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The Garden of Crossing Paths: The Manipulation and Rewriting of Medieval Texts

Venice, October 28-30, 2004

Edited by Marina Buzzoni and Massimiliano Bampi

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Preface

This volume collects a selection of papers originally presented at the International Conference *The Garden of Crossing Paths: The Manipulation and Rewriting of Medieval Texts*, held at the University of Venice, 28-30 October 2004. The meeting was the tangible outcome of an initiative undertaken jointly by five University Research Units[1] belonging to a Group that over the past few years has been working on an interdisciplinary project about the reshaping of Medieval texts into both medieval and modern rewrites.[2] The symposia held in Pavia in December 2002 (*Eroi di carta e celluloide. Il Medioevo germanico nelle forme espressive moderne*),[3] and in Bergamo in October 2003 (*Riscritture del testo medievale: dialogo tra culture e tradizioni*),[4] can be considered crucial events in this field of study since the speakers raised important methodological issues about the degree of adequacy of contemporary theoretical approaches used to investigate the different kinds of rewrites a Medieval text can undergo (for an enlightening survey see Maria Grazia SAIBENE's essay *Rewriting and intertextuality: metamorphosis, interference and reinterpretation of Medieval texts*). Thus, the Conference at the University of Venice represents both a synthesis of the lively current debate on this matter and an opportunity to develop new ideas, sharing the results of the Group's latest and best work with the findings of foreign researchers.

The Conference title is itself a rewrite. It is a 'manipulation' of the name given by Jorge Luis Borges to his famous collection of stories *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* ("The Garden of Forking Paths", 1941), in which

[1] University of Bergamo, University of Ferrara, University of Pavia, University of Trento, University of Venice.

[2] The project was sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR).

[3] Saibene, Maria Grazia / Francini, Marusca (2004) (eds.), *Eroi di carta e celluloide. Il Medioevo germanico nelle forme espressive moderne*, Viareggio, Mauro Baroni editore [Il Confronto letterario n. 42, *Supplemento*].

[4] Cammarota, Maria Grazia (2005) (ed.), *Riscritture del testo medievale: dialogo tra culture e tradizioni*, Bergamo, Bergamo University Press.

the author poses the idea of literature branching out in an infinite number of diverging ways at every point in time and space. Thus every space-time node becomes the centre of a complex system of forking paths which open in different directions and create multiple dimensions all occurring at once. In accordance with this idea, the process of rewriting is seen as a labyrinth of infinite possibilities rather than as a linear, single path. The substitution of Borges' original term 'forking' by the new term 'crossing' was meant to put the stress on the network of convergent forces which characterize any textual manipulation. Instead of referring to the theme of separation, we have chosen to highlight the intertextual and intercultural relations connecting the source text to its rewrites.

Although the starting point of each process of rewriting investigated by the contributors of this Conference is always a Medieval text – or, in some cases, a group of texts – the variety of the final outcomes is rather rich, in terms of both chronological and geographical setting. In fact, some papers deal with rewrites within the boundaries of the Germanic Middle Ages, while others focus instead on modern European and North American reworkings mainly from the 19th and the 20th centuries. The wide spectrum of problems and theoretical questions which the analysis of these texts has helped to bring to the fore tells us much about the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the reception of texts throughout the centuries and beyond the cultural boundaries within which they have been produced.

The majority of the essays contained in this volume are indebted to the theoretical achievements reached in the field of **Translation Studies** (see, among others, Even-Zohar, Toury, Bassnett, Lefevere).[5] Therefore the epistemological approach followed by most of the contributors is based on the analysis of the actual product(s) of the rewriting process with the intent of investigating how and why the source text has been manipulated. No rewrite can be considered "neutral": in fact each target text contains a vision of the world and a hierarchy of values which vary according to both the socio-cultural context the manipulator belongs to, and his own artistic or ideological agenda. Thus through rewriting the source text acquires new meanings in an ongoing metamorphic process, as shown clearly in many articles of this volume.

Siri NERGAARD's contribution: *Translation and power: recent theoretical updates* focuses on the concept of 'power' – a notion which has become

[5] Cf. Bassnett, Susan (1980), *Translation Studies*, London, Methuen [London-New York, Routledge 1991].

central in recent studies on translation – and advances some hypotheses on how the concept might be pertinent for the study of the translation of Medieval texts.

Fulvio FERRARI's essay: *Correcting traditions and inventing history: the manipulation of mythology and of the past in the Nibelungen-literature of the 19th and 20th centuries* analyses several relevant rewrites of the Nibelungen legend in order to point out the narrative strategies deployed by different authors to establish a relationship between the traditional plots which were handed down through centuries by oral transmission and Medieval sources, and a concrete historical context.

In his article: *Re-writing the contemporary sagas. How several modern novelists use* Sturlunga saga, Torfi TULINIUS studies four recent novels which all belong to the genre of historical fiction and which all use "sagas of contemporaries" as sources. Issues of literary technique are discussed as well as the ethics of transforming real persons who lived in the past into characters in a story. Various techniques of writing are taken into account and evaluated depending on how well the authors succeed in bringing to life the distant past, avoiding anachronism as well as meeting the ethical standards argued for in the article.

Jón Karl HELGASON's paper: Njáls Saga *as a novel. Four aspects of rewriting* analyses the novel *Fire in the Ice* published in 1961 by the American novelist Dorothy James Roberts. The features of Roberts' rewriting investigated by Helgason are the following: (1) her sense of history, (2) her sense of geography, (3) her sense of narration, and finally (4) her sense of audience. This study shows that Roberts' work illustrates, somewhat ironically, why and how the Icelandic sagas need to be rewritten in order to enter the realm of the modern novel.

Revisiting the past: P.O. Sundman's rewrite of Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða by Massimiliano BAMPI deals with a peculiar reworking of one of the most popular and intensely studied Icelandic sagas, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*. The aim of the paper is to propose an analysis of some of the main features which characterise Sundman's novel (*Berättelsen om Såm*, 1977) as a rewrite of the saga. Particular attention is therefore given to the investigation of the rewriting strategy that comes out of the comparison between the hypotext and the hypertext, in an attempt to try to work out the mechanisms governing the reshaping of the text and the dynamics regulating them.

Three contributions are primarily focused on the notion of **reception** of a text in a different cultural context.

In her paper entitled *Tannhäuser's* Crusade Song: *a rewriting of Walther's* Elegy? Maria Grazia CAMMAROTA tries to show that a possible key to our

understanding of Tannhäuser's poem may be provided by a comparison with Walther's *Elegy*. The *Crusade Song* may thus be regarded as a work originating from a sort of dialogue between Tannhäuser and his predecessor established in order to undermine an ideology on the holy journey which is felt to be no longer adequate. In such a way the poet manipulates the source-text in order to lead the audience towards a critical reflection on the sense of the missions overseas in the first half of the 13th century.

Ulrike KINDL's essay: *Klopstock's* Messias *– a belated sparkle of Medieval epics?* deals with an eighteenth-century poem, *Der Messias* by F.G. Klopstock, which has always been considered by scholars amongst the most valuable works of German literature, an essential prerequisite to the masterpieces of Weimar classicism. Yet, although upon its first complete publication in 1780 it was welcomed as a "national poem", the work never enjoyed widespread fame among the audience and today is almost totally neglected. How did this happen? The author's suspicion is that from the very start there has been a misunderstanding in the reception of *Der Messias:* this monstrous epic might be defined as all sorts of things – edifying literature, eloquent strophic poem, even as the beginning and foundation of modern German literature – but not as the German national epic. According to Kindl, *Der Messias* is twice contradictory: first of all for its formal features; then for the subject it deals with.

In *Istanze prefative e riscrittura nelle traduzioni anglosassoni d'epoca alfrediana* Franco DE VIVO analyses the features of paratextual elements of Old English translations during the age of Alfred the Great, with special reference to prologues. The study aims to show the relevance of the prefatory sections introducing a translated text towards a better understanding of the reception of the text itself.

Vittoria CORAZZA's paper: *Crossing paths in the Middle Ages: the* Physiologus *in Iceland* deals with the topic of the complex relationships between the target text and its various sources, among which the iconographic witnesses should not be disregarded. The author analyses two Icelandic fragments of the text known as *Physiologus*. These fragments, conventionally called *Physiologus A* and *Physiologus B*, are independent of each other and seem to have been written in about 1200. Scholars agree that their source is to be found in the Latin version conventionally called *Versio B*. Although this statement is true in a general sense, according to Corazza it acts as a screen which hides a much more complex reality: textual and iconographic features give evidence of their derivation from models whose origins lie in England. Moreover, through the analysis of the chapters dealing with onocentaurs the author shows that the two Icelandic *Physiologi*, in which tradi-

tion and innovation mingle profoundly with each other, are original manipulations of the ancient matter.

Further theoretical and methodological points of reference are offered by the work of Gerard Genette *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*[6] – in which the author analyses the manifold relationships a text may have with prior texts on the same document – and the research on **intertextuality** carried out, among others, by J. Kristeva, M. Riffaterre, H. Bloom.[7]
Maria Vittoria MOLINARI's essay: *Converging voices and independent language at the origin of German lyrical poetry* deals with the notion of intertextuality in relation to Medieval texts. The contributor re-examines the issue of the making and development of the German lyrical language in the Middle Ages, looking at the multilingual culture that lay beneath the rise and development of the European lyrical tradition. German medieval lyrical poetry is thus said to have resulted from two entwined phenomena: "multilingualism" and "intertextuality". According to Molinari, throughout the 12th century, European history witnessed major cultural changes, which brought about an elaborate network of culture and languages of very different stocks (Romance and Germanic). Therefore Latin-bound bilingualism and the later intertextual ties with Romance languages should be taken into account in order to explain how the convergence and mixture of diverse elements in the German language gave rise to the self-sufficient and creative idiom of poetry.
The notion of intertextuality is also profitably used by Marusca FRANCINI in her paper: *The* Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd*: an Icelandic Reworking of* Tristrams Saga, which investigates some aspects of structure and style in the target text. The analysis of the composition technique reveals that the use of the conventions of various different literary forms which were current in medieval Iceland, such as translated *Riddarasögur*, original *Riddarasögur* and *Íslendingasögur*, has been crucial to the reshaping of the Tristan legend.

Two contributors, Alessandro Zironi and Marina Buzzoni, have considered the process of rewriting primarily from a **linguistic point of view**, taking into account both lexical and pragmatic features of the source and target texts.
In his essay: *The evangelic text as translation and interpretative experience:*

[6] Genette, Gérard (1982), *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré*, Paris, Édition du Seuil [trad. it., *Palinsesti*, Torino, Einaudi, 1997].
[7] See Allen, Graham (2000), *Intertextuality. The new critical Idiom*, London-New York, Routledge.

the paradigm of the Germanic languages, Alessandro ZIRONI wonders whether it is possible to support the idea of a Germanic paradigm for the translation of the biblical text. The author shows that the answer can be affirmative if part of that model is the relationship with its lexical tradition and its use in rendering a cultural baggage which is different from the existing one in the target language. According to Zironi, the main interpretative key of this relationship should be found in the juridical lexicon, surely one of the most prolific and flowing among the Old Germanic semantic fields.
Marina BUZZONI's paper: *Re-writing discourse features: speech acts in* Heliand makes use of a more formal approach (i.e. pragmatic categories) to face the issue of the communicative features which are present in the early ninth-century Old Saxon verse reworking of the Gospel. In order to do so, a linguistic and philological analysis of how the *Heliand* authors re-wrote their direct and indirect hypotexts is carried out, paying particular attention to the information structure of the utterances. Furthermore, the context from which the poem springs – i.e., broadly speaking, the so-called "Carolingian culture and thought" – is taken into consideration in order to account for the communicative choices made by the compilers. Finally, it is argued that the *Heliand* conveys an orthodox Christian message, whose presence throughout the whole poem has led the author to formulate new hypotheses about both the use of the text and the composition of its audience.

A couple of contributions either focus on or take into account **intersemiotic manipulations** of Medieval texts, both within and beyond the Middle Ages. *Tristan-Rezeption in deutschen Dramen des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts: Ernst Hardt und Georg Kaiser* by Christoph HUBER pivots on the intense reworking of the Tristan material which took place in the field of the dramatic genre in Germany shortly after 1900. The author pays particular attention to two of these dramas, Ernst Hardt's *Tantris der Narr* and Georg Kaiser's *König Hahnrei*; after providing a survey of the different sources they drew upon, he outlines the features of both Tristan adaptations, showing their common traits and their differences as modern re-interpretations of the original story.
Possible narratives: re-telling the Norman Conquest by Giuseppe BRUNETTI analyses four 're-uses' of William of Malmesbury's (1125) record of the Norman Conquest: *The Bayeux Tapestry* (1070s) and three modern novels on the Conquest (Bulwer Lytton 1848, Muntz 1949, Rathbone 1997). All these remakes are samples of 'ancipitous narrative', i.e. equally possible courses of events leading to the same outcome; in fact, they all provide narrations of alternative possibilities with an invariant outcome and an invariant theme: Harold as the expression of English civil society.

One of the essays contained in this volume confronts a very important and thorny issue within the theory of translation, that is the notion of 're-writing' in a culture deeply rooted in the **oral tradition**. Marcello MELI's *Riscritture eddiche. Il caso della* Atlakviða *e degli* Atlamál tackles this difficult problem. The author analyses the relationship between two Old Norse Eddic lays, *Atlakviða in grœnlenzka* [*Akv.*] and *Atlamál in grœnlenzko* [*Am.*], both preserved in Codex Regius nr. 2365, 4°. In particular, he discusses the question whether *Am.* should be considered as derived from *Akv.* by investigating their main features and sorting out their mutual substantial and formal differences. The general conclusion points at the denial of the notion of 're-writing' within the oral tradition: "il concetto di 'riscrittura' non vale, a parer mio, per la tradizione orale, dove non esiste né può esistere un testo-base. 'Riscrittura', in sostanza, è un concetto proprio dell'analisi (semiotica?) moderna che può allontanare l'esegeta dalla corretta comprensione di testi medievali tràditi oralmente."

We would like to thank all who attended the Conference for their enthusiastic participation and their contribution to the final discussion. Many thanks to the doctoral and graduate students who helped at the Conference: Maria Rosa Cargasacchi, Isabella Ferron, Filippo Lovisetto, Luigi Zennaro and, last but not least, Nicola Zocco. Finally, we gratefully thank Lynn Mastellotto for her expert assistance with the language revision of some essays contained in this volume.

Marina Buzzoni and Massimiliano Bampi

Venice, October 2005

(Revised July 2007)

MARIA GRAZIA SAIBENE
(Università degli Studi di Pavia)

Rewriting and intertextuality: *metamorphosis, interference and reinterpretation of Medieval texts*

Summary. In this paper I will deal with the major results achieved by the Research Group that in the past two years has worked under my supervision on the Programme *Rewriting and Intertextuality: Metamorphosis, Interference and Reinterpretation of Medieval Texts*. In the first part I will introduce the essays which colleagues from various Universities presented during the 2002 Conference in Pavia (*Eroi di carta e celluloide. Il Medioevo germanico nelle forme espressive moderne*) and the 2003 Conference in Bergamo (*Riscritture del testo medievale: dialogo tra culture e tradizioni*). In the second part I will discuss some features pertaining to intertextuality which may be of interest for the rewriting of medieval texts. My discussion aims to create a closer link between philological studies – especially those related to Germanic Philology – and recent critical orientations, hoping that this integrated approach will contribute to the development of literary science.

1. *Introduction to the Research Programme*

The title of my paper *Rewriting and intertextuality: metamorphosis, interference and reinterpretation of Medieval texts* is the same as that of our Research Programme, since my purpose is to present the Project and to offer an opportunity for discussion. Indeed, this Conference in Venice is precisely an occasion to present and discuss our contributions and latest results with researchers of different areas together with foreign colleagues.

The team I have co-ordinated for two years had already promoted another Research Programme (i.e. *Modernizzazione del testo medievale. Aspetti della ricezione e traduzione*) under the supervision of Professor Maria Vittoria Molinari. Two Conferences have been organized at the University of Bergamo: in 2000 *Testo medievale e traduzione* and in 2001 *Tradurre testi medievali: obiettivi, pubblico, strategie*, the proceedings of which have been published.[1] Both the characteristics of translation in the European Middle Ages and the theoretical problems of comparing contemporary theories on

[1] Cammarota / Molinari (2001); Cammarota / Molinari (2002).

literary translation to the particular critical perspective of the historical-philological analysis of medieval texts have been studied.

I would like to introduce colleagues from several Universities who have participated in this Project since they deliver their speeches here too: Maria Vittoria Molinari (Bergamo), Fulvio Ferrari (Trento), Ulrike Kindl (Venezia), Alessandro Zironi (Ferrara), Maria Grazia Cammarota (Bergamo), Marusca Francini (Pavia), Massimiliano Bampi (Venezia) and, last but not least, Marina Buzzoni (Venezia). We owe a special thank you to the latter for promoting and organizing this Conference.

In addition to studies on translation, the research has focused on rewriting and intertextuality. In particular, they have studied both different patterns of rewriting in the Middle Ages and the present-day rewriting of medieval texts using different media: film, comics, illustrations, etc. As for the study of medieval texts, they have considered cultural and intercultural aspects, as well as the particular context in which each rewrite took place. As far as the rewriting of Germanic texts and characters is concerned, they have analysed the consequences of these revisions on the medieval image or images spread in present-day culture and society.

In terms of studies and trends of criticism which can offer potential theoretical and methodological points of reference for this kind of research, they have considered the work of Genette *Palimpsestes*,[2] the studies on intertextuality by J. Kristeva, M. Riffaterre, H. Bloom,[3] and, in the field of *Translation Studies*, they have followed an epistemological approach based on the actual product of the translation process (from Even-Zohar, Toury to Bassnett, Lefevere)[4] by investigating the different types and meanings of the transformation of the translated text. Moreover, these processes of rewriting are not seen as "neutral": on the contrary, they assume a vision of the world and a hierarchy of values which vary according to the translator and to the specific context. The socio-cultural context of the target text is important, because it makes possible additional meanings and develops potential alternative meanings of the source text. Through rewriting, the source text is transformed and enriched in an ongoing metamorphic process.

In the study of medieval texts there is also the problem of 'authorship'. This is a problematic issue in medieval texts since many of their authors are

[2] Genette (1982).
[3] Worton / Still (1990); Allen (2000).
[4] Toury (1995); Bassnett (1980); Lefevere (1992).

anonymous. Another aspect to be considered is the instability of medieval texts within their tradition, a result of which was the encouraging of intervention and revisions by copyists, translators and remakers. This aspect of the instability of the text has been investigated within the Project for the Sacred text as well, which was submitted to rewriting in Germanic tradition. Indeed, our research will produce a synoptic edition of the Germanic translations and revisions of St. Matthew's Gospel.

As regards the rewriting phenomena of the Middle Ages in a modern or contemporary age, the intent has been that of combining the methods of translation studies, inter-cultural criticism and comparative studies. Furthermore, it has been necessary to deal with methods and critical results of other disciplines such as semiology, the history of cinema and theatre and the study of new genres and media.

To sum up, the researchers involved in the Project have unanimously agreed that their studies of rewriting should also take into consideration the contribution of studies on intertextuality and reception in order to overcome the limited approach of a mere research of sources so as to consider the relationship between a text and its antecedents as an interplay between texts and cultures.

2. *Contributions from the Conference in Bergamo*

After speaking about the Research Project, I would like to move on to describe some methodological aspects and problems and to illustrate the results achieved in the research presented in two Conferences, one in Bergamo and the other in Pavia.

I will start with the Conference in Bergamo, held in November 2003: *Riscritture del testo medievale: dialogo tra culture e tradizioni*.[5] The Conference papers dealt with rewriting and intertextuality in Medieval Texts and, in some cases, also with rewriting in contemporary times and in modern literary genres.

I myself presented a paper on *Riscrittura e riuso delle immagini poetiche nel* Wanderer[6] (*Rewriting and re-use of poetic images in* The Wanderer). I started from the assumption that in the study of a medieval poetic text it is

[5] Cammarota (2005b).
[6] Saibene (2005: 125-157).

not sufficient to search only for sources, rather it is of primary importance to understand the type and method of composition. In the Old English elegies, for example, poets supported the re-use of formulaic expressions and themes, as well as the formation of new words from existing material. For this kind of poetry we can speak of a tradition, but only if we take into account the way in which the poet, for example the poet of *The Wanderer*, took and rewrote the poetic material for particular purposes and for his specific audience.

At the theoretical-methodological level, I've made reference to some studies and principles like those of Julia Kristeva on dialogicism, which enabled me to verify the applicability and the productivity of modern theories for the study of rewriting and intertextuality in the Old English elegies. Moreover I was able to review other studies which, in the definition of the genre or the structure of *The Wanderer*, have a unidirectional point of view which cannot fully explain all the aspects of these poetic texts. In accordance with Pasternack's studies on textuality,[7] I think that there is a polyphony of voices and elements in the text of *The Wanderer* and that many of its aspects can be traced back to an oral tradition, but with differences in the reworking of the written text. I think that the text, the organic structure of which has been under discussion for quite some time, has three "voices" (*anhaga, eardstapa, snottor on mode*) and various sections linked by cross-references within the text and by reproductions of themes and expressions. I've also looked at the other aspect of interest to me, i.e. intertextuality, both through comparisons of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, as well as with other texts, for example *Beowulf*. In the latter, the figure of the sole surviving warrior, who is the guardian of the treasure, represents an analogous example for the poet and his audience. The *Wanderer*-author does not show himself, because there is the character who speaks for himself. Moreover, the text in the Medieval manuscript tradition displays an inherent instability and temporariness. For this reason, I think that now, as well as at the time, one particular aspect gains importance: the reception and interpretation of the reader who, thanks to possible cross-references and comparisons, plays an important role by creating variable and diverse interpretations of the text.

Moving on to our next contributor, Maria Grazia Cammarota, in *Tannhäuser dopo Tannhäuser*[8] (*Tannhäuser after Tannhäuser*), studied the metamorphosis of a figure, the Minnesänger Tannhäuser. Intertextuality here is not studied only with reference to works that preceded the text's writing; indeed, ac-

[7] Pasternack (1991); Pasternack (1995).
[8] Cammarota (2005a: 281-316).

cording to the researcher, later works can be important for the study of earlier ones. This figure was investigated using a system composed of various types of documents (poetic work, the miniature, the legend and other subsequent examples) analysed through their mutual relationships. In this case, too, the important and active contribution of the receiver and the researcher is recognised when interpreting this figure. What is new in this study is that the research is based not only on texts, but also on a figure which has become legendary. The theory proposed by Cammarota is that the way in which Tannhäuser is presented in the miniature contained in the *Manesse Codex* (f. 264r) clashes with the image of the poet that emerges from the Minnesänger's love lyrics, and therefore the objective of the miniature might have been that of contrasting with the original image which presented a free and bold Minnesänger. The Wagnerian rewriting of Tannhäuser has led to the superimposition of a new Romantic figure onto that of the Medieval poet, and this image is still widespread, despite a recent parodic rewriting of the character.

Alessandro Zironi in *Dentro Matteo: il rinnegamento di Pietro da Vulfila alla Bibbia di King James*[9] (*Inside Matthew: the repudiation of Peter from Wulfila to the King James' Bible*), studied many Germanic versions of the repudiation of St. Peter as recounted in St. Matthew's Gospel. His study examines the texts in light of rewriting, with particular attention to the lexicon, which is characterized in many cases by an adaptation towards the cultural context of the receiver. Thus the question of rewriting was analysed as an adaptation to another semiotic system.

Fulvio Ferrari has contributed *La reinvenzione della tradizione: riscritture* fantasy *della materia nibelungica*[10] (*The reinvention of tradition: fantasy rewriting of the Nibelungen materials*). If we take the papers of both Conferences into account, we can see that the Nibelungen materials, the figure of Siegfried and *Beowulf* were the themes which aroused the greatest interest among researchers, mainly as regards their adaptation into modern forms of expression. First of all, Ferrari refers not to the definition of myth worked out in anthropological studies, but rather to the one given by R. Barthes: "The myth is a second-order semiological system".[11] In Ferrari's opinion the form of the Nibelungen "myth" itself is very vague from its inception and therefore open to successive interpretation and updating. Its various rewrites communicate a different and ideologically important image of the past. The author's

[9] Zironi (2005: 191-218).
[10] Ferrari (2005: 237-262).
[11] Barthes [1957 (1994: 196)].

analysis of six different groups of *fantasy* texts that revise the Nibelungen theme was aimed at analysing the process of intertextual construction, a process which states that the Nibelungen myth continues in modern and contemporary culture. As a result, the researcher identifies a group of texts where there is a special interest in the worship of Northern gods, a new myth and a new meaning for the Nibelungen theme in a neo-pagan context. In this research attention is focused on strategies of rewriting and on emphasizing the characteristics of the *fantasy* genre and on the different forms of reviving characters and stories, also from the point of view of ideology. The medieval period is chosen as the rewriting setting because it is a "different" world, where magic, the supernatural and Germanic pagan gods can reign. Referring to a statement by Genette that "there aren't innocent transpositions",[12] the author believes that *fantasy* rewrites cast special glances on the world and generate new meanings, at times even clashing with previous traditions.

Marina Buzzoni has written *Riscrittura e criteri di testualità: il diario di viaggio di Ibn Fadlan nei* Medical Thrillers *americani*[13] (*Rewriting and criteria of textuality: the travel diary of Ibn Fadlan in American Medical Thrillers*). The starting point for her research was the journal written by Ibn Fadlan and its rewrite in the genre of the American Medical Thriller; this work refers in particular to the criteria of textuality according to the taxonomy of Beaugrande/Dressler. From this vantage point the research investigates whether "translation" and "rewriting" represent two different ways of interpreting text; based on a survey carried out among students together with the results of research on aphasia, the answer is yes. This is because the process of interpretation for both the translation and for the rewriting goes back to specific cognitive components and cannot be analysed from the point of view of the rewriter's work only. Any receiver has an inter-subjective opinion of textuality and the two forms of text manipulation are transversal to all of the literary polysystems and have therefore the same structural characteristics, even if the actual works are different in the end. In short, the researcher has found a "strong" concept of translation and a "weak" concept of rewriting. In Medieval Western cultures the use of rewriting was greater than that of translation, which can be regarded as a typical cultural variable of "young" polysystems. In the Middle Ages, the Old and the New Testament were rewritten, so that it is not with respect to the content that we can assess the feasibility of rewriting; on the contrary we can assess it with respect to how the rewriting of the pragmatic structure of the hypotext was carried out.
Other researches were also presented during the Conference.

[12] Genette [1982 (1997: 352)].
[13] Buzzoni (2005: 53-72).

Verio Santoro, in "Stirb und werde! *Metamorfosi di Sigfrido, il re del Niederland*"[14] ("Stirb und werde! *The Metamorphosis of Siegfried, King of the Netherlands*"), studied the character of Siegfried through the analysis of three texts: *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid*, Hans Sach's tragedy *Der Hüernen Sewfrid* and the 'Volksbuch' *Der gehörnte Siegfried*. Santoro's paper deals mainly with Siegfried's transformations at the beginning of the Modern Age and focuses particular attention on two episodes: the discovery and abandonment of the treasure and the fight with the dragon. The rewritings considered reveal the flexibility of this legendary hero in adapting to the religious, political and social changes occurring in Germany during the Reformation and Counter-reformation.

Giuseppe Brunetti with *Il gioco di Ismaele: un trattato medio inglese sul teatro*[15] (*Ismaele's game: a Middle English tract on the theatre*) analysed the Middle English *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, a short tract against religious drama contained in an early 15th century manuscript. The final thesis is that the staging of biblical and hagiographical stories deprives them of their spiritual efficacy: theatre is incompatible with religiousness, because it is a form of 'playing', which contrasts with what is 'serious'.

Eugenio Burgio in *Ricezione e riuso dell'agiografia in volgare: note sulla traduzione della* Vie de saint Grégoire[16] (*Reception and re-use of hagiography in the vernacular: notes on the translation of* Vie de saint Grégoire) studied the medieval texts which form the corpus collected by Aarne & Thompson under Type n. 933 'Gregory on the Stone'.[17] There are many versions and types which go back to different times and cultural contexts and the author demonstrates the mutual relationships between these practices and ideological shifts.

In the area of Romance philology there is a contribution by Maria Luisa Meneghetti, *Il ritratto in cuore: peripezie di un tema tra il profano e il sacro*[18] (*The portrait in the heart: the vicissitudes of a theme between the profane and the sacred*). On the basis of poems by Folchetto di Marsiglia and other poets, she investigates the spread of this metaphor (i.e. "the portrait in the heart") in various text types as well as related iconographic aspects.

[14] Santoro (2005: 219-235).
[15] Brunetti (2005: 159-190).
[16] Burgio (2005: 87-123).
[17] Aarne / Thompson (1961).
[18] Meneghetti (2005: 73-85).

Gustav-Adolf Pogatschnigg wrote *'Distanza' e 'interesse'*: *la traduzione come parabola*[19] (*'Distance' and 'involvement'*: *translation as parable*), which, after discussing various aspects of translation (e.g. the basic concepts of a definition of translation as access to a given text-sense are 'distance' and 'interest'), tackles the specific problem of the translation of Medieval Texts. He concludes that there is no substantial difference between the latter and the translation of modern texts; thus he asserts that it is not necessary for the translator of Medieval Texts to be a learned philologist.

The contribution of Siri Nergaard also focused on translation, *La traduzione come riscrittura. Dalla rielaborazione intralinguistica all'adattamento intersemiotico*[20] (*Translation as rewriting. From intralinguistic re-elaboration to intersemiotic adaptation*). The theoretic-methodological view leads to linking together various types of 'translation' in the light of rewriting, taking into account differences due to each one's specific field.

3. *Contributions from the Conference in Pavia*

I will now move on to discuss the Conference in Pavia, which took place in December 2002 and was entitled *Eroi di carta e celluloide. Il Medioevo germanico nelle forme espressive moderne*.[21] The Conference was an occasion to review the current state of research and to discuss different methodologies, as well as the multiplicity of rewriting styles in modern media. Moreover, we examined closely the concept of using narrative patterns and literary and iconographic themes to build a contemporary view of the Germanic Middle Ages. Several papers dealt with the film-transposition of works, figures and Germanic mythological and legendary traditions.

Maria Vittoria Molinari, in Die Nibelungen *di Fritz Lang e il* Nibelungenlied. *Trasformazioni ed equivalenze tematiche e stilistiche*[22] (*Fritz Lang's* Die Nibelungen *and* Nibelungenlied: *transformations and thematic and stylistic parallels*), analysed the thematic and stylistic transformations and parallels between *Die Nibelungen* by Fritz Lang and the *Nibelungenlied*. According to the author, the narrative topic is considered as the "object of narration" both in the film and in the Medieval work, and the Lang's version sticks to an ideological reading of the story which is similar to that of *Nibe-*

[19] Pogatschnigg (2005: 33-52).
[20] Nergaard (2005: 15-31).
[21] Saibene / Francini (2004).
[22] Molinari (2004: 11-33).

lungenlied, where the end of the Burgundian kingdom is brought about by the wicked will for power of humankind. The closeness of Lang's film to the medieval German poem is evident, especially when compared to other remakes, and particularly to those of Wagner and Hebbel.

In my contribution, *Il* Perceval *di Eric Rohmer: rielaborazione filmica dell'opera di Chrétien*[23] (*Eric Rohmer's* Perceval: *the filmic reworking of Chrétien's work*), I analysed Eric Rohmer's *Perceval*, that is a filmic transposition of Chrétien's work. What is particular about this adaptation of the medieval work are the choices and the techniques used by the French director, who aims at an extreme stylisation, even though the film can be considered a faithful reproduction of Chrétien's original. The result is the reviving of a character and of a medieval story in the form of *Bildungsroman*; moreover, Rohmer paints an almost iconographic and alien picture of the Middle Ages. A picture which, however, conveys a message that is enjoyable to an élite type of spectator.

Marina Buzzoni's study was entitled *I volti delle parole*: *le rappresentazioni cinematografiche di* Beowulf[24] (*The faces of words: the cinematographic representations of* Beowulf). Her research focused on two filmic transpositions: *The Thirteenth Warrior* (1999) and *Beowulf* (1999). In particular, she examined the female roles and functions in both the medieval poem and in the two films. The conclusion of the analysis was that the transformations in the modern rewriting are clear. Actually, the female characters' roles and their relative communicative performances have a public role and influence the action in the medieval work, whereas in the analysed films the domestic role prevails, though in different ways according to the different genres: *historical thriller* or *techno fantasy movie*. The Research Programme of the University of Venice is planning to create a CD which will make it possible to consider the literary and cinematographic rewriting of *Beowulf* through a hypertextual treatment of the data.

Fulvio Ferrari authored *Da Sigfrido a Capitan Harlock: mito e leggenda germanici nei fumetti e nei cartoon*[25] (*From Siegfried to Captain Harlock: Germanic myths and legends in comics and cartoons*). Ferrari examined the different strategies of rewriting German mythological and legendary elements in different styles and works. His research centred on the following topics: the rewriting of *Beowulf* and the story of the Nibelungen theme in

[23] Saibene (2004: 35-47).
[24] Buzzoni (2004: 195-222).
[25] Ferrari (2004: 55-91).

comics and in the *graphic novel*; the humorous rewriting of a myth or of a literary plot in *Mickey Mouse*; the transformation of events and of the narrative universe of a medieval work in the series of *Capitan Harlock*; and finally the quoting and transferring of myth in a new narrative context or the free reuse of myth in the *fantasy* genre. Particularly interesting is his analysis of the relation between text and illustration, as well as the ways the story is re-proposed and represented when submitted to a new interpretation.

Alessandro Zironi chose the following topic: *I Goti: uso di materiale germanico dal melodramma ottocentesco ai bestsellers contemporanei*[26] (*The Goths: the use of Germanic source material from nineteenth-century melodrama to contemporary bestsellers*). Thanks to this contribution, music (along with melodrama) has joined other modern modes of expressing Germanic material. Zironi studied the melodrama *The Goths* by Gobatti, as well as the rewriting of Gothic material into *fantasy* works and into several stories. *The Goths* reflects the taste and the cultural climate of the end of the nineteenth century.

The Conference in Pavia was particularly noted for its interdisciplinary approach and for the presence of a wide range of experts. The illustrator Sergio Toppi presented a series of illustrations, which included the figures of Odin and a Viking.[27] He also explained the originating process of his work and techniques for producing comics. The semiologist Paolo Jachia, who talked about Dylan Dog comics,[28] offered us an opportunity to broaden our field of research with a far-reaching overview of critics from Bachtin to Umberto Eco. His analysis of Dylan Dog comics convinces us to place the "specific" genre of comics in the disciplines of 'visual and verbal traditions'. More specifically, Jachia has shown the relationship between Dylan Dog and episodes and elements of different genres of novel: from the chivalric novel to the carnival novel, the classic Gothic novel and so on, up to the present-day romance novels. Perry Rhodan's comics[29] were presented by a scholar of German literature, Alessandro Fambrini, who identified a variety of elements and allusions taken from Germanic myths and traditions in these comics and their new functional roles. Indeed, in Perry Rhodan we see once again a political and cultural pattern which appears to give answers to contemporary questions by projecting problems into a hypothetical future, but which in reality also absorbs and interprets the past. Finally, there was a paper on

[26] Zironi (2004: 129-156).
[27] Toppi (2004: 49-53).
[28] Jachia (2004: 93-127).
[29] Fambrini (2004: 181-193).

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's Twin Towers. Aspettando che le luci si spengano*[30] (*Tolkien's Twin Towers. Waiting for the lights to fade*), which was presented by John Meddemmen, who is a scholar of English language and literature. From the perspective of the "college hall" the author developed this topic together with related aspects of the filmic transposition of Tolkien's work and made explicit certain ties to the Old English poem *Beowulf*.

4. *Theoretical approaches to intertextuality and conclusions*

After this part of my talk, which can be considered in a certain sense 'intertextual', even if it is a personal interpretation – and incidentally I beg anyone's pardon who doesn't find his/her thoughts expressed faithfully – I come to the conclusion and I discuss some features pertaining to intertextuality which may be of interest for the rewriting of medieval texts. My discussion aims to create a closer link between philological studies – especially those related to Germanic Philology – and recent critical orientations. My hope is that this integrated approach will contribute to the development of literary science.

Kristeva's pioneering studies on intertextuality[31] have led to a revision of certain traditional approaches in our field of inquiry: in particular the critical research on sources and the notion of 'influence' that has led to an interpretation of the interaction between two texts or two authors, etc. where the author plays a dominant role and the literary product is seen as a self-sufficient entity. From the point of view of intertextuality, on the other hand, the text is seen not only as a 'crossing entity', where one can find what the author draws from other texts both consciously and unconsciously, but also as a product the reader is presented with, thus taking part in the process of constructing the meaning through his/her own knowledge. It is not necessary to mention here all the scholars who have contributed to this debate on intertextuality (in addition to Kristeva: Genette, Barthes, Riffaterre, Bloom etc.);[32] rather I'm going to consider whether and to what extent the results achieved through intertextuality can be applied to our studies.
First of all, I'll deal with the problem of the 'authorship' of medieval texts, an issue much debated by contemporary scholars. Medieval comparative

[30] Meddemmen (2004: 157-179).
[31] Kristeva (1969).
[32] Cf. Allen (2000); Worton / Still (1990).

studies – see, for example, Curtius –[33] have urged us to sort out the influences of the sources and the reception of themes in texts, judging the value of a literary work in relation to its author. This approach may still prove useful when information about the author and his/her work is available. Yet, I'd like to underline that these evaluations have sometimes led to the total disregard of some very interesting texts, which deserve to be brought back to life.

Turning back to the problem of 'authorship', the great majority of the texts we deal with provides very little information about the author. Therefore, his/her intentions are difficult to sort out; what's more, the attitude of the medieval author was different from that of a modern one. He/She didn't seek out originality and innovation (if these features do play a role, they do it in the process of rewriting and putting together the traditional material and not in relation to the subject-matter). The principle on which the medieval author relied is that of *auctoritas*, whose function was to validate his work in front of the audience. However, the rewriting of the text in relation to its sources was not deeply affected by this principle (I leave out here the issues pertaining to translation, a field of its own).

In my opinion, many medieval texts such as the Anglo-Saxon elegies show features that can be analysed through an intertextual approach. So the important question becomes precisely which theories and which references should be taken into consideration. I might quote Bloom, who maintains that "texts presuppose intertexts".[34] Bloom, however, still considers the author a central figure within the process of rewriting; in addition, he omits many other features. Though generally in agreement with him, I think that critical inquiry should stretch into the context the work springs from, going beyond literary boundaries and taking into account the process of reception on the part of the addressee, both in the Middle Ages and nowadays (see New Historicism). Due to the distance in time and the otherness of the Middle Ages, an issue emerges regarding the work's reader/addressee. First, the process of reception does indeed concern the medieval author himself since he reshapes what he has either read or heard. Second, the interpretation of a medieval text is carried out by a scholar, who can't rely simply on his/her own knowledge, but has to deal with the reconstruction of the former addressees' position. This cultural path passes not only through the written tradition, but also through the oral stages of textual transmission and the many issues connected to them. This is the reason why I consider it extremely important to pay attention not only to the notions of 'hypo-text' and 'hyper-text' in the

[33] Curtius (1948).
[34] Worton / Still (1990: 28).

analysis of the medieval text, but also to the notion of 'inter-text'. The latter in fact undergoes constant variation according to the agent (author, addressee, modern reader).

Julia Kristeva in her re-elaboration of Bachtin's theories ended up by maintaining that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity".[35] Making the proper distinctions, I think that Kristeva's words can also be applied to the medieval text, whose features – mainly though not solely aimed at serving either a didactic or an exegetic purpose – imply a revisiting and reshaping of the material drawn from other texts and literary currents so as to present the addressee with a new message.

Yet, in my opinion, Kristeva's point of view, as well as that of other scholars who have carried out research on intertextuality, is characterized by being un-historical. According to Roland Barthes,[36] for example, a text is a new tissue of past citations and relies on a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located. To my mind, in the study of the medieval text we also need to take into account the literary genre to which the work belongs, in order to narrow the field of inquiry and arrive at a reading which, though not exhaustive, can impose at least some constrictions. The interpretation on the part of the reader should not be given an absolute value; rather, a set of options needs to be sorted out by the scholar, in order to avoid the risk of unbounded, illimitable reasoning.

Furthermore, a distinctive feature of some medieval texts is their so-called 'dialogicity', a definition that goes back to Bachtin and was later adopted by other scholars. Pasternack, for example, speaks of a 'poliphony' in the process of composition,[37] thus seeking to capture both the aural and the written properties of the verses. This approach may lead not only to sorting out the many voices that make up a text, but also to proposing a different segmentation of the text in its basic units (movements), thus giving new life to studies on textuality. In this respect, the edition criteria of Anglo-Saxon texts elaborated by Doane[38] are most interesting, since they take into account both intertextuality and orality. As for a philological study of medieval texts, the contribution of Riffaterre seems to me particularly relevant.[39] On the basis of

[35] Allen (2000: 39).
[36] Worton / Still (1990:18-23); Allen (2000: 61-94).
[37] Pasternack (1991).
[38] Doane (1991).
[39] Worton / Still (1990: 24-27).

a semiotic interpretation of the text, he considers the process of textual genesis an expansion of some expressions.[40] According to him, the reader, after a first referential reading of the text, sorts out what he considers to be 'ungrammatical' and then goes on to construct new meanings for obscure passages by resorting to intertextuality and his/her own competence.

These are just some brief and simple considerations regarding the analysis of medieval texts within the theoretical framework of intertextuality. However, no mention has yet been made of the recasting of medieval texts into modern forms. Two major aspects are relevant here: on the one hand, the particularity of the means through which the reshaping takes place, and on the other, the particularity of conveying a message through the mediation of a modern rewrite which has to be analysed within the cultural and ideological boundaries of the context it springs from. In these cases too interpretation cannot be considered totally unbounded and related to the addressee alone; rather, it is partially oriented by the modern manipulator. In these kinds of rewrites, the literary genre and the related canon to which the text belongs are better discernible. For the most part, this field of enquiry is still unexplored (see, for example, the proceedings of the Conference held in Pavia in November 2002). In the end, the most fruitful approach seems to me that of interdisciplinary research, so that philologists can collaborate with scholars belonging to other academic fields.

