocked him supine, Gormont would scarcely have been able to leap to his feet and throw a spear hard enough for it to go completely through the Count and then kill a young man from Lombardy who was standing nearby. But the unique manuscript of the *Gormont* fragment dates from the thirteenth century—a good hundred years after the poem was written, and we cannot be sure what the poet actually wrote. Bayot declared that the manuscript “présente, contre le sens, la mesure et l'assonance, des fautes nombreuses.” It is clear, nevertheless, that in describing the
twelve tilts of Christian knights against Gormont, the poet builds up interest by allowing the Christian knights an increasing degree of success: The first two are promptly killed, the third shatters Gormont's shield but breaks his own spear shaft (line 52), the fourth, fifth, and sixth break through his shield but do not wound him. (The reader will recall that Gormont is handed a new shield whenever he needs one.) The seventh one is described in the passage quoted. We shall return to it in a moment. The eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh all wound him in one way or another, but none of the Frankish knights succeeds in killing him. But finally Loowis, having called upon God, St. Denis, and St. Richier, does actually kill him. As for the seventh tilt against Gormont, the poet may have originally written that the Saint Denis chronicle says that he struck him a great blow breaking his spear shaft but that if he hadn't broken it, he would have surely killed him. Like other poets, he referred repeatedly to chronicles to give his story an air of authenticity. He referred to the one at St. Denis (line 146), that at St. Richier (line 330), and, once, simply to "la geste" (line 418). The fact that he declared, in line 418, that the chronicle's statement is correct suggests that at other times he might have questioned it; and he may have intended to cite the chronicle here only to contradict it. But whatever the poet wrote in the first place, the thirteenth-century scribe merely wrote: "He knocks him to the ground flat, the length of his spear [or with a great blow of his spear] and he would have killed him if his spear shaft had not broken." The scribe, like his contemporaries, was probably unaware of the original meaning of the expression *pleine sa hanste*. It is striking, however, that the hundreds of scribes and *remanieurs* happened, whether by chance or instinctively, to avoid saying that
blows were struck with such tremendous force that the spear shaft was broken.

The reader will have no doubt noted that the eight passages in which our expression occurs in the *Chanson de Roland* are all in the battle of the rear guard. This fact does not suggest to me that the so-called Baligant episode was written by a different and later poet. On the contrary, if it had been written at about the time of the redaction of the Oxford manuscript, it is highly likely that the expression *pleine sa lance* would have been used over and over as a *vers-refrain*—as it was in other *chansons de geste* of the later period. The reason our poet used it in Roland's battle but not in Charlemagne's is, I think, that in the former he is primarily concerned with portraying supremely skilled and courageous human beings who are fighting magnificently while relying on their own strength; but in the latter, he is emphasizing not the courage of men but the power of God. Roland never prays for help. He even refuses to call for the help of Charlemagne. Even the Archbishop Turpin merely gives absolution and other comfortable words; but Charlemagne is frequently in communication with God, and the angel Gabriel speaks to him repeatedly in the poem. Indeed, at the climax of the battle, the angel Gabriel appears to Charlemagne, like the gods in Homer and Vergil, just in time to save him from certain death at the hand of Baligant.

In Roland's battle, the Christians are superior fighters. For 20,000 men to destroy 100,000 men and confront a second 100,000 without fear, they must be supermen. The poet describes very carefully and clearly the atmosphere of the two camps before both battles. Marsile's men have no worries because they have overwhelming numbers and because Gane-
Ion has told them that if they massacre Roland and the rear guard, they will be rid of Charlemagne. They know their losses may be large (Ganelon told them so) but they are convinced that they can not lose. As for Roland, he is much too simple-minded to be worried. Olivier is "sage" and, consequently, very much worried; but Roland refuses even to listen to his wise advice to call for help.

In Charlemagne's battle, the Christians are no better fighters than the pagans. But they perform rites of the Christian religion, pray to the true God for help, and have holy relics and a holy battle cry. The pagans perform silly pagan rites, call upon idols of wood and stone, have no holy relics, and they have a battle cry that has no significance. But they are described as marvelous fighters. The poet says of Baligant: "Deus! quel baron, s'oust Chrliestentet!" (line 3164). The greater the strength, courage, skill, and power of the pagan army, the greater the miracle of a Christian victory.