As a way of concluding, I would like to express a wish. That Germanic philologists – and this consideration could be expanded to include many other academic domains as well – are given the opportunity to fully participate in contemporary critical debate and thus become active and valid interlocutors. Even though they deal with 'a world apart' (this is in fact the most common image of the Middle Ages), they can contribute to a broadening of research into contemporary theoretical approaches, helping to put them into practice. Furthermore, and most important of all, philologists can contribute to placing these studies in a historical perspective, which is perhaps the only way to take abstract and self-referring reasoning and put it into more concrete and verifiable terms. Indeed, what is needed today is a historical approach in order to better understand our present world. This should also be the goal of those who are working in the field of medieval studies. By bringing philological research into the context of contemporary critical debate, both Philology and the Middle Ages can be freed from the fruitless Golden Tower where they are all too often left to languish.

[40] Allen (2000: 120).

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Translation and power: recent theoretical updates

Summary. In recent studies on translation the concept of *power* has become central. In the present paper I will present the evolution of the concept in translation theory and I will present the book *Translation and Power*, focused on the *power turn* that has taken place in the discipline.
I will finally advance some hypotheses on how the concept of *power* might be pertinent for the study of the translation of medieval texts.

1. *Introduction*

In this paper I will try to give some theoretical updates of what is happening inside the discipline of Translation Studies today, hoping that some concepts can be useful for the work that the philological research group is undertaking.
As an outsider – a non philologist, a non specialist in your field – I am embarrassed, but also honoured to contribute in this forum. I am impressed by the interesting use you are making of concepts and theoretical approaches in translation studies, and since you all demonstrate to be so well informed on what is going on in the field in which I find myself, my only choice is to present something recent that you might not yet have had access to. I will limit my contribution to a sort of presentation of some issues proposed in a new book on translation I find particularly interesting – in my opinion the most important one published in the last years. I will discuss these issues and consider how and why I think they might also be useful for the study of the translation of medieval texts.

2. *Rewriting and Manipulation*

In my contribution at the previous conference on medieval translation in Bergamo (2004), I dedicated the first part to the concept of *rewriting* and especially to how André Lefevere has developed it in Translation Theory. In my article for the proceedings of that conference I included a quotation of Lefevere's words where he explains why the concept of rewriting is so cen-

tral for the comprehension of how texts survive and how and why they are included in the canon.
It is necessary, he insists, not to limit oneself to consider that literary studies have interpretation as the core of their analysis and rather take into consideration questions like *power*, *ideology*, *institution*, and *manipulation*.

> It is my contention that the process resulting in the acceptance or rejection, canonization or non-canonization of literary works is dominated not by vague, but by very concrete factors that are relatively easy to discern as soon as one decides to look for them, that is as soon as one eschews interpretation as a core of literary studies and begins to address issues such as power, ideology, institution, and manipulation.
>
> [Lefevere (1992: 2)]

In my present paper, I therefore start from where I left off – with the same quotation – in order to introduce the main topic I am going to consider together with you. I start from the issues Lefevere invites us to address and will be paying particular attention to that of *power*, as announced in the title.
For another reason I have decided to re-quote Lefevere's words: Among his categories for the comprehension of how texts survive, we also find *manipulation*, a concept we find in the title given to the entire conference we are presenting in this book.[1]

In translation studies Lefevere is not only the "father" of the concept of *rewriting*, but he is also closely connected to both *manipulation* and *power*. As you know, in 1985 a book edited by Theo Hermans was published with the title *The Manipulation of Literature* and it had such deep consequences for the discipline, that the contributors to that volume – where among others we find André Lefevere – are often called members of the *Manipulation School*.
In Herman's introductory remarks to the book, we find the following words which define how manipulation is intended:

> From the point of view of the target literature, all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose.
>
> [Hermans (1985: 11)][2]

[1] In the Italian title, the same word does not appear although, and it is substituted with *trasformazione* which in my opinion is a good concept, but probably with different connotations than those we find for manipulation.
[2] Hermans' introduction is translated into Italian and published in "Testo a Fronte" nr. 9, 1993.

When studying translated texts, the scholars of the so-called "manipulation school" underlined the importance of being aware of the fact that texts can be translated in many ways and that the reasons why one text is translated in one particular way can probably be found in how it is manipulated to achieve desired effects. Key concepts here are statements like "no translation is innocent", "translation does not take place in a vacuum", "there is nothing that can be called objectivity in translation", and "translations are inevitably partial", where the manipulating "force" was recognized to be less linguistic and more cultural or institutional.
In considering it as a cultural practice able to manipulate texts, translation was consequently promoted from its traditional position as secondary and derivative, being acknowledged as a primary tool for influencing, forming, transforming and constructing cultural representations.
Therefore, translation is no longer considered simply a process of faithful reproduction but invariably it involves deliberate acts of *selection*, *construction*, and *omission*. So, I insist on the concept of *manipulation*, not only because of its connection to the title of this conference, of course, but because – as should be clear – it is strictly connected to that of power: power to manipulate for certain purposes, power to select, power to achieve desired effects.

As you know, in translation studies, the so-called *Cultural Turn* took place between the Eighties and Nineties – also as an evolution of the manipulation thesis posited in 1985 – and translation was finally located in the sphere of culture.[3] This implied that translation was recognized not only to have to do with language, but with languages and texts in culture, and that difference is not situated only in the linguistic code, but in culture.
Connected to the manipulation thesis we mentioned above, the cultural turn takes into consideration that the shifts in translation cannot only be explained as mistakes or subjective interpretations, but as shifts that are *culturally* and *socially* determined by the discourses of the age and, therefore, in any case informative about the relation between the source- and the target-cultures.
The next significant step in the discipline, on the way to reach the centrality of the issue of power, we have to remember another publication that has among his authors André Lefevere. In 1990 he coedits with Susan Bassnett *Translation, History and Culture*, probably the first book that can be considered to take the full consequences of the cultural turn.
In their introduction the two editors insist on the importance of studying power relations in society in order to be able to understand and to explain the

[3] We should remember here that the Polysystem Theory, mainly proposed by Even-Zohar (1978), (1981) and Gideon Toury (1980), was also important to make this turn possible.

changes in modes of translation. The question of *why* we have shifts in translation becomes central, and one of the explanations is suggested to be found in "the vagaries and vicissitudes of the exercise of power in a society […]. The exercise of power […] in terms of the production of culture, of which the production of translation is part" [Bassnett / Lefevere (1990: 5)] will demonstrate to be a significant constraint on the production of translations. In the same volume, Lefevere underlines the importance of recognizing that one of the constraints under which translation often operates is exactly manipulation of power relations [Bassnett / Lefevere (1990: 15-27)].

Along the line of the increasing importance of the power issue in translation studies which I am trying to trace, I consider to be particularly important the book *Rethinking Translation. Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* edited in 1992 by Lawrence Venuti. The author can be considered as a sort of "new entry" in the discipline, representing not actually the discipline itself, but rather literary criticism, dominated in this period by deconstructionalist and poststructural approaches. Venuti testifies with this book that translation studies are getting a closer and closer connection to these areas of critical literary theory, and to that of cultural studies in general, which "brings a renewed functionalism to translation theory, a concern with the social effects of translation and their ethical and political consequences" [Venuti (2000: 333)].
We are now observing a continuous presence of the question of power in translation, at least between the lines, and rather evidently in the emerging studies on translation and gender, translation and postcolonialism, translation and ideology, translation as creation and transformation of cultural representations. All these new issues are actually present in the volume edited by Venuti bringing evidence of the political engagement the studies are representing.

What followed was approximately ten years of intense activity around the phenomenon of translation and culture, resulting in a vast amount of conferences, publications, and research, more and more interdisciplinary, where we can see a gradual transformation from purely descriptive to more and more critical approaches. Lefevere's work continued to be particularly central, like his investigations on how ideological factors are inherent in the decision-making processes of practicing translators.

> At the start of the new millennium, translation studies is an international network of scholarly communities who conduct research and debate across conceptual and disciplinary divisions.
>
> [Venuti (2000: 334)].

3. *The Power Turn*

In 2002 Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymoczko coedit *Translation and Power*. They are both well known scholars in the discipline; Tymoczko primarily through her seminal work *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation* (1999), Gentzler through his important book *Contemporary Translation Studies* (1993). Both scholars represent a discipline that has gone through the cultural turn, and with the present book they suggest that it is time for a new turn. "The key topic that has provided the impetus for the new directions that translation studies have taken since the cultural turn is *power*" (2002: xvi), they state, and therefore it is time to take the consequences of the focused examination of questions pertaining to power and realise that the discipline is passing through a new turn: a *power turn.*

In developing the suggestion of power, Gentzler explains in the following why the exploration of power is becoming so important in translation studies:

> It is becoming increasingly important to explore the specific situation in which institutions of power have had an impact on translation activity and the resulting impact that translations have had on the development of culture.
>
> [Gentzler (2002: 197)][4]

In Gentzler's words I read that we cannot really understand why translations are as they are, if we do not explore the specific power relations in which they are produced. And, at the same time, we cannot understand the impact translation has on the development of culture, before we understand the impact of power on translation.

"[T]he asymmetrical relations in any translation project" [Venuti (1998: 11)] should also convince us about the importance of investigating power.

In their introduction to the volume, Gentzler and Tymoczko consider that the question of power was already present in the cultural turn, but often with what they call a rather monolithic and dichotomic idea of it, considering it primarily as a form of repression. Now, when they suggest this new turn, power has to get rid of these absolutist views, and one is starting to recognize that power does not take place in completely dichotomical situations. Translation moves in the space where discourses meet and compete, negoti-

[4] These words are taken from Gentzler's article "Translation, Poststructuralism and Power", included in the same book.

ating power relations. Power, in a foucaultian[5] sense is instead connected to the concept of knowledge, where power produces knowledge, but not in the sense of a cause producing an effect. What has to be underlined is that power, after this turn, has nothing to do with the absolutist views of the past, but rather with ideas of power as "a motivating factor in cultural domains".
As we said, power does not mean repression, and translation can in many cases be considered as an "empowering activity", a site where one can even mobilize counter-discourses and subversion. Power might signify the assertion of power by the translators themselves, who deliberately decide to "subvert traditional allegiances of translation, interjecting their own worldviews and politics into their work" [Gentzler (2002: 197)]. With a focus on power one actually starts to recognize the power translators often are given, or take themselves to have, to adapt the texts they are translating for specific purposes:

> Translation is not simply an act of faithful reproduction but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuring, and fabrication – and even, in some cases, of falsification, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and the creation of secret codes.
>
> [Tymoczko / Gentzler (2002: xxi)]

This means that translation is actively participating in the construction of knowledge: Knowledge does not necessarily precede translation activity, and the act of translation is itself very much involved in the creation of knowledge (*ibidem*). In fact, our knowledge about different cultures, languages and their textual production often takes place through translation, but, as we saw above, by selecting, structuring and fabricating a particular kind of knowledge. The "representations thus configured are coming to be understood as central aspects of power" (*ibidem*).
Creation of knowledge has for instance to do with the image created of the source-text, the source language and the source culture through translation. Translations represent the source-text, they create an image of the source text, and doing this, they create our knowledge, not only about the text they translate, but about the culture these texts originate in.

> [This kind of] poststructural translation can be viewed as a creative act, the representation of the text, participating in the creation of knowledge and, by extension, power. Translation does not simply offer a window onto some unified, exotic Other; it participates in its very construction. The process of staging translation is a process of gathering and creating *new information* that

[5] Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*: Naissance de la prison (1975) *and* La volonté de savoir (1976).

> can be turned to powerful political ends, including resistance, self-determination, and rebellion.
>
> [Gentzler (2002: 216)]

This kind of observation is close to the discussion we find specifically developed in Lawrence Venuti's *Scandals of Translation* (1998), where he insists on the power of translation to construct representations of foreign cultures:[6]

> Translation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures. The selection of foreign texts and the development of translation strategies can establish peculiarly domestic canons for foreign literatures, canons that conform to domestic aesthetic values and therefore reveal exclusions and admissions, centres and peripheries that deviate from those current in the foreign language.
>
> [Venuti (1998: 67)]

In this view, maybe the translated medieval texts we study today can be considered as texts which reflect the *construction* of the Middle Ages that has been made through the ages not only by philologists and historians, but also by institutions like the church and the school. The translations we read do "not simply offer a window onto some unified, exotic Other", as Gentzler states over, but are results of a more or less deliberate work of selection, exclusions and admissions which lets them be new texts offering new information.

4. *Consequences of the power turn*

For different reasons I find the power turn of particular interest for the evolution of translation studies: on the one hand the turn simply represents a result of how the discipline has evolved in the last years, on the other hand it represents a kind of programme for how one wants to proceed. As I see it, the power turn represents the sum of the questions we have to ask when we explore translation. I believe this is true also for the specific case of the translation of medieval texts. But please correct me if I am wrong, I am an outsider, I speak from another position, with too little knowledge about the medieval texts you study, and of course influenced by my studies.
The *power* turn which was developed from the *culture* turn gives us the possibility to make clear that the explanations of the shifts that occur in transla-

[6] A thesis especially followed by Fulvio Ferrari in his contributions to the research-project this group is pursuing.

tion are not to be found in the nature of culture itself, but in the power relations that govern in any culture. And these power relations can often explain *why* a certain translation represents the source text in one way rather than in another. Every translation is partial because, as the Italian poet Valerio Magrelli puts it, faithfulness in translation has more to do with the choice of *what* to translate of the source text, than with *how* to translate it. The partiality of translation is the decision on how to represent a foreign text and the culture it represents. Investigating the power relations in culture, we should have more possibilities to understand why translations decide to be partial in one way rather than another.

In investigating why certain kinds of translations or rewritings of medieval texts have survived until our present times instead of others, or why certain texts are translated or rewritten in certain ways, we might have to consider the power relations in the translating culture at the moment of the translation activity. Analyzing translators' choices of *what* to translate, we probably need to connect their choices to the dialectic of power inside the social and political situation in which they work. Is the text they translate already known? Is it already part of the canon? Do the philologists agree on the interpretation of the text? Are some forms of interpretation marginalized by a dominant cultural form of power? Are the translators working for an institution or for a "general" editor? Is the translators' work considered prestigious or is it competing with the interpretation offered by the philologists? How is the paratextual material that surrounds translations organized? These and many more questions of this kind could be asked, and the answers one gets probably offer a deeper understanding about the translation than if one had been concentrating on the comparison between the source text and target text focusing on the linguistic differences.

5. *Partiality, Fragmentation*

Partiality can be considered to be one of the main characteristics of translation and brings us to think about it as both partisan and metonymic. This perspective is a further important consequence of the power turn and, I believe, significant also from a medievalist point of view since it underlines the fragmentary and incomplete nature of discourse interactions:

> As with other discursive practices, texts to be translated must be seen as embodying a range of discourses, all of which impinge on the choices of the translators, thus contributing to the gaps, inconsistencies, and fragments that can be found in translations.
>
> [Tymoczko / Gentzler (2002: xx)]

Postcolonial and poststructuralist critique insists on the fragmentary nature of discourse and of translation. Complexity is the characteristics of any textual nature, it is impossible to single out one unified meaning, also because any textual construct is a result of a plurality of languages.

> It is only with the rise of poststructuralism that language becomes a site of uncontrollable polysemy, and translation is reconceived not simply as transformative of the foreign text, but interrogative, or [...] "deconstructive".
>
> [Venuti (2000: 218)]

Venuti considers how theorists like Derrida and de Man

> question the concepts of semantic unity, authorial originality, and copyright that continue to subordinate the translated to the foreign text. Both texts, they argue, are derivative and heterogeneous, consisting of diverse linguistic and cultural materials which destabilize the work of signification, making meaning plural and divided, exceeding and possibly conflicting with the intentions of the foreign writer and the translator. Translation is doomed to inadequacy because of irreducible differences, not just between languages and cultures, but also within them.
>
> [Venuti (2000: 218)]

These theorists, and the translation scholars who have introduced their concepts to translation studies, have finally brought us to the "acknowledgement of the fragmentary nature of translations and the configuration of the power that they exert" [Tymoczko / Gentzler (2002: xx)]. When analyzing translations one therefore has to be aware of the fact that there are parts of a source text translated and parts that are absent, and that translations are made of gaps, contradictions and inconsistencies. Sometimes these gaps and partialities have the function to produce a unified and coherent target text, other times they are there in order to create a text that subverts or destabilizes the already existing image of a text, a culture or a language.

The selection, assemblage and structuring of translated texts mentioned above is another aspect of this fragmentary nature: Since texts are heterogeneous, with plural meanings, it is necessary to recognize that translation ought to be fragmentary and partial. The most important investigation, again, turns out to be that of the power relations that decide in which direction the partiality has to go.

Is it not true that medieval texts often are heterogeneous where even the existence of an original is unsure, and where the author is often more than one? Is it not true that medieval texts are often written in a language with different and contradictory devices, with a plurality of possible meanings and inter-

pretations? Is it not true, on the other hand, that translations of these text often tend to present them to be more homogeneous and unified?
Examining the translations from the "point of view of power", we will not only be able to understand the reasons why the texts are manipulated in a certain way, but we will also introduce a wider perspective to our observations in order to consider the translations' possibility "to participate in the dialectic of power, the ongoing process of political discourse, and strategies of social change" [Tymoczko / Gentzler (2002: xviii)].

Finally, the power turn also gives us the possibility to get rid of the strong, even if implicit, connection established between culture and nation.
Translation has for too long a time been too strongly connected to the romantic idea of National Languages and Literatures as expression of a Nation's real identity and specificity, taking almost for granted that a culture expresses itself through one language and one kind of text.
But since translation has more to do with the fragmentary, partial, selection of texts and their reconstruction in another heterogeneous textual and cultural reality, and less to do with strong unified identities as Nation and National Language and Culture, the partiality that results from the power turn is another positive device.

> Theorists can no longer think in terms of an uncritical transfer from a monolithic language A to a similar monolithic language B; rather, translation takes place across a multilingual and multicultural environment A into an often equally multicultural environment B.
>
> [Gentzler (2002: 217)]

6. *Conclusions*

In this short contribution I have tried to make a brief reconstruction of the presence of the concept of power in translation studies. I have presented the recent proposal of a "power turn" in the discipline, suggesting that this turn might have its pertinence for the study of the translation of medieval texts.

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Correcting traditions and inventing history: the manipulation of mythology and of the past in the Nibelungen-literature of the 19th and 20th centuries

Summary. This contribution analyses several relevant rewrites of the Nibelungen legend in order to point out the narrative strategies deployed by different authors to establish a relationship between the traditional plot (or, rather, plots), which were handed down through centuries by oral transmission and Medieval sources, and a concrete historical context. The Medieval written versions of the legend – both the Old Norse and the German ones – show little or, in fact, no interest in the historical setting of the narrative and do not seem to pursue any reliable or chronological consistence. The modern re-writers, on the contrary, have often set the action in specific historical contexts, a choice of setting which is usually strictly connected to the author's artistic, cultural and ideological agenda.
To this end, I have singled out texts which, in my opinion, reflect important changes in mentality and culture, without belabouring the variances in their literary worth: first of all, I took into account some rewrites which belong to the German 19th century (Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, Ernst Raupach, Friedrich Hebbel and Felix Dahn); then Ibsen's theatrical rewrite of the *Völsunga saga*; the fantasy novels by the contemporary new-heathen writers Stephan Grundy and Diana L. Paxson; and, finally, the iconoclastic theatrical pastiches of the playwrights Heiner Müller and Volker Braun, whose works are deeply rooted in the experience of the German Democratic Republic.

1. *The nationalization of the Nibelungen legend*

The Medieval narratives which transmit the Nibelungen legend do not show any conspicuous interest in the historical embedding of their matter, nor do they thematize in any explicit way the relationship between the act of rewriting the traditional, inherited tale and the historical context in which the rewriting took place. The German *Nibelungenlied* depicts – in the same way as the contemporary courtly romances do – an abstract feudal milieu, projecting a way of life and social conventions of the late 12th century back onto the screen of an unhistorical past. Just as the author of the *Nibelungenlied* assimilates his matter – at least in part – into the descriptive patterns of the courtly romance, so do the authors of the Norse versions fit the legend to the literary system of Medieval Iceland, reshaping it in the form of a heroic lay

or a heroic-legendary saga.[1] In no case do the Medieval re-tellers of the Nibelungen legend seek to match the traditional narrative with the information supplied by historiography, nor do they show any awareness of the historical conditions which first gave birth to the story of Siegfried's death and the massacre of the Burgundians.

This lack of interest in the "real" historical setting of the Nibelungen narrative is shared by the first remarkable modern rewrite of the legend, the dramatic trilogy *Der Held des Nordens* ('The Hero of the North') published by the German romantic poet Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué from 1808 to 1810.[2] As a matter of fact, Fouqué was urged to his undertaking by a compelling passion for history and politics, but his interest concerned his own time and his own country. What he aimed to do was to bring to life again the supposed virtues of the ancient Germanic heroes, awakening through their example the pride and national self-consciousness of the Germans in their struggle against Napoleon and for the building of a modern state. To this purpose, the traditional narrative about the Nibelungs had to work as a foundation myth of the new national community. There was, therefore, no need to reshape the legend in a radical manner or to set it in a specific historical context, whereas it was necessary to choose the most "authentic" and effective of its versions – the Norse ones, according to Fouqué and to most romantic writers of his age – and to recreate it into modern poetry, in order to make it appealing to a large audience of modern readers.

The first significant rewrite of the Nibelungen legend to introduce vague historical references into the plot is the drama *Der Nibelungenhort* ('The Treasure of the Nibelungs') by the German playwright Ernst Raupach, an author almost totally neglected now but very popular in the first-half of the 19th century.[3] The drama, staged for the first time in 1828 and published in 1834, is a patchwork of narrative material taken from diverse medieval sources of the legend. Relevant to our discussion is the fact that Raupach – expanding allusions already contained in the sources – makes the opposition Christian vs. Heathen the major theme of the narration. The setting of the action is,

[1] I refer in particular to the heroic lays of the *Poetic Edda* dealing with the Nibelungen matter and to their prose adaptation in the *Völsunga saga*. More complex is the question about the version contained in the *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, both with regard to the strategies of rewriting the traditional narrative and the collocation in the tradition itself.

[2] de la Motte Fouqué [1808-1810 (1996)]. See also the studies on Fouqué's work, and in particular on his rewrite of the Nibelungen matter: Lorenz (1994); Schmidt (2000); Stockinger (2000); Ferrari (2004).

[3] Raupach (1834). On Raupach's drama see the sarcastic remarks of Heinrich Heine [Heine 1833-1834 (1979: 225)] and the recent biographical contribution in Rosch (2002).

therefore, identified with the historical scene of the fight between Huns and Burgundians in the 5th century. In this way, Raupach's Etzel (Attila) is neither a wise and generous Monarch, as in the *Nibelungenlied*, nor the abstract model of a wicked, greedy king, as is Atli in the Old Norse lays of the *Edda*. Instead, in keeping with history, he is the barbarian leader of a coalition of peoples which he has won and subjugated: this explains why his death, at the end of the play, is celebrated by the Gothic king Dietrich (Theoderic) as the liberation of the Germanic, Christian peoples from the wild and cruel scourge of the nations.[4]

This first step towards a historicization of the Nibelungen matter is still very cautious and discreet, but it marks the beginning of a practice that has proved to be one of the most relevant strategies of rewriting the legend. In order to confer a new meaning and a new effect upon the old narrative, its re-tellers very often do not confine themselves to redefining the characters and to reshaping the structure of the tale; instead, they place the plot into a specific historical frame, extracting from the archive of memory the set which best fits their purpose. In this way, the Nibelungen legend becomes the bridge or the conductor which makes possible "der Tigersprung ins Vergangene" – as Walter Benjamin said[5] – that spreads a new light on the present. Even if Benjamin's reflection concerned primarily the self-consciousness of the working class, this movement backwards in search of a pregnant historical moment which foreshadows, announces or founds the present is not an exclusive prerogative of the revolutionary forces. On the contrary, every social, national, cultural or political group, even the most reactionary, may use history – as actually happened with the Nazis – as a catalyst for emotive reactions and identification processes. For this purpose the Nibelungen matter is particularly suitable: historical figures (Attila, Theoderic, the Burgundians, etc.) appear as important actors in the Medieval sources, but, on the other hand, they are completely abstracted from the concrete historical conditions in which they originally operated. This gives modern re-tellers the possibility not only to represent history according to their main interests and intents, but even to *create* history, manipulating and altering the chain of events and, in some cases, changing the very setting of the dramatic action. Such flexibility in content has made possible the long sequence of rewrites, and the transformation of this whole tradition into a narrative frame where different and contradictory ideologies, projects and

[4] On Attila's figure in Medieval narratives see Williams (1981).

[5] "The tiger jump into the past" [Benjamin 1940 (1974: 701)]. With regard to Benjamin's vision of history see, in particular, Löwy (2001).

discourses compete against each other in a struggle for self-assertion and hegemony.

It is impossible, of course, to analyse on this occasion the whole, vast multitude of the Nibelungen rewrites, even if we should confine our discussion to those rewrites which carry out strategies of historicization.[6] I'll try, therefore, to single out some of these strategies and the texts which best illustrate them. First of all, I think it's important to highlight how Raupach's neglected and despised play cleared the way to the much better known and appreciated dramatic trilogy of Friedrich Hebbel, *Die Nibelungen*.[7] As Raupach does, Hebbel sets the action in the age of the conversion of the Germanic peoples to Christianity. His reshaping of the tale is, however, much subtler and more complicated than Raupach's: on the one hand, he stages an abstract "age of conversion", an epoch during which all Germanic peoples – Germans, Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians – simultaneously embrace the new faith; on the other hand, he intertwines myth and history (or perhaps, more correctly, philosophy of history) in an inextricable way. His Siegfried and his Brunhild are creatures of the myth: Brunhild, in particular, is alluded to as an offspring of the Norse Gods. The interaction and the encounter of mythical and human beings must eventually lead to the tragic conclusion, but this very conclusion – as happened in Raupach's play – marks the beginning of a new time. The last words of the drama are again Theoderic's, and they announce the overcoming of a new phase of history: a human and Christian one.

I find it worthy to note that this expanded vision, from Raupach's narrow, nationalistic and conservative point of view to Hebbel's broad historical and philosophical one, is reversed again after only one-and-a-half decades by a very popular imitator of Hebbel who was also an enthusiastic nationalist and an admirer of Bismarck, Felix Dahn, whose play *Markgraf Rüdeger von Bechelaren* ('Margrave Rüdeger of Bechelaren') was published in 1875.[8] Even more than in Raupach's and Hebbel's dramas, Theoderic is here the triumphant hero at the end of the play; moreover, he is the real motor of the plot. His aim is to liberate the Germanic peoples from Attila's yoke and, at the same time, to revenge Siegfried; thus, he is perfectly aware of Kriemhild's murderous intentions, but he plays Kriemhild off against Hagen in order to bring them both to the tragic final result. Even though the Burgundians are to be blamed for having treacherously killed Siegfried, their fight against the

[6] For a complete outlook on the rewrites of the Nibelungen matter see Gentry / McConnell / Müller / Wunderlich (2002).
[7] Hebbel [1862 (1964)]. On Hebbel's trilogy see de Boor (1966) and Glaser (1991).
[8] Dahn (1875).

Huns displays the enormous superiority of the Germanic soul and the intrinsic cowardice of the oriental peoples of the steppe. At the end of Hebbel's drama, Theoderic inherited Attila's power and took upon himself the responsibility of a universal reign "im Namen dessen, der am Kreuz erblich";[9] at the end of Dahn's drama, Theoderic does the same thing "für der Germanen Volk".[10] Here, then, a new historical phase opens, one which, however, doesn't concern the whole of mankind, but only the part of it which speaks a Germanic language.

2. *Saga, history and drama: Henrik Ibsen's rewrite*

In spite of the huge differences in their structure and literary quality, Raupach, Hebbel and Dahn form a chain of rewrites: adopting similar strategies in order to combine some traditional elements of the Nibelungen legend into a new text; setting it at the same time in the historical context of Late Antiquity. A totally different strategy is adopted by Henrik Ibsen in his drama *Hærmændene på Helgeland* ('The Warriors in Helgeland') of 1858.[11] Ibsen's narrative also depicts an age of transition, but in this case the setting is Norway in the time of the foundation of the kingdom and of the conversion to Christianity. Already at the very beginning of the play, the first stage direction informs us: "Handlingen foregår i Erik Blodøkses tid",[12] that is to say in the years 931-933, a historical setting that is later confirmed by the references to the reign of king Aethelstan in England. But Ibsen doesn't confine himself to setting the action in a specific, crucial time in the history of Norway; instead, he tries to bring to life the "saga time" of the Norse past and to display it on stage. To fully understand Ibsen's operation, we have to take into consideration one of his – relatively – few theoretical writings: *Om kjæmpevisen og dens betydning for kunstpoesien* ('On heroic ballad and its meaning for poetry').[13] In this contribution, written and published in 1857, just one year before he wrote *Hærmændene på Helgeland*, Ibsen maintains the necessity of making use of the traditional ballads and narratives to create a new literature able to appeal to the people of his time, and he discusses the means to realize this project. In his opinion, both Icelandic sagas and Norwegian ballads belong to the literary heritage of the Norwegians and express

[9] "in the name of the One, who turned pale on the cross" [Hebbel 1862 (1964: 319)].
[10] "for the sake of the Germanic people" [Dahn (1875: 160)].
[11] Ibsen [1858 (1898)]. This reference edition of the drama is now available on-line: http://runeberg.org/ibsen/2/. On this drama and, more in general, on Ibsen's historical dramas, see Lynner (1909); Bø (1997) and Aarseth (1997).
[12] "The action takes place in the time of Erik Bloodaxe" [Ibsen 1858 (1898: 3)].
[13] Ibsen [1857 (1930)].

the intimate essence of their soul, but the structure of the ballad makes it much more suitable than the saga for dramatization. Ibsen, therefore, judges in quite an ambiguous way the attempts made by his predecessors to rewrite sagas into dramas, particularly by the influential Danish poet Oehlenschläger. As a matter of fact, Ibsen emphasizes the difficulties that the peculiar structure and style of Icelandic sagas pose for a theatrical rewriting; in spite of this, he glimpses the possibility of working on the language to overcome such difficulties. According to Ibsen, it is necessary to add some lyricism to the saga in order to make a drama out of it, but on the other hand, one has to make use of a prose very near to the saga-style to compensate the loss of plasticity that the introduction of lyric elements in the matter involves.

I think it quite likely that, after this theoretical reflection, Ibsen felt tempted to measure himself against the difficult task he had described in his essay. What is quite surprising, however, is that Ibsen picked out a legendary pattern instead of a historical narrative as the main hypotext for his theatrical rewrite. Apparently, he recognized in the Medieval narrative about the Volsungs some motifs – or, rather, a constellation of motifs – which kept on fascinating him for the whole of his life: the unfaithfulness toward a true and deep love and the consequences of such unfaithfulness; the contrast between a mild and submissive woman and a wild, aggressive one; and above all, perhaps, the rebellion of a strong and restless woman against the rules imposed by a conservative, male-dominated society. Ibsen, therefore, took over the Nibelungen legend, manipulated it thoroughly and made a family saga out of it: there are no princesses and no kings in his version, no dragons and no dwarfs. His heroes and heroines are realistic figures taken from the inventory of the Icelandic sagas: Gunnar is a *hersir* in Norway; Sigurd is his foster-brother, a sea-king and a liegeman of King Aethelstan of England; Brunhild and Gudrun are renamed Hjørdis and Dagny, and they are respectively the foster-daughter and the daughter of an Icelandic *landnámamaðr*, the old and wise Ørnulf. Sigurd doesn't have to pass through a wall of fire to awaken Hjørdis from an enchanted sleep; he has instead to kill bare-handed a huge white bear to win her admiration, and he does so disguised, in the service of Gunnar, even if he is in love with Hjørdis, because he believes that she doesn't really love him but his foster-brother. All these characters speak like the heroes of the realistic sagas, in a sober and often laconic, elliptical prose. Ibsen even inserts some stanzas in the prose of the play, recreating somehow the alternation of prose and poetry typical of so many sagas. Moreover, in order to create such an unprecedented thing as a "theatrical saga", Ibsen integrates into his main hypotext episodes, quotations and refer-

ences taken from other sagas and Old Norse texts: *Laxdæla saga*, *Njáls saga* and *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* above all, but also *Friðþjófs saga Frækna*, *Hávamál* and perhaps *Örvar Odds saga*. In the fourth act, he even inserts a whole episode in which Ørnulf, distressed after the death of all his sons, recovers his strength and vitality after having composed a funeral poem in honour of the dead: a rewrite of Egill Skallagrímsson's *Sønatorrek* is thus performed on the stage, in the frame of the rewrite of *Völsunga saga*.[14] In his 1857 essay, Ibsen had denied any difference between the fictional world of the sagas and the extra-textual world of history: "enhver Periode afspeiler sig for Efterslægten alt efter Beskaffenheden af de Overleveringer, hvorigjennem den bliver bekjendt."[15] With his *Hærmændene på Helgeland*, thus, he displays on the stage a vision of the national past of Norway made up of different literary motifs and fragments. In this staging, Hjørdis acts and speaks not only like so many frightening and inscrutable heroines of the Norse past, but even as an ancestor and a foreshadowing of the modern, restless and unhappy Hedda Gabler. This strategy of de-mythicization and, at the same time, of psychological interpretation contrasts the final scene of the drama: after Hjørdis' death, her son Egil sees his mother riding on a black horse in the sky, towards Odin's Walhalla.[16] This re-emergence of the myth seems to question Ibsen's strategy of rewriting, but this is true only at a very superficial level of analysis. In fact, Hjørdis' apparition at the end of the play not only confers an eerie greatness to her life and death, but also enhances the audience's identification with the cultural and religious representations of the Norwegians before Christianization.

3. *Historicization and re-mythicizing: new-heathen literary rewrites*

If we now turn our attention to our own time period, we can identify at least two widely diverging rewriting strategies of the Nibelungen legend which are of particular interest to our discussion. On the one hand, we see a strong and unexpected tendency towards historicization of the ancient narrative taking place in the probably least realistic of all literary genres, modern *fantasy*. On the other hand, in the last decades some German playwrights have taken up the Nibelungen matter and have reshaped it in a paradoxical and grotesque way, using anachronism itself in order to emphasize misery, self-deception and contradictions in the history of Germany.

[14] Ibsen [1858 (1898: 100-102)].
[15] "Every epoch is mirrored and transmitted to posterity according to the character of the documents through which it is known" [Ibsen 1857 (1930: 136)].
[16] Ibsen [1858 (1898: 113)].

Both Stephan Grundy's novel *Rhinegold* (first published in 1994) and Diana L. Paxson's trilogy *Wodan's Children* (published from 1993 to 1996) retell the Nibelungen legend by setting it in the context of the 5th century, thus depicting the collision of the Germanic and of the Roman worlds, the short-lived power of Attila and the triumph of Christianity over the old traditional heathenism.[17] As a matter of fact, Raupach, Hebbel and Dahn did the same in their plays, but Stephan Grundy and Diana L. Paxson make use of all the devices of the historical novel to outline a broad and accurate description of Germanic life during the late antiquity. They introduce into the plot references to historical figures like Aetius, King Theoderid of the Visigoths, Emperor Valentinian III and so on. Diana L. Paxson goes so far as to replace the character of Theoderic with his father Thiudimir in order to restore the consistency of chronology violated in the Medieval sources. Furthermore, both writers exhibit a vast knowledge of the civilization of the ancient Germanic peoples and of their religion, and both take pains to add a glossary and some bibliographic references to their books. In spite of all this, Grundy's and Paxson's novels are *not* historical novels because of the active role played in the plot by various gods and by witchcraft. It's just this mixture of historical accuracy, descriptive realism and fantasy that determines the originality of these rewrites: the gods act on the level of history and, even if men can't change the stream of fate, they can at least influence the course of events by controlling natural and supernatural forces through magic. The myth is thus embedded in history; in fact, it is its hidden face and its invisible motor. This reconsideration of the mutual relationship between myth and history is not, of course, without purpose. Both Stephan Grundy and Diana L. Paxson are indeed prominent members of the new-heathenism: Stephen Grundy has written a handbook for the practising of Norse religion[18] and Diana L. Paxson declares herself to be a *gythja*, a priestess of the Old Norse Gods and a practitioner of oracular *seiðr*. Their novels, therefore, are not merely amazing successions of heroic and bloody deeds, as Sword and Sorcery novels usually are; instead, they aim at spreading knowledge about the old heathen religion of the North, at presenting the gods in action and at supplying a sort of pagan theodicy, explaining and justifying the conduct of the gods and their – temporary – withdrawing from the history of men. The myth recovers in this way its original function, founding the religious experience of a new, scattered heathen community and giving form to it. The novels are thus, at the same time, effective tools of religious propaganda and guide-books to the

[17] Grundy (1994); Paxson (1993); Paxson (1995); Paxson (1996). On the new-heathenism see Blain (2002).

[18] He published his handbook under the pseudonym Kveldulf Gundarson [Gundarson (1993)].

supposed, reconstructed cultural world, beliefs and practices of the ancient Germanic peoples.

4. *Through tradition against tradition: Heiner Müller's and Volker Braun's rewrites of the Nibelungen legend*

A totally different rewriting strategy was adopted, as mentioned above, by some German writers and playwrights who lived and worked in the German Democratic Republic and who actively took part in the cultural and political debates of the post-Stalinist era. For the sake of brevity, I'll confine myself to a succinct analysis of three works which I consider particularly relevant to our discussion: Volker Braun's *Siegfried Frauenprotokolle Deutscher Furor* ('Siegfried The Women's Minutes German Rage') and Heiner Müller's two "Germania"-plays: *Germania Tod in Berlin* ('Germania Death in Berlin') and *Germania 3 Gespenster am toten Mann* ('Germania 3 Ghosts at Deadman').[19] Although there are evident differences among these three plays, they also reveal important similarities concerning the way in which the two writers use the Nibelungen legend in order to lead the audience to ponder over the historical development of German society. From this point of view, we can assert that both Braun and Müller put into effect a strategy which is directly opposite to that of most authors of the 19th century. Fouqué, Raupach, Hebbel, Dahn manipulated the traditional narratives and rewrote the Medieval sources with the purpose of eliminating obscurities and contradictions, of extrapolating their concealed meaning, and of preserving in compact, coherent texts what they considered the most authentic expression of the German soul. In this way they contributed to turning the Nibelungen leg-

[19] Braun [1987 (1992)]; Müller [1977 (2004)]; Müller [1996 (2004)]. On Volker Braun's theatrical rewrite see Joschko (1992) and Schmidt (1995: 187-220). On Heiner Müller's dramas see Klussmann (1982); Fiebach (2003); Heeg (2003); Eckardt (2003); Bohn (2003); Jourdheuil (2003); Hauschild (2003: 322-330; 497-506).
German contemporary history plays an important part also in *Ostfotze* ('Eastern Cunt'), one of the eight episodes which make up the theatrical suite *MauerStücke* by the producer, actor and playwright Manfred Karge [Karge 1989-1990 (1996)]. In *Ostfotze* the characters of the *Nibelungenlied* act on the scene of post-1989 Germany, but the tragedy of the hypotext is completely substituted by the burlesque, and Karge's farce doesn't reach by far the complexity and effectiveness of Müller's and Braun's rewrites. Even the prominent DDR author Franz Fühmann coped with the Nibelungen tradition: he wrote the poem *Der Nibelunge Not* in the 1950s [Fühmann (1978: 18-19)], a prose version of the *Nibelungenlied* for the Youth [Fühmann (1971)] and in 1973 the screenplay to a film which was never realized [Fühmann (1987)]. The poem offers an anti-heroic view of the Nibelungen narrative, and in the invective against the *Mörderdynastie*, the 'dynasty of murderers', he carries out a superimposition of ancient legend and recent history.

end into an effective political myth: a powerful factor in mobilizing the consciousness of the people and in creating consent for the nationalistic and expansionistic policies, first of the Prussian and later of the German governments.

Heiner Müller and Volker Braun, on the contrary, take up the myth as a result of two centuries of interpreting and re-telling practices, and dismantle it: emphasizing not only its inherent violence and contradictions, but even the possibility of re-reading it as a powerful metaphor of the German disaster during the 20th century. Both authors underline the strong relationship between Nibelungen matter and history, but they focus their attention on contemporary German history: retelling the Nibelungen myth after Stalingrad and Auschwitz, they drive the audience to question the whole combination of attitudes, moral values and commonplaces handed down as the "German soul". To this end, they make systematic use of anachronisms and show overtly on stage the metaphorical mechanism in action.

Heiner Müller's play *Germania Tod in Berlin* – written between 1962 and 1971, published in West Germany in 1977 and staged for the first time in Munich in 1978 – is made of thirteen different scenes, not explicitly correlated to each other, but all thematizing the history of the German working class from the Spartakist insurrection of 1918 up to the workers' rebellion against the communist government in East Berlin in 1953. The Nibelungen heroes Gunther, Hagen, Volker and Gernot appear only in the fifth scene, *Hommage à Stalin 1*: they are ghosts on the battlefield of Stalingrad, fighting an imaginary battle against invisible Huns. Müller, thus, takes up the famous propagandistic metaphor of Hermann Göring, who in a radio speech had compared the German soldiers in the infernal Stalingrad cauldron to the Burgundian warriors in Attila's Hall, and makes a spectral theatre out of it.[20] The dead warriors don't even remember the reason for their fighting, or perhaps they don't want to. As Gernot, with an implicit reference to the myth of Odin's warriors in the Walhalla, confesses that he is tired of dying every night and asks why they have to fight, Hagen's and Gunther's answers are manifest, conflicting lies, propaganda tools to justify the war: they have to revenge Siegfried; Siegfried was killed by the Huns; Siegfried was actually a traitor; and so on. As a matter of fact, the Nibelungen are fighting just for the sake of fighting, and Gernot's questions have to be silenced. So the warriors' band kills the dissident and lets loose its destructive, macabre exultation masturbating over the corpse. The murderers' solidarity, however, doesn't prevent them from killing each other at the end of the scene, trying to grab

[20] On Göring's radio speech see Krüger (1991).

hold of the hoard. Gernot's doubt and questioning can be read as an attempt, or at least an opportunity to stop the senseless succession of wars and massacres, but its failure clears the way to the merciless actualization of the myth: the corpses of the Nibelungen thus coalesce in a monstrous conglomerate of flesh and metal, ready to perpetuate its work of killing.[21]

Another possibility for using the Nibelungen legend to light up and question German history is exploited by Heiner Müller in his last play, *Germania 3 Gespenster am toten Mann*, written in the years 1994-1995 and staged for the first time in 1996 in Bochum, after the writer's death on 30 December 1995. Again, Müller arranges in a line a sequence of different scenes, this time concerning the social and political development in Germany after World War II and the failure of the socialist experiment in the German Democratic Republic. Of capital importance in the play are the figures of Hitler and Stalin, both acting on the stage, as well as the references to Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish revolutionary leader murdered during the Spartakist insurrection whose ideal of an anti-authoritarian socialism disappeared from the communist agenda with her death and the subsequent success of the Leninist model. Rosa Luxemburg appears directly only once in the play, in the very first scene: in a superimposition of temporal levels, the historical leaders of the Communist Party of Germany (later SED, *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*), Ernst Thälmann and Walter Ulbricht are discussing the failure of the socialist state when Rosa Luxemburg goes across the stage, escorted by her executioners.[22] To the figure of the Polish revolutionary, although absent, point the references to the Nibelungen legend included in the play; first of all, through the title of the third scene – the set is again the Stalingrad Cauldron – *Siegfried eine Jüdin aus Polen* ('Siegfried a Jewess from Poland').[23] The surprising identification of the Medieval hero with the communist leader not only reminds the audience of the treacherous murder of Rosa Luxemburg, but at the same time it sounds like a ghastly omen of the consequences of such murder. These consequences are revealed later on, as Kriemhild and Hagen meet on the battlefield: the two characters' cues are, for the most part, extrapolated from Hebbel's *Nibelungen*, but what actually confers meaning to the encounter is the fact that Hagen is dressed like a German officer, while Kriemhild wears a uniform of the Red Army, and Stalin's shadow is visible behind her. Kriemhild, the mild princess of the first part of the *Nibelungenlied*, changed into the ruthless she-devil at the court of Attila; in a similar way the spectre of Rosa Luxemburg comes back

[21] Müller [1977 (2004: 20-24)].
[22] Müller [1996 (2004: 61)].
[23] Müller [1996 (2004: 66)].

now as an enraged Stalinist soldier, with a catastrophic outcome both for Germany and the socialist project.[24]

While Heiner Müller inserts short, compact rewrites of the Nibelungen legend into broader texts, Volker Braun's *Siegfried Frauenprotokolle Deutscher Furor* is a rewrite of the whole legend, assuming the *Nibelungenlied* as main hypotext and introducing references to the Norse tradition and to Hebbel's dramatic trilogy. As Heiner Müller does, so too does Volker Braun sharpen the conflicts implicit in the sources and makes use of anachronisms to emphasize the destructiveness of behavioural patterns inherited from the past and passively accepted. Braun's use of anachronism is, however, quite peculiar, and the writer himself rejects the correctness of this definition with respect to his literary technique. In a conversation with Hans Kaufmann he explains:

> Das liegt am Anachronismus der heutigen Zeit, nicht an dem Anachronismus des Mittels. Denn du hast recht: die Gegenwart schleppt soviel Altes mit, alte Verlaufsformen, Strukturen, Denkweisen, daß die alten Vorgänge als Modell für heutige dienen können. Ein Umstand, der zu bedauern ist, der aber Geschichte für die Kunst darstellbar macht.[25]

It is because so many social and psychological archaisms live on in our own society and in our own mind that the old myths and legends can be superimposed on contemporary life and reveal themselves useful to its interpretation. Playing with associations, following the logic of dreams, Volker Braun establishes connections between the legendary past and the conflicts of the present, stressing some points of the old narrative and emphasizing its inherent violence, yet without transporting it into our own time. On the contrary, the explicit references to the real historical vicissitudes of the Burgundians, crushed in a "stellvertreterkrieg"[26] between the superpowers, Romans and Huns, strengthen the relevance of the staged action to the audience, especially to an audience in the German Democratic Republic in the mid-1980s, as shortly before nuclear warheads had been located on the territory of the neighbouring Federal Republic.

The threat of possible self-destruction of mankind as a consequence of an insane aggressiveness rooted in the greed for power and the sense of honour;

[24] Müller [1966 (2004: 70-73)].

[25] "It depends on the anachronism of the present, not on the anachronism of the means. You are right, indeed: the present drags so much of the old – old patterns, structures, outlooks – that the ancient events can be useful as models to today's ones. This circumstance is regrettable, but it makes history representable in the arts" [Braun 1984 (1992: 257-258)].

[26] "war by proxy" [Braun 1983-1986 (1992: 251)].

the self-mutilation of one's own affectivity and sensitivity aimed at self-control and effectiveness in reaction and revenge; the brutal patriarchal oppression of men on women: these are the focuses of this rewrite of the *Nibelungenlied*, a "heroic" text which the playwright chooses as hypotext among many other legendary and heroic tales exactly because of its "schonungslose Darstellung des gräßlichen Geschehens".[27] The overlapping of temporal planes and the re-reading of the ancient massacre as an omen of the impending future (or rather, as Volker Braun writes, of the impending *Nicht-Zukunft*, or "not-future")[28] signal Braun's profound pessimism. The old patterns can reproduce themselves with any generation, and a radical break with the inherited ideas and behaviours is necessary in order to avoid self-annihilation. In a view of history which appears deeply indebted to Walter Benjamin's reflection, Volker Braun recognizes the necessity and the possibility of change: the voice of his Volker echoes the potentially redeeming question of Heiner Müller's Gernot as he asserts "wir müssen anders denken".[29] Like Gernot in Müller's *Germania*, however, even Volker is accused by his comrades of being a traitor and a spy of the enemies, and the possibility of an alternative future – or of a future tout-court – which is glimpsed for only a short moment and radiates an almost messianic hope, is overwhelmed by the inexorable power of the *Unerledigte* (the 'unsolved', the 'not-overcome'),[30] the inherited destructive patterns handed down through history.

Volker Braun's – as well as Heiner Müller's – purpose is apparently not about making a myth of the legend in order to guarantee the identity and/or the glory of a community: their project is thus radically opposed to Raupach's or even Ibsen's. Their purpose is rather to dismember the traditional narrative in order to show the vacuity and danger of every exaltation of war, supremacy and glory. They both disintegrate and revitalize the myth, making out of it a literary instrument able to disconnect traditions and common sense, establishing new connections among visions of the past, analyses of the present, and perspectives on the future.

[27] "Pitiless representation of the horrible facts" [Braun 1984 (1992: 256)].
[28] Braun [1984 (1992: 258)].
[29] "we have to think in a different way" [Braun 1987 (1992: 240)].
[30] Braun [1983-1986 (1992: 254)]; [1984 (1992: 258)].

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Tristan-Rezeption in deutschen Dramen des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts: Ernst Hardt und Georg Kaiser

Summary. Shortly after 1900, an intense reworking of the Tristan material took place in the field of the dramatic genre in Germany. This paper aims to analyse two of these dramas, Ernst Hardt's *Tantris der Narr* and Georg Kaiser's *König Hahnrei*. Beside a presentation of both authors and a survey of the different sources they drew upon, the attention will be devoted to outlining the features of the two Tristan adaptations, showing their common traits and their differences as modern re-interpretations of the original story.

Die literarische Mittelalterrezeption mit ihrer Vielfalt von Varianten eines Stoffes in den verschiedenen Volkssprachen, mit ihren unterschiedlichen nationalen Wegen ist im Vergleich zu der auf zentrale lateinische Prätexte fixierten Antikenrezeption schwer zu fassen. Insofern ist es ein guter Griff der Veranstalter, wenn sie über diese Tagung als Motto den Titel der Erzählung von Jorge Luis Borges gestellt haben: *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*. Diese poetische Metapher und das Modell, das sie suggeriert, ist im Denken der Gegenwart eine viel gehandelte Münze. Es erscheint in ästhetischen wie wissenschaftlichen Kontexten und drückt vor allem auf dem Feld der elektronischen Intelligenz mit ihren sich verzweigenden binären Systemen das Sowohl-als-auch und die Dimension einer scheinbar grenzenlosen Offenheit aus. Während das Labyrinth auf eine verborgene Mitte zustrebt, öffnen sich die sich verzweigenden Pfade von einem Ursprung aus ins Unendliche, in die grenzenlose Virtualität.

Überträgt man das Modell auf rezeptionsgeschichtliche Zusammenhänge, zeigen sich deutlicher die Bindungen und Grenzen. Bleiben wir beim ‚Garten': Die *origo* als Quellpunkt des Systems liegt oft weit zurück, manchmal bleibt sie im Dunkeln. Dennoch hat der Garten zwischen den Zäunen, die ihn gegen das freie Feld abgrenzen, eine Anlage, die sich Schritt für Schritt entfaltet. Das Muster der Wege ist in den Abschnitten, die man jeweils überblickt, nicht willkürlich und auch nicht von binärer Art. Neben den Hauptwegen gibt es Seitenwege. Querwege tun sich auf und öffnen Prospekte. Das

Entscheidende aber ist, dass jeder, der hier promeniert – sei es in schöpferischer oder in nachvollziehender Art, als kreativer oder nur aufnehmender Hörer und Leser –, sich immer erst nach rückwärts wendet und in Kenntnis einer vorgeformten Landschaft eine neue begeht. Das heißt, das Potential des Stoffes erschließt sich von innen her aus verschiedenen Standpunkten, und an diesen durch Blicke nach rückwärts, nach vorn, nach der Seite. Gerade so sind Züge zu erkennen, die über alle Divergenzen hinweg ein erstaunlich homogenes Muster der zeitlich und kulturell verstreuten Teile hervortreten lassen. Ich versuche das im Rahmen der Tristan-Rezeption zu zeigen, eines prominenten mittelalterlichen Stoffes, in den ich aber über neuzeitliche Beispiele einsteige, in einer etwas abgelegenen, aber durchaus nicht uninteressanten Ecke des Gartens.

Die Bibliographie zur Rezeption der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters von Grosse/Rautenberg macht deutlich, dass kurz nach 1900 eine intensive Verarbeitung des Tristanstoffs in der Gattung des Dramas stattfand.[1] Aus einem Umkreis weiterer Stücke, die ästhetisch missraten, prinzipiell aber natürlich historisch signifikant sind, heben sich hier zwei Tristan-Adaptationen heraus: Ernst Hardts ‚Tantris der Narr'[2] und Georg Kaisers ‚König Hahnrei'[3], die sich chronologisch überlappen. Die Geburtsdaten der Autoren wie die Entstehung der Dramen liegen nur wenige Jahre auseinander. Hardt wurde 1876, Kaiser 1878 geboren.[4] Hardts ‚Tantris' erschien 1907 und wurde am 21.01.1908 in Köln uraufgeführt. – Kaisers ‚Hahnrei' wurde, wie andere Werke des Dichters, mehrfach umgearbeitet. Es existiert eine handschriftliche Fassung von 1910, eine weitere von 1912 (gedruckt 1913), eine weitere von 1914 (Vorlage der Ausgabe 1971).[5] Zur Aufführung gelangte das Drama erst 1931. Die Rezeption der kurz hintereinander entstandenen Stücke läuft also eine Zeit lang parallel.

Trotz der engen zeitlichen Nachbarschaft und eines Abschlusses vor Ausbruch des 1. Weltkriegs sind die zwei Dramen aber denkbar verschieden, ja sie scheinen geradezu diesseits und jenseits einer Epochengrenze zu liegen. Hardts ‚Tantris' trägt Züge eines neuromantischen Ausstattungsstückes, das, nach dem klassischen Dramenmodell gebaut und in Blankversen metrisch stilisiert, einen üppig-wortgewaltigen, pathetisch archaisierenden Sprachstil

[1] Grosse / Rautenberg (1989: 40).
[2] Zitiert nach der Ausgabe Hardt (1910).
[3] Zitiert nach der Ausgabe Kaiser (1971: [367]-454).
[4] Tabelle zu den Lebensdaten Hardts bei Meyer (ed. 1975). Zur Biographie Kaisers vgl. die Ausgabe von Huder (1971: 877). Zwei materialreiche Kapitel zu Hardt wie zu Kaiser enthält die Würzburger Dissertation von Sparre (1988).
[5] Bibliographische Angaben in der Ausgabe von Huder (1971).

entfaltet. Eine Vorstellung von dem intendierten Inszenierungsstil gibt die Anweisung unterhalb der Personenliste: „Tracht und Haltung der Gestalten entspricht der starken, keuschen und verhüllten Art der Fürstenstatuen im Chor des Naumburger Doms." (S. [5]). Das Stück war sofort ein Erfolg auf der ganzen Linie, auch ein finanzieller für den Autor. Hardt wurde mit dem doppelten Schillerpreis ausgezeichnet, d.h. dem Volks- und dem Staats-Schillerpreis. Diese Auszeichnung war allerdings auch von heftiger Kritik begleitet. Das Drama wurde an den wichtigen deutschsprachigen Bühnen aufgeführt (Burgtheater Wien 1908/9; Lessingtheater Berlin 1909/10), in mehrere Sprachen übersetzt und an Schulen und Universitäten behandelt.[6] Seinen Erfolg konnte der Verfasser freilich nicht wiederholen. Nach dem Verschwinden von Hardts Stücken aus den Spielplänen etwa ab 1918 mit der kulturellen Wende zur Weimarer Republik erlebte das Drama immerhin noch Neuauflagen bis 1929 und erreichte die beachtliche Gesamtzahl von 54000 Exemplaren. Hardt wirkte seit den frühen 20er Jahren im Kulturbetrieb als Theater- und später als Rundfunkintendant. Von den Nationalsozialisten wurde er 1933 als Leiter des Westdeutschen Rundfunks entlassen und gerichtlich verfolgt, später aber auf Antrag in die Reichsschriftenkammer aufgenommen und finanziell entschädigt. Er blieb jedoch dem ‚braunen' Literaturbetrieb fern, hielt sich durch Übersetzungen über Wasser und starb am 3. Februar 1947. Ein beruflicher Wiedereinstieg nach dem Krieg war ihm nicht geglückt.

Das Drama ‚König Hahnrei' von Gerhard Kaiser bietet zumindest stilistisch bereits die ganze Palette expressionistischer Dramatik. Trotz des Fünf-Akte-Schemas gibt es keine stringente Handlungsfolge. Die Szenen reihen sich montageartig, die dramatische Mimesis ist antinaturalistisch, die Sprache grell und übersteigert.[7] Das Stück spielt seine Figurenkonstellation abstrakt durch und arbeitet mit Mitteln der Ironie und der Farce. Es steht der Komödie näher als der Tragödie, auch wenn Kaiser in der zweiten Auflage 1923 etwas zweideutig die Gattungsbezeichnung „Tragödie" einsetzt. Nachdem der Verfasser in der Weimarer Republik zum meistgespielten Gegenwartsdramatiker hinter Gerhard Hauptmann aufgerückt war, erlebte auch der ‚König Hahnrei' eine verspätete Uraufführung im Jahr 1931. Die Inszenierung am Berliner Schauspielhaus mit Jürgen Fehling als Regisseur und Heinrich George als Marke wurde allerdings von der Kritik einhellig abgelehnt. Knapp zwei Jahre später, am 18.02.1933, wurde die Uraufführung von Kai-

[6] Meyer (1975: 169f., 179).

[7] Vgl. Fivian (1941: 27): „[...] in einer Beziehung ist das Werk schon expressionistisch: es erfüllt die expressionistische Forderung auf Verzicht jeder objektiven Darstellung der Wirklichkeit, ist eine Schilderung rein subjektiver Seelenzustände."

sers Drama ‚Der Silbersee' von den Nationalsozialisten gesprengt. Kaisers Schriften fielen der Bücherverbrennung zum Opfer, der Autor erhielt Publikationsverbot, floh aber erst 1938 vor der Gestapo ins Schweizer Exil, wo er kurz nach Kriegsende, am 4. Juni 1945, verarmt und vergessen starb. Ich stelle im Folgenden die gegensätzlichen Stücke vor, um sie dann über die Unterschiede hinweg zu vergleichen. Weiter wird zu zeigen sein, dass gerade die Entsprechungen schon in der mittelalterlichen Stoffgeschichte angelegt sind.

‚Tantris der Narr' und ‚König Hahnrei' greifen auf verschiedene Abschnitte des Tristanstoffes zurück, der mit den Umrissen einer Gesamtvita des Helden samt Vorgeschichte der Eltern schon für die ‚version primitive', den Urroman um 1150, anzusetzen ist und in der Nähe der Fassung Eilharts von Oberge vermutet werden darf. Während Hardt nach der endgültigen Trennung des Liebespaares, das heißt nach der vertraglichen Rückgabe Isoldes an Marke bei dem zugespitztesten der Wiederkehr-Abenteuer ansetzt, der Begegnung Tristans mit Isolde als Narr, wählt Kaiser die Phase des Ehebruchs samt der Flucht der Liebenden in den Wald, von der er sofort in einen höchst eigenwillig gedeuteten Liebestod einlenkt. Auch Hardts Drama blickt auf den Liebestod voraus. Das heißt, beide Dramen haben den Gesamtverlauf der Liebesgeschichte vor Augen, die mit ihren zentralen Phasen vorgestellt oder anzitiert und in ihren Linien bis zum Ende hin ausgezogen wird.

Im Garten der Stoffgeschichte mit seinen sich verzweigenden, sich kreuzenden Wegen ist die Kenntnis der Gesamthandlung für beide Dichter wie auch für ihr Publikum vor allem durch zwei imponierende moderne Bearbeitungen garantiert, die sich vor die mittelalterlichen Prototypen schieben. Das ist zum einen die Oper Richard Wagners (Uraufführung 1863) und weiter die Rekonstruktion eines Tristan-Urromans – neben der wissenschaftlichen Form auch in literarischen Gestalt – durch Joseph Bédier (1900, deutsche Übersetzung bereits 1901).[8] Die Bedeutung beider Adaptationen, die sich auf die Gattungen Drama und Roman verteilen, kann neben den jeweils gerade modernen Übersetzungen der mittelalterlichen Klassiker für die folgenden Schicksale des Stoffes gar nicht überschätzt werden. Bédier wirkte vor allem auf Hardt neben einer Fülle von mittelalterlichen und modernen Nebenquellen. Auch für Kaiser ist das Spektrum vielschichtig.[9] Tatsächlich scheint der Stoff als diffuses Ganzes, gerade in seiner varianten Form, zur Auseinandersetzung und provokativen Neugestaltung gereizt zu haben.

[8] Bedier (1901).
[9] Vgl. Sparre (1988: 88-94, 125-129).

Ernst Hardt zieht eine bunte Reihe stoffgeschichtlich verstreuter Tristan-Szenen zu einem fünfaktigen Dramen-Tag auf dem düsteren Schloss Lubin mitten im Wald von Morois zusammen. Vorausgesetzt wird ein nicht ganz einleuchtender Vertrag Markes mit Tristan, dieser habe, wenn er nach Cornwall zurückkehre, zusammen mit Isolde das Leben verwirkt. Da Tristan in diesem Fall zuallererst Isoldes Leben gefährdet, die in Markes eheherrlichem Gewahrsam lebt, scheint diese von Hardt erfundene Formulierung gerade ein Einverständnis des Liebespaares mit dem Zwang zur Rücksicht auf den Partner vorauszusetzen. Parallel dazu gibt es einen Vertrag zwischen den Liebenden mit Ringtausch und der aus Eilhart und Thomas bekannten Verpflichtung Tristans, sich immer und überall zu stellen, wenn er in Isoldes Namen angesprochen werde. Der öffentliche Beweis des Ehebruchs ist nach einem zugunsten Isoldes verlaufenen Gottesurteil nicht erbracht, wobei natürlich Marke das Verhältnis, das er eifersüchtig beargwöhnt, im Inneren zu wissen scheint. Die Rolle des Verräters übernimmt eine neu geschaffene Figur namens Denovalin, ein Ritter, der als abgewiesener Konkurrent in die Fußstapfen des bei Thomas / Gottfried bekannten Marjodo tritt. Denovalin hat aber einen grundbösen Charakter mit sadistischen Zügen und wird nicht nur von Isolde, sondern auch von Marke und dessen der Königin ergebenen Baronen inständig gehasst.

1. Akt: Wir sehen Isolde im Morgengrauen in ihrem Schlafzimmer, geplagt von Eifersuchtsphantasien ob der Untreue des mit Isolde Weißhand verheirateten Tristan. Da treffen Meldungen von der Ankunft eines Kaufmannsschiffes aus Arundel ein. Denovalin will Tristan getroffen haben und will Isolde erpressen, sich ihm hinzugeben. Auf ihre Frage erklärt er, Tristan habe sich bei der Nennung ihres Namens nicht gestellt, was nach der Verheiratung einen weiteren Bruch des Freundschaftsrechtes bedeutet. 2. Akt vormittags: Denovalin bezeugt vor Marke und dem ganzen Hof Tristans Anwesenheit, dagegen will Dinas, der Anhänger Tristans, diesen gleichzeitig an einer anderen Stelle gesehen haben. Trotz der durch widersprüchliche Aussagen unsicheren Rechtslage beschließt Marke kraft seines Rechts als Ehemann, Isolde den Aussätzigen auszuliefern. 3. Akt um die Mittagszeit im Burghof: Den Höhepunkt an dramatischer Konfrontation erzwingt hier der Verfasser durch einen schwer motivierbaren Wechsel zwischen Massen- und Einzelszenen. Während Volk und Hofstaat samt dem König in der Kirche weilen, wird Isolde nackt vor die Türe geschickt und den Aussätzigen ausgeliefert. Unter ihnen befindet sich der als fremder Siecher verkleidete Tristan, der die Krüppel verjagt und die Freundin entführen will. Isolde zeigt sich aber nicht willens oder nicht in der Lage, den verkleideten Freund zu erkennen. Denovalin, allein aus der Kapelle tretend, wird von Tristan erstochen, und dieser

rettet sich durch einen Sprung von der Mauer in die Tiefe. Die Rettung der Königin vor den Aussätzigen wird dann vom Volk und einem völlig gewandelten Marke als zweites Gottesurteil interpretiert. 4. Akt abends im Schloss: Zu der von den Ereignissen des Tages erschöpften Hofgesellschaft mit Marke, seinem Hofnarren Ugrin (bei Eilhart der Einsiedler!) und später Isolde samt Brangäne gesellt sich, von außen kommend, ein fremder Narr namens Tantris. Er agiert offen als Tristan, wird aber als Narr gerade nicht als Tristan erkannt. Isolde kommentiert: „Er sieht gar kläglich aus, find ich ... ergötzlich." [Hardt (1910: 118)]. Indessen wird Tristans Schwager Kuerdin tödlich verwundet hereingetragen. Er ist der vorher gesichtete Doppelgänger, der Tristans Rüstung und den Freudschaftsring Isoldes trägt (Wie er dazu kam, unter welchen Umständen er verwundet wurde, ob anderseits Tristan vor Denovalin wirklich floh – die verschiedenen Zusammenhänge werden nicht recht klar gemacht; es geht vor allem darum, durch Tristans persönliche Requisiten die Verkennungssituation auf der Bühne zuzuspitzen.) 5. Akt im Morgengrauen: Brangäne und dann Isolde persönlich fordern nun vom Narren das Rechtssymbol des Freundschaftsvertrages der Liebenden, den Ring. Auch jetzt gelingt es Tantris / Tristan nicht, von der auf die Rivalin Isolde Weißhand fixierten Freundin erkannt und anerkannt zu werden. Isolde verfällt auf die Hundeprobe. Sie schickt Tantris in den Zwinger zu Tristans Jagdhund Husdent, der seit der Verbannung seines Herrn zur Bestie mutiert ist. Der Hund ist nun das Wesen, das seinen Herrn erkennt. Tristan entschwindet mit dem Tier im Morgengrauen, Isolde kommentiert: „Wie geht er groß und kühn dahin ... Nun geht Herr Tristan in die Welt zurück ... Bis daß er stirbt ... dann küß ich ihn, [Regieanweisung] *Sie richtet sich starr und groß auf.* Brangäne, Mein Freund! ... mein Freund war hier ... *Sie bricht in Brangänes Armen zusammen*." [Hardt (1910: 158)].

Die Grundfrage des Stückes, die auch als Frage an das Stück stehen bleibt, hat Friedrich Sieburg in einen Brief an Hardt vom 06.05.1910 formuliert: „Warum erkennt Frau Isot den Tristan nicht gleich, den sie doch liebt?"[10] Die Motivation lautet von Anfang bis Ende: aus Verletzung durch die Heirat des Freundes mit Isolde Weißhand. Aus Tristans Untreue folgt bei Isolde eine gnadenlos starre Unbeweglichkeit. Sie singt zu Beginn ein Lied: „Herr Tristan ist untreu worden … Gott soll es strafen an ihm, Daß er mich will ermorden. Doch sterbend noch küß ich ihn." [Hardt (1910: 9)]. Lediglich verschärfend kommt später durch Denovalins Lüge der Verstoß gegen den Abschiedsvertrag hinzu, nach dem sich Tristan beim Namen der Freundin stellen müsste. Dabei bleibt bis zum Schluss ein paradoxes Bekenntnis zu der verflossenen Liebe bestehen. Isoldes pathetische Ahnung des Liebesto-

[10] Meyer (1975: 73); zitiert bei Sparre (1988: 95).

des, den sie nicht wirklich vorauswissen kann, hat etwas Nekrophiles, wie dies zeitgleich in Oscar Wildes ‚Salome' gestaltet wird.[11] Gegenüber dem lebendigen Freund dagegen fehlen ihr die Empathie und die innere Sicherheit des Liebens, das zum Verzeihen fähig wäre.
Auch Tristans Verhalten ist nicht eindeutig: Er versucht unter Lebensgefahr eine reumütige Rückkehr zur Freundin und trotzt lange Isoldes Weigerung, ihn aufgrund des Ringes wieder anzunehmen. Nach der Begegnung mit dem Hund aber scheint das Interesse an der kapriziösen Freundin plötzlich erloschen zu sein. Tristans letzte, aus der Kulisse [Regieanmerkung] „freudeschreiend" gerufene Äußerung ist der Hundename „Husdent!" [Hardt (1910: 157)]. Warum kehrt er nicht um, warum „geht er so groß und kühn dahin." [Hardt (1910: 158)]. Aus beleidigtem Stolz, aus Trotz? Die Zerrissenheit Markes, die von Wutraserei in devot frömmelnde Selbstverleugnung umschlägt, ist im Stoff vorgezeichnet, und Denovalins destruktive Hassliebe hat eine gewisse innere Konsequenz. Beide Charaktere wirken weniger befremdlich als das verunsicherte Protagonistenpaar selbst. Offensichtlich kommt es dem Dichter darauf an, trotz des stark an Wagner anklingenden Minnetrank-Erlebnisses und einer immer wieder, noch bis in die Schlussreden hinein beschworenen sinnlich-affektiven Liebesverfallenheit, ja trotz des im Fluchtpunkt der Ereignisse festgehaltenen Liebestodes die Auflösung der bedingungslosen Tristanminne vorzuführen. Dies gegen Wagner und die mittelalterliche Tradition. In der Zerstörung des höfischen bzw. romantischen Liebeskonzeptes, das für den Dichter wie für das Publikum zunächst eine Folie identifikatorischen Interesses bietet, dann aber doch nicht durchgehalten werden soll, kann man die Stoßrichtung von Hardts Drama sehen.

Eine Demontage des Liebesmythos betreibt auch Georg Kaiser.[12] Er stellt, wie schon der Titel sagt, die Marke-Gestalt in den Mittelpunkt seines Stückes und arbeitet sich bis zum 3. Akt an einer Serie von Listepisoden entlang, die aus Traditionskernen heraus frei umgestaltet oder ganz neu erfunden sind. Kaiser stellt diesen eine Schlüsselszene voran, die gegenüber dem Bekannten eine völlig neue Ausgangslage schafft. Der greise Marke hört, in einem Akazienbaum sitzend, von Tristan und Isolde ein völlig eindeutiges Bekenntnis ihrer Liebe und erfahrt von Brangänes Rolle als permanenter Vertreterin im Ehebett. Die dramatische Spannung liegt somit nicht mehr bei der Aufklärung des Ehebruchs, sondern allein bei den Reaktionen des

[11] 1891 französisch; Uraufführung Paris 1896 mit Sarah Bernhard in der Titelrolle, Erstaufführung London erst 10.05.1905. Oper von Richard Strauß Uraufführung Dresden 09.12.1905. Vgl. die Uraufführung von Hardts ‚Tantris' Köln 21.01.1908.
[12] So auch die Analysen von Konecny (1978: 256-270) und Pietsch (2001: 29-57), hier Analyse von ‚König Hahnrei'.

„Hahnreis“. Marke bemüht sich einerseits das Liebespaar masochistisch und voyeuristisch zu verkuppeln, um sich an seiner Liebe aufzuwärmen und seine Impotenz zu kompensieren. Er lässt Tristan offiziell ins königliche Schlafzimmer holen. Er nötigt das Paar zu einer Bootsfahrt zu zweit und zum Schäferstündchen auf einer einsamen Insel im Fischteich und so fort. Die andere Seite dieser Strategie muss darin bestehen, die Verräter des Ehebruchs mit ihren Beobachtungen und Beweisstücken pausenlos zu widerlegen, was nur durch groteske Verrenkungen gelingt.

Ein neues Motiv verleiht der Psychopathologie des Königs eine weitere Dimension. Isolde erwähnte unter dem Akazienbaum ihren sechsjährigen Bruder, der sie mit seinen Ärmchen umschlang und die Füße in ihren Schoß stemmte. Diese Bemerkung wird in Markes Phantasie zur Bedrohung ihrer Unschuld, sie generiert eine Kette von Folgeszenen, die sich wie ein roter Faden durch das Drama schlingen. Marke jagt der fixen Idee hinterher und sucht bei einem Wissenschaftler und einem Kabbalisten zu ergründen, ob hier eine sexuelle Handlung vorliegen konnte. Er stilisiert die Szene ins Religiöse (Maria mit dem Kind) und lässt sich von einem jungen Priester die damit verbundenen unkeuschen Gedanken rituell austreiben, natürlich erfolglos. Es ist klar, dass der Dichter hier um 1910 einen pathologischen Seelenzustand mit tiefenpsychologischen Dimensionen wie Narzissmus, Verdrängung, Kompensation, Affektverschiebung ausgestaltet, ohne dass diese beim Autor theoretisch vorausgesetzt werden müssen.

Eine Wendung in seiner Versuchsanordnung leitet Kaiser am Ende des 3. Aktes ein. Ausgerechnet im sogenannten „Rosenhof“ zählt Marke Isolde seine Verdachts- und Beweisgründe her und veranlasst so das Paar zur Flucht in den Wald. Während die Maschinerie des Verrates weiterläuft, kommt es in Markes Psyche zum Dammbruch. Er bekennt sich zum Wissen und will die Flüchtigen zur Bestrafung an seinen Hof zurückholen [Kaiser (1971: 434ff.)]. Der 5. Akt stellt nun die Konstellation auf den Kopf und führt sie einer grotesken Auflösung zu. Tristan und Isolde sind zurückgekehrt und gestehen sich, dass ihre Liebe gerade durch Markes Kuppelei zerstört wurde. Dieser fleht sie zunächst an, das inzestuöse Dreieck fortzusetzen. Die Verewigung der Konstellation erreicht er zuletzt dadurch, dass er das Paar auf sein Schwert spießt und in einem pervertierten Liebestod vereinigt. Gleichzeitig nimmt er auf diese Weise grausame Rache.

In der darauf folgenden Schlussszene treibt er das Versteckspiel mit einem neuen Beweisstück weiter. Melot meldet, er habe ein Frauentaschentuch zuerst in Markes, dann in Tristans Bett gefunden – Isoldes Taschentuch.

Marke identifiziert es – wenn man ihm glauben darf – mit Brangänes Taschentuch. Das wirbelt in einem letzten Salto mortale die Beziehungsverhältnisse durcheinander. Marke selbst setzt sich dem Verdacht des Ehebruchs mit der Magd aus; anderseits entlastet er Tristan, oder – die Liebe zu Isolde vorausgesetzt – er weist ihm einen Betrug der Freundin mit deren Dienerin nach. Das geschieht vor der Folie einer notorischen großen Tristanliebe. Kaisers Marke katapultiert diese am Anfang wie am Ende seines Stückes aus der Handlung heraus auf die Metaebene eines literarisch sanktionierten Stoffes. Dieser ist von vornherein als solcher allbekannt, und Marke ist sein Verfasser. Er ist derjenige, der mit Hilfe des Liebespaares den Stoff kreiert.[13] Marke etabliert bewusst die stoffgeschichtliche Tradition, welche sich gleichzeitig durch das Bühnengeschehen als große Lüge, als Selbst- und Fremdtäuschung sämtlicher Beteiligter erweist.[14] Die Akteure, voran der „Hahnrei", konstruieren und destruieren den Stoff im gleichen Augenblick.

Das mehrfach überarbeitete Stück erfuhr in der Uraufführung am Berliner Schauspielhaus 1931 eine stilistische Umdeutung. Der Regisseur Jürgen Fehling strich die farcehaften Elemente und stilisierte die Marke-Figur zum tragischen Fall. In einer langsamen und leisen Personenführung wie auch in einer modernistischen Ausstattung im ländlichen Milieu der Jahrhundertwende wurden offenbar neuromantische Züge eines Eifersuchtsdramas in den Vordergrund gerückt und eine realistisch-naturalistisch bis symbolistische Gesamtsicht angestrebt.[15]

Ich möchte hier anfügen, dass auch Hardts in den Hades des Vergessens versunkenes Monumentaldrama Reprisen erlebte, 1936 am Wiener Burgtheater, 1944 in einer tschechischen Übersetzung in Prag.[16] Schließlich wurde es 1994 im Bamberger Brentano-Theater von Martin Neubauer (Regie und Titelrolle) auf die Dimensionen eines Zimmertheaters zurechtgestutzt. Nach dem Wegfall der Haupt- und Staatsaktionen blieben die privaten Auseinandersetzungen zwischen den Hauptfiguren und deren psychologische Ambivalenzen stehen – die Schicht, in der sich unter der Oberfläche der klassizistischen Form Hardts Modernität am stärksten entfaltet und in der sie Kaisers Experimentalstückdrama am ehesten nahe kommt.

[13] ‚Hahnrei', Ausgabe Kaiser (1971: 371, 454).
[14] Diese ikonoklastische Haltung nimmt Kaiser auch bei der Bearbeitung anderer Quellen ein, so in seinem Judith-Drama ‚Die jüdische Witwe', an dem er zeitlich neben dem ‚König Hahnrei' arbeitete (4. Fassung 1909/10) und das in Judiths altem und impotentem Ehemann Manasse Parallelen zur Marke-Figur aufweist.
[15] Vgl. die Dokumentation der Rezeptionsgeschichte bei Tyson (1984: Bd. 1, 539-547).
[16] Meyer (1975: 10).

Wir sehen, wie hier Umbesetzungen, welche die Stücke als Zeugnisse der Rezeptionsgeschichte selbst verwirklichen, auch in die Aufführungspraxis hinein verlängert werden und die Texte auf der Bühne erneut modifizieren. Das betrifft stilistische Gegensätze oder Ambiguitäten, aber auch inhaltliche Akzente, die den Eingriffen des Regisseurs zur Disposition stehen. Werfen wir an dieser Stelle einen Blick zurück auf die Konstanten des stoffgeschichtlichen Musters, das hinter diesen Modifikationen, den Verzweigungen und erneuten Anbindungen, erkennbar bleibt und eine gewisse Resistenz gegen die grenzenlose Veränderbarkeit eines kanonischen Stoffes durchsetzt. Drei Aspekte erlauben, wie ich meine, einen Vergleich der Dramen bei aller Gegensätzlichkeit.

1. Gemeinsam mit Hardts klassizistisch gestelztem ‚Tantris' ist dem ‚König Hahnrei' die Absage an die absolute, bedingungslose Liebe, die sich als verbotene bewährt und zuletzt im Doppeltod bestätigt.[17] Aufgegeben werden die Einmaligkeit und die Kraft der Gefühle, die im mittelalterlichen Minnetrank aus einem überindividuellen Gesetz abgeleitet wurden. Schon Wagner verlegte den Trank in eine komplizierte Psychologie von Anziehung und Hassliebe; so hat auch bei Hardt wie bei Kaiser der Trank seine magischen Züge verloren.[18] Ein psychologisch entzauberter Minnetrank kam in der mediävistischen Interpretation von Gottfrieds ‚Tristan' erst später auf die Tagesordnung; es ist bemerkenswert, wie hier eine produktive Rezeption der Sicht der Literaturinterpreten vorausgeht. Wagner hielt aber fest an einer existentiellen Verbindlichkeit der Liebespassion, die Tristan in seinen Fieberphantasien durchlebt und die in Isoldes Liebestod eine quasireligiöse, ästhetisch orgiastische Verklärung erfährt. Aufgegeben wird in den modernen Varianten des Stoffes der moralische Anspruch, der umwertend gegen die gesellschaftliche Norm an einer Autonomie personalen Liebens festhält. Der Stoff mit seiner erotischen Dreiecks- bzw. Mehreckskonstellation wird zum Experimentierfeld für widersprüchliche Affekte, bei denen sich der Egoismus durchsetzt, zum Darstellungsmedium für seelische Verirrungen, für die Auflösung von Gefühlssicherheit und Ich-Identität.

2. Gemeinsam ist den beiden Vorkriegsdramen damit auch das Erkenntnisproblem. Beide haben eine analytische Struktur, die in Kaisers ‚Hahnrei' zugleich ein großes Verschleierungs- und Vernebelungsprojekt hervorruft.

[17] Hauptgesichtspunkt bei Konecny (1978) und Pietsch (2001). Beide betonen eine politische Sinnebene. Die dem Tristanstoff seit den Anfängen inhärente Kritik an gesellschaftlichen Normen scheint mir aber mit dem Wegfall der absoluten Minne als normativem Gegenpol weitgehend ausgeschaltet. Bereits Wagner reduziert die gesellschaftliche Dimension nahezu vollständig.

[18] Ausgabe Hardt (1975: 33, 125). Ausgabe Kaiser (1971: 372f.)

Aufklärung sucht hier Marke vor allem für seine fixe Idee, die Mutmaßung einer inzestuösen Beziehung Isoldes zu ihrem sechsjährigen Bruder. Während Hardt die Erkenntnissuche in einer Schicht psychischer Diffusheit, in Begierden und Selbsttäuschungen ad absurdum führt, wo paradoxerweise nur noch das Tier Identität hat, reflektiert Kaiser das Scheitern des Erkennens in seinen Versuchsanordnungen abstrakter. Weder Wissenschaft noch Parawissenschaft noch Religion kommen den psychischen Verwirrungen auf den Grund. Dazu erweist sich in einer reflexiven Wendung auch die literarische Mythe als grandioses Betrugsmanöver.

3. Als weitere Gemeinsamkeit ist somit eine Textebene der ästhetischen Reflexion festzuhalten. Hardts Isolde fasst ihre verfahrene Lage in dem einleitenden Lied lyrisch zusammen. Sie singt von dem Hündchen Petitcreiu „aus Purpur und Safran, Gold und Smaralt", das Tristan als Liebeszauber zur Leidbesänftigung einsetzte, und dem vergleichbar Isolde selbst bei Tristans Tod einmal wirken will: „Isot, die Blonde, Wie Gold und Smaralt, Hat liebend vorm Tode Wohl Zaubergewalt." [Hardt (1910: 10)]. Wie dieser Zauber im späteren Liebestod eingelöst werden soll, bleibt völlig rätselhaft. Petitcreiu täuscht, Isolde täuscht, wie aber „liebend"? Fest steht hier nur: Nicht allein das Hündchen als Requisit, die Hauptfigur selbst wirkt als Kunstfigur. Noch ein paarmal spielt Hardt im 1. Akt auf den Wechsel von Kunst in Leben und umgekehrt an. Dann scheint er das Motiv zu vergessen. Es klingt noch einmal in dem Fingerring aus Gold und Smaragd am Ende an, doch hat hier das Kunstobjekt seine Kraft als Erkennungszeichen und verpflichtendes Symbol dramentechnisch gerade verloren. Eine Ästhetik-Kritik? Hardts Kult der schönen Form scheint diese Richtung nicht konsequent einzuschlagen.

Nun gibt sich auch Kaisers Hahnrei bei seinem ersten Auftritt programmatisch als ästhetische Existenz zu erkennen. Die Bühnenfigur stellt sich als Produkt des allbekannten Stoffes vor. „Wer denkt bei dem Aussprechen von meinem Namen nicht an den anderen, der so eng mit ihm für alle Zeiten und Geschlechter – die ein lebendiges Gefühl sich bewahren! – verbunden ist: Isolde?" [Kaiser (1971: 371)]. Eine andere Bemerkung macht das Dreieck vollständig: „Der Namen Marke hat zwei Flügel erhalten, auf denen fährt er über alle Zeiten hin." [Kaiser (1971: 371)]. Die parasitäre Existenz des Königs gilt so nicht nur für sein Liebesleben, sondern vor allem auch für seine ästhetische Existenz im Medium des Stoffes.[19]

[19] Der Schluss der „Tragödie" schließt genau diesen Rahmen: „Nichts von einem Verdacht – nichts von einer Schuld – nichts von einem Beweis – : dies Tuch berät uns alle! [das Taschen-

Ein Aufsatz von Kamakashi Murti mit dem Titel ‚Impotenz als Impuls zu schöpferischer Tätigkeit' (1990) liest Markes Psychogramm als Allegorie des literarischen Schaffens und kann dafür theoretische Äußerungen Kaisers beibringen. Die Trennung vom Leben als eine Art Impotenz setze den schöpferischen Akt gerade in Gang und lasse Geschöpfe entstehen, die von der Welt abgetrennt bleiben und dennoch in dieser Welt Verweiskraft über das Bestehende hinaus übernehmen.[20] Ob nun Tristans und Isoldes Liebe auch als literarisches Werk verstehbar ist und Marke, sich an sein Werk klammernd, den Künstler repräsentiert, der sich daran vergeht, soll dahingestellt bleiben.[21] Jedenfalls betrachtet Kaiser die im Stoff transportierte Wahrheit kritisch. Er sieht das Palliative, Beschönigende des Stoffs und arbeitet auf eine Entzauberung des schönen Liebesmythos hin.