In describing the fight of Roland and his men, the poet must have quite intentionally set out to show the greatness (and insignificance) of man without God; therefore, he made the most of their physical vigor, skill, and courage. In the battle between Charlemagne and Baligant, he wanted to show the superiority of God and of Christian faith over the pagan gods and the Mohammedan religion. That Roland finally admitted his mistake, prayed for forgiveness, and was carried off to heaven by angels does not alter the fact that 20,000 Frankish knights had been killed because he foolishly failed to call for help.

The difference between the meaning of the word *hanste* and *lance* is, and always was, clear; but it is perfectly compre-
hensible that the former should be replaced by the latter in our expression without necessarily changing its meaning. But the problem becomes more complicated when we remember that \textit{plein (plenus)} and \textit{plain (planus)} are entirely different words which were frequently used interchangeably in manuscripts in which the spellings -ei- and -ai- were interchangeable. After all, the best manuscript of the best Old French epic (the Oxford Roland) writes \textit{la pleine tere} instead of \textit{la plaine tere} ("level ground"). Then there were a number of expressions like \textit{plein pié, plein doit, plein pas}, and so on, that were commonly used as expressions of distance; but since they were often written \textit{plain pié, plain pas}, and so on, they could easily be taken to mean "a plain foot," or "a mere foot," or whatever you please. The meaning of the entire complex of words was further complicated by the constant use of such expressions as \textit{cols pleniers, lance pleniere, en plein champ, de plein, plein eslais, lonc une lance, tant con hanste li dure}—all of which soon became clichés. In the \textit{Chanson de Willame}, the word \textit{espee} is repeatedly used instead of \textit{espié} (lines 1804, 1811, and 1839); it seems unthinkable that a scribe could write that the shaft of an \textit{espee} was broken in one line and in the very next line write that the knight drew his \textit{espee} (Williame, lines 1842, 1843). But that is precisely what happened.

Given such a large number of expressions whose meanings were becoming more and more academic as the Middle Ages wore on and as the manner of fighting evolved, it is not in the least surprising that scribes who were copying manuscripts in the thirteenth century did not distinguish between the expression \textit{pleine sa hanste} and \textit{plaine sa lance}. But it is perhaps as important for Old French specialists today to distinguish between a term of eleventh- and thirteenth-century warfare as
it is to distinguish between technical terms having to do with architecture, law, finance, literature, philosophy, or religion.

1. References to the text of the poem are always to the edition of Joseph Bédier (Paris, 1922).


3. T. A. Jenkins (ed.), La Chanson de Roland (Boston, 1924). D. J. A. Ross supported this interpretation with many citations and two handsome illustrations of mounted combat from a fourteenth-century MS. Unfortunately, the illustrations do not show that the unhorsed knight was knocked from his horse the full length of a spear. Be it said, however, that in order to show the distance of a spear shaft between the knight and his horse, the illustrator would have had either to reduce the scale of his composition or to simplify it considerably (Medium Aevum, XX (1951), pp. 1-10). I am indebted to U. T. Holmes, Jr., for this reference and the one to the articles of W. D. Elcock which is mentioned in footnote 8 infra.


5. Bédier's translation of the poem is included with the edition of the text.


7. For the customary nomenclature used here, see Bédier, La Chanson de Roland, pp. 65-73.

8. Emile Littré, Dictionnaire de la langue française (4 vols.; Paris, 1863-83). W. D. Elcock expressed the opinion that of the various interpretations that had been suggested, Littré's was the one "most strongly supported by medieval evidence"; but instead of accepting Littré's explanation, he argued that our expression had survived from an earlier exercise in which knights practiced maneuvering a spear and that it had the same meaning as lance baissée (French Studies, VII [1953], 35-47).


10. Readings cited here are taken from the variants listed in E. Stengel, Das Altfranzösische Rolandslied (Leipzig, 1900).