Die drei genannten Akzente, die Liebesunfähigkeit, das Scheitern der Erkenntnis und die Fragwürdigkeit des ästhetischen Scheins lassen sich im philosophischen und ästhetischen Umfeld der Zeit um 1900 ausführlicher belegen, was hier nicht ausgeführt werden kann. Erstaunlicher ist es, dass damit Denkfiguren aufgegriffen werden, die auch schon der originär mittelalterliche Stoff anlegt und formuliert in einem Umfeld, das dem noch wenig aufgeschlossen gegenübersteht. Wir wenden uns im Garten des Tristanstoffes nach rückwärts. Hier findet sich bereit die schillernde Figur eines Marke, die vor allem bei Gottfried von Straßburg über gewisse Inkonsequenzen der Handlung hinaus zu einem Gemälde widerstreitender Gefühle und seelischer Zerrüttung verdichtet wird. Bei der modernen Destruktion der absoluten Minne muss man sehen, dass auch schon diese Problematik in der ursprünglichen Anlage des Stoffes angebahnt wird. Da ist die Phase der endgültigen Trennung des Liebespaares, die bewältigt werden will. Da ist Tristans Verwirrung und seine wenn auch zögerlich vollzogene Ehe mit Isolde Weißhand. Vor allem ist da das prekäre Zerwürfnis des Liebespaares, das Eilhart als Repräsentant der frühhöfischen Stufe des Stoffes im Anschluss an das zweite Wiederkehr-Abenteuer inszeniert. Isolde ist zornig, da Tristan sie im Kampf zu verleugnen scheint – was aber auf einer Verwechslung beruht. Sie stößt ihn in der Verkleidung des Aussätzigen von sich zurück und motiviert so den Vollzug der Ehe mit der Weißhand. Im großen Bogen der Viten-

tuch in Markes und Tristans Bett, das Marke der Brangäne zuschreibt s.o.] – – Es fällt über alle Geschichten herab!" [Kaiser (1971: 454)].

[20] Murti (1990: 116) zitiert Kaiser: „Die Impotenz macht den Dichter produktiv. Hier keimt der Wille zum Werk – hier schwingt sich die Brücke vom Tod zum Leben – und aus solcher fürchterlicher Erfahrung geboren stellt sich das Werk als Turm des Schweigens in die Mittagswüste des Daseins, das ohne Gärten und Wälder die Sehnsucht nach Gärten und Wäldern offenbart."

[21] Gegen Murti (1990).

Handlung bezieht schon der mittelalterliche Stoff die Tiefen einer Entfremdung der exemplarisch Liebenden ein. Hardt kann hier direkt zugreifen; Kaiser setzt an der neuralgischen, schwer motivierbaren Stelle der Rückkehr des Paares aus dem Wald an.[22]

Auch der mittelalterliche Stoff stößt zu den Aporien des Erkennens vor, besonders im religiösen Kontext (Gottesurteil). Eine Reflexion und Kritik der ästhetischen Medialität leistet vor allem Gottfried von Straßburg in der Gestaltung der Petitcreiu-Episode und in den Variationen von Tristans Künstlertum, besonders in den scheinhaften Ästhetisierungen seiner Minne in der Weißhand-Episode. Der Stoff führt hier vor allem in den problematisierenden hochhöfischen Fassungen des Thomas und Gottfried auf Diskussionsfelder, die über ein geschlossenes und geordnetes mittelalterliches Weltbild hinausweisen und zweifellos den skandalösen Charakter der einschlägigen Varianten bis zu einer Athetierung in der Überlieferung (vgl. die bruchstückhafte Überlieferung des Thomas-Werkes) mit zu verantworten haben.

Auch wenn schließlich das frühe 20. Jahrhundert andere Positionen bezieht als sie noch der Romantik mit Wagner als Prototypus plausibel waren, so bleibt doch festzuhalten, dass die Fragestellungen, an denen sich verschiedene Texte in ihren kulturellen Kontexten mit verschiedenen Ergebnissen abarbeiten, offensichtlich im Rahmen des einen Stoffes mit seinen epischen Versatzstücken angelegt sind. Der Stoff als Garten ästhetischer Möglichkeiten will seinen Besucher nicht nur durch Fremdes überraschen, sondern ihn vor allem Bekanntes wieder erkennen und neu sehen lassen.

[22] Dazu auch das aus dem Waldleben herausversetzte ambige Motiv des Schwerttausches zwischen Marke und Tristan (vgl. Akt 3, 1, S. 410-412; Rückbezug S. 444).

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Table 1. Ernst Hardt

Table 2. Titelblatt der Ausgabe. Inselverlag 1909

Table 3. Georg Kaiser

Table 4. Georg Kaiser: „König Hahnrei“. Uraufführung Staatliches Schauspielhaus Berlin 1931 mit Heinrich George und Hilde Körber

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Converging voices and independent language at the origin of German lyrical poetry

Summary. This study sets out to re-examine the issue of the making and development of the German lyrical language in the Middle Ages. Its aim is not so much to establish a relation with the Romance tradition, but to look at the multilingual culture that lay beneath the rise and development of the European lyrical tradition. German lyrical poetry may be said to have resulted from the two entwined phenomena: "multilingualism" and "intertextuality". Throughout the 12th century, European history witnessed major cultural changes, which brought about an elaborate network of culture and languages of very different stocks (Romance and Germanic). All of these vernacular cultures were held together by the cultural and linguistic tradition of Medieval Latin, which served to filter and restrain, as well as kindle and spread, a range of ideas and themes later used in the vernacular to mold new literary forms. The making of courtly lyrical poetry in Europe is one of the outcomes of such interaction.

In this study I set out to re-examine the issue of the making and development of the German lyrical language in the Middle Ages. My aim is here not so much to establish a relation with the Romance tradition, but to look at the multilingual culture that lay beneath the rise and development of the European lyrical tradition. Two entwined perspectives may shed light on how the language of German lyrical poetry was formed: "multilingualism" and "intertextuality". And if we approach the written records of German lyrical poetry from such perspectives, i.e. Latin-bound bilingualism and the later intertextual ties with Romance languages, we should be able to explain how the convergence and mixture of diverse elements in the German language gave rise to the self-sufficient and creative idiom of poetry, which in turn brought about further blends.

Starting with the 12th century, European history went through rapid evolution and intense cultural exchanges: hence an elaborate network of cultures which identified themselves in languages of very different stocks (Romance and Germanic). Yet all of these vernacular cultures were held together by one cultural and linguistic tradition: that of Medieval Latin. Latin monastic culture, revitalized through the Cluniac reformation, served to filter and re-

strain, but also to kindle and spread, a range of ideas and themes which was taken up in the vernacular and used to mold new literary forms. While these ideas and themes belonged mostly to the Classical tradition, they also incorporated Celtic, Germanic and Islamic features. The linguistic and cultural background of German lyrical poetry is therefore multilingual and "multidiscursive": a world based on the interaction between Latin and vernacular cultures at a time when these were concurring to produce a new type of literature and new genres. The making of courtly lyrical poetry in Europe is one of the outcomes of such interaction.

Before reaching its full creative expression, German lyrical poetry went through several phases that we can outline without arranging them into a definite time sequence:

1. *The Latin tradition*

It should be kept in mind that, long before the courtly tradition, German rose and evolved as a written language under the impulse of Late and Medieval Latin.[1] Interaction between the two languages occurred, we know, gradually and at various levels: from glossing to translations that were more and more detached from their models, to language blends (especially after the year 1000) of the kind found in the bilingual didactic comments of Williram and Notker. In a sense, ever since the time of Charlemagne, Latin-German bilingualism in learned prose had paved the way to full linguistic autonomy for written German. And unlike Romance languages, which had to withstand a long process of emancipation to overcome an uneasy state of diglossia, German was relatively quick to gain independence. As early as the 11th century, we find examples of Latin and German being used together in heroic and eulogistic poetry. Thus, for instance, in *Ezzolied* and above all in *De Heinrico*, we come across new language blends accompanied by singing. We also find a new metrical form (long lines divided into two assonanced semilines) that brackets Latin and vernacular models. Yet, at the same time, even in early records of lyrical poetry, we encounter instances of Latin-German *Sprachmischung* [see also Ehrismann (1932: 241-42)]. The *De Heinrico* itself belongs to a group of about fifty poetry texts written in Latin but of German origin, the so called *Carmina Cantabrigensia*, to be found in ff. 432r-441v of the famous Cambridge University Library manuscript (Gg V.

[1] For a thorough analysis of the role Medieval Latin culture played in the making of German lyrical poetry one may still consult H. Brinkmann's pacesetting study *Entstehungsgeschichte des Minnesangs* [Brinkmann (1926)].

35 dated to the first half of the 11th century). This corpus is known to consist of several religious and secular compositions on a variety of subjects (history, politics, eulogy, satire and didactics) which also include seven love poems. Since the Middle Ages, some of these poems had suffered extensive censorial erasures on account of their erotic themes and of the involvement of the monastic milieu. What matters for our purposes is that poem number 28,[2] albeit ridden with stains and erasures that make it hard for us to reconstruct its text, shows signs of a mixed Latin-German language with phrases that anticipate the *topoi* of later courtly poetry. Let me quote the entire text, in Ziolkowski's edition (1998[2] : 94-96; 260-262):

1. S…….nunn[a]….fert
2. ……tempus adest
3. …..dum grōuonot gras in
4. .rt…
5. Quid [uis ut faciā] s[a]go thu mir
6. iu[n]…..[turpis] hortaris unicā
7. [rn]…….[m]el….
8. .....coro miner min
9. n[e]……..[n]des [uir]...silue nu
10. sing..t…ela..ualde
11. [I]am cant& philomela kristes
12. [u]uir…….cui me deuoui
13. ……..
14. O [formosa]……..sagic thir
15. ……..sede[.]anīe.
16. …….[humele]
17. S[ed angilo]….mia s……[m]inne
18. ……..u[o]k[.]l[.]s ueradan.
19. C……..nunna choro miner
20. ……dabo tibi super hoc uuerelt
21. …….genuoc
22. Hoc [euanescit] om̄e also uuolcan in
23. th….umele solū x̄pi regnū
24. th……ineuum.
25. [Quod ipse regnat cr]edo in humele
26. /s[.]scon[.]…..cus[.]t dare
27. [.]az [g]il……uuare.
28. [.]omin……uuemir
29. …….[d]ere…..m[ir]
30. ..ndi[s]……inne.

[2] This is according to Strecker's numbering (1926: 74-77), also adopted by Ziolkowski (1998[2]). Strecker entitled this poem *Kleriker und Nonne*.

31. [Laus]……thaz her s[i]be
32. ker[e]….[penetrabit]…..also
33. s....[e]ger.....s[a]l

As far as we can tell, the poem uses both languages in close-knitted and consistent links: so for instance in *tempus adest…..grōuonot gras* (lines 2-3), we come across the *topos* of the coming of spring, then carried on into what we could define as a naturalistic setting in lines 9-11: *silue nu sing(en)t (vog)ela..uualde [I]am cantet philomela*. Other lines bring us to interpret this text as a dialogue: *s[a]go thu mir* (line 5), *sagic thir* (line 14); and a few fragments may be read as a typical call on the part of the suitor to test his love: *coro miner minn[e]* (line 8); a call restated on line 19 with *nunna choro miner*..., and finally rephrased as a promise of worldly goods: *dabo tibi super hoc uuerelt…..… genuoc* (lines 20-21). Extensive erasures in the final lines prevent us from guessing the nun's reply, although she may already have reminded her suitor of the duties of her station (lines 11-12: *kristes [u]uir……cui me deuoui*). Religious hints in fragments like: *...umele solum christi regnum* (line 23) and *[quod ips*e *regnat cr]edo in humele s[.] scon[o]* (line 25), lead us to think that the nun has in fact rejected her suitor's entreaties. The text is fascinating. One can see why a scholar like Dronke could have put forward a hypothetical reconstruction that is certainly rash and yet at times highly plausible and exciting.[3] As we have shown, throughout this unfortunate text we stumble upon features of form and content that foreshadow early *Minnesang.* Think first of the dialogic structure of the poem, laid out in the predictable sequence of meeting, love entreaty, debate and response. This recalls for instance Albrecht von Johansdorf's famous dialogue song: *Ich vand si âne huote*, the first to have been attested as part of the *Minnesang,* inspired by the anonymous Provençal *tenso*: *Dona*, *[a] vos me comand*.[4] But we also find motifs that often figure prominently in subsequent love lyrics: the naturalistic opening with the *topoi* of the coming of the fair season, of grass growing green again and the singing of birds, of love being put to the test (*coran*).

The *Minnesang* is also recalled in a few specific features of language. So for example, the …. *tempus adest…..grōuonot gras* fragment (line 2-3) calls to mind Dietmar von Eist's *Ahî*, *nu kumt uns diu zît … ez grüenet wol* ...(*MF* 33,15-16). Similarly, the use of the German long line and the presence of

[3] His reconstruction would call for extensive study. It would in fact pertain to the issue being discussed in this convention: the analysis of different types of rewriting. See Dronke (1968: vol. 1, 271-281; vol. 2, 353-354 and 356).
[4] See Molinari (2002a: 269-278).

assonance and rhymes recall early *Minnesang*. We are left with the impression that portions of text voiced in two different languages are thereby linked successfully together.

That the subject of love should be expressed through a clever and subtle language blend is in this case particularly worthy of note. Yet blending here does not occur in the standard mode of an "official" text like *De Heinrico* (the other Latin-German text included in the Cambridge Codex). The *De Heinrico* has long lines with internal assonance or rhymes, with Latin almost always confined to the first semi-line and German to the second. Given the sharp difference in genre between the two poems (the *De Henrico* is a heroic-political poem) we cannot possibly draw a full comparison. What we can do, however, is notice how, at the level of language, the few traces of German words we make out in the dialogue between the "cleric" and the nun belong neither to the learned style of the Latin portions, nor to the epic-heroic language of German tradition as found in the *De Heinrico*. This corroborates our guess that the erotic theme - already present in the Latin poem *Iam dulcis amica* appearing right before this one in the manuscript - may have tapped into another tradition: that of love poetry in the vernacular; a tradition with no precedents in written German poetry, yet presumably attested in the famous, yet unattested, *wineleodos* often quoted to repressive ends in Carolingian capitularies.

If we believe in the existence of an oral tradition, we may say that, under the form of mixed language, the combination between the oral register and the learned Medieval Latin poem marks a relevant communicative shift. It is as if the ancient oral tradition had been "legitimized" by association with Latin, to be then incorporated into the written register.[5] This is similar to what happened when German judicial language started to be encoded in writing: first inside legislation written in Latin, and then progressively emancipated by virtue of a *Mischung* with Latin. The German version of the *Strasbourg Oaths* signals the time when full and complete autonomy had been reached. To be sure, lyrical poetry addressed a very different audience than the one of judicial prose or religious, epic-heroic, didactic poetry. This audience did not exclude members of religious groups, but it did mainly consist of lay people and women.

[5] Cyril Edwards himself, in his study on the origin of German *Pastourelle*, shows the multiple genesis of this genre in the European Middle Ages, and deals with the many Latin and vernacular themes that went into its making. These were interactions "die die Grenzen zwischen Latin und Volkssprache im Mittelalter ignorieren". [Edwards (1996: 16)].

The link, or rather the coexistence, between the emerging written form of German lyrical poetry and the monastic tradition in Latin is also demonstrated by the short vernacular text *hirez runeta hintun in daz ora uildu noh hinta*, which scholars have entitled *Hirsch und Hinde*. Its erotic subject-matter, questioned by Ute Schwab (1992: 74-122) has been recently claimed by Edwards (2000: 128-140). The German sentence appears on the upper margin of f. 15v. in Ms. 8862, kept at the Bibliothèque Royale Albert I in Brussels, and is written in a 10th-century hand that right below this sentence - and still within the upper margin - drew up the first line of the Latin hymn *Solve lingua moras.* The two lines, the one in the vernacular and the one in Latin, are here accompanied by almost identical neumic notation but bear no resemblance in content.

I am not going to discuss here the thorny issue of this German interpolation. What I would like to observe is that its position as a sort of "rhythmical preface" to the Latin hymn, and the fact that the two sentences carry right above them similarly accurate musical notations, show that the monastic tradition (here liturgical hymn) may well be taken as a relevant means in the birth of early instances of written poetry, even on erotic subject-matters, in the vernacular.

The link between early German writings on the theme of love and the lyrical language of Medieval Latin is confirmed by another significant, albeit later, document.
I am thinking of the so-called Tegernsee letters, a collection written in rhythmical, learned, sophisticated Latin prose (Ms. clm 19411), dating back to the second half of the 12th century. These letters deal extensively with the theme of love, and go over the practical and sentimental implications of a love affair, here apparently transposed in the very different social context of a racy liaison between a teacher and his female pupil. Two German passages appear in the text. Of these, the most famous is *Du bist min, ich bin din…,* one of the earliest attestations of lyrical poetry in the *Minnesangs Frühling*. Nevertheless, following the steps of John Meier's 1907 study, Kühnel (1977: 28-29; 33 n.6) has claimed that this text may well be seen as a consistent ending, in rhythmical prose, to the letter that comes before it, to which it is seamlessly joined (f. 230 a). This is also demonstrated by the presence of another passage in rhythmical prose (f. 202b), not as widely known [Kühnel (1997: 92)] and written in mixed German-Latin language. This comes as a conclusion to a letter in which the female writer reproaches her friend for having blamed her unfairly:

wande ih mohte dir deste wirs geuallen
ob ih mih prosternerem in allin
den ih gŏtlichen zŏspriche.
wande du mir daz uercheret hast
notabilis factus es mihi.
desne soltu dun niemere.
Friunt uolge du miner lere.
div nemach dir gescaden. nieth.
wande warest du mir nieth liep
ego permitterem te currere
in uoraginem ut ita dicam
ignorantie et cecitatis
desne bist abe du nieth wert.
quia in te sunt fructus honoris et honestatis.
Ich habete dir wol mere gescriben.
niv wan daz du bist also wole getriben
quod scis colligere multa de paucis.
statich unde salich du iemer wis.

Ingeniously, the text uses both languages by intertwining two registers: the learned one of Latin sentences and the colloquial one of vernacular sections. And this produces varied rhetorical effects: lexical propriety and a sophisticated tangle of metaphors in the Latin portions on the one hand, and colloquial expressions, with regular rhythm, rhymes and assonance in the German phrases on the other.

The short pseudo-lyrical poem and the above-mentioned text would call for separate treatment. But whether forged or authentic, this collection of letters is relevant to our study because it attests to the existence of literary records dealing extensively with love themes and characterized by vernacular interpolations. Also, these records bear witness to an ongoing debate of opinions and feelings in which women are assigned a key role. All this is evidence of a socio-cultural background that is analogous to the one underlying courtly lyrical poems in Romance languages, where literary use of the vernacular is also established via Latin.[6]

[6] The voices of women writers in the context of Provençal poetry have been edited and collected by Angelica Rieger, *Trobairitz* (Tübingen, Niemeyer 1991). *Poetisas arábigoandaluzes*, in operation ever since the 10th century, have been edited by Mahmud Sobh (Granata) as observed by Peter Dronke (1996³: xv).

2. *The Romance tradition*

At the outset of the written tradition, interpolations with Latin are also found in the Romance world, in the forms of bilingualism and *barbarolexis* that affect the vernacular in the challenging course of its independence from the mother tongue. In the context of liturgy, we may recall the bilingual *Alba* of Fleury, dating back to the 11th century. The *Alba* is accompanied by neums, and its three Latin stanzas end with a *refrain* that is made up of a semi-vernacular couplet interspersed with Latin words, which must indicate that the adoption of a different register was intentional [Lazzerini (2001: 22 n. 36)]. Another important document is the Christmas hymn *In hoc anni circolo*, where we have an alternation of Latin and vernacular stanzas (from the St Martials of Limoge' s manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque Nazionale, lat. 1139, 11°-12°century). Modifications of the Romance metrical structure against Latin in this document point to possible Arabic and Andalusian influence, so that we may see here one of the earliest signs of an interaction that is known to have had a momentous – albeit among scholars controversial – impact on the birth of Romance lyrical poetry.

Closer to the purposes of our study is the case of two short stanzas from Ms. Harley 2750 mentioned by Bischoff (1984: 266-267 and Tafel V) as dating back to the last quarter of the 11th century. The first of these two, written in frenchified Provençal [Lazzerini (1993)] is certainly one of the oldest examples of a love lyric in the Romance vernacular. This short text adumbrates widely popular themes of courtly poetry, the complaint of distant lovers and the motif of the falcon, equally widespread in the Medieval Latin tradition, the Arabic tradition and in the first *Minnesang*. That motif is found both in the plain (and universal) version that voices the lover's desire to bridge the distance from his lover in flight by becoming a bird (Dietmar von Eist, *MF*, 37,4), and in the more sophisticated version whereby the bird of prey is identified with the lover and the tameness of the falcon recalls the submissiveness of the beloved (See Kurenberg *MF*, 8,33-9,12 and 10,17-25).

Handwriting and neumic notation are German: evidence – albeit slight – of the fact that the written German tradition, for obvious linguistic reasons older and more independent from Latin than the Romance tradition, might have served to inspire and motivate at its very outset the writing of French and Provençal poetry. Similarly the German model, as far back as Carolingian times, may have encouraged the written use of vernacular French in the context of the judicial-political language exemplified by the *Strasbourg Oaths* [Molinari (2002b: 62-68)].

Let us now return to our initial question, i.e. the making of German lyrical language. The observations we have made so far as to the early presence in the German world of love-related poetry seem to uphold our claim that the adoption of Romance models to be found at the end of the 12th century in the development of the *Minnesang* took place thanks to a lyrical language that had already been established on the basis of a common "European" template of Latin poetry as found in liturgical hymns. After all, this is what had happened centuries before to other vernacular genres throughout Europe, but mainly in England and Germany, where Latin had influenced for instance religious and judicial poetry. These must have been put first into writing by virtue of the distinction that set them apart from frivolous erotic poetry.

At the end of the 12th century the Romance influence, which played a vital role as German took on the forms and themes of courtly love poetry initiated in France and in Provence, was probably exerted over a language and a genre that were already well established and independent. And, rather than in the exact imitation of contents and forms, the very first outcome of this familiarity and appreciation for Romance love poetry rested probably in the strengthening of a genre that had already gained its autonomy.

3. *The early Minnesang*

If we analyze the language of very early *Minnesänger*, the ones who did not yet employ metrical-rhythmical models or subject-matters from the Romance tradition (say for instance Kürenberg), we find that in handling the theme of love they tap into a vast repertoire of very different motifs and idioms. In this repertoire we do come across words that may be strictly ascribed to the "courtly" lyrical poetry, but their presence is not prevalent: for instance *minne/minnen*; *holt sîn*; *ein schoene ritter*; *eine vrouwen guot*; *trûriger muot*; *hôher muot*; *lieb unde leit*; *merker* and *lügenaere*. What is more, all these words apply to various subject-matters within a wide range of amorous scripts (the man's or woman's jealousy; the female's erotic yearning; the rejection of the male) that are quickly taken over by the preponderant insertion of courtly topics. As a matter of fact, when measured up to its limited *corpus*, Kürenberg's vocabulary sounds rich and articulated. It voices themes that touch upon a variety of amorous and erotic contexts, all sharing the same degree of elaboration in sentences that tell both of the joys and of the sorrows of loving. Subsequent German lyricists will, instead, turn to a much richer and thorough range of words to express feelings of sorrow than to express those of joy [Molinari (1997: 218-220)]. But that will only occur fol-

lowing the adoption of the *fin'amor* and the *hohe mine* theories, which would often lead German poets to address erotic themes in a tone of sorrow and self-denial best suited to the concepts of "love service" and of subjection to the courtly lady.

Neither Kürenberg's subject-matter nor his poetic language come from Romance models, even though they obviously enlist elements that will typically feature in courtly lyrical poetry. The Romance tradition does not seem to have influenced Kürenberg's work in the choice of metrical forms or in the selection of contents. His work most likely originates from a lyrical language that had already been established in Germany on the basis of a rich Medieval Latin tradition. This tradition was widespread in Europe and underlay both the German and the Romance conventions – the latter in the poetical forms not only of Provence, but also of Northern France and Spain. According to Dronke (1996³: 109), Kürenberg can be compared to Guillaume of Aquitaine, since both may be said not so much to have initiated a tradition, but rather to have given body, both in the Romance and in German context, to pre-existing, well-established lyrical conventions whose records survive for us only in fragments. Onto this tradition – hard to define but undoubtedly present – German writers engrafted their own encoding of the *fin'amor* theme, together with new metrical models, new rhyming, and a new range of motifs and images one can already find for instance in Rietenburg's or in Meinloh von Sevelingen's rhymes.

In fact, as far as the assimilation of Romance models is concerned, in the case of Meinloh we should talk about a period of transition. Meinloh builds his own metrical scheme (not yet derived from the Romance one), which is based on the German long line employed by Kürenberg. And he uses this new verse form in nine out of the twelve stanzas ascribed to him in manuscripts B and C. Interestingly, partial technical novelty is accompanied by only a limited stereotyping of themes, adapted to the courtly milieu: the definition of love, the pledge of love service, the hyperbolic extolling of the lady's virtues. A realistic description of the love affair persists and prevails. Dietmar von Eist seems to follow the same pattern. Within the *corpus* ascribed to him tradition and innovation coexist, both in the choice of meter and rhyme and in the selection of contents, so much so that a few critics have been led to question the attribution of all the Dietmar stanzas in the manuscript to one poet only.

A parallel state of transition may clearly be observed in the handwritten record of Burggraf von Regensburg/Rietenburg's work, lately expanded after

the discovery of the Budapest manuscript. Worstbrock (1998: 114-142) has given us a painstaking analysis of this manuscript, which has stimulated further research by Schwob and Vizkelety (2001). The Budapest manuscript (Bu) was discovered about twenty years ago and dated back to years between 1280 and 1300. While appearing almost at the same time as collections of lyrics C, A and B, according to Worstbrock Bu records an earlier phase of the lyrical tradition; a phase that could be defined as "secondary" in the sense that it was less codified with regard to the canons of courtly tradition of Romance origin. In fact, within the limited *corpus* ascribed to Regensburg (and named Rietenburg in C and B) Bu records versions that are closer to older metrical forms: in *MF* 18,1 and 18,9 we come across an initial couplet of long lines, while in the C draft (that has two stanzas) and in the B draft (that only lists the first one of the two), the texts bears alterations and insertions that together make up the regular three-part stanza of the song, as found throughout the corpus ascribed to Rietenburg in C. And to Rietenburg's *alter ego* - the Graf von Regensburg - C and A ascribe only older stanzas written in long lines.

We have no evidence as to the history behind the names of the two poets. And we cannot conclusively establish whether we are coping with two separate persons or simply two names indicating the same person. What does transpire in these large collections of lyrics (A, B and C) is, however, the tendency to "normalize" tradition by ascribing Romance-inspired innovation to Rietenburg and conservative attitudes to Regensburg. Instead, the tradition that appears in Bu under the name of Regenburg marks the borderline zone between the German tradition of long-line forms, preserved in part in the first two stanzas, and the Romance song form of the stanzas that follow. Even from the point of view of content, the first two stanzas differ from the others: only the latter exhibit full observance of Romance themes and motifs, with precise references to themes recorded in Peirol and Folquet which match the poet's self-conscious statement as to the novelty of his song (*noch ist mîn rât, daz ich niuwe mînen sanc*, *MF* 19,13).

On the other hand, the great lyrical collections - namely the prestigious Codex Manesse - may well have exerted a strong normalizing influence on the *Minnesang* tradition, especially as far as meter and rhymes were concerned. And normalization may have been allowed precisely by the absence of musical notations. To be sure, documentation before the 14th century was still largely sporadic, anonymous and thus closer to the practice of singing or acting. Documentation of this kind was hosted by manuscripts that were devoted to other texts, for the most part written in Latin and in the case of

German, devoted to epic poetry. Throughout the 13th century then, the writing or copying of love lyrics was still carried out mainly by clerics. As Christa Bertelsmeier-Kierst pointed out [in Schwob / Vizkelety (2001: 37-46)], we are thinking here of about forty in Latin manuscripts, plus an additional fifty stanzas from the Codex Buranus (1230).

In all probability then, the penetration of Romance models took place around the second half of the 12th century, under the shape of a new "trend" within a German lyrical tradition that had already been established and had already achieved autonomy. It was, at any rate, a trend that the German lyrical tradition could not have taken in, had not its language already reached a significant degree of development and sophistication.

The penetration of French and Provençal poetry may have occurred by various routes,[7] together with many other elements that must have shaped the interests and changed the tastes of German courts in the second half of the 12th century. It must have taken place above all in live performances and the first-person listening of the songs spread by troubadours themselves as they moved from court to court in various European countries. That is the way new melodies, and thus new metrical and rhythmical schemes, were diffused.

Nonetheless, while the new musical and rhythmical forms could be conveyed in oral performances, the adoption of new contents and especially of the basic ideas of courtly love poetry could only be achieved via translation and "rewriting". And that once again called for a state of bilingualism, or even of multilingualism, whose outcomes were bound to differ from the ones of the previous century. For back then the "writing" of vernacular lyrical poetry had been endorsed and promoted precisely by virtue of the close linguistic ties between Latin and German which, after an initial state of blending, had produced early written drafts. But after the spreading of troubadouric poetry, language interaction with French and Provençal did not result in written bilingualism. Its outcome was rather "rewriting". Romance influence is not explicitly apparent in the language of early *Minnesänger*, who carefully avoided any form of linguistic blending, i.e. borrowing or loan translations. For such forms of lexical expansion pointed to cultural inequality and exposed a state of dependency from another language. The bilingualism of the authors (and of their audience) may thus be said to appear in the form of various types of "translation", remaking and adaptation of Romance

[7] See Touber (1998); and recently Touber (2003).

models. We range from the many stanzas "translated" by Swiss count Rudolf von Fenis, whose reliance on troubadours (namely from Folquet) is at times almost word for word, to the various forms of intertextuality that later *Minnesänger* drew from their "conversations" with Romance lyrical poetry [See Molinari (2002a)].

The fact that German lyrical poetry had already gained its own distinctive autonomy of language enabled prominent writers to experiment with Romance metrics. It also allowed them to swiftly change and "metabolize" newer and bolder subject-matters. That is what happened for instance in Morungen and in Walther as they hastened to question the idea of submission to the courtly lady; in Wolfram's dawn songs as he opened up to novel kinds of erotic poetry; or in the Friedrich von Hausen's crusade poetry, where the very concept of love came to mingle or clash with other ideals.

4. *Further developments*

The practice of multilingualism (be it Latin-German or French-German) resurfaced among poets of the late 13th century under the guise of a rhetorical technique. This time multilingualism was not intended to sustain a language yet incapable of self-sufficient expression, as in the older Latin-German phase. It was rather a linguistic tool meant to voice fresh subject-matters. Hence various form of *Sprachmischung*, found both in individual writers (as in Tannhäuser's famous parody *Der winter ist zergangen*, which borrows French stereotypes to mimic Romance *pastourelle*; Siebert 1934: 89-94)[8] and in the *Carmina Burana,* where *barbarolexis* and multilingualism nonchalantly concur to assemble unprecedented textual clusters. We go from the alternate use of Latin and German within a single stanza, with subtle parodic effects (See for instance the third stanza of the poem CB 177 *Stetit puella bi einem boume*, / *scripsit amorem an eime loube…*), to the (much more common) creation of multi-stanza songs, where Latin and German stanzas seem to forge their metrical and rhythmical structure out of the same melody; and the German stanza, placed mostly at the end of a prevailingly Latin text, is integrated into new content units [Müller (1981: 97)].
As critics have invariably claimed, it was the Latin lyrical poems that took on the German ones as models. This hypothesis is substantiated by the presence of stanzas by well-known poets also found in other manuscripts. But in a few cases we are inclined to postulate a more complex kind of interaction, involving translation from Latin into German. What matters here is not so

[8] And later in the work of the "polyglot" poet Oswald von Wolkenstein.

much to settle once and for all the direction of this Latin German influence but rather to read such work as proof of an existing bilingual or multilingual poetry whereby German lyrics, having gained autonomy of form and content, could themselves function as models.

We may conclude with one more instance, still dating back to the late 13th century, where German lyrical poetry may be said to have initiated another poetic tradition: I am thinking of the rise of the Sicilian school. In all likelihood, within the highly elitist and certainly multilingual setup of the Swabian imperial court, German courtly poetry acted as an outer incentive (perhaps not linguistic but certainly socio-cultural) to start and uphold a school of poetry of Provençal inspiration within the milieu of Friedrich II's Sicilian court [Molinari (1992: 182-184)]. Inside this court, one of the most linguistically and culturally vibrant communities in Medieval Europe, we come full circle, and glimpse an original network of intertextual and multilingual themes. That Friedrich II's court should have been hypothetically suggested, of late, as the very setting of the Codex Buranus [Drumbl (2003: 35-36)] is surely no mere chance.

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Tannhäuser's Crusade Song: *a rewriting of Walther's* Elegy?

Summary. Tannhäuser's "crusade song" has given rise to controversial interpretations: it has been read as an autobiographical account of the poet's experience on the expedition organized by the Emperor Frederick II in 1228-29, and it has been interpreted as an allegory of man's earthly existence; for some scholars the poet expresses profound concern for his sinful life, and willingly takes the cross to gain eternal reward, for others his aim is to ridicule the pro-crusade propaganda conducted by the Church.
This paper tries to show that a possible key to our understanding of the poem may be provided by a comparison with Walther's *Elegy*. Tannhäuser's poem may thus be regarded as a work originating from a sort of dialogue between Tannhäuser and his predecessor established in order to undermine an ideology on the holy journey which is felt to be no longer adequate. In such a way the poet can effectively lead the audience towards a reflection on the sense of the missions overseas in the first half of the 13th century and the formation of a critical stance.

In the corpus of lyrics preserved in the collective manuscript known as "Codex Manesse"[1] and ascribed to the thirteenth-century poet Tannhäuser, the so-called *Kreuzlied* ('crusade song') has given rise to controversial interpretations. Indeed, this poem is highly problematic, for without doubt it contains many ambiguities and unexpected elements that bewilder the contemporary reader.
A possible key to our understanding of the poem may be provided by a comparison with the *Elegy* by Walther von der Vogelweide. A few connections between the two texts have already been made by a number of scholars. For the most part however, it has been argued that such affinities are, at most, marginal or may simply be due to the fact that both poets are dealing with a very common set of themes.[2] On the contrary, my contention here is that the links between the two songs are close enough to assume that Tannhäuser's intention was to "reply", as it were, to Walther's *Elegy*.

[1] MS C, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, cpg 848.
[2] E.g. Mohr (1960: 345) and Martellotti (1981: 110-111).

A complete analysis of Tannhäuser's crusade song would be beyond the scope of this paper, which simply attempts to answer two questions pertaining to the theme of this conference:
a) Is it possible to consider Tannhäuser's poem as a sort of "rewriting" of Walther's *Elegy*?
b) If this were the case, how would the recognition of such an intertextual relationship affect our interpretation of the text?
Before answering these questions, it is perhaps necessary to present the content of the poem and, in doing so, to touch upon some crucial matters.

1. Tannhäuser's poem consists of 5 loosely connected strophes, each one virtually complete in itself.
It opens with a description of the pleasures of those knights who find themselves in Apulia and go hunting, riding, or walking with lovely women. As we learn from line 7,[3] which shifts the focus from the "others" to the individual, the narrator does not take part in such pleasant activities:

der fröude ist mir zerunnen 'such joy is over for me'

This idea is repeated in line 9:

Des darf man mich niht zihen 'I can't be rebuked for this'

and specified in the following lines, with further seven negative sentences. The reason for this exclusion is found in the last hemistich (l. 16), when the speaker states:

ich swebe uf dem se 'I float on the sea'

It is significant that no further information is given about this voyage. Or rather, the unexpected use of the verb *sweben* ('float') suggests that the narrator feels he is being aimlessly carried along by the water: consequently, this journey by sea seems to be entirely lacking in both a purpose and a destination.
In the second strophe the narrator speaks of his difficult life in general: a restless life, drifting from place to place, at the mercy of the wind. This is the most problematic part of the whole poem, for it contains several lines that have given rise to critical controversy, a point we shall discuss later on.

[3] Quotations are from Siebert's edition [1934 (1980: 119-121)].

The third strophe describes the dangers of this voyage: a terrifying storm off Crete, the oars broken, the sails torn away by the winds and the cries of the crew that cause the speaker great anguish are all described. It should be observed that whereas the description of a storm is normally found in epic, it is a new element in a lyric poem.[4] As we shall see, this unexpected naturalism has been interpreted in entirely different ways.

In the following strophe the emphasis is on the hardships suffered on board: the food is inedible, the water is murky, the wine is undrinkable, and the stench which comes up from the hold of the ship is certainly not a good companion during the journey.

In the last strophe the contrast is once again drawn between the pleasant life of the man who lives on land, who can ride wherever he likes, and the hard life of the man at sea, who must wait for favourable winds. The speaker subsequently lists the names of the 12 winds and concludes by saying that he would not have learnt them if he had remained ashore. Finally, we are informed of the reason for this voyage (l. 79):

durch got ich vuor von lande 'to serve God I left land'

This is the only clue in the text that reveals the kind of journey the poem deals with: it is, apparently, a pilgrimage or a genuine crusade. However, if we compare it to other poems which treat essentially the same subject (more or less directly), we cannot help but notice that this is a highly unusual text. In order to appreciate its innovative features, it is necessary to consider the place that Tannhäuser's poem occupies in the landscape of German crusade songs.

2. It is evident that Tannhäuser's poem stands somewhat apart from the very first crusade songs composed in Middle High German, such as those by Friedrich von Hausen or Albrecht von Johansdorf. In these poems, belonging to the late 12th century,[5] themes dealing with crusades and love usually occur together.[6] Indeed, the poets do not speak so much of the rigours that a crusade implies, but rather of the pain caused by leaving the loved one behind. The principal focus is on the ethical dilemma of the Christian knight, torn between service to his lady and service to God, as we can see in these lines by Friedrich von Hausen:

[4] Cf. Lang (1936: 118).

[5] We are only aware of crusade songs in Middle High German just before the third crusade led by Frederick Barbarossa (1189). This is considerably later than in Latin, Old Provençal and Old French. Cf. Böhmer (1968: 13); Theiss (1974: 8).

[6] Ingebrand (1966: 5); Theiss (1974: 5).

MF 47,9 *Mîn herze und mîn lip diu wellent scheiden,*
diu mit ein ander wâren nu manige zît.
der lîp wil gerne vehten an die heiden,
sô hât iedoch daz herze erwelt ein wîp
Vor al der welt.

'My heart and my body, which have long been united, want to part. My body is eager to fight against the heathen, but my heart has chosen a woman above all the world'.

Needless to say, Tannhäuser's text is also very different from those poems that advance propagandist arguments in favour of participation in a crusade, such as those by Heinrich von Rugge or Hartmann von Aue.[7] The following lines by Hartmann, for example, constitute an exhortation to free the Holy Land by reminding the knights of their duty to God. They must undertake the journey overseas, and for the sake of God they must offer the very life they have received as a gift from Him:

MF 209,37 *Nu zinsent, ritter, iuwer leben*
und ouch den muot
*durch in, der i*u *dâ hât gegeben*
beidiu lîp und guot.

'Now, pawn your life and courage, knights, for the sake of the One who has given you both life and goods'.

By the early 13th century, the attitude towards crusades has changed significantly. Of course, some poets are still deeply concerned about the need for new enterprises, which are seen as an opportunity to expiate their sins and to attain eternal reward. As we shall see, Walther von der Vogelweide is one of the foremost representatives of those poets who idealistically praise the crusading spirit.[8] On the whole, though, in the first decades of the new century it becomes clear that the religious fervour which had stirred the first crusaders has, to a great extent, faded: by this time disappointment and scepticism prevail.[9]

[7] Cf. Hölzle (1980: 103-105), who acknowledges as crusade songs only those poems that explicitly exhort the audience to set sail for the Holy Land.
[8] He exhorted his audience to take the cross in the following songs (following Lachmann's traditional numeration): 13,5 ff., 76,22 ff., 14,38 ff. (the so-called *Palästinalied*), and 124,1 ff. (the so-called *Elegy*). Cf. Wentzlaff-Eggebert (1960: 234-246); Ingebrand (1966: 175-231); Ladenthin (1983); Volkmann (1987); Salvan-Renucci (1995); Bachofer (1997); Scholz (1999: 160-169).
[9] Cf. Wentzlaff-Eggebert (1960: 213 ff.); Böhmer (1968: 19-20).

Freidank, for example, is a poet and a crusader who gives us extraordinary evidence of the difficult situation he has personally witnessed in the Holy Land. In his *Akkonsprüche*, which is a collection of epigrammatic statements written between 1227 and 1229, Freidank bitterly tells us of the miserable life of the crusaders in Acres (Akko): a life made up of disease, swindles, and moral decay. He also informs us of the general indignation towards the hostility of the clergy and the irresponsible decisions of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who deprived the crusade of its salvific function by placing the Holy City under interdict:[10]

157,17-20 *Daz kriuce man für sünde gap,*
z'erlœsen daz vil hêre grap;
daz wil man nû mit banne wern.
Wie sol man nû die sêle ernern?

'We took the cross to expiate our sins, to free the Holy Sepulchre. Now they want to keep us away from it by banishment. How shall we now save our soul?'

In such a situation, he wishes that he had never come to the Holy Land:

159,13-15 *ich selbe wolte her wider niht*
durh die untriwe, diu hie geschiht.

'I would never come here again, because of the lack of faithfulness that is found here'.

In his verses, then, disappointment and bitterness have completely replaced any religious enthusiasm for the mission overseas.[11] A similar disenchantment can also be observed in Neidhart's songs. The poet, who writes as if he were in the Holy Land,[12] recounts the crusaders' hard lot, laments that he himself had to leave, and longs for home:

12,24-25 *hey wære ich dort!*
bî der wolgetânen læge ich gerne an mînem rûme.

'Oh, were I only there! I would dearly like to lie in my room beside the beautiful one'.

[10] Quotations are from Bezzenberger [1872 (1962)].
[11] Cf. Mundhenk (1993).
[12] It has been noted that Neidhart's verses might refer either to the crusading expedition of Leopold of Austria in 1217-18, or to that of the Emperor Frederick II in 1228-29; however, it does not necessarily imply that the poet actually took part in a crusade. Cf. Böhmer (1968: 56) or Schweikle (1990: 60, 88). Quotations are from Haupt / Wiessner [1858; 1923 (1986)].

Only a fool, he states, would favour remaining far from home over sailing back:

13,1 *Er dunket mich ein narre,*
swer disen ougest hie bestât.
[...]
13,7 *nindert wâre ein man baz dan dâ heime in sîner pharre*

'He who remains here in August seems a fool to me. [...]
Nowhere could a man be better off than at home in his parish'

Neidhart could not express more explicitly the senselessness of the expedition.
It is quite clear that Tannhäuser's poem shares significant elements with these verses by Freidank and Neidhart, so much so that he has been grouped with them in the so-called "younger generation".[13] In their works the tone is predominantly sceptical and there is no attempt whatsoever to portray the mission overseas as a way of saving one's soul. Nevertheless we must not overlook the fact that Tannhäuser's poem, in focusing on the dangers of the voyage and neglecting to mention the Holy Land, the aims of the expedition or the military and political events connected to a crusade, is distinctly unusual. Nor does it overtly criticize the mission overseas. These puzzling omissions have been taken by some critics as evidence to support the theory that Tannhäuser's poem cannot really be said to belong to the "crusade song" genre. Now, before proceeding to a comparison with Walther's *Elegy*, let us briefly review some of the most significant opinions about the meaning of Tannhäuser's poem and its purpose.

3. The traditional interpretation of the poem tends to regard it as a crusade song in which the young knight Tannhäuser tells of his personal experience on the expedition organized by the Emperor Frederick II in 1228-29.
The assumption that the journey referred to in the text is precisely this crusade is based largely on two facts: in his *Leich* V Tannhäuser states he has been to Jerusalem; and the only enterprise (amongst those that Tannhäuser may have joined) in which crusaders reached the Holy Places is in fact the expedition undertaken by Frederick II.
The foremost proponent of this critical approach to the poem is Siebert (1934). For Siebert the text allows us to draw precise inferences about the time

[13] Böhmer (1968: 33 ff.).

and place of its composition. Tannhäuser's crusade song is defined as his first work to have reached us, since historically verifiable references in his other poems span from 1245 to approximately 1266. Siebert then maintains that in his late twenties the poet set sail from Brindisi after spending a pleasurable period of time in Apulia and probably reached Jerusalem on March 17, 1229. The use of the present tense in the fourth stanza, the indication of the days spent after the storm, and the like, lead Siebert to conclude that Tannhäuser wrote his crusade song in 1228, during the voyage to Jerusalem; or, more exactly, while the ship was east of Crete.[14]

Like Siebert, the Italian scholar Anna Martellotti (1981) maintains that the realistic description of the voyage is founded on the personal experience of Tannhäuser, whom she believes to be a "crusader" and a member of the Emperor's entourage.[15] But she suggests that Tannhäuser's autobiographical account of the journey shows that he manifestly rejects this expedition, and intends to mock the pro-crusade propaganda conducted by the Church.

The early dating of the poem and the unusual insistence on realistic details have been the subject of much debate. Some critics have objected that the content and style of the poem indicate a later composition. The reference to a wandering life, for instance, leads Margarete Lang (1936: 114) to suggest that it was composed after the death of the poet's patron, Frederick of Austria, in 1246.[16] Furthermore, she proposes a symbolic interpretation of the realistic details, so that the poem reveals itself to be the expression of a wandering existence [Lang (1936: 119)].

Much scholarship perceives both realistic and allegorical elements in the poem. Wentzlaff-Eggebert (1960: 314-315), for instance, states, on the one hand, that Tannhäuser's crusade song is a highly realistic description of the crusaders' fate in the expedition of 1228-29, and on the other, he maintains that the poet equates the crusade to the journey of life.

Similarly, Wolfgang Mohr (1960) argues that much of what might appear realistic is only superficial, and in fact conceals metaphorical meanings. For example, the storm is a literary *topos* and points to the difficulties of life; the term *suten* (a loan word from Italian *sotto* 'underneath'), used in l. 59 to indicate the hold of the ship, may also stand for 'hell'; and, if taken figuratively, the twelve winds named by the poet may represent temptations or the vices of men. Hence, Mohr views this poem as the first example of "allegorical naturalism" in German poetry, and contends that its true theme is not a crusade,

[14] Siebert (1934: 188). This explanation is shared by many scholars, such as Martellotti (1981: 123) and Bleck (1993: 262), to name a few, but it has been criticized as excessively pedantic by others, like Böhmer (1968: 78).

[15] Evidence is found in the reference to Apulia and especially to hawking, which was Frederick's passion [Martellotti (1981: 98)].

[16] Similarly Sayce (1982: 319) and Paule (1994: 300).

but the allegory of the sea of life: the poem is essentially a description of Everyman at the mercy of fate [Mohr (1960: 354)]. According to Mohr, the allegorical meaning of the poem is clearly brought to the fore in the second stanza, which he therefore moves to the end of the composition.[17]

Many other critics also share an allegorical reading of the poem, albeit with minor differences. For John Thomas (1970: 1; 33-35), the poem is a "Spruch cycle" in which "the analogy to life, with its hardships, sins, punishments, and rewards is obvious". Thomas, for whom Tannhäuser is primarily a humorist, claims that the poet treats the traditional crusade song in a manner that his audience did not expect, thus producing a humorous effect. Among the scholars who reject a literal interpretation of the poem we might also cite Maria Böhmer (1968), who reads the text as a representation of man's sinful life on earth. In more recent years, the allegorical reading seems to have become the predominant one, for it can be found in critical work on Tannhäuser as well as in handbooks and anthologies.[18]

A remarkable interpretation of the poem has been given by Roswitha Wisniewski (1984: 106), who sees parallels with St Paul's voyage and shipwreck found in *Acts* 27. In her opinion, the sea is symbolic of hell, and the adverse forces the poet has encountered during the voyage allude to his sinfulness. She goes so far as to conclude that Tannhäuser's willingness to set off on a crusade to serve God is a sign of his conversion and makes him "a follower of that Saul who became Paul".

The variety of critical opinions briefly presented here requires a number of considerations. As far as the literal interpretation is concerned, it need hardly be said that this poem tells us nothing about either the date when it was written or the poet's biography, even though the use of the present tense may suggest that he depicts himself as actually sailing to the Holy Land. Indeed, it is methodologically mistaken to identify the narrator with the real author.[19] Tannhäuser is a poet and for poetical reasons he may be simply adopting the role of a crusader, and describing the suffering which would be experienced by anyone who undertook such a journey. Moreover, in Tannhäuser's corpus of poems there is nothing to indicate that he really was a knight and went on a crusade. Not even the famous illustration of the poet in the Manesse manuscript, in which he appears as a knight of the Teutonic Order, can be produced

[17] This shift has been accepted by Böhmer (1968), but rejected by other critics, e.g. Wachinger (1995: 605).

[18] Tannhäuser's poem is defined as an allegory of man's earthly life for example in Müller (1993: 542) or Schweikle (1995^2: 144). Heinz Kischkel (1998: 281-282) agrees with the allegorical reading of the poem, but with the qualification that it is not so much a metaphorical representation of life in general, but of the poet's life in particular.

[19] For a discussion of this matter see Cammarota (2005: 283-286, with bibliographical references in notes 15 and 16).

as evidence of Tannhäuser's social status. On the contrary, it has been assumed that this portrait was inspired by his crusade song, or by the later legend attached to the poet's name, or, as I have previously suggested,[20] it may have served as a way of correcting Tannhäuser's image as a libertine. Therefore, the attempt to regard the poem as an autobiographical account of Tannhäuser's journey to the Holy Land – whether accepted or refused – is not based on particularly solid foundations. Interestingly, the actual participation of the poet in a crusade is also taken for granted by some of those scholars who read the poem as a *mare vitae* allegory. Wisniewski (1984: 105), for example, who interprets Tannhäuser's readiness to go on the holy journey as a symbol of the poet's effort to reject his sinful life, accepts the assumption that the young knight Tannhäuser joined the expedition of 1228-29. But if his *conversio animi* took place in his youth, we are faced with an apparent contradiction: in fact the inevitable question arises as to why Tannhäuser, redeemed from sin like St Paul, praised sensual love and boasted of erotic adventures in his songs that followed. Hence, it appears that the need to read Tannhäuser's poem as a historical document capable of revealing significant information on the poet's life is so strong as to be practically irresistible.

Yet, rejecting the need to derive any exact biographical data about the "real author" does not automatically imply the alternative reading of the poem as an allegory of the sea of life.

Firstly, it is difficult to deny that in the poem Tannhäuser stresses his appreciation of the material delights of this world, as he does in most of his other lyrics. Secondly, those phrases that seem to point to the poet's awareness of his sins and a sincere concern for his after-life are by no means self-evident. The allegorical interpretation is essentially based on the second strophe, and, in particular, on the image contained in the last line:

T II

Ich bin ein erbeitsælic man,
der niene kann beliben
wan hiute hie, morn anderswan,
sol ich daz iemer triben.
Des muoz ich dicke sorgen,
swie frœlich ich da singe,
den abent und den morgen,
war mich daz weter bringe,
Daz ich mich so gefriste uf wazzer und uf lande
daz ich den lip gefuore unz uf die selben stunt.
ob ich den liuten leide in snœdem gewande,
so wirt mir diu reise mit freise vil wol kunt.
dar an sold ich gedenken,

[20] See Cammarota (2005: 287-293).

die wile ich mich vermac.
in mac im niht entwenken,
ich muoz dem wirte gelten vil gar uf einen tac.

'I am a tormented man, who can never rest: who is here today and tomorrow there. I shall always live like this. Though I sing happily, I must often worry, both day and night, about where the wind will take me; how to proceed, on land and sea, how to save my life every day. If I offend people with shabby clothes, then the journey with horror reveals itself to me. I should think of this, as long as I can. I cannot avoid him. I must pay the innkeeper his bill one day (or: until the last day)'.

This strophe can in fact be viewed as the expression of an existential crisis. The narrator feels as if he is drifting from place to place. Even if he sings happy songs, his life is difficult and is dependent on wind and weather. His clothes offend people and he has to struggle on a daily basis to save his life on land and sea. However, a reading of these lines as the sincere concern of a repenting soul for his salvation proves somewhat problematic.
Scholars have seen religious reference both in the image of the narrator's shabby clothes that offend people and in the image of the *wirt* ('landlord, innkeeper, host') to whom he has to pay his debts.
As to the former, Singer (1922b: 303) has suggested a reference to the biblical parable of the "Marriage Feast" after *Matth.* 22,1 ff. Since a man attended the feast without a wedding garment, the king ordered him to be cast into the darkness outside, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. By refusing to wear the wedding garment, which represents the pure, blameless character which Christ's followers must possess, the guest insulted his lord and showed no desire to honour him; he was therefore unworthy to enter the heavenly kingdom.[21]
As to the latter image, the "innkeeper" is usually conceived as either God or the devil.[22] According to this interpretation, then, Tannhäuser is considered to

[21] Curiously, this interpretation requires three emendations in the verse *Ob ich den liuten leide in snœdem gewande*, so that it reads: *Ob ich* dem wirte *leide in snoedem* brut*gewande* ('if I offend *the host* with this shabby *wedding* garment'). Cf. Singer (1922a: 39; 1922b: 303).
[22] Mohr (1960: 352); Wentzlaff-Eggebert (1960: 315); Böhmer (1968: 91); Thomas (1970: 33); Paule (1994: 290). The alternative hypothesis of the landlord being the devil (the innkeeper of hell) has been posited by Mohr (1960: 353), who notes a similar use of this image in Walther's poem L 100,24 and in Wolfram's *Willehalm* (38,2ff.). He is followed by Birkhan (2003: 218). Lang (1936: 115-116) interprets the "wirt" on a literal level as the captain of the ship to whom the crusader has to pay his due (in which case it constitutes a further difficulty on board), but she also sees a reference to God. For Martellotti (1981: 123) the referent might be the pope, who excommunicated those who did not honour their oath to take the cross.

be expressing a profound consciousness both of his sins and for the necessity of expiation as well as preoccupation for the inevitability of the Last Judgement and the fear of being excluded from the heavenly kingdom.
There is, in fact, another possible implication in this image that, to my knowledge, has not been taken into account by criticism. The referent of the "innkeeper" may be "death", which is probably viewed as impending by a seafarer in a desperate situation. A somewhat similar use of the term *wirt* occurs in Freidank's *Akkonsprüche*. In order to stress that the crusade has been achieved at the cost of many lives, Freidank represents the cemetery as an innkeeper who is glad to receive such a large number of guests. No further implications of metaphysical nature are involved here:

156,19-23 *sô slîchet maneger über daz*
zem frîthof, derst ein sælic ***wirt****;*
dem manic gast ze teile wirt
der tuot dâ daz beste,
er enpfâhet alle geste.

'And so many crawl as far as the cemetery, this blessed host. To him many a guest are allotted. He does his best: he hosts all the guests'.

Similarly, the narrator in Tannhäuser's poem may be worrying about death closing in, without any concern for his sinful life or the Last Judgement. This interpretation of the image is therefore not only possible, but it seems to me that it also fits in well with the general content and tone of the poem. Conversely, the attempt to compare Tannhäuser with St Paul or to discern allegorical implications even in such small details as the narrator's clothes or in such concrete details as the twelve winds or the hold of the ship seems to me, frankly, implausible. As we shall see, the innovative use of realism in this lyric need not be explained as allegory, but may fulfil the function of establishing a contrast to Walther's idealism.

4. I will now concentrate on some of the most significant elements that link Tannhäuser's poem to the so-called *Elegy*,[23] and we shall see whether they should be regarded as accidental, as has been argued, or, as I believe, intentional.

[23] The definition "elegy" is a subject of much debate. On the poem see Volkmann (1987); Salvan-Renucci (1995); Schweikle (1998: 450-455; 773-779). Quotations are from Cormeau (1996: 264-266).

Although Walther's poem cannot be dated with any certainty, it is usually taken to be his final work composed with the purpose of inspiring participation in the crusading expedition of 1228-29.[24] The author, who portrays himself as an old man who laments the transitory nature of life and contemporary evils, has no doubts as to the righteousness of the Christian cause.

4.1. A distinctive feature which is present in both texts is an original means of handling the *topos* of the futility of earthly possessions.
We should bear in mind that crusade preachers, as well as poets, recommended to those who were taking the cross that they gave up the attractions of the world and concerned themselves with their spiritual life. As Hartmann says, the *conversio animi* is the basis on which participation in a crusade is predicated.[25]

MF 209,25 *Dem kriuze zimet wol reiner muot*
und kiusche site

'A pure mind and virtuous behaviour befit the Cross'

We may also think of Heinrich von Rugge's exhortations to reject 'the stupid earthly delights' (*die bloeden gir* MF 97,2), and not to behave like those who pursue worldly pleasures (*vil maneger nâch der werlte strebet* MF 99,13). He also criticizes the attitude of a 'wicked man' who, rather than leaving for the Holy Land, thought it better to stay at home and pass the time pleasantly with ladies:

MF 98,28 *Sô sprichet lîhte ein boeser man,*
der <...> herze ne gewan:
'wir suln hie heime vil sanfte belîben,
die zît wol vertrîben vil schône mit wîben'

'A wicked man, who does not have a <manly> heart, speaks in this careless way: "we would be better off staying peacefully at home, and having a nice time with ladies"'

Rugge therefore incites his audience to go on a crusade as a means of obtaining 'a high reward' (*ein vil grôze gewin* MF 99,19).

[24] This dating is based on the phrase *uns sint unsenfte brieve her von Rome komen* ('unpleasant papal letters have arrived from Rome', II,9), which is usually believed to indicate the excommunication letters sent to Frederick II in 1227 for failing to honour his oath to lead a crusade. Volkmann (1987: 180-182); Bachofer (1997: 9).
[25] Cf. Theiss (1974: 14) and Haubrichs (1978: 320).

Walther uses this *topos* in an original way, for he transforms it into the remembrance of things past and a melancholic meditation on the decay of present times. The world, as the poet had known it in his youth, is gone forever. Things have changed to such an extent that they are no longer recognizable.
The contrast between two situations, one entailing a state of *happiness* and the other a *loss of happiness*, is the main theme in Tannhäuser's work too. Like Walther, Tannhäuser treats this subject in a very personal way: they both make extended use of the first person singular, since they both lament the loss of their own happiness.

W I,15 *als **ich** gedenke an manigen wunneclîchen tac,*
*die **mir** sint enphallen,*

'When I think of many wonderful days that have fled from me'

T I,7 *der fröude ist **mir** zerunnen* 'such joy is over for me'

As it seems to me that Tannhäuser's strategy consists in recalling some elements in Walther's poem in order to negate them, or invert their meaning, we shall now look at the differences.
First of all, we note that instead of juxtaposing *past* and *present*, as Walther does, Tannhäuser juxtaposes *land* and *sea*. In the first strophe of Tannhäuser's poem, Apulia represents a place of delights enjoyed by those at home, a *locus amoenus* which is in contrast with the hardships of the life at sea. This shift allows Tannhäuser to adopt Walther's meditative attitude while at the same time adapting it to a new situation.
Then, Walther states that merriment has now disappeared from society (*dâ ist nieman vrô* 'nobody is happy' II,4), mentioning that even the young are miserable:

W II,1 *Owê, wie jæmerlîche junge liute tuont*

'Alas! How miserable are the young'

Tannhäuser implicitly contradicts these statements by listing all the pleasant activities of those who have remained on shore and can still enjoy themselves. Hunting, riding, walking with beautiful ladies, and the other courtly activities are depicted as sources of joy. And, as we have learnt from line 7 (quoted above), this is exactly the type of joy the speaker has been deprived of once he has set off.
But the most important difference lies in the opposing attitude towards the joy

of this world. From his powerful meditation on the vanity of the wordly life Walther moves on to blame those who only seek temporal pleasures, in a way which reminds us of Heinrich von Rugge:

W II,16 *swer dirre wunne volget, der hât jene dort verlorn*

'Whoever pursues the joy of this world has lost that other one'

Conversely, Tannhäuser does not condemn the attractions of worldly pleasures as distractions from the seeking of God and eternal joy. Indeed, it is quite clear that he looks back with regret on such a comfortable life.

T I,1 *Wol ime, der nu beizen sol*
ze Pülle uf dem gevilde!

'Lucky is the man who can hunt in the fields of Apulia'

The same idea, it will be recalled, is repeated in the last strophe:

T V,1 *Ahi wie saelic ist ein man,*
der für sich mac geriten!

'How lucky is the man who can ride as he pleases'

Therefore, while both poets lament the loss of happiness, Walther is deeply concerned with the *life to come*, whereas Tannhäuser is clearly tied to the *earthly life*.

4.2. In the two poems the voyage is differently related to the poets' state of mind.
Walther suggests that the journey across the sea would be the only remedy to his suffering and anguish, a means of forsaking the things of this world and of striving to arrive at a more lasting gain, the true home in heaven. Thus, to him the sea-journey is desirable, it is *liep* ('dear, precious'):

W III,15 *möhte ich die **lieben reise** gevarn über sê*

'If I could go on the dear journey across the sea'

Conversely, the narrator in Tannhäuser's poem, who really does find himself in the situation in which Walther wishes he were, realizes that the journey is, in reality, nothing more than a source of horror and terror:

T II,28 *so wirdet mir diu **reise** mit **freise** vil wol kunt*

'then with horror the journey reveals itself to me'

The internal rhyme *reise-freise* ('journey-horror') leaves us in no doubt as to the harsh disappointment of the narrator. And when Walther exhorts the knights to leave:

W III,7 ***dar an gedenken**, ritter, ez ist iuwer dinc.*

'think about it, knights, it is up to you'.

the narrator in Tannhäuser's poem replies in a sceptical tone:

T II,29-30 ***daran sold ich gedenken**,*
die wile ich mich vermac

'I should think about it, as long as I can'

He would even like to escape the terrifying experience that this journey entails, but he states bitterly that he has no way out:

T III,47-48 *in mahte im niht entwichen,*
ich muos ez allez liden, als der niht anders mac.

'I could not escape. I had to bear everything such as one who has no choice'.

In short, whereas Walther's unhappiness prompts him to yearn for a sea-journey that would save his soul, Tannhäuser blasphemously considers this very journey the principle cause of his suffering.

4.3. Another striking example of the way Tannhäuser takes up one element in Walther's poem in order to reverse its meaning can be seen in the different use of the antithesis *we – wol*.[26]
Walther opens and closes each strophe with the exclamation of suffering *owê*. The poet laments personal as well as public issues: he expresses sorrow for his former youth, for the unhappiness of young people, and for the decay of the world. In the last strophe he claims that leaving on a crusade would be the only solution to his anguish. In fact, if he could only go to sea, his cry of woe might turn into one of exultation:

[26] This similarity between the two poems has been very well described by Anna Martellotti (1981: 110-111), but, once again, its significance as a deliberate response to Walther's work is underestimated.

W III,15-17 *möchte ich die lieben reise gevarn über sê,*
*sô wolte ich denne singen **wol** und niemer mêr **ouwê***
*<niemer mêr **ouwê**>*[27]

'If I could go on the dear journey across the sea, I would sing in exultation and no longer cry of woe, (no longer cry of woe)'

In contrast, Tannhäuser opens his poem with the exclamation of joy *wol.* As we have seen, though, the reference is not to those who are at sea, but to those who are on land and can still enjoy courtly pleasures. Like Walther, again, he uses the word *wê* at the end of his poem, but this time with reference to his own unfortunate situation:

T V,80 *swie **we** halt mir geschiht*

'how woeful is my lot!'

This is the hard lot of one who *has* gone to sea for the love of God (*durch got ich fuor von lande* V,79) but has not attained the rich reward that Walther wished he had gained (*sô wolte ich nôtic man verdienen rîchen solt* 'I, poor man, would like to gain a rich reward' III,11). The only meagre reward that the narrator in Tannhäuser's poem can rely upon is the knowledge of the names of the winds.

4.4. The rich reward that Walther aspires to is clearly the salvation of his soul, as he explicitly affirms:

W III,11-13 *sô wolte ich nôtic man verdienen rîchen solt.*
joch meine ich niht die huoben noch der hêrren golt,
ich wolte selbe[28] *crône êweklîchen tragen,*
die möhte ein soldener mit sîme sper bejagen.

'I, poor man, would like to gain a rich reward. But I do not mean land or the gold of the rich. I would like to carry eternally the same crown that a soldier may obtain with his spear'.

[27] Editors have added the refrain *niemer mê **ouwê*** after the third strophe. For an explanation of the reason for this emendation cf. Volkmann (1987: 248 ff.).
[28] *selbe* is the reading in the Codex Manesse, which has been emended to *saelden krone* ('the crown of salvation') by Lachmann, followed by the majority of scholars. Cf. Volkmann (1987: 240 ff.).

The reward Tannhäuser wishes for is, on the contrary, of a concrete type, linked to the comfortable life he renounced when he boarded a ship that he finds disgusting in every respect. In the second part of the fourth strophe the author supplies us with a realistic picture of the difficult conditions he has to experience on the ship. He complains about the stench coming up from the hold of the ship; instead, he would prefer the perfume of roses. And he complains about the food and drink: the water is murky, the bread is hard, the meat is too salty and the wine is undrinkable. Furthermore, eating peas and beans fails to put him in a good mood. Reduced to such a miserable condition, the reward he desires from God is better food and drink:

T IV,63-64 *wil mir der hohste lonen,*
so wirt daz trinken süeze und ouch die spise guot.

'if the Almighty wants to reward me, then drink will be sweet and food will be good'.

It has been assumed that the list of revolting food and drink has a devilish reference and is antithetical to "heavenly nourishment", which the narrator hopes to obtain.[29] Frankly though, considering the general content of the strophe, I believe these words to be quite literal and to mean quite simply what they say. The seafarer misses a pleasant life, and the hardships described on board are not willingly suffered in view of a higher reward, nor are they the occasion to expiate one's sins and attain eternal life. On the contrary, they are both aimless and useless. This interpretation sheds light on the omission of religious thoughts in the poem, which has normally been taken as evidence that it is not a crusade song. Rather, this omission suggests that in Tannhäuser's view the crusading expedition has completely lost any religious motivations and it is no longer a way to save one's soul.[30]

4.5. The supposition that Tannhäuser meant to take up certain elements in Walther's poem in order to imbue them with a new significance may be supported by some formal affinities.

[29] For Mohr (1960: 351) this popular representation of Paradise as the land of Cockaign has parallels in a sermon by Tauler. A different interpretation of ll. 63-64 has been provided by Kischkel (1998: 282), who reads these statements as aggressive and cynical behaviour arising from the sense of powerlessness of one who has lost his social status.

[30] See the above-mentioned lines by Freidank (§ 2), in which the poet complains that the interdict imposed on Jerusalem by the patriarch has caused the crusaders' sacrifice to be in vain.

Today it is generally agreed that for his *Elegy* Walther chose the archaic long line with a caesura in the middle. Each strophe is composed of 16 lines, grouped in rhyming couplets:[31]

W I,1-2 *Owê, war sint verswunden alliu mîniu jâr!*
ist mîn leben mir getroumet, oder ist ez wâr?

Some scholars claim that Tannhäuser is following Walther's example in using long lines.[32] If this were the case, it would be a striking coincidence, since the long line is typical of the *Nibelungenlied* (*Song of the Nibelungs*) or, moving beyond epic poems, it belongs to the beginnings of the "Minnesang" tradition: it can be found, for example, in the poems by Der von Kürenberg. Later, the long line is largely abandoned, and the four-beat line becomes the dominant type.

Actually, there is no real consensus about the metrical structure of Tannhäuser's poem. While Bartsch (1914) and Singer (1922a) present long lines, some of which have rhyme caesura,[33] the critical edition of Jürgen Kühnel in Müller's anthology (1993) prints short lines throughout. An intermediate position is adopted by Siebert (1934), who keeps long lines when there is no rhyme at the caesura, but otherwise divides them into four-beat lines.[34] Thus, each stanza has a combination of lines of different length, with regularly alternating rhyme. The *Aufgesang* (ll. 1-8) is made up of two *Stollen* of four short lines each with the rhyme arrangement *abab* and *cdcd*.[35] The *Abgesang* (ll. 9-16) is made up of four long lines followed by three short lines and a final long line. The rhyme arrangement in the *Abgesang* is *efef* and *ghgh*.

If we accept this description proposed by Siebert, it is in fact possible to claim that Tannhäuser follows, at least in part, the unusual metrical form adopted by Walther in his *Elegy*. In addition, we can find a few examples in which the two texts show exactly the same pattern: anacrusis, three syllables with a feminine ending in the first half-line and three syllables with a masculine ending in the second half-line. Let us compare these verses:

W II,3 *die kunnen niuwan sorgen, owê, wie tuont si sô?*

[31] On the other hand, following Lachmann some scholars maintain that the line is made up of 6 stressed syllables without caesura; e.g. Schweikle (1998: 774). On the question of the metrical structure of the *Elegy* and the debate on this theme see Volkmann (1987: 59-99).

[32] Wentzlaff-Eggebert (1960: 314); Mohr (1960: 345); Böhmer (1968: 86).

[33] More recently, long lines are accepted also by the scholars mentioned in note 32 and Sayce (1982: 326).

[34] See the strophe quoted in paragraph 3 (pp. 103-104).

[35] In the first *Stollen* lines 1 and 3 end in a stressed syllable, while in the second *Stollen* all lines end in an unstressed syllable.

T II,26 *daz ich den lip gefuore unz uf die selben stunt*

Unfortunately, we are unaware of melodies[36] but, in any case, these parallelisms make it reasonable to suppose that – in some verses at least – Tannhäuser meant to echo Walther's rhythm. Of course, this hypothesis is open to dispute. But let us look at the following example. At the end of the first and second stanza in Walther's poem we find this unrhymed half-line, used to isolate a key statement:

W I,17 *iemer mêre ouwê*

At the end of the first strophe in Tannhäuser's poem we read:

T I,16 *ich swebe uf dem se*

Now, apart from the fact that in Tannhäuser's poem the line begins with an unstressed beat (anacrusis), it is worth noting that both lines have three accented syllables with a masculine ending, both insist on the sounds /i/ and /e/, and both have the same final sound. Formal similarity here is more than a hypothesis and hardly seems accidental.
We can imagine that similarities in the metrical form might lead the audience to listen to one text while having another one – a famous one – in mind; and this would inevitably lead the audience to draw a comparison between their different contents. In the above-mentioned example, Walther's verse expresses deep suffering, while Tannhäuser's states that he is floating on the sea without any clear goal. If we connect the two statements, Tannhäuser's verse acquires new semantic value. Indeed we may infer the following reasoning: the narrator's aimless journey overseas is the cause of all his suffering (see § 4.2.).

5. I might add a few further examples of more or less overt ties between the two texts. But I shall now turn to the questions I asked at the beginning.
a) Is it possible to read Tannhäuser's poem as a sort of "rewriting" of Walther's *Elegy*?
Of course, each of the connections we can trace in the two works might seem irrelevant, marginal or accidental if considered in isolation. But taken in conjunction they cannot easily be explained away: in fact, they make it dif-

[36] For the importance of melodies as a vehicle of meaning and the heuristic value of modern attempts to reconstruct them see Springeth / Müller (1998).

ficult not to reach the conclusion that Tannhäuser's work intentionally "replies" to Walther's *Elegy*.

Tannhäuser seems to recall Walther's statements in order to offer his audience a different perspective on them. Walther's idealism is countered by Tannhäuser's realism and his enthusiasm by Tannhäuser's disenchantment. In opposition to Walther's hierarchy of values, which derives from a sincere Christian devotion, Tannhäuser posits his own set of values, in which worldly delights are not necessarily to be condemned.

Viewed in this light, Walther's *Elegy* is not simply a source of inspiration for Tannhäuser's work, and Tannhäuser's work does not simply feed on allusions to Walther's *Elegy* as well as to other prior texts, as traditionally thought. As we have seen, it is the interplay of repetition and difference that links Tannhäuser's poem to his antecedent, thus charging it with a special significance.

For these reasons, I believe that Tannhäuser's poem can qualify as a sort of "palimpsest", to use Genette's metaphor:[37] it is a text in which we can somehow recognize the presence of the previous text ("hypotext"). In other words, it is a work originating from a sort of dialogue established between Tannhäuser and his predecessor in order to undermine an ideology on crusades which is felt to be no longer adequate. Tannhäuser's text, therefore, has the meaning it does because of its relationship to Walther's *Elegy*. Now, whether we can call this operation "rewriting" proper depends on how widely or narrowly we define this notion.[38]

b) The second question I asked was: How does the recognition of such an intertextual relationship affect our interpretation of the text?

If we admit that Tannhäuser's poem is – at least in part – a reply to Walther's work, we have a further reason for rejecting any attempt to regard it as an autobiographical description of Tannhäuser's journey to the Holy Land. All the concrete details we find in the poem do not necessarily entail a personal experience; rather, they may function as a means of creating a contrast to the idealism which characterizes Walther's poem. After all, it is not important to decide whether the account of the voyage is first-hand experience or simply imagined. What is important is that this poem reveals Tannhäuser's disillusioned opinion about the crusades.

Consequently, the allegorical interpretation loses persuasiveness as well. Tannhäuser's poem does not seem to me a meditation on his life or on human life in general, nor can I sense any sincere religious concern in any of his

[37] Reference is to his study *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré* (1982).

[38] For some scholars any text is a mosaic of more or less direct and explicit citations, any text is the absorption and transformation of another, therefore all writing is a rewriting. Other scholars, instead, find this notion insufficient and admit as rewriting only those texts that entail a strong tie to chronologically prior texts, the trace of which is discernible in the text. Cf. Moraru (2001: xii ff.).

verses. Those first-person reflections contained chiefly in the second strophe can be seen as part of the consequences of the "crusade" event. It seems only natural to me that one whose life is in danger may feel confused, lost, powerless, and fearful of death. In addition, this expression of the narrator's existential crisis offers another parallel to Walther's poem. But whereas Walther's meditation leads him to find a solution in the crusade, which is a means of attaining spiritual salvation, Tannhäuser's reflections derive from the terrifying and disappointing (even if fictitious) experience of the crusade, which deprives him of earthly joy without offering a higher reward. Moreover, the surprising omission of any attempt to present the enterprise overseas as a way of saving one's soul becomes a powerful vehicle for ideological criticism.

In conclusion, I think that Tannhäuser's poem can be legitimately held to be a "crusade song", albeit a very particular and original one. Considered in the light of the intertextual relationship to Walther's poem, Tannhäuser's work is a "multidimensional space" in which two opposing views on crusades meet and clash. In such a way the poet can effectively, although obliquely, lead the audience towards a reflection on the sense (or senselessness) of the expeditions to Palestine in the first half of the 13th century and the formation of a critical position. A more explicit condemnation might have not had the same impact on an audience that to a large extent still accepted the official discourse on crusades.

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The evangelic text as translation and interpretative experience: the paradigm of the Germanic languages

Summary. This essay deals with the following major topics: 1. The relationship between Teutonic peoples and the Bible; 2. Searching out a Germanic canon; 3. The construction of the corpus; 4. Lexical analysis; 5. The relationship between translator and target language: rewriting?
As for the question whether it is possible to support the idea of a Germanic paradigm for the translation of the biblical text, it will be shown that the answer can be affirmative if part of that model is the relationship with its lexical tradition and its use in rendering a cultural baggage which is different from the existing one in the target language. The main interpretative key of this relationship should be found in the juridical lexicon, surely one of the most prolific and flowing among the Old Germanic semantic fields.

1. *The relationship between Teutonic peoples and the Bible*

The cultural project of the Anglo-Saxon king, Alfred the Great, is openly stated by himself in the *Praefatio* to his English translation of the *Cura Pastoralis* by Pope Gregory the Great. Destruction and ravages caused to monastery foundations by Danes particularly in Northumbria, and the decline of knowledge among the people ruled by the West-Saxon king urged Alfred to proceed with the translation of Latin texts into his own tongue. Following the same rhetorical strategies used during late antiquity, the king reminds some noble precedents of that operation:

> Ða gemunde ic hū sio ǣ wæs ærest on Ebreisc geðiōde funden on eft ðā hīe Crēacas geliornodon, ðā wendon hīe hīe on hiora āgen geðiōde ealle ond ēac ealle ōðre bēc. Ond eft Lædenware swæ same, siððan hīe hīe geliornodon, hīe hīe wendon ealla ðurh wīse wealhstodas on hiora āgen geðiōde. Ond ēac ealla ōðræ Crīstnæ ðiōda sumne dæl hiora on hiora āgen geðiōde wendon.
>
> Alfred the Great (2004: 34-5)

> "Then I remembered how the law was first found in the Hebrew language, and afterwards, when the Greeks learned it, they translated it all into their own language, and all the other books as well. And afterwards in the same

> way the Romans, when they had learned them, they translated them all into their own language through learned interpreters. And all other Christian nations also translated some part of them into their own language."
>
> Swanton (1975: 31)

The reference to the Pentateuch, hidden under the word æ "law", should not be overlooked. What a greater *auctoritas* could Alfred have produced in sustaining his translation strategy? The biblical text, which was conceived – at least for the Old Testament – in the Hebrew language, had then been translated into Greek and, in its turn, proposed again by Romans together with the New Testament books in their own language. Alfred is obviously citing the three holy languages, but it seems to me that the author also refers to some Teutonic translations that should, therefore, be counted among the *auctoritates* he refers to.

What kind of attitude did the Teutonic peoples have toward the biblical text? What kind of exigencies did the biblical translation impose? Surely the ecclesiastical hierarchy (both Orthodox and Arian) placed no obstacle in the way of translation activities into Teutonic languages, as is evident in the words of John Chrysostom:

> ἐκείνη δῆμον ἕνα ἐξάγουσα ὁμόγλωττον, σὺ δὲ μυρίους ἑτεροglώσσους. Καὶ γὰρ μυρίους ἡμὶν ἐξήγαγες χοροὺς, τοὺς μὲν τῇ ᾽Ρωμαίων, τοὺς δὲ τῇ Σύρων, τοὺς δὲ τῇ βαρβάρων, τοὺς δὲ τῇ ῾Ελλάδι φωνῇ τὰ τοῦ Δαυῒὸ ἀπνακρουομένους ᾄσματα καὶ διάφορα ἔθνη καὶ διάφορους χοροὺς ἦν ἰδεῖν μίαν κιθάραν ἅπαντας ἔχουτας, τὴν τοῦ Δαυῒὸ, καὶ ταῖς εὐχαῖς σε στεφανοῖντας.
>
> St John Chrysostom (*II Homilia*: col. 472)

> "and that one [the Hebrew] leading with it a sole people of a sole language, you (on the contrary taking with you) uncountable peoples of different languages. Namely you took crowds striking up someone in Latin, someone in Syrian, someone in Barbaric, someone in Greek the Psalms of David and it was possible to see different peoples and crowds all having the same zither, precisely the same as David's one, crowning you with their preaches."

This is further established in the words of St. Jerome:

> Dilectissimis fratribus Sunniae et Fretelae, et ceteris qui vobiscum Domino serviunt, Hieronymus. Vere in vobis apostolicus et propheticus sermo conpletus est: «In omnem terram exiit sonus eorum, et in fines orbis terrae uerba eorum.» Quis hoc crederet, ut barbara Getarum lingua Hebraicam quaereret ue-

> ritatem; et dormitantibus, immo contendentibus Graecis, ipsa Germania Spiritus Sancti eloquia scrutaretur?
>
> St. Jerome (1955: CVI, 104)

Here, the primary goal was one of conversion. Moreover, the translation of the Bible into vernacular was also due to the low cultural knowledge of the majority of the European population, starting at least from the first half of the 6th century [Riché (1995[4]: 141-3); Chiesa (1995: 175-6)]. In 529, the Council of Vaison la Romaine (Haute Provence) still obliged parish priests to gather lectors together in order to teach them the Psalter, the holy texts and the divine Law:

> Hoc placuit, ut omnes presbyteri, qui sunt in parrociis constituti, secundum consuetudinem, quam per totam Italiam satis salubriter teneri cognovemus, iuniores lectores, quantoscumque sine uxoribus habuerent, secum in domo, ubi ipsi habitare videntur, recipiant et eos quomodo boni patres spiritaliter nutrientes psalmis parare, divinis lectionibus insistere et in lege Domini erudire contendant, ut et sibi dignos successores provideant et a Domino proemia aeterna recipiant.
>
> *Concilium Vasense* (1893: I, 56)

Yet, at the same time, the bishop Caesarius of Arles († 542) in his sermons was already urging his Christian community to an individual study of the Bible in order that people might "ruminate" what had been heard during the liturgy; this should be done at mealtimes and during the long winter evenings and, in the case of illiteracy, the holy text should be read by anyone who could read, even if for payment:

> Quando noctes longiores sunt, quis erit qui tantum possit dormire, ut lectionem divinam vel tribus horis non possit aut ipse legere, aut alios legentes audire? […]
>
> Caesarius of Arles (VI, 2 [33] : 31)

> Ego retineo, dixisse episcopum meum, ut qui novit litteras, scripturam divinam studeat legere; qui vero non novit, quaerat sibi et roget qui illi debeat dei praecepta relegere, ut quod legerit possit deo adiuvante conplere. Dicat etiam alius: Ego audivi episcopum meum dicentem, quod quomodo negotiatores qui non noverunt litteras, conducunt sibi mercennarios litteratos ut adquirant pecuniam, sic christiani debent sibi reliquere et rogare, et si necesse est, etiam et mercedem dare, ut illis aliquis debeat scripturam divinam relegere; ut quomodo negotiator alio legente adquirit pecuniam, sic illi adquirant vitam aeternam.
>
> Caesarius of Arles (VI, 8 [37-8]: 35)

> […] quanto magis in spiritalibus lucris non vobis debet sufficere, quod in ecclesia lectiones divinas auditis, sed in domibus et in conviviis vestris et, quando dies breves sunt, etiam aliquibus horis in noctibus lectioni divinae debetis insistere.
>
> Caesarius of Arles (VII,1 [39], p. 38)

The situation became more and more complex with the progressive enlargement of the gap between the Latin tongue and vernacular languages, a difference that was obviously greater in Teutonic-speaking areas. It would be superfluous here to dwell upon well-known sources, such as the rule of the synod of Tours held in 813, which prescribed that the homilies of Church Fathers, if used as sermons, had to be translated into *theodisca* language or into a Romance language in order to be understood:

> ut easdem omelias quisque aperte transferre studeat in rusticam Romanam linguam aut Thiotiscam, quo facilius cuncti possint intellegere
>
> (MGH LL II Conc. II,1, n. XVII: 288)

From the second half of the 7th century, there is mounting evidence of sermons being delivered in vernacular. One example is the case of Mummolinus in 660:

> Cujus (Eligii) in loco, fama bonorum operum, quia praevalebat non tantum in Theutonica sed etiam in Romana lingua, Lotharii (Clotario III) regi set aures perveniente, praefatus Mummolenus ad pastoralis regiminis curam subrogatus est episcopus.
>
> *Vita Mummolini* 17

Another case is Amandus, in the second half of the 7th century, who was a missionary along the Franco-Frisian border:

> Igitur, ne prolixa oratio horrorem incutiat generet que, ut adsolet, legenti fastidium, vitam sancti Amandi, qualiter a pueritia usque perfectam vixerit aetatem, qualiterve ante episcopatum vel in episcopatum gesserit, aut circa beatum finem quails extiterit, vel qualiter rigorem mentis atque propositum tenuerit, licet rustico ac plebeio sermone, propter exemplum tamen vel imitationem memoriae, contempta verecundia, tradere curabo.
>
> *Vita Amandi episcopi* (1910, *Praefatio*: 429)

Finally, Gallus and Emmeran stand as examples; the former preached in vernacular at Bregenz:

> Columbanus itaque beato Gallo id inunxit officii, ut populum ab errore idolatriae ad cultum Dei exhortatione salutary revocaret, quia ipse hanc a

> Domino gratiam meruit, ut non solum Latinae, sed etiam brabaricae locutionis cognitionem non prava haberet.
>
> Valafrid Strabo, *Vita Galli*: 289

And the latter needed a translator in the alemannic area:

> Qui dum Germaniam ingressus linguam non novisset, per interpretem quondam religiosum presbiterum Vitalem nomine eximia sacrae docrtinae divinitus plantando perrexit.
>
> *Vita vel Passio Sancti Haimhrammi Martyris* (1902, 3, *Versio B*: 475)

The same situation characterized the Goths at the time they were still settled within the Eastern Roman Empire:

> ᾄᾖ οὐκ ἐν Ἰουδαίᾳ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν βαρβάρων γλώττῃ, καθὼς ἠκούσατε σήμερον, ἡλίου φανότερον διαλάμπει· καὶ Σκύθαι καὶ Θρᾷκες καὶ Σαυρομάται καὶ Μαῦροι καὶ Ἰνδοὶ καὶ οἱ πρὸς αὐτὰς ἀπῳκισμένα τὰς ἐσχατιὰς τῆς οἰκουμένης, πρὸς τὴν οἰκείαν ἕκαστος μεταβαλόντες γλῶτταν, τὰ εἰρημένα φιλοσοφοῦσι ταῦτα·
>
> St John Chrysostom (*VIII Homilia*: col. 501)

> "not only in Hebrew, but also in Barbaric language, as you have been hearing today, shines more luminous than the sun; and the Scythes and Thracians and Samaritans and Maures and Indians and those who live on the world's borders study what has been said, translating it into their own tongue."

Therefore, it is not surprising that the necessity – as it was in fact a real need – for biblical translations into vernacular languages was particularly felt by clergymen who needed them for two reasons: first, because of the widespread ignorance of Latin, especially in the lower clergy orders [Bäuml (1993: 254-266)]; second, because of the need for catechism. It should not be forgotten that, in order to convert medieval people, a fundamental role was played by both gesture and objects [Bognetti (1966: 157)]. It has been noted that one of the most significant keystones in the evangelization process was the evidence that the theophanic message came through the reading of the book [Bäuml (1993: 254-266)]; therefore, the main source for conversion was the book not the narrator, regardless of the poet. The three indivisible elements for a conversion then remain: a Christian message delivered in a vernacular language (in order to be understood); a reading, often in a performative way; and the Book itself.

2. *Searching out a Germanic canon*

For the aforementioned reasons, the motivation for biblical translations into Germanic languages was strong and provides a starting point for my discussion. The particular issue I now wish to tackle is the relationship between the original text (Greek for the Gothic, Latin for the other Germanic languages) and the translation. This problematic relationship will be the main theme of my paper; it is a problem that is not easily resolved, not even within the large scope of translation studies. The analysis of the various translations must be broken down into many aspects and, consequently, the answers to be found are many-sided and do not refer to a single explanation or unitary whole.

The first aspect to be considered, or pathway toward a concept of rewriting, is the relationship between the receiving culture, which is still expressed for the most part in an oral way, and the engagement in that great enterprise of translating a very large and complex text, the Text by excellence. In terms of Old English, the assertion cannot be made so strongly since the Anglo-Saxons translated the Gospels into vernacular during a declining and final phase of their literary production [Liuzza (1998: 5-6)]; on the contrary, in terms of the translation into Old High German, we can speak of a language that is at its very beginnings of literacy. However, as concerns the Gothic, the very first and greatest encounter with the written word occurred in a sensational way on the occasion of the Bible's translation by Vulfila [Scardigli (1973: 95-132)]. What kind of repercussions did the impact of oral culture have on the Germanic translations of the Sacred Scriptures?

Another aspect to take into consideration is connected to the performative elements present in the translation. The biblical text bears the secondary goal of providing a liturgy of the word, which aspires to be documentary in nature – a true account of what really happened. Although in its various redactions, first in Hebrew, then in Greek and finally in the various Latin versions, a melodic use of voice can be traced throughout [Bologna (1992: 112-3)], we must not imagine any explicitly performative use of the Word of God. The case is quite different for translations into one of the Germanic languages since those cultures were still extremely oral-based: every public communication was immediately charged with a recitative responsibility [Ong (1986: 97-100)].

A further pathway or analytical level concerns the movement of the biblical text away from the Mediterranean environment in which it was born and in which it had, until that time, been composed and translated. The Germanic

languages have to face a complex problem of lexical restitution. First, there is the difficulty of conveying a lexicon connected to the political and organizational institutions within the specific panorama of Germanic society that does not know a similar kind of state territorial organization and power management. Secondly, there is the problem of the restitution of a lexicon bound to the law, a social institution which was, on the contrary, well evidenced and structurally complex within the Germanic world. How then do translators behave? Do they apply a lexicon connected to other legal practices onto their own value systems?

Last but not least is the problem of a lexicon connected to the religious sphere of life. While it is true that the same problems were faced by Greek and Latin translators, nevertheless they had at hand two languages which, for a long time, had been strengthening and reinforcing themselves as far as words pertaining to philosophical and eschatological semantic fields were concerned. This experience is completely absent among those Germanic languages that had to translate a lexicon derived from a monotheistic and culturally non-Indo-European religion. What kind of results can we expect from such a starting point?

To sum up, the main problems adherent in the relationship between original biblical text and Germanic translations are: the relationship with a form of orality intrinsically connected to performative culture in the Germanic context; the relationship with Mediterranean society and its institutions; the relationship with a different kind of religiosity. I will address these issues and offer some explanations by seeking to identify a possible canon of Germanic translating strategies *vis à vis* the biblical text. In my analysis, prominence will be given to some reflections on the theories of textual rewriting. A Germanistic reading of the history of Christianity has long been asserted [Russell (1994); Scardigli (2002: 189-192)]. Is it possible then to speak about a Germanic rewriting of the Bible? Furthermore, is it possible to speak about a Germanic tradition of the Bible or, at least, of the Gospels, as a rewritten work following the cultural references of the world in which the holy text is accepted?

3. *The construction of the* corpus

Since texts translated from the ancient testament are nearly absent in Gothic, an analysis of the Gospels has become compulsory. Yet, this already delimited research has been further confined to the translations of Matthew's Gos-

pel, as only this Evangelist's text had been handed down in an Old High German version, the so-called Monsee Gospel, composed in the Carolingian age at the end of the 8th century, probably in a Lotharingian dialectal area [Matzel (1970: 82-84, 534)]. The German geographic area allowed confrontation with other and wider Gospel translations (excluding the activity of glossography) starting only in the 12th century, thanks to the Vienna and Munich fragments [Cgm 5250 (17foll.) Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Suppl. 2259 (s.n. 249) (22ff.)]; Ruh (1980: 653-4). As both the Gothic and the Old High German translations of Matthew are fragmentary, the whole of the passages present in Gothic, Old High German and Old English versions (the last one is complete) does not exceed 48 verses shared in 10 different episodes:

- The Gadarenes' refusal (M 8: 33-34)
- The power of forgiving sins (M 9: 1-8)
- The persecution and the comfort to the disciples (M 10: 23-25)
- The Last Judgement (M 25: 41-46)
- The announcement of Eastern (M 26: 1-2)
- The questioning before Caiaphas (M 26: 66-68)
- Peter's denials (M 26: 69-75)
- The taking of Christ before Pilate (M 27: 1-2)
- The purchase of the blood-field (M 27: 3-10)
- Jesus is questioned by Pilate (M 27: 11-17)

Such a limited field of research could lead one to suppose scarceness of material but, even considering the misfortune of handling such a small *corpus*, a large part of the interrogations by Pilate and Caiaphas have survived, allowing an investigation of the legal-semantic field, a sector which has been considered essential to this research in order to prove a possible rewriting of the biblical text. From among the episodes connected to Christ's Passion, it is possible to draw some translations of the institutions of power in 1st century Judea. From the other episodes, though fragmentary, information can be extracted about two more important semantic fields: religion (especially from chapters 9 and 15) and human activities (chapters 9 and 10). The *corpus* can be in its turn divided into subgroups that project a more specific connection of the word to a particular field of application or meaning. In practical terms, the following systematization can be proposed:

SEMANTIC FIELDS

LAW	HUMAN ACTIVITITES	RELIGION
juridical action	agriculture	guilt
commerce	domestic field	cult festivity
detention	juridical field	demon
penalty	education	salvation
process	politics	theonym

4. *Lexical analysis*

As far as the juridical lexicon is concerned, a greater indulgence towards an autochthonous lexicon in the Old High German and Old English translations should be expected since they were long used to transmit in a written form their own juridical customs, both with glosses and with texts in vernacular language. Strangely enough, the Gothic text more than any other reflects Germanic juridical practices in the translation of the Gospels; one example will suffice here.

In the Gospel of Matthew, verse 27: 3, Judas Iscariot returns the 30 silver coins to the High Priests as he becomes aware that Christ has been unjustly sentenced. The Evangelist remembers here that Judas' repentance comes when he understands the ineluctability of the events, that is, when Jesus is handed over to Pilate [Gnilka (1991: 649)]. The Greek text uses the verbal form *κατεκρίθη* (from *κρίνω*) "I let to be judged" [Schmoller (1968[14]: 291)]. The Gothic version translates the original into the construction *du stauai gatiuhan*. The substantive *staua* comes from the Proto-Germanic reconstruction **stōu̯ō* and is evidenced in all Germanic languages often with a clear juridical meaning linked to judgement [Pokorny (2002[4]: 1008); Lehmann (1986: 324)]. One can remember that the word, in the composed form *stuatago* "Last judgement" appears in line 25 of Old High German *Muspilli* [Princi Braccini (1997: 1117)]. Vulfila's choice was therefore conscious and linked to the Germanic usage that makes use of a form corresponding to the Indo-European root **stō-u̯ō* "to stay" with the precise meaning of "staying before the judgement" [Grienberger (1900: 198)]. The Old English version uses another verbal compound, *fordēman*, "to express a judgment against someone, to condemn" [Di Paolo Healey *et al.* (2004: 3261, M8)] which suggests a negative connotation. Similarly, the same verb is used in its Old High German form in Tatian's version in the passage in which Christ is asking the adulteress who escaped stoning where the people were who condemned her:

> Thô rihta sih ther heilant úf inti quad iru: uuîb, uuâr sint thie thih ruogtun? nioman ni forduomta thih?
>
> *Tatian* (1892, 120, 6: 172)

A verb with a negative meaning is also used in the Monsee text – *ganidarren* "to diminish, to debase, to condemn (with infamy)" – also employed by Tatian's translator in order to clarify the same evangelic passage: *Tho gisah Iudas ther inan salta thaz her fornidirit uuas* [*Tatian* (1892, 193, 1: 259)]. However, Old English and Old High German strictly depend on the Latin version that uses *damnatus* "condemned". Is this a matter of close reliance on the original text? Only up to a certain point. The Gothic, in fact, uses the verb *tiuhan*, which can be compared with modern German *ziehen* "to pull, to lead", which only in the language of Vulfila has the juridical meaning of "to lead someone before judgement" [Feist (1939: 478-9)]. One exception is a form used by Notker III of St.Gall, *gi-ziugōn*, which, however, has the generic sense of "to appear before the court, even if as witness", whereas our text links the verb expressly to the defendant. The Gothic seems to use a specific and proper technical word, certainly clear, that amplifies the exigencies of the translation from the Grecian text.

That the Germanic people had in mind an evident juridical situation can be drawn by the versicle (M 27: 2), from the restitution of Pilate's title (*ἡγεμόν* in Greek, *praeses* in Latin). While in Old High German *herizoho* is chosen, literally "the man who leads the army" (which is one of the meanings of Latin *praeses*, but certainly not the most pertinent one in this passage) (Thesaurus 1991, B.1.δ, 871), the Old English text uses *dēma*, "the judge". The noun compound *kindins*, whose meaning for "governor" is unique among the Germanic languages [Lehmann (1986: 218)], can be found in the Gothic translation. In this case, taken from the point of view of the reception of the text by the receiving culture, the most pertinent choice is made by the Old English translator who correctly imagines a trial with Christ before a judge. A very recent Bible translation into French chose the word *procurateur* for *ἡγεμόν*, instead of the more common *préfet*, in order to underline the juridical meaning of the situation [Bible Bayard (2001: 2271)]. Contemporary French and Old English are here associated by a translation choice which led to rewriting in an effort to assist text comprehension. The same variety of answers deriving from Germanic languages for the title of "governor" also reveals the great uncertainty of expressing, in one's own idiom, a role which is not known by that political system.

Another interesting case is revealed by the questioning of Christ by Pilate (M 27: 11-17). The governor asks Jesus to respond to the assertions of the

witness. The *Vulgata* simplifies the context using the verb *dicunt* and both Old English and Old High German do not move away from their source, translating respectively *secgeað* and *sagent*. The Greek version is, on the contrary, more complex as it proposes the form *καταμαρτυρέω* "I bear witness, I convince through witness" [Schmoller (1968: 272)]. The same noun *μάρτυς* properly means "the one who has taken part to an event and, thanks to that personal knowledge of having seen or heard what happened, can witness" [Spicq (1994, II: 114-5)]. Moreover in New Testament Greek *μάρτυς* does not simply mean the witness but precisely the man who has been asked in order to report what he has seen and consequently knows. The choice of Vulfila in using the verb **weitwodjan* faithfully follows the exigencies of the Grecian verb, and therefore the word specifically means "to witness because it has been seen and therefore it is known". In this way the translator's role wanders far from the role of witness by ancient Germanic culture, including also the Visigothic one, in which the witness is called only in order to confirm the validity of a legal proceeding and not as a person who could give useful information to settle an action [Scovazzi (1975, II: 179-184)]. It is evident that in this case the translator's sensitivity does not divide between the need for clarity due to the goals of evangelization and the theological content of Matthew's text.

Another interesting case which helps explain how Gothic and Old English, even at a distance of four centuries, responded with identical Germanic lexical material to a delicate textual problem is the betrayal by Judas (M 27: 3-10). Our *corpus* presents the Grecian verb *παραδιδοὺς*, *tradidit* in Latin (M 27: 3); while the choice of the *Vulgata* privileges a generic verb signifying "to consign", the Greek uses *παραδιδόναι*, a form which has specialized its meaning in the New Testament becoming a verb strictly connected to the events of the Christ's Passion [Spicq (1994, II: 298)]. It has to be understood for its basic meaning "to consign" but with a clear juridical specialization: "to consign in order to have someone detained". In the Gospels, Judas is always called *ὁ παραδιδούς* [Schmoller (1968: 381)], namely "the one who consigns (Christ) in order to have him detained", consequently the traitor [Spicq (1994, II: 298)]. In these contexts (M 10: 4; 27: 3 and Mk 3: 19) the Gothic always uses the verb *galewjan*, which also finds support in Old High German *gilāen, firlāen* "to betray" used by Otfrid in *Evangelienbuch* (IV,8,19 and IV,8,24, respectively *firláti* and *giláti*) and in Old English *lǣwan* "to betray" but, it must be noted, used only in contexts referring to Judas Iscariot [Bosworth-Toller (1898: 614); Toller-Campbell (1921: 603)]. Another is the Germanic root which specifically indicates the betrayal but with the meaning of "conspiracy" and it is this word that compares in the

Monsee's version, *verrhaten*, meeting correspondences for ex. in Old English *forrædan* and it is still used nowadays in German, *Verrat, verraten*. Gothic and Old English propose the same Germanic word but connoting it, in an autonomous way, in order to mean strictly Judas' behaviour. This can be considered a reflection on his own tongue, a semantic enrichment but at the same time a specialization which could even define a sort of language reformulation caused by the exigencies of translation.

A parting look at religious lexicon. In this semantic field it is also amazing to find lexical material in all three Germanic languages belonging to its own tradition, even if, in this way, the original meaning comes out transformed. For example, the word for "sin": *frawaurhts* in Gothic, *synn* in Old English, *suntea* in Old High German. The two western languages can be compared with the same Germanic form **sun(d)jō* [Orel (2003: 386)], perhaps etymologically connected to the Latin *sons,* "guilty" [Onions (1978: 828)]: thus, from its original juridical use, the word specialized its meaning with the conversion to Christianity, denoting "wrong" in the Christian sense. The same thing happened for *frawaurhts*, also present in all other Germanic languages with an identical meaning. (OE *forwyrht*, Old Saxon *farwirkian* [*Heliand* 5186], Old High German *firuuirchen*). From the ancient sense of "to do something wrong" with a clear use in juridical situations, it evolves toward the Christian meaning, which uses this word because it cannot find in its own lexicon another term to convey the idea of an aware or unaware violation of divine Law [Üçok (1938: 47-8)]. In this case, the evangelic lexicon obtains words from the juridical semantic field, but transports these terms into a new context, thereby wrenching them from their primitive meaning. The same effect is produced by the Gothic use of terminology linked in the past to paganism then projected into a new Christian context. Such is the case with *unhulþo*, "demon" [Scardigli (1973: 106)], or *frauja,* "Lord" which, as is widely known, a pagan theonym.

5. *The relationship between translator and target language: rewriting?*

What has come out of this brief lexical analysis (for further elaboration, please consult my published comments on Peter's betrayal [Zironi (2005)]) is that the use of the Germanic juridical lexicon in translating the evangelic text is noteworthy. It is true that the passages of our *corpus* mainly focused on Matthew, chapters 26 and 27, (Caiaphas's and Pilate's questionings) but other less juridical references (as for example the passage about the remission of sins, M 9: 1-8) are on the same path. This dynamic was defined by

Michail Kotin as the change of the reference meaning of a word [Kotin (1996: 142)]. His investigation, carried out on the Vulfila Bible, led him to conclude that the language used by the Visigothic bishop in his translation is neither a spoken language nor a literary one, but a language with an unbroken relationship between tradition and neo-conceptualization [Kotin (1996: 145)]. The main trouble is the necessity of correctly conveying the Christian message in a biblical translation from one cultural environment to another; a problem still alive today.

Unavoidable at the time of the great barbaric migrations and during the following centuries, the Catholic Church also faced a similar situation at the time of the Second Vatican Council when it decided to open itself to the Third World and its cultures. This necessitated the Council's drawing up a body of legislation in relation to the correct translation of the liturgical texts into different languages:

> 1. The Second Vatican Council strongly desired to preserve with care the authentic Liturgy […] and to adapt it with pastoral wisdom to the genius of the various peoples […] 2. Thereupon there began, under the care of the Supreme Pontiffs, the great work of renewal of the liturgical books of the Roman Rite, a work which included their translation into vernacular languages, with the purpose of bringing about in the most diligent way that renewal of the sacred Liturgy which was one of the foremost intentions of the Council.
>
> *Liturgiam Authenticam* (2001: 1-2)

That work, carried out by the "Congregation for the divine cult and the discipline of the sacraments" culminated in 2001 with the promulgation of a copious regulatory document, *De usu linguarum popularium in libris liturgiae romanae edendis* (*On the Use of Vernacular Languages in the Publication of the Books of the Roman Liturgy*). The document, with article 20, confirms that the translation of the liturgical texts of the Roman liturgy must not be the expression of a creative innovation, and every adjustment to its characteristics or to its nature in different languages has to be extremely sober and discreet. According to the following article, translations must be extremely accurate and respectful to the original text, especially in the case of transmission to peoples who have just been reached by Christian faith. It is therefore possible that some words already used in current speech can be employed in new ways, through the coining of new expressions [*Liturgiam Authenticam* (2001: 21)]. Article 25 confirms, even while paying attention to text comprehension for those newly converted to the Christian faith, that preference must be granted to dignity [*Liturgiam Authenticam* (2001: 25)], beauty and doctrinal precision. Finally, article 28 establishes that translators

must not try to make explicit what is obscure in the original texts [*Liturgiam Authenticam* (2001: 28)]. It does not seem to me that the choices made by the Catholic Church four years ago are comparable with those of our Germanic translators, apart from the necessity of semantic enlargement in the lexicon of the target language. Definitely, the Vatican decided that for those societies often coming to the holy text directly from orality or from a faint literacy, a path should be followed in which the word of God not foreground the communicative aspects of orality and performance. Those elements were surely repressed also in the Germanic translations without, however, being completely absent. Avoiding a very strict correspondence the Germanic languages have removed the risk of biblical translations being reduced to a text giving sense only at a signified level, a message only abstractly understood, while the holy text was created for being read aloud [Scott (1999: 110)]. The risk of sacrificing the performative aspects on behalf of textual fidelity is always present with the translation of the biblical text. Such complexity leads to the consciousness that the texts translated into Gothic and Old English, in particular, but also some passages in Old High German, are in their content something different from the original, although translators sought to avoid rewriting. If, as asserted by Lefevere, every translation is a rewriting and every rewriting is a manipulation [Lefevere (1992: XI)], perhaps the new semantic arrangement of part of the lexicon can then be considered a sort of implicit rewriting of the text. It is beyond a doubt that, even if arranged in the new semantic field, the word takes with it a cultural and interpretative baggage that leads to what cognitive linguistics has defined as the old word concept, the *Wortkonzept* that was unknown to the writer of the original text [Kotin (1996: 142)]. It is consequently easy to agree with the words of Frédéric Boyer, writer and editor of a new and much discussed French translation of the Bible, who asserts:

> La Bible, dans l'histoire de notre langue et de notre culture, a été le creuset d'une intense créativité linguistique et littéraire, de jeux de langage rendus nécessaires par la tâche complexe de la transmission d'écrits polyphoniques, véritables millefeuilles d'expressions religieuses et culturelles, d'expériences de sens.
>
> Boyer (2002: 41)

Is it then possible to support the idea of a Germanic paradigm for the translation of the biblical text? In my opinion the answer can be affirmative if part of that model is the relationship with its lexical tradition and its use in rendering a cultural baggage which is different from the existing one in the target language. The main interpretative key of this relationship should be found in the juridical lexicon, surely one of the most prolific and flowing

among the old Germanic semantic fields. It is used in order to allow the formation of new concepts, new ideas. The risk of creating a non-existent language is also avoided; Carlo Alberto Mastrelli reminds us, for example, that the Vulfila translation had fewer loan-words than the *Vulgata* [Wilmart (1927: 50); Mastrelli (1963: 671)]. Occurring very rarely in the Germanic versions is that paradoxical phenomenon defined by Boyer as "word exile" inside its own language, namely a lexicon that does not give any meaning to readers and listeners. The choice of the right word is difficult because, as Eugenio Costa asserts in one of his recent articles, the biblical translation destined to public readings (as was the case for the Germanic translations) needs phonic and conceptual clearness. Therefore the translator is continually called to respond to often opposing needs [Costa (2003: 639)]. Even more complex is the translator's choice when seeking to propose a version suitable to everyone, that is those with little or no knowledge of the matter, and persons who are potential converts [Buzzetti (2003: 129-131)]. The goal, says Costa, must be a product that leans to the side of the reader's living culture [Costa (2003: 639)]. The fusion of these two necessities seems to be concrete in the choices carried out by the Germanic languages. The Germanic route has found an acceptable compromise between literacy (often to be found in the syntactical aspects, especially in Gothic) and a living communication that shrinks cryptic content using its own lexical material. A real evangelic textual rewriting, such as with the Old Saxon *Heliand*, has not yet come to pass. Surely, however, the Germanic translators' cultural attitude (often broader than that of Vatican Congregation members) is probably a source for that kind of action with modern implications, embryonic traces of which are already visible in the evangelic translations.

Finally I would like to draw attention to a very recent French translation of the Bible – 20 French and French-Canadian writers have translated the books of the holy text in collaboration with 27 exegetes. The latest one has offered to men of letters a word-for-word translation, through which the writer has conceived his new elaboration-translation. The various writer-exegete pairs have had continuous exchange before reaching the final version, on which the very last opinion always belongs to the Biblist. The final result is a fine translation for our times, interconnected with our culture and language, perhaps a more literary than theological work [Belli (2003: 57-8)]. One very short example from the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, chapter 27:

> Vint l'aube. L'assemblée de grands prêtres et des anciens du peuple délibera sur Jésus et sur sa mise à mort. Ligoté, il fut conduit devant le procurateur Pilate, à qui on le livra.
>
> Bible Bayard (2001: 2271)

This translation by the Canadian Marie-Andrée Lamontagne has the cadence of a recited monologue, which is very near in tone to the Monsee fragment translation:

> Duo morgan uuarth. kengun in sprahha alle dea herostun biscoffa enti dea furistun dero liuteo. quatun uuidar ihuse. daz sie inan zatode sellenti uuarin: Enti inan kabun tanan leititun enti selitun inan demo pontischin herizohin pilate.
>
> Hench (1890: 35)

Curiously enough, the operation produced for the translation of the Bayard Bible is largely identical to the composition strategies of the Germanic biblical rewritings where the poet, the creator of the text in the target language, made use of persons who knew the original language to solve the theological difficulties. Scardigli's interpretation [Scardigli (2001: 182-4)] of the well-known passages concerning the so-called gift of diction to Caedmon (as Bede referred to it) is excellent; as is Harald Haferland's interpretation of *Heliand* [Haferland (2002: 27)].

The often-crossed boundary between translation and rewriting is, in the Germanic world, fading: this will lead to the splendid results of *Heliand* that can be understood only in light of that great test represented by the Gospels' translations in the ancient Germanic languages.

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Re-writing discourse features: speech acts in Heliand

Summary. Starting with a discussion about the standard approach to the *Heliand* – an early ninth-century Old Saxon verse reworking of the Gospel – as provided by Ronald Murphy in 1989 and 1992, this paper seeks to find out a new path for the interpretation of the poem as far as its communicative features are concerned. In order to do so, a linguistic and philological analysis of how the *Heliand* authors re-wrote their direct and indirect hypotexts will be carried out, paying particular attention to the information structure of the utterances. Furthermore, the context from which the poem springs – i.e., broadly speaking, the so-called "Carolingian culture and thought" – will be taken into consideration in order to account for the communicative choices made by the compilers. Finally, it will be argued that the *Heliand* conveys an orthodox Christian message, whose presence throughout the whole poem has led us to formulate new hypotheses about both the use of the text and the composition of its audience.

1. *Introduction*

When, in 1989, Ronald Murphy's *The Saxon Savior*: *The Germanic Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth-Century 'Heliand'* was published, most critics welcomed it as a work comparable to that of the poet himself. A review which appeared in *Speculum* (1992: 457-459) enthusiastically pointed out that:

> [...] the author [= Murphy] has managed to make the *Heliand* more accessible to the English reader, to bring out the fascination of the work, the majesty of the alliterative verse, and the spiritual and emotional strength of its unnamed poet's brilliant achievement.

The reading of the early ninth-century Old Saxon poem which Murphy provides in his notorious work – that is, a powerful re-imagining of the Gospel in heroic terms with Christ as leader of the apostolic warband – turns out to be at the basis of not only his own later prose translation of the *Heliand*[1] but

[1] Murphy (1992).

also of much of the criticism up to today,[2] not to mention the hundreds of records and quotations contained in widespread anthological collections and school books.[3] Thus, Murphy's approach to the text has established itself as the standard, among both English-speaking scholars and general readers.

Though extremely fascinating and very appealing, the theory of the *saxonization* and *northernization* of the Gospel[4] has ended up permeating every single level upon which an analysis of the poem can be carried out, becoming a sort of *a priori* starting point that may lead scholars to over-interpretation and, therefore, hinder them from developing a perhaps deeper insight into the poem. In particular, Murphy's interpretation of the "rhetorical devices" used by the poet in order to make the Gospel sound more familiar to his Germanic audience proves to be not altogether convincing since, on the one hand, it conveys a one-sided representation of the poem set within a pagan "magical" framework and, on the other, is not supported by a thorough investigation of the linguistic evidence supplied by the text, both in itself and in its relation to the sources the *Heliand* authors drew upon.[5]

The aim of this paper is to provide a linguistic and philological interpretation of how the poets re-wrote their direct and indirect hypotexts[6] as far as the information structure of the utterances is concerned.[7] Furthermore, the context from which the poem springs – i.e., broadly speaking, the so-called "Carolingian culture and thought" – will be taken into consideration in order to account for the communicative choices made by the compilers.[8]

[2] See, among others, Hare (2004 [footnote n. 11]).

[3] James Cathey's "school edition" of the *Heliand* [Cathey (2002)], which includes excerpts in Old Saxon amounting to almost 3,000 lines of the poem, contains a commentary highly dependent on Murphy (1989); (1992).

[4] Murphy (1989: 4).

[5] The hypothesis that the *Heliand* is the result of "teamwork" was put forward forcibly and convincingly in Haferland (2002).

[6] See below, section 2. The poem is mainly based on Tatian's *Diatessaron* "Harmony of the Gospels"; yet, it shows acquaintance also with the biblical commentaries of Alcuin, Bede, and Hraban Maur. Amongst them, Hraban's *Expositio in Matthaeum* is considered to be a very important source, second only to Tatian. See Petersen (1995); Weber (1927).

[7] See below, sections 3 and 5. Since a scientific approach should aim at isolating the variables under inspection, I will keep strictly faithful to this method. For this reason, I am not going to discuss here many other thorny issues pertaining to *Heliand*, such as metrics.

[8] See below, sections 4 and 6.

2. *Old Saxon* giruni: *magic or mystery?*

1 Manega uuâron, the sia iro môd gespôn,
2 ....., that sia *bigunnun* ***uuord*** *godes,*
3 *reckean* that **girûni**, that thie rîceo Crist
4 undar mancunnea mâriða gifrumida
5 mid **uuordun** endi mid uuercun.[9]

"There were many whose hearts told them that they should begin to tell the **secret runes**, the **word** of God, the famous feats that the powerful Christ accomplished in **words** and deeds among human beings".[10]

These are the opening lines of the *Heliand*.[11] These lines, which at first sight seem to pivot on the power of God's spoken words (line 2: *uuord godes*; line 3: *giruni*; line 5: *mid uuordum*), have traditionally been interpreted as clear evidence of the presence of magic throughout the whole poem. According to Murphy, for example, the term *giruni* implies not only that the Gospel conveys God's almighty speech, but also that this speech "is of the power of the magic spells and charms written in the runes of the Northern world".[12] This interpretation is apparently enhanced by the fact that the same term, *geruni*, occurs later on to introduce the 'secret runes' of the Lord's Prayer, which thus would seem to be treated as just any other Germanic charm or spell:

1594 [...] Dô *thîna* iungorun sô self:
1595 gerihti ûs that **gerûni**. [...]

1600 *Fadar ûsa* firiho barno[13]

"Do this for Your own followers – teach us the **secret runes** [...] Father of us, the sons of men".[14]

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[9] Behaghel / Taeger (1996: 7).
[10] Murphy (1992: 3).
[11] The text of the Saxon poem has been preserved in two major manuscripts: M (Cgm. 25, Staatsbibliothek, Munich, first-half of the 9th century) and C (Cotton Caligula A.vii, British Library, London, second half of the 10th century). Fragments of the poem have survived in four other witnesses: V (Pal.lat. 1447, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, ll. 1279-1358); P (R 56/2537, Museum für deutsche Geschichte, Berlin, ex cod. XVI D 42, Universitní Knihovna, Prague, ll. 958b-1006a); S (the so-called "Straubing Fragment", ll. 351-722, discovered in 1977 and found in very poor condition); L (the newly found – May 2006 – Leipzig fragment).
[12] Murphy (1992: 3 [footnote n. 2]). As for the interpretation of this term, Murphy seems to adhere to the ancient scholarship going back to Grimm (1821). See also Lehmann (1986) and Kluge / Seebold (1995).
[13] Behaghel / Taeger (1996: 62, 63).
[14] Murphy (1992: 54, 55).

The purpose of the poets, who look at the biblical world through Germano-Christian eyes, is supposed to be that of conveying a message using words and rhetorical devices which would sound more familiar to their Germanic audience. In so doing, they are said to have created a synthesis between Christianity and the Germanic warrior-society which "would ultimately lead to the culture of knighthood and become the foundation of medieval Europe".[15]

If we stick to this reading of the poem – a reading which I do not deny, even though I am strongly convinced that other interpretations are possible and even more plausible – the re-writing of discourse features becomes a central issue within the process of reshaping the text of the Gospel. For example, assuming that the word of God, and specifically the "Our Father", is transformed into a spell of great performative power implies that its discourse features have been re-written almost completely in order to turn it from a prayer into a sort of "holy charm". Let's consider, then, how and to what extent the information structure of the utterances and their speech acts are manipulated within a set of sample passages taken from the Old Saxon text.

As for the term *giruni,* which is supposed to provide a framework for a magic reading of the poem, it should be remembered that this is not a terminological innovation introduced by the *Heliand* poets. The same word appears in the main source text the compilers drew upon, that is, the Old High German translation of Tatian's *Diatessaron*. In Tatian, *giruni* renders the Latin *mysteria,* "the secret words of God", and is endowed with an overt theological meaning:

> *Mt. 13, 11*
> *Qui respondens ait illis: quia vobis datum est nosse* ***mysteria*** *regni coelorum, illis autem non est datum*
>
> *Tat. 74, 4*
> Tho antlingenti quad in: íu ist gigeban zi uuizanne **girunu** himilo rihhes, ín nist íz gigeban[16]

Furthermore, a conspicuous number of parallels[17] can be found in the gothic tradition, where *runa* and *runos* are constantly used to translate

[15] Murphy (1992: xiii).
[16] Sievers (1892: 98).
[17] Fourteen, if my estimate is correct: *Luke* 8,10; *Mark* 4,11; *Rom*. 11,25; *Cor. I* 13,2; 15,51; *Efes*. 1,9; 3,3; 3,4; 3,9; 6,19; *Coloss*. 1,26; 4,3; *Tim. I* 3,9; 3,16.

Gr. *μυστήριον* <mystērion> and *μυστήρια* <mystēria>, respectively,[18] and Goth. *garuni* renders Gr. *συμβούλιον* <symboúlion>.

Mark 4, 11

CA jah qaþ im: izwis atgiban ist kunnan **runa** þiudangardjos gudis, iþ jainaim þaim uta in gajukom allata wairþiþ,

— And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

— καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ: ἐκείνοις δὲ τοῖς ἔξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὰ πάντα γίνεται,

Luke 8, 10

CA iþ is qaþ: izwis atgiban ist kunnan **runos** þiudinassaus gudis; iþ þaim anþaraim in gajukom, ei saihvandans ni gasaihvaina, jah gahausjandans ni fraþjaina.

— And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

— ὁ δὲ εἶπεν, ὑμῖν δέδοται γνῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ, τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς ἐν παραβολαῖς, ἵνα βλέποντες μὴ βλέπωσιν καὶ ἀκούοντες μὴ συνιῶσιν.

Matthew 27, 1

CA At maurgin þan waurþanana, runa nemun allai gudjans jah þai sinistans manageins bi Iesu, ei afdauþidedeina ina.

C At maurgin þan waurþanana, **garuni** nemun allai þai gudjans jah þai ....

— When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:

— πρωΐας δὲ γενομένης συμβούλιον ἔλαβον πάντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ κατὰ τοῦ ἰησοῦ ὥστε θανατῶσαι αὐτόν:

Mark 3, 6

CA jah gaggandans þan Fareisaieis sunsaiw miþ þaim Herodianum **garuni** gatawidedun bi ina, ei imma usqemeina.

— And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

— καὶ ἐξελθόντες οἱ φαρισαῖοι εὐθὺς μετὰ τῶν ἡρῳδιανῶν συμβούλιον ἐδίδουν κατ' αὐτοῦ ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν.

[18] For a detailed discussion of three (most apparent) exceptions to this paradigm see Meli (1988: 65-66).

Mark 15,1

CA Jah sunsaiw in maurgin **garuni** taujandans þai auhumistans gudjans miþ þaim sinistam jah bokarjam, jah alla so gafaurds gabindandans Iesu brahtedun ina at Peilatau.

— And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

— καὶ εὐθὺς πρωῒ συμβούλιον ποιήσαντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς μετὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ γραμματέων καὶ ὅλον τὸ συνέδριον δήσαντες τὸν ἰησοῦν ἀπήνεγκαν καὶ παρέδωκαν πιλάτῳ**.**[19]

As for the Anglo-Saxon tradition, Christine Fell (1991) points out that the term *geryne* is most commonly modified by adjectives such as *halig* "holy" and *gaestlic* "spiritual", thus concluding that "the various forms of *geryne* are not used for pagan belief [...] but for [...] the 'mistery' of Easter, of baptism, of the sacrament, of the Trinity [...]."[20]

Since there is no proof that either *runa* or *giruni* is used to convey the idea of "Germanic spell" in any of the theological texts which have come down to us, I would suggest that the term *giruni* in *Heliand* is primarily related to the apparent unaccessibility of the New Testament message. It seems to me that the author's main point is that no one can approach the word of God on their own; the only possible way to penetrate the *mysterium* is to rely on what the four evangelists have written down since the four evangelists alone were taught what to write and sing by the greatest of masters, the Creator Himself. In order to support this hypothesis with further evidence, it is necessary to move from the widely studied lexical layer to the much disregarded textual one.

3. *How information is conveyed*: *existential sentences and contrastive focus*

If we pay attention to the information structure of the utterances – rather than to single lexical items – we can easily realize that the discourse elements upon which the passage under inspection pivots appear in two parellel *existential sentences* (line 1a: *Manega uuaron* "There were many [...]"; line 9b: *than uuaron thoh sia fiori* "There were, however, these four [...]") which

[19] The Gothic, English and Greek texts are taken from the digital edition "The Gothic Bible and Minor Fragments" available at the *Project Wulfila* website (University of Antwerp): http://www.wulfila.be/ gothic/browse/text/?book=4&chapter=4 [last visit: July 2005]. The TEI text and database are based on the work of Wilhelm Streitberg (1919).

[20] Fell (1991: 206).

introduces the discourse focus [F]; furthermore, the latter sets up a *contrastive focus* [CF][21] so that *sia fiori* "the four [evangelists]" can be interpreted as opposed to the *manega* "many" in line 1.[22]

1 **[Manega]$_{F}$ uuâron**, the sia iro môd gespôn,
2 ....., that sia *bigunnun uuord* godes,
3 *reckean* that girûni, that *thie* rîceo Crist
4 undar mancunnea mâriða gifrumida
5 mid uuordun endi mid uuercun. That uuolda thô uuîsara filo
6 liudo barno loƀon, lêra Cristes,
7 hêlag uuord godas, endi mid iro handon scrîƀan
8 *berehtlîco* an buok, huô sia scoldin is *gibodscipi*
9 frummian, firiho barn. **Than uuârun thoh [sia fiori** [te thiu]**]$_{CF}$**
10 under thera menigo, thia habdon maht godes,
11 helpa fan himila, hêlagna gêst,
12 craft fan *Criste*, – sia uurðun gicorana te thio,
13 that sie than êuangelium *ênan scoldun*
14 an buok scrîƀan endi *sô* manag gibod godes,
15 hêlag himilisc uuord: sia ne muosta heliðo than mêr,
16 firiho barno frummian, neƀan that ***sia fiori*** te thio
17 thuru craft godas gecorana uurðun,
18 **Matheus** endi **Marcus**, – sô uuârun thia man hêtana –
19 ***Lucas endi Iohannes***; sia uuârun *gode lieƀa*,
20 uuirðiga ti them giuuirkie. Habda im uualdand god,
21 them heliðon an iro hertan hêlagna gêst
22 fasto bifolhan endi ferahtan hugi,
23 sô manag uuîslîk uuord endi giuuit mikil,
24 that sea scoldin ahebbean hêlagaro stemnun
25 godspell that guoda,[23]

"There were many whose hearts told them that they should begin to tell the secret runes, the word of God, the famous feats that the powerful Christ accomplished in words and deeds among human beings. There were many of the wise who wanted to praise the teaching of Christ, the holy Word of God, and wanted to write a bright-shining book with their own hands, telling how the sons of men should carry out His commands. Among all these, however,

[21] Contrastive focus picks out one element as prominent, mainly new information. Contrastive focus restricts a contextually presupposed closed set to an exhaustive subset for which the predicate actually holds. Even though in this specific example we are not able to appreciate the prosodic features – i.e. the contrastive accent – there is a textual element that helps us analyze it as a case of contrastive focus, namely *thoh*, which works as a presuppositional activator. See Levinson (1983 [1993: 175-231]). Anyway, *fiori* bears the metrical accent, since it alliterates with *frummiam* and *firiho* in the a-verse.
[22] On contrastive focus and other related notions see Chafe (1976); Levinson (1983 [1993]).
[23] Behaghel / Taeger (1996: 7-8).

> there were only four who had the power of God, help from heaven, the Holy Spirit, the strength from Christ to do it. They were chosen. They alone were to write down the *evangelium* in a book, and to write down the commands of God, the holy heavenly word. No one else among the heroic sons of men was to attempt it, since these four had been picked by the power of God: Matthew and Mark, Luke and John were their names. They were dear to God, worthy of the work. The ruling God had placed the Holy Spirit firmly in those heroes' hearts, together with many a wise word, as well as a devout attitude and a powerful mind, so that they could lift up their holy voices to chant God's spell."[24]

Since a Contrastive Focus-marked proposition presupposes either the denial or at least the suspension of its alternative propositions (this is a well-known phenomenon called "reversed polarity presupposition"), the use of this discourse strategy helps the poets convey the idea of Christian Truth as a part of God's revelation by means of the chosen. Thus the four evangelists, later called by their names [Matheus, Marcus, Lucas, Iohannes] and seen as the only true messengers of God, are opposed to the anonymous "many" who ventured to praise the teaching of Christ by writing a book on him without being selected by the power of God. It should not be overlooked that such a strong message, put forth at the very beginning of the poem, is not to be found in the *Tatian*, which faithfully translates the Latin and keeps very close to its own primary source, that is the *Prologue* of *Luke*:

> *Tat., Prologus*
> 1. Bithiu uuanta manage zilotun ordinon saga thio in uns gifulta sint rahono, 2. Só ûns saltun thie thar fon anaginne selbon gisahun inti ambahta uuarun uuortes, 3. Uuas mir gisehan gifolgentemo fon anaginne allem, gernlihho after antreitu thir scriben, thû bezzisto Theophile, 4. Thaz thû forstantes thero uuorto, fon them thû gilerit bist, uuâr.[25]

4. *The re-writing of discourse features as a means of conveying an orthodox theological message*

The new reading – we could say, the new path – sorted out in the *Heliand* and deeply rooted in the clever manipulation of its discourse features on the part of the authors, as shown above, is rich in theological implications.
One is in fact reminded of a theological framework which goes back to Origen (*Ecclesia quattuor habet evangelia, haeresis plurima*) whose function within the Old Saxon poem can be better understood if we consider that ex-

[24] Murphy (1992: 3-4).
[25] Sievers (1892: 13).

tirpating heterodoxical practice – not necessarily pagan – was one of the main concerns of the religious policy carried out in Fulda at the time,[26] especially because of the presence there of Hraban Maur as abbot. In Hraban's famous work *De rerum naturis* or *De Universo*,[27] two books – n. 4 and n. 5 – are entirely dedicated to the "True Faith" as opposed to "heresy". The titles of the sections that make up the two books are listed below:

4.1 De his personis quae ad Novum Testamentum pertinent.
4.2 De martyribus.
4.3 De Ecclesia et Synagoga.
4.4 De religione et fide.
4.5 De clericis.
4.6 De Monachis.
4.7 De caeteris fidelibus.
4.8 De haeresi et schismate.
4.9 De haeresibus Judaeorum.
4.10 De diffinitionibus rectae fidei et ecclesiasticorum dogmatum.

5.1 De sanctis Scripturis, hoc est Veteri et Novo Testamento.
5.2 De auctoribus eorumdem librorum.
5.3 Brevis annotatio, quae indicat quid in sanctis canonicis libris contineatur.
5.4 De bibliotheca.
5.5 De opusculorum diversitate.
5.6 De canonibus Evangeliorum.
5.7 De canonibus conciliorum.
5.8 De cyclo paschali.
5.9 De officiis canonicis, et de his quae in Ecclesia leguntur atque canuntur.
5.10 De hostiis holocaustis atque sacrificiis, et quod eorum species singulae significent.
5.11 De sacramentis divinis: ubi quid in his homini gerendum sit, demonstratur.
5.12 De exorcismo.
5.13 De symbolo.
5.14 De oratione et jejunio.
5.15 De poenitentiae satisfactione atque exomologesi.[28]

[26] Fulda played a leading role in the foundation of new episcopal bishoprics in the Saxon territory after its forcible conversion at the beginning of the ninth century. Fulda is also the most favored place of origin for the *Heliand*, the others being Corvey and Werden.
[27] A pseudo-scientific encyclopedic treatise, which is essentially a reworking of Isidor's *Etymologies*. The *De rerum naturis* depicts the whole Universe as a manifestation of God.
[28] *PLD*, vol. 111.

It should also be noted that *Book 4* (n. 1: *De his personis quae ad Novum Testamentum pertinent*) opens with a reference to the evangelists and the New Testament. Since most of the heretical movements are christological, Hraban's primary and main concern seems to be that of assessing the New Testament sources which are to be considered orthodox beyond all doubt:

> **[Col.0071C]**
> In primis igitur notandum est, quod **quatuor evangelistae** Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum sub quatuor animalium vultibus figuraliter exprimunt. **Matthaeus** enim eumdem Redemptorem natum et passum annuntians, in similitudinem hominis comparat. **[Col.0071D] Marcus** a solitudine exorsus leonis figuram induit, et Christi regnum invictum, potentiamque proclamat. **Lucas** quoque per vituli mysticum vultum Christum pro nobis praedicat immolandum. **Joannes** autem per figuram aquilae eumdem Christum post resurrectionem carnis demonstrat revolasse in coelos.[29]

In *Book 5* (n. 2: *De auctoribus eorumdem librorum* and n. 3: *Brevis annotatio, quae indicat quid in sanctis canonicis libris contineatur*) the author deals with the evangelists once more and describes the set of symbols pertaining to them.

> Quatuor libros Evangeliorum quatuor Evangelistae singulariter conscripserunt. Primus **Matthaeus** conscripsit Evangelium litteris Hebraicis et sermonibus, in Judaea mittans [initians] evangelizare ab humana Christi nativitate, dicens: *Liber generationis Jesu Christi, filii David, filii Abraham* (Matth. I); significans descendisse corporaliter ex semine patriarcharum Christum, sicut promissum erat in prophetis **[Col.0109C]** per Spiritum sanctum. Secundus **Marcus**, plenus Spiritu sancto, scripsit Evangelium Christi, eloquio Graeco: in Italia secutus est Petrum, ut discipulus. Is initium ab spiritu prophetali fecit, dicens: *Vox clamantis in deserto, parate viam Domino* (Marc. I)**:** ut ostenderet Christum post assumptionem carnis Evangelium praedicasse in mundo. Ipse enim Christus et propheta dictus est, sicut scriptum est: *Et prophetam in gentibus posui te.* Tertius **Lucas** inter omnes evangelistas Graeci sermonis eruditissimus, quippe ut medicus in Graecia Evangelium scripsit Theophilo episcopo, initians a sacerdotali spiritu, dicens: *Fuit in diebus Herodis Judaeae sacerdos Zacharias:* Christum post nativitatem carnis et praedicationem Evangelii hostiam fuisse effectum pro salute mundi. Ipse **[Col.0109D]** est enim sacerdos, de quo dictum est in Psalmis: *Tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech* **(Psal. CIX)**. Ubi enim Christus advenit, sacerdotium Judaeorum obmittunt [obmutuit], lex et prophetia cessavit. Quartus **Joannes** scripsit Evangelium ultimus in Asia, incipiens a Verbo, ut ostenderet eumdem Salvatorem, qui pro nobis dignatus est nasci et

[29] *De rerum naturis,* 4.1. *PLD,* vol. 111.

> pati, ipsum ante saecula Dei Verbum esse, ipsum e coelo venisse, et post mortem ad coelum iterum remeasse. Hi sunt quatuor evangelistae, quos per Ezechielem Spiritus sanctus significavit in quatuor animalibus. Propterea autem quatuor animalia dicuntur: quia per quatuor mundi partes fides Christianae religionis eorum praedicatione disseminata **[Col.0110A]** est. Animalia autem dicta sunt, quomodo propter animam hominis praedicatur Evangelium Christi. Nam et oculis plena erant intus et foris, quomodo praevident Evangelia, quae dicta sunt a prophetis, et quae promiserat in prioribus. Crura autem eorum recta, quia nihil pravum evangeliis est. Et alas habebant senas tegentes crura et facies suas: revelata sunt enim, quae tegebantur, in adventu Christi.[30] Item praefationis Novi Testamenti Evangeliorum praedicatio, quamvis quadrifaria sit, una est tamen: quia ex uno eodemque ore Trinitatis processit. Haec sunt enim **quatuor flumina** de uno fonte paradisi manantia, quaeque dupliciter uno ore decurrunt ac per totum mundum coelestis ministrantes fluenta gratiae ac fidei verbis infundunt. Haec est illa in Zacharia quadriga Domini, in qua per omnem evectus mundum leni jugo colla sibi cunctarum gentium subigit. **[Col.0119C]** Hi sunt etiam, quos sub **quatuor animalium specie** visio Prophetalis scribit, id est, **hominis, leonis, vituli** et **aquilae**. Namque primus, ut homo, ordinem humanae nativitatis designat. Secundus ad instar rugientis leonis statim in principio sui sermonis divinae potestatis fortitudinem intimat. Tertius victimam sacerdotis praemittens, quasi vituli mortem insinuat. Quartus more aquilae assectans coelum et terram avidus transvolat, atque nativitatem Verbi occulta mysteria [mysterii] intelligentia penetrat. Sed ex his tria illa animalia, quae in terra gradiuntur, actualem vitam sequentes, ea tantummodo prosecuti sunt, quae homo Christus in terris temporaliter gessit. Quartum animal contemplationis acie coelestia inspicit, et paulatim operum plurima divinitatis **[Col.0119D]** Sacramenta digessit. Ex his primus et ultimus ea praedicaverunt, quae ex ore Christi audierunt: vel quae ab illo facta vel gesta viderunt, reliqui medii duo ea tantummodo, quae ab Apostolis cognoverunt. Quorum quidem **Matthaeus** Evangelium in Judaea scripsit: deinde **Marcus** in Italia, tertius **Lucas** in Achaia: ultimus **Joannes** in Asia: ex quibus solus tantum Matthaeus praedicationis historiam Hebraico perstrinxit stylo, reliqui vero Graeci sermonis eloquio ediderunt.[31]

Furthermore, a whole section (n. 6: *De canonibus Evangeliorum*) is devoted to the way in which the four canonical Gospels were fixed.

> Canones Evangeliorum Ammonius primus excogitavit Alexandriae, quos postea Eusebius Caesariensis secutus plenius composuit. Qui ideo facti sunt, ut per eos invenire et scire possimus, qui reliquorum Evangelistarum similia aut propria dixerint. Sunt autem numero decem, quorum primus continet numeros, in quibus quatuor eadem dixerunt: **Matthaeus**, **[Col.0124B] Marcus**,

[30] *De rerum naturis,* 5.2. *PLD,* vol. 111.
[31] *De rerum naturis,* 5.3. *PLD,* vol. 111.

> **Lucas**, **Joannes**. Secundus, in quibus tres: Matthaeus, Marcus, Lucas. Tertius, in quibus tres: Matthaeus, Lucas, Joannes. Quartus, in quibus tres: Matthaeus, Marcus, Joannes. Quintus in quibus duo: Matthaeus, Lucas. Sextus in quibus duo: Matthaeus, Marcus. Septimus, in quibus duo: Matthaeus, Joannes. Octavus, in quibus duo: Lucas, Marcus. Nonus, in quibus duo: Lucas, Joannes. Decimus, in quibus singuli eorum quaedam propria dixerunt. Quorum expositio haec est. Per singulos enim Evangelistas numerus quidam capitulis affixus adjacet: quibus numeris subjecta est area quaedam minio notata, quae indicat, in quoto canone positus sit numerus, cui subjecta est area. Verbi gratia: si est area prima, in primo canone: si secunda, in secundo: si tertia, **[Col.0124C]** in tertio. Et sic per ordinem usque ad decimum pervenies. Si igitur aperto quolibet Evangelio placuerit scire, qui reliquorum Evangelistarum similia dixerint: assumes adjacentem numerum capituli, et quaeres ipsum numerum in suo canone, quem indicat, ibique invenies, qui et quid dixerunt: et ita demum in corpore inquisita loca, quae ex ipsis numeris dicantur, per singula Evangelia de eisdem dixisse invenies.[32]

Hraban's struggle against heterodoxy is confirmed by his strong opposition to Gottschalk (ca. 803-867), a monk of Saxon origin, whose predestination theory was condemned as heretical.[33]

Thus, the orthodox bias of the *Heliand* I'm suggesting here, appears to be consistent with the cultural, historical and theological background the poem is supposed to spring from, and is further enhanced by thematic evidence. For the sake of brevity, I'll mention only a few relevant examples. First, throughout the whole poem Christ is shown as being one and the same with the Lord of Creation[34]

[32] *De rerum naturis,* 5.6. *PLD*, vol. 111.

[33] See, in particular, Marenbon's chapter dedicated to the Carolingian thought in the miscellany edited by Rosamond McKitterick. [Marenbon (1994: 171-192)]. See also Christie-Murray (1976 [1991: 99]).

[34] Cf. *De rerum naturis,* 4.10. *PLD,* vol. 111: "Neque sic est natus ex virgine, ut deitatis initium homo nascendo acceperit: quasi, antequam ex virgine nasceretur, Deus non fuerit, sicut Artemon et Berillus et Marcellus docuerunt: sed aeternus Deus homo ex virgine natus est. Nihil creatum aut serviens in Trinitate credendum, ut vult Dionysius fons Arii: nihil inaequale, ut Eunomius: nihil gratia aequale, ut vult Ethius: nihil **[Col.0097B]** anterius posteriusve, aut minus, ut Arius: nihil extraneum aut officiale alteri, ut Macedonius: nihil persuasione aut surreptione insertum, ut Manichaeus: nihil corporeum, ut Melito et Tertullianus: nihil corporaliter effigiatum, ut Anthropoformus et Vadianus: nihil sibi invisibile, ut Origenes: nihil creaturis visibile, ut Fortunatus: nihil moribus vel voluntate diversum, ut Marcion: nihil Trinitatis essentia ad creaturarum naturam deductum, ut Plato et Tertullianus: nihil officio singulare, nec alteri communicabile, ut Origenes: nihil confusum, ut Sabellius: sed unum perfectum, quia totum ex uno, et unum, non tamen solitarium, ut praesumunt Sylvanus et praxetos penthapolitana damnabilis illa doctrina. **[Col.0097C]** *Omousion ergo est in divinitate Patris Filius* [italics mine]."

thus setting aside even the slightest risk of Adoptionism.[35] When Peter confesses the Nature of Christ, he says:

3057 ‘thu bist the *uuâro* uualdandes sunu,
3058 libbiendes godes, the thit lioht giscop,
3059 Crist cuning êuuig: sô uuilliad uui **queðen** alle,
3060 iungaron thîne, that thu sîs god selƀo,
3061 hêleandero bezt.’[36]

“You are the true Son of the Ruler, the living God, who created this light, Christ, King forever! All of us, Your followers, want to **say** that You are God Himself, the Greatest of healers.”[37]

The stress is here on the assertive utterance (*thu sîs god selƀo, hêleandero bezt*) introduced by the verb *queðan* “affirm, declare” and reinforced by the modal *uuillian* “want”. In *Tat.* 90, 2 instead, no overt mention of the identity between the two persons – father and son – is made:

Dicit illis: vos autem quem me esse dicitis? ***Respondens Simon Petrus dixit: tu es Christus filius dei vivi.*** *Respondens autem Ihesus dixit: beatus es Simon Bar - Iona, quia caro et sanguis non revelavit tibi, sed pater meus qui in caelis est.*

Tho quad her in: ir uuarlicho uuen mih quedet uuesen? **Tho antuurtita Simon Petrus inti quad**: **thu bist Christ sun gotes lebentiges.** Tho antuurtita der heilant inti quad: salig bist Simon tubun sun, uuanta fleisg inti bluot ni gioffonata thir thaz, oh min fater der in himile ist.[38]

Second, the relevance attributed to the figure of Peter, who is portrayed as being especially close to Christ and second only to him, may reveal an intent to emphasize the power of the Roman ecclesiastical hierarchy since, at the time, popes consistently referred to themselves as vicars of Peter and were depicted in iconography upon his throne. Thus, Peter symbolizes much more than simply “the archetypal Saxon warrior”, becoming instead an outstanding symbol of orthodoxy, the embodiment of (Roman) Church hierarchy.

[35] In the Carolingian age Adoptionism was a very common heresy against which also Charlemagne had violently fought, calling Alcuin in his aid. Alcuin’s most outstanding pupil, Hraban Maur, became his spiritual heir in that he faithfully followed the *vestigia patrum* and strongly reacted against heterodox views. See Marenbon (1994: 181-182).
[36] Behaghel / Taeger (1996: 112).
[37] Murphy (1992: 100).
[38] Sievers (1892: 129).

5. *The manipulation of speech acts in miracles and prayers*

Let's now move to the core of the present paper, that is the manipulation of speech acts, particularly as they appear in miracles and prayers. It has often been noted by scholars that in the *Heliand* the miracles carried out by Christ are reported in indirect speech.[39] The words pronounced by the Son of God are consistently omitted, thus the general assumption is made that the author was afraid of the consequences of revealing them to the Saxons; if the audience had learned the powerful words of Christ, they would be urged to use them due to the Germanic "belief in secret spells and in their intrinsic performative ability".[40] In my opinion this interpretation is not supported by sufficient textual evidence and relies only upon extralinguistic inference.

If we consider the wedding feast at Cana, we notice that the poet has expanded and re-written its source text using assertives to replace directives.[41]

Tat. 45, 4-6

4. Erant autem ibi lapideę hydrię sex positæ secundum purificationem Iudęorum, capientes singulæ metretas binas vel ternas. (*John 2, 6*)
Thar uuarun steininu uuazzarfaz sehsu gisezitu after subernessi thero Iudeono, thiu bihaben mohtun einero giuuelih zuei méz odo thríu.

5. Dicit eis Ihesus: ***implete*** *hydrias aqua. Et impleverunt eas usque ad summum.* (*John 2, 7*)
Thó quad ín ther heilant: **fullet** thiu faz mit uuazaru. Inti sie fultun siu únzan enti.

[39] On the shift between direct and indirect speech throughout the whole poem, very interesting remarks are to be found in Guerrieri (1985-86).

[40] Flowers (1986); Murphy (1989), (1992: 68 [n. 102]). From a technical point of view the term 'performative' was introduced by Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962 [1975: 5]) to label the utterances that, unlike *constatives*, are not subject to the truth/falsity conditions of propositional knowledge. Austin assumes that these utterances exist as acts in themselves, that is as *performatives*. Austin's archetypal examples of these are the acts of naming, marrying, bequeathing and betting. Since Austin's time, scholarly research on this topic has widely developed, putting forth further distinctions. See, e.g., Conte (1972); (1983).

[41] I refer here to the five basic categories of illocutionary acts elaborated by Searle (1969): 1) assertives, i.e. statements that may be judged true or false because they purport to describe a state of affairs in the world; 2) directives, i.e. statements that attempt to make the auditor´s actions fit the propositional content; 3) commissives, i.e. statements which commit the speaker to a course of action as described by the propositional content; 4) declarations, i.e. statements that attempt to change the world by "representing it as having been changed"; 5) expressives, i.e. statements that express a psychological state.

6. Et dicit eis Ihesus: ***haurite*** *nunc et* ***ferte*** *architriclino. Et tulerunt.* (*John 2, 8*)
Thó quâd ín ther heilant: **skephet** nú inti **bringet** themo furistsizzenten. Inti sie bráhtun.[42]

Heliand, 2036b-2048a
2036 […] Lârea stôdun thar
2037 stênfatu sehsi. […];

2040 **he hêt** thea skenkeon thô skîreas uuatares
2041 thiu fatu **fullien**, endi hi thar mid is fingrun thô,
2042 segnade selƀo sînun handun,
2043 **uuarhte it te uuîne** endi **hêt** is an ên uuêgi hlaðen,
2044 **skeppien** mid ênoro scâlon, endi thô te them skenkeon sprac,
2045 **hêt** *is* thero gesteo, the at them gômun uuas
2046 themu hêroston **an hand geƀan**,
2047 ful mid folmun, themu the thes folkes thar
2048 geuueld aftar themu *uuerde*.

"Six stone vats were standing there empty. [...] He told those who were pouring to fill the vats there with clear water, and then He made the sign of the cross over it with His fingers, with His own hands – He worked it into wine! Then He ordered it poured into a drinking vessel, drawn off with a pitcher, and then speaking to a servant, He told him to give it to the most important person at the wedding, to put it right into the hands of the one who had the most authority over those people after the host."[43]

The imperatives *fullet, skephet, bringet* in *Tatian* becomes *he het fullien, het skeppien, het an hand geban* in the *Heliand*. Yet, the Saxon poem does not omit any spell at all, since no spell is present either in the direct source text (i.e. *Tatian*), or in the indirect one (i.e. the Gospel of John, chapter 2). The words which Christ is supposed to have used in order to change the water into wine (that is, the words endowed with the alleged performative power) are kept secret in any case, therefore this omission cannot be ascribed to the Saxon text as one of its peculiar features.

Thus, the crucial point is not why the poets omitted the Savior's words, but why they decided to replace directive speech acts with assertive speech acts. The answer I suggest is that the speaker thereby signals his maximum commitment to the truth of the proposition which is thus presented to the hearer as a fact undoubtedly true. This reading is reinforced by the further expansions the poets made. In line 2043a, for example, they introduced a new

[42] Sievers (1892: 68).
[43] Murphy (1992: 68-69).

statement (again, a categorical assertion: *uuarhte it te uuine* "He worked it into wine") whose function is not only to describe what was happening, but also to testify to the truth of it: "We tell you and assure you – the water was turned into wine!". This is consistent with the exhortation to "trust well" and "have faith in Christ" which is scattered throughout the whole poem as a sort of leitmotif.[44]

As for the Lord's Prayer, the acts of speech we can find in the text are a type of directives that bear the illocutionary force of petitions and supplications to God, the Creator of both the heavenly and earthly Kingdom.

Tat. 34, 6

[...] fater unser, thu thar bist in himile, si giheilagot thín namo, queme thín rihhi, si thin uuillo, só hér in himile ist, só si hér in erdu, unsar brót tagalihhaz gíb uns hiutu, ínti furlaz uns unsara sculdi, só uuír fúrlazemes unsaren sculdigon, inti ni gileitest unsih in costunga, úzouh árlosi unsih fon ubile.[45]

Heliand, 1600-1612

1600 Fadar ûsa firiho barno,
1601 thu bist an them hôhon himila rîkea,
1602 **geuuîhid sî** thîn namo **uuordo gehuuilico**.
1603 **Cuma** thîn craftag rîki.
1604 **Uuerða** thîn uuilleo oƀar thesa uuerold alla,
1605 sô sama an erðo, sô thar uppa ist
1606 an them hôhon himilo rîkea.
1607 **Gef** ûs dago gehuuilikes râd, drohtin the gôdo,
1608 thîna hêlaga helpa, endi **alât ûs**, heƀenes uuard,
1609 managoro mênsculdio, al sô uue ôðrum mannum dôan.
1610 **Ne lât** ûs farlêdean **lêða uuihti**
1611 sô forð an iro uuilleon, sô uui uuirðige sind,
1612 ac **help** ûs uuiðar allun uƀilon dâdiun.[46]

No textual evidence suggests that the Lord's Prayer has been turned into a "charm". In a charm we find a different kind of directives that bear the illocutionary force of commands and are endowed with a peculiar performative value commonly defined as *ontopoietic*: a charm is used to build up an *ontic*

[44] If the true aim of the poets was instead to stress the "magic power" of God's word, providing a sort of comparison with the power of Germanic lore, the addressee would be extremely disappointed by the omission of the relevant passage.
[45] Sievers (1892: 55-56).
[46] Behaghel / Taeger (1996: 63).

status, that is to bring a new reality into being.[47] Here, instead, only the Holy Father can bring about changes. Thus it seems to me that the *Pater Noster* still remains a prayer and that there's no need to consider it a magic spell in order to account for its granting immediate access to God.[48] The undeniable changes from the source text (see lines 1602b and 1610b) do pertain to a different level of interpretation. For example, since it is difficult to imagine God deliberately leading us into tempting situations, the *Heliand* poets solved the puzzling supplication "lead us not into temptation" by attributing the circumstances of our being led astray to evil creatures (line 1610b: *lêða uuihti*). In a Christian perspective, *caput omnium malorum diabolus est*,[49] so there's no need to interpret the evil creatures as "variants of gnomes and trolls and little people who can be blamed for things that go wrong".[50] The Christian *demones* perfectly suit this purpose.

> Musio appellatus, quod muribus infestus sit. Hunc vulgus caum a captura vocat. Alii dicunt, quod catat, id est, videat. Nam tam acute cernit, ut fulgore luminis noctis tenebras superet. Unde a Graeco venit catus, id est, ingeniosus. Venator Christus est, ut in Isaia secundum LXX: *Ecce quemadmodum leo aut catulus leonis in venatione quam capit* **(Isa. XXXI)**; *ita veniet.* Venatores, Apostoli vel caeteri praedicatores, ut in Jeremia: *Mittam eis venatores, et venabuntur eos de omni monte* **(Jer. XVI)**. Venator diabolus, in cujus figura Nemrod ille gigas venator coram Domino, ut in Genesi **(Gen. X)**; venatores **[Col.0226B]** pravi homines, ut in propheta: *Venantes ceperunt me, quasi avem, inimici mei gratis* **(Thren. III)**. Lamia diabolus vel daemones, ut in

[47] Buzzoni (1996: 98-103, especially 102).

[48] The textual parallel introduced by Murphy (1992: 215-217) to support this hypothesis, that is the very letters of the *Pater noster* written in runes and therefore endowed with magic power within a passage of the Old English poem *Solomon and Saturn I,* is not altogether convincing. In fact, of the two manuscripts that transmit the poem – Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, mss. 41 and 422 – , only the latter contains runic symbols before their roman capital equivalents. In ms. 41, which gives the poem in its early state, no rune is present. The *Pater noster* letters are entirely represented by individual roman capitals separated from the rest of the text by mid-line points. Thus, on the basis of the codicological evidence, I am inclined to share Page's opinion according to which the use of the runic characters in this poem is probably due to their epigraphical and monumental quality, rather than to magic in a pagan sense. "This quality Anglo-Saxon scribes sometimes profited by when they wanted to make individual letters stand out from the surrounding text [...]." [Page (1999: 187)]. Furthermore, the acrostic technique as a kind of intellectual game was widespread in the Christian Latin Literature of the Middle Ages; its usage "can be traced back as far as the alphabetic psalms on the Old Testament, where each verse begins with one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet." [Halsall (1981: 42)]. The adding of runes before the Roman capital characters in ms. 422 may well be due to a mere cultural motivation of giving the Germanic alphabet the same value as the others.

[49] *De rerum naturis*, 6.3. *PLD*, vol. 111.

[50] Murphy (1989: 91).

> Jeremia: *Sed et lamia nudavit mamillam, et lactavit catulos* **(Thren. IV)**. Item lamia, haereticus vel quilibet hypocrita, ut Isaias dicit: *Cubavit lamia, et invenit sibi requiem* **(Isa. XXXIV)**.[51]

What is more, in lines 1030-1032 a similar expression, *craftiga uuihti* "powerful creatures", refers to the devil and his followers who are depicted as the cause of all sin:

> 1030 uuelda is thar lâtan *coston* **craftiga uuihti**,
> 1031 selƀon ***Satanasan***, the gio **an sundea spenit**,
> 1032 man **an mênuuerk**:[52]
>
> "He wanted to let powerful creatures test him, even Satan, who is always spurring men on to sin and malicious deeds".[53]

As for the expansion introduced in line 1602b: *geuuîhid sî thîn namo uuordo gehuuilico* "blessed be your name in every word (spoken)", it sounds to me like a warning to those who use their words in order to spread God's message, most probably to the missionary monks themselves. I see in this injunction a covert threat to those who risk falling into heresy, not paying enough attention to the true word of God.

6. *Final remarks*

In my opinion, the "received" interpretation of the *Heliand* as a book of "charming performative magic" is based on (at least) two misunderstandings. First, a misunderstanding about the linguistic meaning of the term 'performative'. Murphy (1992: 206), for example, following Flowers (1986), identifies the idea of 'performative speech' with 'spell, runes, curses', that is, with magic. This is not true from a linguistic point of view and therefore can be considered as an *overinterpretation*. Legal formulae, for example, are often endowed with a performative value and yet have little to do with magic.[54] Furthermore, talking of 'performative speech' in general is indeed an *oversimplification*. There are, in fact, many different kinds of performatives; to mention only a few: implicit *vs.* explicit performatives; ontopoietic (linked to magic) *vs.* deontopoietic (linked to legal formulae) performatives; etc.[55] Sec-

[51] *De rerum naturis*, 8.1. *PLD*, vol. 111.
[52] Behaghel / Taeger (1996: 43).
[53] Murphy (1989: 36).
[54] See, e.g., Conte (1977), (1995).
[55] See Austin (1962); Conte (1983); Conte (1995); Buzzoni (1996).

ond, a misunderstanding about the theological value of secrecy and mystery, which is linked to *mysterium* of the True Faith, rather than to the pure Germanic idea of charm or spell.

The study of how discourse features were re-written and re-used by the compilers leads to a very peculiar interpretation of the poem. If one puts together the pieces of information gathered so far, one may come to the final conclusion that the *Heliand*, rather than being a work directly addressed to pagan lay peoples in order to persuade them to follow the new Faith, is instead a learned product addressed to already-converted monks.[56] The *Heliand* appears indeed as a "Saxonization" of the Gospel, Jesus is indeed portrayed as a Germanic *drohtin*, the Mediterranean vessels are indeed turned into high-horned northern boats. Yet, all these adaptations take place within an orthodox Christian framework. To my mind, the main purpose of this verse reworking of the Gospel was to promote orthodoxy as a reaction against the dangerous heterodox teachings which were spreading at the time,[57] so that those monks who were in charge of the conversion of the Saxons could do their job avoiding the risk of heresy.

This assumption goes a step beyond what has already been stated by, among others, Cyril Edwards (1994: 153) who, commenting on the Latin *Praefatio* to the poem,[58] assumes that:

> The *Praefatio* also contains tantalising hints as to the audience of the *Heliand*. It specifies reception by the *illiterati*, and indeed by 'all the people subjects to Louis who speak the German language', but it also states that the biblical chapter headings accorded to the work's fitts are intended to help the 'zealous reader'.[59] [...] There would seem to be a dichotomy here: the desire to reach the whole of the populace by translating Holy Writ is very much in the spirit of the Carolingian Church reforms, but the chapter-headings point

[56] It shouldn't be overlooked that the monastic expressions scattered throughout the poem – for example, the reference to the canonical hours in fitt 42 – are consistent with this interpretation of the text.

[57] See, for example, the above-mentioned views on predestination put forth by Gottschalk.

[58] The prose *Praefatio in librum antiquum lingua Saxonica conscriptum*, together with the *Versus de poeta et ininterprete huius codicis*, was published by M. Flacius Illyricus in 1562 and, if genuine, it represents an important source for a contextualization of the *Heliand*, since it refers to *Ludouuicus piissimus Augustus* – probably Louis the Pious (814-840) or Louis the German (843-876) – as the commissioner of the work. See Behaghel / Taeger (1996: xxxiii-xxxviii).

[59] "Ut uero studiosi lectoris intentio facilius quæque ut gesta sunt possit invenire, singulis sententiis, iuxta quod ratio huius operis postularat, capitula annotata sunt." Behaghel / Taeger (1996: 2).

> to use within the monastery, during divine office or for readings in the refectory. Perhaps only on those occasions when the laity were admitted to the Church did the *Heliand* reach a wider audience.

The linguistic analysis carried out in this essay has contributed to finding out at least one possible reason why already-converted and learned monks should be exposed to the reading of a re-elaboration of the Gospel in their own language: it is reasonable to suppose that the poem was used as a sort of didactic tale,[60] with the precise intent of both preventing monks from yielding to the folly of heterodox thought and teaching them how to diffuse the True Christian Message among still pagan or newly converted peoples.

[60] Many scholars have underlined the 'narrative' nature of the *Heliand* verse structure. Bostock, e.g., maintains that "The *Heliand* seems to stand at the end of a literary movement. […] The 'Hakenstil' is more prevalent than in other epic or lay; long sentences, elaborate periods, and indirect speech are common; the masses of unstressed syllables, the numerous 'Schwellverse', and the extensive use of epic variation may well be signs of late techniques". He also adds that "typical of the preacher or orator are the formal phrases asking for the patience of the listeners." [Bostock (1976: 177)].

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Rev. of Ronald Murphy, *The Saxon Savior: The Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth-Century 'Heliand*'. *Speculum* 67 (1992): 457-459 [David Yeandle].

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Klopstock's Messias – *a belated sparkle of Medieval epics?*

Summary. F.G. Klopstock's eighteenth-century poem *Der Messias* has always been considered by scholars amongst the most valuable works of German literature, an essential prerequisite to the masterpieces of Weimar classicism. Yet, although upon its first complete publication in 1780 it was welcomed as a "national poem", the work never enjoyed a wide fame among the audience and today is almost totally neglected. There are few examples in the history of world literature of such a disconnect between the fame conferred by ivory tower scholars and the cheery insouciance of the wider public. How did this happen?
My suspicion is that from the very start, there has been a misunderstanding of the reception of the *Messias:* this monstrous epic might be defined as all sorts of things – edifying literature, eloquent strophic poem, even as the beginning and foundation of modern German literature – but not as the German national epic. Not by any stretch of the imagination.
In this essay it will be shown that *Der Messias* is twice contradictory: first of all as for its formal features; and then also for the subject it deals with.

While he was still a student at the princely school of Schulpforta,[1] Klopstock (1724-1803) made up his mind to write an epic. In all probability, he envisioned a German national epic – whatever he and his contemporaries thought that meant. Early sources[2] report that the young poet considered a genuinely German subject matter such as the historical legends associated with the emperor Henry I, "The Fowler" (876-936), the first great ruler of the Saxonian royal line. Perhaps he was already thinking of the Cheruscan leader Arminius, a figure that was to be at the centre of a trilogy of plays Klopstock would

[1] Klopstock was a student at this famous classical school between 1739 and 1745. In his graduation address, delivered in Latin, the young graduate solemnly pledged to help create a new German literature.

[2] The writing of the *Messias* has been thoroughly researched. Cf. the Hamburg Klopstock edition, Gronemeyer *et al.* (1974-76). The *Messias* takes up "Abteilung Werke" IV/1-6, ed. by Elisabeth Höpker-Herberg, 1974-1999; volume 3 (1996) contains the apparatus as well as notes on the formation of the text, its history and that of its printed editions, transmissions etc., esp. pp. 187-243.

write later in his life. Germanised into "Hermann" and elevated to the status of patron saint of the movement for German unification in the nineteenth century,[3] the ancient Arminius had the potential to become something of a national "messias". Klopstock, however, chose an entirely different and very audacious path, ultimately doomed to failure by its very ambitiousness. More on that below.

Mostly through the reception of the Grimm school, the originally northern Germanic Siegfried eventually took on the role of German national hero. In accordance with contemporary courtly tastes, he was made a royal prince of Xanten in the Medieval Nibelung epic.

The appropriation of Old and Middle German literature, particularly its epics, as national cultural treasures was part and parcel of the complicated history of the formation of the German nation state. Starting with the idea of a modern nation emerging during the late Enlightenment period, German unification became a political movement during the era of Romanticism. Klopstock was part of the vast process of myth-creation that took place during this historical phase[4] – not, however, as the author of the German national epic. As a result of a highly complex sequence of events, this role fell to the Nibelung epic, long after Klopstock's death.

It is highly doubtful that Klopstock even knew the grandiose works of Middle High German epic literature. The rediscovery of the German Middle Ages only began during the age of Romanticism.[5] As much as the older Klopstock might have contributed to the awakening of a German national consciousness, the young Klopstock at the beginning of his literary career was still very much a product of the more cosmo-politically minded Enlightenment, an avid admirer of the educational ideals of antiquity and an equally fervent advocate of the universalistic concept of Christian salvation.[6] In fact,

[3] Cf. in particular Heinrich von Kleist's *Hermannsschlacht* (1808); note the creation of Hermann's myth as the first "founding figure" in the Berlin Museum of German Art, leading the procession of great Germans on the relief adorning the staircase.

[4] Cf. Fischer (1995).

[5] We owe the recovery of Old and Middle High German literature mainly to the activities of the Grimm brothers, who are the true founding fathers of German Studies. One of the most important members of the Grimm circle, Karl Lachmann (1793-1851), produced a great many editions of Middle High German texts; many of them still constitute the gold standard for text editing. Lachmann's critical editions started appearing in the 1830s, i.e. after Klopstock's death. Cf. Weddige (2001).

[6] From the point of view of enlightened thought, the choice of the *Messias*' subject matter is surprising: the increasingly widespread secularization was already on its way to denying the objective truth of religious concepts. Klopstock was fully aware of the provocative nature of

the education he received at Schulpforta was entirely geared toward the Greek and Latin classics. As a student of theology in Jena and Leipzig, he never lost sight of his classical roots. Initially, he even read the great epic that was to become the inspiration for his *Messias* – Milton's (1608-1674) *Paradise Lost* (1667), not in the English original, but in Bodmer's German translation.[7] This nascent national epic, the *Messias*, was strange both in terms of its content and its form. Taking his cue from his two most important sources, the Bible and Bodmer's prose translation of *Paradise Lost*, Klopstock wrote the first draft of the *Messias* in prose. Only later did he decide to use the – not very German – metre of classical ancient epics. In addition, he drew his material from an entirely un-epic source: the Book of Books, the eternal truths of which were guaranteed for Christian believers through revelation. His epic did not exalt a German national hero, but Christ himself; it did not deal with tragic fates and heroic battles, but with Christian doctrine. Unsurprisingly, the *Messias* was initially regarded as a piece of edifying literature rather than the highly anticipated crowning achievement of German literary history.

Still, the publication of the first three books of the *Messias*[8] caused a "Klopstock mania" which, in hindsight, seems hard to understand.[9] In spite of the odd critical voice, the *Messias* was universally celebrated as *the* German national epic and the literary public eagerly awaited subsequent installments. In the end, it took no less than twenty-five years (1748-1773) for the *Messias* to be completed. At the beginning, Klopstock's fame grew exponentially with each new printing. In 1780, the first complete edition of the "epical composition on Biblical themes" (today's classification of the work) appeared. At Klopstock's request, it was subtitled "A Heroic Poem". After the completion of the *Messias*, which ran to ca. 20,000 verses in 20 books, the entire German-speaking public celebrated Klopstock as its national poet; when he died in 1803, he received a nearly royal funeral. Notwithstanding, even at the

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his choice; however, his main focus was not so much religious truth as poetic truthfulness: the ultimate value of the poetical *sujet* as the only material worthy of the *vates*, the poet as the genial creator and prophet of literature. Some critics such as the Enlightenment figure G. E. Lessing (1729-1781) and, somewhat later, the Romanticist A. W. Schlegel (1767-1845), emphatically disapproved of his choice of subject matter, not so much because of religious scruples; on the contrary, they maintained that the truths of scripture are not appropriate for literary creation because literature is not bound by revealed religious truths, but by the creative force of the poet's imagination. Cf. Nienhaus (1998: 1, 308-311).

[7] Cf. *Messias,* III, of the Hamburg Klopstock edition, ibid., esp. pp. 187-243.

[8] Books I-III appeared in vol. 4 of the *Bremer Beiträge*, 1748.

[9] Contrary to widespread opinion about the epic's immediate success, it took some time for it to gain recognition. Only Bodmer's intervention made it an overnight best seller. Cf. Kohl (2000: 30ff).

time, hardly anyone voluntarily read the alleged national epic. Up to this day, Klopstock and his *Messias* are regarded as an integral part of the canon of German Studies, but the work has found hardly any audience even among highly educated readers, let alone a wider public. On this issue, Lessing sardonically comments:

> Wer wird nicht einen Klopstock loben?
> Doch wird ihn jeder lesen? – Nein.
> Wir wollen weniger erhoben
> und fleißiger gelesen seyn.[10]

This state of affairs remains unchanged to this day, even though there is no doubt that Klopstock's influence on German literature was far-reaching and can still be felt.[11] There are few examples in the history of world literature of such a disconnect between the fame conferred by ivory tower scholars and the cheery insouciance of the wider public. How did this happen?

My suspicion is that from the very start, there has been a misunderstanding of the reception of the *Messias*. As we have seen, this monstrous epic might be defined as all sorts of things – edifying literature, eloquent strophic poem, even as the beginning and foundation of modern German literature – but not as the German national epic. Not by any stretch of the imagination.

What, then, was Klopstock's own understanding of the concept of "epic" – and why did the groundbreaking work that was to be the crowning glory of German literature have to be an epic? True, Klopstock's idea of devoting his life to the creation of the postulated German national epic, something he had already committed himself to while still a student at Schulpforta, was a huge challenge, even though his choices would turn out to be ill-advised. This was mostly due to two reasons: first, the idea of a Christian epic poem was, its literary merits notwithstanding, already obsolete both in terms of its content and, most of all, its form (notably its genre). Given his time, Klopstock's choice of the epic genre was entirely understandable: for an eighteenth-century reader, the epic was still the highest and most noble form of literary

[10] "Who would not commend Klopstock?/But would everybody read him? - No./We'd rather be less exalted/and more widely read." [G.E. Lessing, "Sinngedicht an den Leser", *Epigramme,* 1752].

[11] With surprising consistency, Klopstock scholars regard the author of the *Messias* as an indispensable precursor of the classical-romantic era who, during its later heyday, was overshadowed and ultimately transcended by it. Cf. Kohl (2000), esp. the section on "Das Klopstock-Bild in der deutschen Literaturgeschichte", p. 4ff.

expression. It must have already been clear to contemporary observers, however, that the creative potential of this particular genre was already spent.[12]

For an eighteenth-century audience, epics were synonymous with the heritage of classical antiquity, most prominently Homer. Starting with the Renaissance, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were joined by Virgil's *Aeneid*, i.e. Latin antiquity. The link was regarded close enough that in some quarters, Klopstock was enthusiastically welcomed as the "German Virgil". Klopstock in fact modelled his work on the Homeric epics, commencing his *Messias* with a Homeric *incipit*:

> Sing, unsterbliche Seele, des sündigen Menschen Erlösung […]

Cf. Homer:

> Sage mir, Muse, die Taten des vielgewanderten Mannes […]
> ′Ανδρα μοι ′εννεπε, Μουσα, πολυτροπον, `ος μαλα πολλα // πλαγχθη […]
>
> Singe den Zorn, o Göttin, des Peliden Achilleus […]
> Μηνιν, ′αειδε, θεα, Πηληιαδεω Αχιληος // ουλομενην […]

or Virgil's *Aeneid:*

> Arma viruumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
> Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit // Litora […]

His metric choice was also determined by classical precedents. Klopstock opted for the truly classical Hexameter, not for the Alexandrine metre which Gottsched had declared classical in his *Critische Dichtkunst* (1730) only a few years before Klopstock embarked on his *magnum opus*.[13] Through his influence, the hexameter became for a short time the metre of choice of German classicism – soon to be replaced by iambic blank verse, a metre more suited to the German language. Together with the clumsy six-footed

[12] Cf. Max (1981: 75ff).

[13] Klopstock's choice was very deliberate; in fact, during his studies in Leipzig (1746-1748), the young poet had attended lectures on poetry by no less an authority than Gottsched himself. His views on literature, however, owe less to Gottsched and French classicism, which the latter extolled as a literary role model, than to the Swiss literary critic Bodmer and his ideas about "the miraculous in poetry" (cf. J. J. Bodmer, *Kritische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie,* 1740). Klopstock's resolute preference for the ancient metre also found its way into his theoretical writings on poetry, e.g. *Über die Nachahmung des griechischen Sylbenmasses im Deutschen* (1754).

hexameter, the outdated epic genre itself departed from German literary history. Theatre became the new stage for epoch-making literary creations, as can easily be demonstrated by Lessing's *Nathan*, Goethe's *Iphigenie*, and Schiller's theatre.

The claim that Klopstock's *Messias* represents the "first great German epic after the Middle Ages"[14] has a surprisingly tenacious hold on the imagination of German literary historians. They are right in chronological terms, but the connection they postulate between Medieval high literature and Klopstock's epic is highly questionable. As we have asked before, is it not the case that his work marks a failed attempt of monumental proportions to create something novel – so novel that not even the poet himself knew exactly what it was supposed to be? We have already mentioned that in all probability, Klopstock did not even know Old and Middle High German epic literature. He regarded Old French literature, to the extent he knew it, as "novelistic" – in the way we now classify Medieval chivalresque epics as "verse novels". Finally, the Italian tradition, e.g. Dante, Ariosto or Torquato Tasso with their highly complex metrical structures, remained alien to him.

Focusing on the position of the *Messias* in literary history, however, we have to admit that there *is* a common thread leading from the beginnings of Old High German poetry to Klopstock. The *Heliand* and the *Evangeliar* of Otfried von Weißenburg draw on biblical material. The *Muspilli*, an apocalyptical drama,[15] also resembles the last books of the *Messias*. Still, even if Klopstock had known about the existence of these works, he certainly did

[14] Cf. Frenzel / Frenzel (1991: 195).

[15] The *Heliand*, written around 830 in long alliterative verses, was edited for the first time in 1830. It is a so-called "reader epos", mainly intended to help Christianize the heathen Saxons. The work narrates the story of a heroic Jesus figure, a "hebancuning", in the tradition of Germanic heroic epics. We can safely assume that it was written for a lay audience; it is regarded as the work of a monk from the Fulda school who wanted to bring his biblical source closer to his audience using contemporary stylistic devices. The *Evangelienharmonie* by Otfried von Weißenburg, written ca. 863-70 with end rhymes, belongs to a group of texts associated with the Franconian dialect. The author was a monk in Weißenburg and a student of Hrabanus Maurus. His anthology of texts drawn from the New Testament mainly addressed a learned, clerical audience. Its purpose was less missionary than to produce a text in Old High German comparable with his Latin biblical sources. The *Muspilli*, written in long verses around the year 880 as part of the Old Bavarian literary tradition, seems to display familiarity with both the alliterative rhyming technique of the *Heliand* and the end rhymes of the *Evangelienharmonie*. The main purpose of this compilation of apocalyptic material seems to have been missionary activities. Editions of these and other examples of early German literature, however, only started to appear during the late romantic era; therefore, Klopstock could not have known the texts.

not read a single line of them: the systematic philological treatment of ancient German literature had not yet taken place.

We do not even know whether Klopstock was familiar with Johann Sebastian Bach's (1685-1750) monumental passion oratoria (*Johannespassion*, 1724; *Matthäuspassion*, 1727).[16] Whatever the case, it is clear that he would only be interested in its biblical references. Notwithstanding poetic license, the meaning of the *Messias* rests entirely on the biblical text which Klopstock quoted verbatim again and again. What is more, Klopstock's two proven sources – Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Luther's Bible translation – explicitly do not depend on Medieval literature but on its very opposite: the groundbreaking changes in the world view of the literate public engendered by the Renaissance and the Baroque age which overcame and transcended Medieval thinking.[17]

Klopstock intended to effect a similar renewal by fusing the two basic strands of Western tradition, namely classical antiquity and Christianity, in an artistic creation inspired by the spirit of the German language. Without doubt, he has to be credited with one particular renewal, that of the German language: crafting the language of Luther's Bible translation into a viable literary idiom might be his main achievement.[18]

What he was not able to achieve was the realization of his poetic plan: a true synthesis of ancient and Christian knowledge. His unfortunate choice of the epic genre was one of the main reasons for his failure. The heroic epos did not suit his subject matter, the holy Christian belief; both of them in turn did not agree with a language that was described as "national". This, however, we only know from hindsight. Klopstock's *Messias* is in fact one of the prime examples of this mismatch between form, content and language.

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[16] Throughout his life, Klopstock was very interested in music and took great care to have his songs and hymns properly set to music. Contemporary tastes, however, leaned towards Gluck and Händel. Incidentally, Klopstock was introduced to the latter's *Messiah* (1742) only in 1764. There is no evidence that Baroque cantatas and oratoria had any influence on Klopstock. This constitutes a significant and grievous gap in the scholarly research of Klopstock's life and work.

[17] Cf. Blumenberg (1981). The secularization phenomenon of the medieval worldview and replacement of the medieval closed eschatological system of thought by a new "readability" of the world.

[18] Ladislao Mittner (1964: 175) agrees and writes that the *Messias* is less a poetical masterpiece, "*non tanto un'opera di poesia, quanto una grande azione rinnovatrice compiuta nell'ambito poetico*".

Paradoxically, from a theoretical point of view, Klopstock could not have chosen any other subject. The epic as a genre presupposes the world as a totality: the structure of the epic plot is not problematic, but confirms the existence of the world as a huge, but always unambiguous and straightforward whole. This epic world constitutes the link between narrator, narration and audience because it never deals only with the private fate of specific individuals but, instead, with a shared view of the world that is experienced and formed in the acts of narrating and listening. Thus, Klopstock's choice of a Christian biblical subject was only logical: the Christian belief was one of the founding myths of the West. During Klopstock's life, however, the relation between epic and myth underwent crucial functional changes, caused by the transition from the Enlightenment to Romanticism, from secular rationality to pietistic sensitivity.

At the precise moment when traditional Christian teaching received its most eloquent literary expression, the formerly unquestioned authority of the doctrines embodied in these teachings imploded. Religion became a private affair. This most important legacy of the Enlightenment put an end to Christian teachings as a viable subject matter of epic poetry.

While Klopstock was working on his *Messias*, another poet tried his hand at the epic genre: Wieland (1733-1813), but he avoided any serious reference to the epic worldview. Wieland's epics are charming little pleasantries, equally at home with biblical material (e.g. *Der geprüfte Abraham*, 1753), the knightly world of the Italian Renaissance (e.g. *Idris und Zenide*, 1768) or burlesques in the English tradition (e.g. *Oberon*, 1780). Like Klopstock's monumental work, Wieland's short epics are mostly forgotten, but they equally illustrate the rupture between claim and (literary) reality that emerged in the eighteenth century. People still evoked the epic as the most noble literary genre, in perfect agreement with Gottsched's ideas about epics, with which Bodmer and Breitinger totally agreed; however, in reality the theatre was now the main stage for literary innovation, and the modern novel had become the most important literary form.

Goethe also dabbled with the epic genre, but he studiously avoided any reference to mythical and biblical subjects. Works like his *Reineke Fuchs* (1794) or the bourgeois idyll *Hermann und Dorothea* (1797) were required reading in the nineteenth and also the early twentieth century. Today, their clumsy hexameters are the butt of grammar school students' jokes. But let us not forget that only a year after Klopstock finished his *Messias*, the same Goethe wrote the novel that put German literature back on the map of world

literature: his *Werther* (1774). Quoting the *Messias* in a rather touching scene,[19] he at the same time irreverently consigns it to the scrap heap of literary history.

Only a few years later, Goethe created the true national expression of German literature, *Faust*. Composed in a doggerel that sounds slightly absurd to modern ears, it describes a breathtakingly dramatic conflict. The work is not at all burdened by its literary form, even if it still demands a lot of directors and actors. Like the *Messias*, few Germans have read *Faust* from beginning to end. But even fewer are completely ignorant of the subject of the work. Interestingly, the plot does not draw on biblical material, but nevertheless revolves around a conflict between god and man. Still, the reader is fully aware that the integration of the *Faust* story into a religious framework consists of more than just the "prologue in heaven". Goethe's Faust neither seriously struggles against the devil, nor does he fully trust in god's benevolence: he is enough of a demon himself. The profundity of this conflict within the figure of Faust has yet to be fully fathomed. This is why Goethe's *Faust* is the natural complement and antipode to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the eternal skeptic: they are the prototypical modern heroes and true icons which define the image of modern man.

Klopstock's *Messias*, on the other hand, simply ended up as the source for Händel's oratoria – if one likes classical music.[20]

[19] Klopstock's name is used as a "Losung", a secret password between the two lovers: "*Wir traten ans Fenster, es donnerte abseitswärts und der herrliche Regen säuselte auf das Land, und der erquickendste Wohlgeruch stieg in aller Fülle einer warmen Luft zu uns auf. Sie stand auf ihrem Ellebogen gestützt und ihr Blick durchdrang die Gegend, sie sah gen Himmel und auf mich, ich sah ihr Auge tränenvoll, sie legte ihre Hand auf die meinige und sagte: - Klopstock! Ich versank in dem Strome von Empfindungen, den sie in dieser Losung über mich ausgoss. Ich ertrugs nicht, neigte mich auf ihre Hand und* küsste *sie unter den wonnenvollsten Tränen*." J. W. Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (version A), 1774.

[20] On Klopstock's reception in music, cf. Kohl (2000: 165ff).

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Possible narratives: re-telling the Norman Conquest

Summary. William of Malmesbury (1125) casts the Norman Conquest as an 'ancipitous narrative' – equally possible courses of events leading to the same outcome. *The Bayeux Tapestry* (1070s) is such a narrative. And three modern novels on the Conquest (Bulwer Lytton 1848, Muntz 1949, Rathbone 1997) are here seen as narrations of alternative possibilities with an invariant outcome and an invariant theme: Harold as the expression of English civil society.

1. *The ancipitous narrative*

When, in 1125, William of Malmesbury sets about narrating the reign of Edward the Confessor (ch. 197), he warns the reader that

> hic quasi ancipitem viam narrationis video, quia veritas factorum pendet in dubio.

And he reports in juxtaposition the English and the Norman versions of the great crisis of 1051-1052, a crucial step in the course of events leading to the Norman conquest of 1066. The situation remains unchanged for the modern historian of the period: in his biography of Edward the Confessor Frank Barlow (1970: xxvii) writes that

> the historian meets uncertainty at every point […]. Sometimes the only course that he can honestly follow is to offer several equally plausible possibilities, between which he cannot decide.

William's "ancipitous way" can be equated with Borges' "forking paths" – of the type that might be called 'forking in' as opposed to 'forking out'.

'Forking out' is when a course of events leads to several possible outcomes, or when an event branches out into alternative courses – the battle of Hastings won by Harold, or fought by William of Normandy and Harald Hardrada of Norway, if the latter had won the battle of Stamford Bridge

against Harold of England. Modern historiography and fiction make much use of this narratology of possible worlds. In three recent volumes a number of historians have revisited crucial events in history and imagined alternative outcomes and their consequences.[1] The novelist Philip Roth has imagined the United States under the presidency of Charles Lindbergh, the aviator, who wins the 1940 election against Roosevelt and starts a policy of isolationism, pro-Nazism and anti-Semitism. This is the counterfactual type; a fictional variation is the alternative story-lines developed in parallel by films.[2]

'Forking in', on the other hand, is when different possible courses of events have the same outcome, as in Borges's example (1944: 113-4):

> […] dos redacciones de un mismo capítulo épico. En la primera, un ejército marcha hacia una batalla a través de una montaña desierta; el horror de las piedras y de la sombra le hace menopreciar la vida y logra con facilidad la victoria; en la segunda, el mismo ejército atraviesa un palacio en el que hay una fiesta; la resplendeciente batalla les parece una continuación de la fiesta y logran la victoria.

A fictional realization of the type is a famous short story by O. Henry, *Roads of Destiny* (1909), where three alternative courses of events starting at a crossroads have the same tragic conclusion. Judicial narratives are well-known examples of this type: Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1868-1869) and Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950). And Ruth Prawer Jhabvala has attempted an autobiographical variation in this mode, with character as invariant.[3] But the type is institutional in the historiographical

[1] Ferguson (1997), who contains also references to fiction, Cowley (1999) and (2001).

[2] Guido Morselli's *Contro-passato prossimo. Un'ipotesi retrospettiva* (1975) envisages a different outcome of World War I on the Italian front; Salman Rushdie has sprinkled his *The Ground Beneath her Feet* (1999) with bits of alternate history, such as "the day after the President of the United States had that narrow escape in Dallas, Texas […]"; and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004) is also a counterfactual autobiography, since it has a Jewish character called 'Philip Roth' (born, like the author, in Newark, 1933) narrate his childhood years under the Lindbergh presidency. Films are particularly fond of bifurcations of this type, from *It's a Wonderful Life* by Frank Capra (1946) to *The Family Man* by Brett Ratner (2000), *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Alan Taylor (2001) and *Femme Fatale* by Brian De Palma (2001), passing through *Blind Chance* by Krzysztof Kieslowski (*Przypadek*, 1981) and *Sliding Doors* by Peter Howitt (1997).

[3] *My Nine Lives. Chapters of a Possible Past* (2004): "These chapters are potentially autobiographical […]. The central character – the 'I' of each chapter – is myself […]. I may have been trying out alternative destinies […] for myself. But however many times one may set oneself up with a new set of parents – or a new country – or new circumstances – the situations in which the 'I' is placed (or places itself) always seem to work out themselves in the

discourse, which has often the task of narrating the event as the invariant outcome of different possibilities. The paucity of narrative sources, their silence or reticence, and their bias and stereotypes engage the historian in the integration of the little real that is known with the configurations of the possible. Aristotle had drawn a dividing line between historiography and fiction, between 'what happens' and 'what might happen' (*tà genómena* and *oîa àn génoito*, *Poetics* 1451a-b); but the narratology based on the logic of possible worlds[4] should bring us to see the actual and the virtual as meshed in the fine texture of any narrative, and the real as embedded in the possible – or the possible as the porosity of the real.

2. *Master narratives*

Contemporary and near-contemporary narratives of the Conquest turn around the figure of Harold, the powerful earl of Wessex and successor of the Confessor: a king, as *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* puts it (ms C 1065, ms A 1066), who enjoyed "little quiet" in his reign of "forty weeks and one day". The Norman narrative (Guillaume de Poitiers, 1071-1077) tells of Edward promising the succession to William of Normandy and then sending Harold to Normandy to confirm the promise with an oath. The earliest English version (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) is silent on the promise and the voyage and the oath, and tells instead of Harold being nominated to the succession by Edward and being elected king by the Council. Later English versions accept Harold's Norman voyage but motivate it differently: for Eadmer of Canterbury (1109-1115), Harold goes to Normandy to free his relatives held hostage there, and having got into trouble he is extorted an oath; for William of Malmesbury (1125), Harold goes fishing (yachting, we would say) in the Channel, is driven by a storm on the French coast, then to extricate himself from a difficult situation he pretends to be on a mission on Edward's behalf, and the Norman duke takes care to make that pretension good.

It is becoming increasingly accepted that incompatible versions of these events find their confluence, and possibly their source, in *The Bayeux Tapestry* (1070s), an outstanding example of ancipitous storytelling. Its two parts are devoted to the two protagonists of the events of 1064-1066: Harold's voyage, oath and succession, William's invasion and victory. The *Tapestry*

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same way: as though character were fate." Kierkegaard's four alternative motivations of the Abraham story in *Fear and Trembling* belong to this type.

[4] Ryan (1991); Doležel (1998).

is diffuse in its embroidered images, but elliptic in the inscriptions that go with them: which are silent on the motivation of the first part of the story – the reason for Harold's journey to Normandy and the object of his oath to William. One might call the *Tapestry* a pictured scenario for a narrating voice: its images are not self-sufficient and require the integration of a verbal narrator – and the integration can take a number of different paths.

In the first panel King Edward is talking to a personage later identified as Harold – the talking is done by the hands. The Norman script would say that here Edward sends Harold to Normandy in order to confirm with an oath his previous pledge to make William his successor. An English narrator would say instead that here Harold asks leave of Edward to go to Normandy to set free his brother and nephew held hostage there, and the king admonishes him not to go, not trusting the wily William – thus Eadmer of Canterbury. And to this "ancipitem viam" William of Malmesbury adds a third way of his own – Harold taking leave of Edward to go fishing, or yachting, in the Channel.

The images can do double and triple service, and accomodate different versions of the story, and might have even suggested them, one would suspect. If we were to launch a competition for the best script of the panel of Harold's return to England, no doubt we would choose Eadmer's reading of Harold's bending head facing Edward's scolding finger:

> 'Nonne dixi tibi […] me Willhelmum nosse, et in illo itinere tuo plurima mala huic regno contingere posse?'

3. *A classically-modelled epic romance*

The Norman and English narratives converge not only on the outcome of the events, but also on a theology of history that sees defeat as God's judgment of guilt: "the French remained masters of the battlefield as God granted them because of the sins of the people, *for folces synnon*", is the penitential comment of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ms D 1066) on the battle of Hastings. The Norman version is a sycophantic glorification of William and vilification of Harold 'the perjurer', and a legitimation of the Conquest as the reinstatement of right by the force of arms – it is a master narrative, we would say. The English versions cannot delegitimize it: they simply downgrade Norman pretensions and seek extenuation for Harold.

The challenge of full vindication – that is the scripting of a radically alternative master narrative – was taken up by the English in the nineteenth century.

The agenda is set in 1848 by Bulwer Lytton, who rehabilitates Harold by making him the expression of the country (1848: 223b):

> In the character of Harold […] I have attempted […] to shadow out the ideal of the pure Saxon character, such as it was then, with its large qualities undeveloped, but marked already by patient endurance, love of justice, and freedom – the manly sense of duty rather than the chivalric sentiment of honor – and that indestructible element of practical purpose and courageous will, which, defying all conquest, and steadfast in all peril, was ordained to achieve so vast an influence over the destinies of the world.

And the agenda is accompanied by an alternative conception of the historical romance (1848: 225b):

> There are two ways of employing the materials of History in the service of Romance: the one consists in lending to ideal personages, and to an imaginary fable, the additional interest to be derived from historical groupings: the other, in extracting the main interest of romantic narrative from History itself.

The first way is that of Walter Scott, with its grouping of fictitious characters and events with historical ones. The second way is also defined by Bulwer Lytton (1848: 222b) as that of

> extracting its natural romance from the actual history.

'Romance' here stands for the idealized possibilities of the invariant events of history.

Bulwer Lytton's romance is not simply historical, it is also epic in its classical modelling: 12 books, noble sentiments, oratorial postures – Harold has "the bravery of Hector, not Achilles", "he would have died the Roman's death rather than live the traitor's life" because of his "stern philosophy and stoic ethics" [Bulwer Lytton (1848: 285a, 396b, 397a)].

Harold is made into the expression of the country, and his ambition is a national call to duty. He says (1848: 329a):

> 'I look round in England for the coming king, and all England reflects but my own image.'

The Conqueror himself recognizes that "in the breast of Harold beats the heart of England" [Bulwer Lytton (1848: 261b)].

His voyage to Normandy is an act of family duty (to free hostages), but it is also motivated by his desire to ensure William's friendship, which a Norman emissary makes him believe William is ready to bestow: a snare which leads to the forced oath [Bulwer Lytton (1848: 365b, 360a, 375a)].

And, finally, his burial in unhallowed ground on the seashore, which the Norman narratives see as a supreme insult ("posthumae generationi tam Anglorum quam Normannorum abominabilis eris," Guillaume de Poitiers, II,25), is turned into the supreme honour of identification with the country's soil, "Harold could have chosen no burial spot so worthy his English spirit and his Roman end," [Bulwer Lytton (1848: 481b)]. The final words of the novel celebrate Harold as the champion of Freedom and Justice vindicated in the tribunal of history:

> the tombless shade of the kingly freeman still guards the coasts, and rests upon the sea.

4. *An epic saga*

Harold's "intense nationality" [Bulwer Lytton (1848: 380a)] is the invariant theme of the very different narrative projects of Muntz and Rathbone.

Muntz's novel is a saga narrative, simple, direct, quick-paced, with no elaboration of explanation or motivation: all implicitness. It is the story of two men, Harold and William, their friendship and their rivalry, and their ambition to rule – in William subjectively recognised and self-sanctioned ["God set me in this world to be a ruler. I would rule," Muntz (1949: 97)], in Harold induced by the whole nation and legitimised by the Great Council, who makes him vice-king of England [Muntz (1949: 102)]. The voyage to Normandy is motivated by friendship: after his election to vice-king Harold goes to Normandy to offer and seek personal friendship. And the friendship is accepted and reciprocated, but William does not renounce his ambition ["I shall have Harold's friendship, and England too," Muntz (1949: 135)].

When he asks leave of king Edward, Harold adduces a desire to sail and go fishing ("I have a sea-longing on me"), but Edward guesses the real reason and warns him [Muntz (1949: 110-1)]:

> 'Madness, madness […]. You do not know the man. Never trust yourself in his hands […]. If you go […] I can foresee you will be ruined and all England also.'

The novel closes on a heroic note which is introduced, again saga-like, through a piece of embedded poetry. After Harold's death his retainers strengthen themselves for the last stand by singing the final lines of *The Battle of Maldon*, "Soul shall be stronger, spirit be keener […]" [Muntz (1949: 337)]. As is well-known, William of Malmesbury has the Normans chant the *Song of Roland* before the battle of Hastings, both as incitement to valour and affirmation of divine legitimation. *The Battle of Maldon* celebrates valour in defeat – and defeat due to the fortunes of war, not to God's judgment (or at least the fragmentary nature of the poem leaves this out of the frame).
The novel has a dedication to Winston Churchill, "in remembrance of 1940".

5. *A heritage of family grudges*

Muntz is no less epic than Bulwer Lytton: both novels explicate what they see as the intrinsic nobility of the past they narrate – political, ethical and religious. The legend of Edward's sanctity is part of that nobility, and the two novelists accept it in the past's own terms. They have no use for that disbelief which we would see as the mark of the modern. They take no hint from William of Malmesbury, who is obviously bound to that legend but does not close his eyes to more earthly motivations of character or behaviour.

From the reticence of his sources William infers a heritage of family grudges in the behaviour of Edward the Confessor, whose mother, Emma, had remarried another conqueror of the English, Cnut. William describes Emma as swollen with grudge against her first husband ("In maritum tumebat," ch. 166; in the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, certainly commissioned by her, Emma's first husband, and Edward's father, Æthelred, is not even mentioned). And he later completes the characterization by adding that she had passed down her hatred of the father to the child, "hereditario […] odio parentis in prolem" (ch. 196). The victim of this grudge, Edward, manages to conceive one of his own against another relative, his wife's father, the powerful Godwine, Edward's own king-maker; and William advances an outrageous possibility about Edward's chastity, one of the foundations of the legend of his sanctity and, of course, one of the causes of the Norman conquest: Edward had not known his wife "virili more" either out of hatred for her family or from a love of chastity. A Freudian could not have done better.[5] Notice the formulation (ch. 197):

[5] Muntz (1949: 7) glosses over the outrageous possibilities by having Edward say: "Edith is not as her father and the rest. She too was overborne. We made a vow together, she and I, to keep our maidenhood in his despite."

> quod an familiae illius odio […] an amore castitatis fecerit, pro certo compertum non habeo.

The statement comes just before the warning about the "ancipitous way of narration", and its very phrasing is a model of ancipity.

6. *Debunking all traditional pieties, except one*

The hint is taken by Rathbone, and is developed into a thoroughgoing debunking of traditional pieties. Edward's sainthood is simply a form of religious aestheticism [Rathbone (1997: 127)], and he dies farting, after having plotted to leave England in Norman hands in exchange of a promise of canonization [Rathbone (1997: 256, 247-8)]. Harold's voyage to Normandy is a calculated snare laid by Edward and his Norman councillor to put Harold in William's hands: it is Edward's retaliation against the Godwins [Rathbone (1997: 131, 122-3)]. Edward has been the lover of Harold's brother, Tostig, who was prostituted to him in order to advance the Godwin family. Godwin himself has raped his daughter Edith, who is the lover of her brother Harold.

Sex – utriusque Veneris – is used in the novel as a form of desecration. But also as genuine eros: eros of the landscape ["all so rich, so teeming, so crowded with life […], the fecundity of it all," Rathbone (1997: 140)], and eros of the narration itself as repossession of the past.

And the thing repossessed is the England of mutual responsibilities as against the Normandy of oppression and ideology: England as "a self-regulating system", "an intricate web of interconnections and interdependencies" in which "all were entitled to have their say" [Rathbone (1997: 98-9)]. The desecration stops short of this England, of which Harold is the true expression.

Rathbone's novel reverts to Walter Scott's formula of having a fictitious character in the foreground, Walt, a housecarl of Harold's, who has survived his lord and is traumatised by guilt and bitterness for an unrealised existence: a Wanderer after Maldon, as it were – a retainer who did not manage to die with his lord. The narration proceeds through analepses, both Walt's and the external narrator's. Walt is given an interlocutor, Quint, a rationalistic, sceptical ex-monk who represents the intrusion of the modern point of view into the world of the eleventh century. He psychoanalyses Walt; and the juggler Taillefer does the same for William of Normandy, seen as "anally obsessed" [Rathbone (1997: 316)]: and the Conquest acquires a mock-heroic, farcical side.

The final perspective of the novel is not that of hero-celebration or political history. Hastings is seen as a turning point of English civilisation, from the ethos of war to hedonistic self-fulfilment [Rathbone (1997: 378)]:

> the civilisation of the English reached its zenith – it turned its back on the savagery of war and embraced hedonistic willingness to live as well as one can and help others to do the same. And – at that moment its decline began.

7. *The invariant theme*

The three novels form a strange trio, in which a strong family likeness emerges through the most disparate differences of genre. Bulwer Lytton gives to the events and characters of eleventh century England the enhancement and amplification of his classical models: in a way his is the belated answer to the Norman panegyric of Guillaume de Poitiers, who magnified the Conqueror above the heroes of classical history and fiction – and made out Harold as Hector and Turnus against William's Achilles and Aeneas (II.22). Muntz chooses the sobriety and equanimity of saga narrative, and a parallel-life format that might have been inspired by the bipartite structure of *The Bayeux Tapestry*. The classical and the northern models are both close to the cultural world of the eleventh century; Rathbone, on the other hand, is a postmodernist deconstruction of that world through the cultural tenets of the twentieth century (scepticism, psychoanalysis, complexity…). But he, too, shares with the other two novelists a common Harold, whom all three portray as the embodiment of the values of English civil society. Their collectively ancipitous narrations fork in on the same social portrait – and national identity.

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Njáls saga *as a novel: four aspects of rewriting*

Summary. Inspired by *Njáls saga* and *Laxdæla saga*, the novel *Fire in the Ice* by American novelist Dorothy James Roberts is one of numerous modern rewritings of classical and medieval literature. With her works Roberts joined a diverse group of nineteenth and twentieth century writers who borrowed plots and themes from Iceland's early literature in their own works. The earlier adaptations were often influenced by the nationalistic and racial concerns of the rewriters, but the tides had changed when *Fire in the Ice* was published in 1961. By then the sagas were celebrated as remarkable works of art, even as milestones in the history of World Literature. "The best Icelandic Sagas," writes Roberts in her preface, "approach the finest of modern novels, and are more closely related to them than to the European literature of their time." With this statement in mind, four important aspects of Roberts' rewriting are explored.

> Often she was the worse for ale when she stumbled to bed in the morning watch. Now and then when a man tempted her she gave herself to him, but in this she was careful not to be headlong. [...] Within a year she began to look her age. Within two years she was no longer quite slender. Within five she had passed the point at which a season of self-restraint and spare living could recoup the losses her beauty suffered. She had studied her beauty since she was old enough to learn she was female, and she knew the signs of ruin beginning to show themselves, and she grieved. But I am still able to walk past men crowding around a young girl and steal all their eyes, she thought, I am forty and I have yet to meet the woman who can be first when I am in the room. [Roberts (1961: 291–292)].

This passage is not from the unauthorized biography of a withering Hollywood actress, even though the character in question has survived three marriages and two husbands. No, we are monitoring the thoughts of the medieval Icelandic saga heroine Hallgerður Höskuldsdóttir as presented in the second half of the novel *Fire in the Ice* by Dorothy James Roberts. Hallgerda, as Roberts (1961: 290) re-names her, is at that point suffering the ruin of her marriage with Gunnar of Hliðarendi "like a bewildering animal in the murk of her thoughts". Inspired by two Icelandic Family Sagas (*Íslendingasögur*),

Laxdæla saga and *Njáls saga*, the novel was published in 1961, when Roberts was fifty-eight and a well-known novelist. The daughter of a West Virginia oil producer, she had done her graduate work in medieval and Arthurian literature, specializing in the legend of Tristan and Isolde, which was the source of her most popular historical novel, *The Enchanted Cup*, published in 1953.

Fire in the Ice is one of numerous modern rewritings of classical Icelandic literature. For the most part, such texts have enjoyed only limited and rather negative critical attention. But recent developments in the fields of translation and reception studies stress the cultural impact of such translations and adaptations of classical texts. As Bassnett and Lefevere (1990: 10) have pointed out, such "'rewritings' are at least as influential in ensuring the survival of a work of literature as the originals […]. One might even take the next step and say that if a work is not 'rewritten' in one way or another, it is not likely to survive its publication date by all that many years, or even months." From this perspective, Roberts' novel is a part of an extensive textual tradition originating in Iceland during the Middle Ages and continually extending its borders to embrace different cultures and literary genres.

With her rewriting of *Laxdæla saga* and *Njáls saga*, Roberts joined a diverse group of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and American writers who used plots and themes from Iceland's early literature. Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Niebelungen* in Germany, Henrik Ibsen's historical plays in Norway and William Morris's epic poem "The Lovers of Gudrun" are only a few works in an amazingly large corpus. *Njáls saga* alone has inspired children's versions, dramatizations for stage and radio, illustrations, music, and poems.[1]

Many of the earlier adaptations of *Njáls saga* were influenced by the nationalistic concerns of the rewriters, who celebrated pan-Scandinavian, Germanic, or Teutonic cultural values and racial attributes. In his preface to *Heroes of Iceland*, an American abridgement of *Njáls saga*, Allen French (1905: xxi) claimed for instance that the archetypal saga hero represented "with slight differences, all the old nations of Teutonic stock, and in this picture of him the modern Scandinavian, Englishman, German and native born American can see the strength of the root from which they spring." This ideology was taken to its extreme during the Nazi era in Germany with, for in-

[1] On the post-medieval reception of the eddas and the sagas in Europe see e.g.: Wawn (1994), (2000), (2005). On the rewriting of *Njáls saga* see e.g.: Helgason (1998), (1999), (2001).

stance, individual saga scholars defending Icelanders' exposure of infants in heathen times with reference to eugenics.[2]

But the tide had changed when Roberts published her work. In the post-war period the sagas have been celebrated primarily as remarkable works of art, even as milestones in the history of World Literature. "The best Icelandic Sagas," wrote Roberts (1961: viii) in her preface to *Fire in the Ice*, "approach the finest of modern novels, and are more closely related to them than to the European literature of their time." With this statement in mind, I intend to look briefly at four aspects of Roberts' rewriting: (1) her sense of history, (2) her sense of geography, (3) her sense of narration, and finally (4) her sense of audience. It turns out that her work, somewhat ironically, illustrates why and how the Icelandic sagas need to be rewritten to enter the realm of the modern novel.

First, however, I want to dwell briefly on the positive criticism *Fire in the Ice* attracted in the United States in the early 1960s.[3] "The novel is one of those increasingly rare historicals that do not exploit history but contribute to our understanding of a time and a people," wrote P. A. Duhamel for the *New York Times Book Review*. His colleague writing for *Kirkus Reviews* struck a similar note, claiming that Roberts' novel was "almost obsessively concerned with the minutiae of a way of life. Granted a Kristin Lavransdatter as focus, it might do for ancient Iceland what Sigrid Undset's book did for Norway." Orville Prescott of *The New York Times* similarly found *Fire in the Ice* "somber and splendid", as Roberts had managed to "impose order on the disorderly mass of saga material", first by telling the saga from the point of view of one key character and then by eliminating "many irrelevant scenes, superfluous characters and tiresome genealogical pedigrees." For Prescott, the rewriting surpassed its defective Icelandic sources and could promptly replace them. It is worthwhile to explore his premises.

One of the great challenges in translating the Icelandic sagas in general is that their implied reader is indeed a medieval Icelander, or at least someone who knows the basics of Iceland's early history and culture. Accordingly, many saga translations have been buttressed with commentary on Iceland's settlement, its provincial organizations, public life, parliamentary procedures and the like. The most vivid example of this sort is the first English translation of *Njáls saga*, *The Story of Burnt Njal* translated by Sir George Webbe

[2] Cf. Bollason (1990: 89-100). On the reception of the eddas and sagas in twentieth-century Germany see e.g.: See (1970) and Zernack (1994).
[3] All quotations from reviews of *Fire in the Ice* are from *Book Review Digest* (1962: 1197).

Dasent (1861). It was originally published in two volumes totaling around 900 pages. Of these, only 600 were devoted to the translation, and the rest to Dasent's preface, introduction and appendices, all of which were designed to prepare those who knew nothing about Iceland and its sagas.[4] Even in children's versions like *The Story of Gunnar* by Beatrice E. Clay (1907: 24), one finds an introduction addressing issues such as the "dwellings of the medieval Icelanders" with explanations such as the following: "The homestead in which these people lived consisted of several buildings surrounded by the 'tun,' i.e. the enclosure or homefields."

Roberts (1961: 6) approaches this problem of the sagas' historical context in a different manner. An example from the opening of *Fire in the Ice* illustrates her method. The reader is introduced to Hallgerda when she is ten years old, sitting in her mother's "wool house" at the farm of Hoskuldstead. When she becomes tired, she is permitted to go outside:

> Hallgerda wanted to run to her mother and kiss her, but kissing, like weeping, was a sign of her light mind. She followed the nurse outdoors and stopped to draw a breath.
> Hoskuldstead stood above the Laxa River on the hill slope which made the southern side of the valley. Her father's seat was a cluster of buildings, the gabled fire hall, the home dairy, the stables and barns, the stout, locked storehouse, the wool house and loft above it which was used as the women's quarters. The long, narrow houses faced south, and were either built against each other or communicated by short paths and passages. All were constructed of blocks of porous lava rock, and to keep out the wind, their side walls were covered with thick slabs of turf, now grown over with brown-green autumn grass.

Apart from the first two sentences, this text might have been a part of an introduction, but being a novelist, Roberts simply unites plot and commentary. Generally, her historical data are fairly accurate and presented as a natural part of the narrative.

A different but related concern for non-Icelandic saga readers is the reality of Iceland's geography. In many modern editions and translations of the sagas, this reality is presented through maps and even illustrations and photographs that are to help the reader connect narrative and landscape. Ever since the 1860s, many authors of Icelandic travelogues have attempted to make the same connection. Here, the primary example is *A Pilgrimage to the Saga-*

[4] For further discussion on Dasent's translation cf. Wawn (2000: 142-168) and Helgason (1999: 47-64).

Steads of Iceland by painter W. G. Collingwood and Jón Stefánsson. This "picture book", as Collingwood and Stefánsson (1899: v) explained in their preface, was designed to supply "the background of scenery" for some major Icelandic Family Sagas. The idea was to help "the modern reader, out of Iceland" to "*stage* these dramas, to *visualise* the action and events." A whole chapter is devoted to the district where most of *Njáls saga* takes place, and another chapter to the field of Þingvellir where, as almost every Family Saga will illustrate, the medieval parliament gathered each summer.

Another example might be William Morris's *Icelandic Journals*, in which the author describes a visit to Þingvellir in the summer of 1871. Morris (1996: 30) writes:

> My heart beats, so please you, as we near the bow of the pass […] for this is the heart of Iceland that we are going to see: nor was the reality of the sight unworthy; the pass showed long and winding from the brow, with jagged dark hills showing over the nearer banks of it as you went on, and betwixt them was an open space with a great unseen but imagined plain between you and the great lake that you saw glittering far away under huge peaked hills of bright blue with gray-green sky above them, Hengill the highest of them, from the hot spring on whose flank rose into the air a wavering column of show-white steam.

I have chosen this passage because a strikingly similar description occurs in *Fire in the Ice* when Roberts (1960: 238) describes Hallgerda's visit to Þingvellir:

> Yet in time they began to see the plain of Thingmeads over the pitch of the near hills. And now they perceived how the parliament site was ringed by mountains. To the south, rising above lesser eminencies, stood Hengill, crowned with an immaculate plume of steam. And far beyond Armansfell in the north brooded the snowy dome of Skialdbreid. Above Mossfell Heath the road dropped into a smooth, grass-grown plain. The view shortened, and the lava abruptly ended.

Descriptions of this sort imply that *Fire in the Ice* is not only a disguised lesson in Iceland's early history but also a travelogue written for people with limited knowledge of Iceland's geography.

The third reason for the positive critical reception of *Fire in the Ice* is that Roberts transforms the impersonal and understated narrative style of the two sagas in accordance with the accepted poetics of the modern novel. Consistent with Henry James' well-known discussion of 'center of consciousness'

in *The Art of the Novel*, *Fire in the Ice* is written in the third person but primarily limited to the perspective of Hallgerda. The difference between the two styles is apparent in a dramatic scene set at Þingvellir as Hallgerda presents herself to her future husband, Gunnar of Hlíðarendi. In Magnus Magnusson's and Hermann Pálsson's (1960: 93) popular translation of *Njáls saga* from 1960, the story goes like this:

> One day, as he was walking from the Law Rock, Gunnar went down past the Mosfell booth. There he saw some well-dressed women coming towards him; the one in the lead was the best dressed of all. As they met, this woman at once greeted Gunnar. He made a friendly reply, and asked her who she was. She said her name was Hallgerd.

The events are being reported here as seen by someone who is following Gunnar and is able to listen to his and Hallgerd's conversation. In Roberts' (1961: 245) novel, however, we follow Hallgerda as she tricks some young women to walk with her toward Gunnar's quarters, and also enter her cunning mind.

> "Come with us, Hallgerda," said one of them.
> "Not I, I'm not interested in catching any man's eye."
> "But you're a married woman, you – you will –"
> "Protect you? I suppose it wouldn't be suitable for you just to run out and stare. I'll go for your sakes."
> They were delighted to be involved in a romantic plot, especially with a woman their mothers did not approve of. "Don't giggle and give him flirtatious looks," she cautioned them. "We must seem to be enjoying a little stroll in the air."
> They were childishly awkward and obvious. She moved among them gravely, thinking, if girls between fourteen and seventeen realized their gifts, if they could learn to walk, avoid grimaces, be mindful that light reflects on smooth hair but makes wool of hair allowed to bounce about their heads, what luck would even beautiful older women have?
> They approached Gunnar. Hallgerda let her eyes show a flicker of surprise.
> "What woman are you?" Gunnar said.

This passage gives an idea of Roberts' narrative control. The sentence "Hallgerda *let her* eyes show a flicker of surprise," for instance, carries a meaning quite different from "Hallgerda's eyes showed a flicker of surprise" that would be closer to the traditional saga style.

Finally, Roberts' implied audience is culturally different from the medieval implied reader of the original sagas. At the beginning of this essay, I intro-

duced Hallgerda, as portrayed in *Fire in the Ice*, in an alcoholic, adulterous state of mind, but another depiction might be found in her conversation with her brother, Olaf Peacock, at the end of Robert's (1961: 317) novel. Gunnar has been killed and Hallgerda is a widow for the third time. Olaf asks her how she is doing:

> "Me, I am getting old." But she watched him, to see denial in his eyes.
> "This fate overtakes us all in time."
> "Though I am hardly gray," she added.
> "I do not see a single gray hair."
> "Why did you say I was getting old, then?"
> He laughed at her. "I did not say it, you did."
> "But you agreed with me."

Conversations of this sort were probably the primary source of annoyance for the critic who reviewed *Fire in the Ice* for the *New York Herald Tribune*. He or she complained that Roberts' portrait of Hallgerda fused "elements of past and present, and in spite of the author's best efforts, the alloy does not ring true. Hallgerda's thoughts and motivations are not quite those of a modern woman, and seem likewise to be not quite those of an Icelandic woman of a thousand years ago". I am inclined to agree with the critic on this issue, but such an analysis needs qualification. In my view, every modern reading of the Icelandic sagas, even in the original language, is bound to fuse elements of past and present, as the reading is shaped by the reader's background, including age and gender. From this perspective, *Fire in the Ice* highlights our general tendency to comprehend literature through terms and forms that correspond to our personal experiences and various contemporary cultural conventions.

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Re-writing the contemporary sagas. How several modern novelists use Sturlunga saga

Summary. This article studies four recent novels which all belong to the genre of historical fiction and which all use "sagas of contemporaries" as sources, i.e. accounts of real events of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries written down by contemporaries. Issues of literary technique are discussed as well as the ethics of transforming real persons who lived in the past into characters in a story. It is argued that though authors are free to do what they want, a claim can be made for literary value on the basis of the care with which they treat their sources as well as the respect they show for the memory of individuals from the past. Various techniques of writing are discussed and evaluated depending on how well they succeed in bringing to life the distant past, avoiding anachronism as well as meeting the ethical standards argued for in the article.

The literature of medieval Iceland is incredibly diverse for such a small population.[1] Not only are there different forms of poetry on a variety of subjects. There are also works of history and about different types of knowledge: grammar, law, and mythology. In addition there is a great variety of narrative literature or what we call *sagas*. Legendary sagas tell us mythical-heroic tales of Viking warriors from the distant past of the Nordic countries. King's sagas give us an overview of the history of Norway and Denmark from mythical times to the thirteenth century. There are sagas of bishops, of saints, of knights. The greatest – or at least the most famous – of the sagas are the so-called Sagas of Icelanders, stories written in the thirteenth and fourteenth century but which take place in the period from the discovery and settlement of Iceland in the late ninth century until the country was converted to Christianity in the year 1000. Some of these sagas are to be counted among major works of literature: *Njáls saga*, *Egils saga* or *Laxdæla saga*.

Finally, there is one group of sagas, which are particularly hermetic to modern readers. They are the so-called contemporary sagas; sagas written in the

[1] The population during the period in which the flowering of the medieval literature occurred is estimated by historians to have ranged between thirty-five and seventy thousand. See Gunnar Karlsson (2000: 44-51).

thirteenth century and which describe contemporary events. They are of different types. Some of them focus on a given character, a real person who lived at a certain time and who played and important role in Icelandic society for a given period. Others are more occupied with the history of a family or concentrate on a particular series of events. Most of them were collected together into one compilation in the early fourteenth century, called the *Sturlunga saga*.

"Sturlungar" is the name of a family that rose to prominence in Iceland during the first half of the thirteenth century, a period in which Icelandic society was undergoing transformations that would lead to the country becoming formally a part of the kingdom of Norway in 1262 to 1264. The compilation focuses on individuals of this family, for example its founder Sturla Þórðarson, and his three sons, among which the youngest, Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), is the most famous, not for his political activities in thirteenth century Iceland, but for the literary works which he is credited for having written.

The picture of Icelandic society given by the *Sturlunga saga* is both vivid and complex. The times are interesting, mainly because there are difficult issues of power which are dealt with through politicking, legal maneuvering and by the use of force. Also, the members of the Icelandic upper class, which are literally at each other's throats during the period, are all more or less related. This gives the struggle for power an even more tragic flavor. Finally, this is the period in which Icelandic medieval literature flourished and even though very little is said of it directly in the *Sturlunga saga*, there are different signs which tell us not only that the fight for power went on in a highly literate culture but also that this literature was intimately related to other aspects of the life of Icelandic lay aristocrats of the thirteenth century.[2]

Despite all of this, and a certain number of memorable characters that are portrayed in *Sturlunga saga*, writers have rather little used it after the novel became the principal literary form in the nineteenth century. The sagas of kings and, even more, the sagas of Icelanders have been rewritten or used as models for novelists, for example *Njáls saga*, like Jón Karl Helgason studies in his contribution to this volume, or *Hrafnkels saga*, as Massimiliano Bampi does in his. The explanation for this is the sheer mass of the *Sturlunga saga* text, the number of its characters as well as the complexity of its narration. Also, the fact that it is a compilation of several sagas, which are sometimes fragmentary, makes reading the saga even more complicated. Last but not

[2] On the relationship between literature and society in thirteenth-century Iceland see Tulinius (2004).

least, the authors are telling of events that took place in their lifetimes. Therefore they assume that the audience already knows a great deal of background information, which of course is not true for modern day readers.

In the year 1988 a new edition was published of the *Sturlunga saga* in Reykjavík.[3] This edition not only made the text accessible to a whole new group of readers, since the previous one was from 1946. The new edition was also equipped with indexes, genealogical charts, maps, diagrams and all kinds of useful information, opening up to the reader the extremely interesting world of the Sturlung period. This was a collective endeavor of a team of scholars working with an ambitious editor and was commercially successful. It also had quite an impact on novel writing in Iceland, as I will now explain. Indeed, in the nineties and onwards, a series of historical novels were published by three Icelandic novelists and one Norwegian, that staged characters and events from the *Sturlunga saga*. I am sure that – at least for the Icelandic ones – this would not have taken place if the aforesaid edition had not drawn their attention to this wonderful historical source and made it accessible to them. I would like to consider these four novels from the perspective of issues I believe important for our subject, the "rewriting of medieval literature".

First, I will take a look at the literary technique. The four authors are writing at the end of a period of extraordinary inventiveness in the art of telling stories. The tradition of the modern novel puts at the disposal of the writer an incredibly diverse array of narrative techniques. I will look at each of the novels and what techniques of the modern novel the authors use to make these long dead characters come to life. Then I will go on and relate this to some ethical questions. Does it matter how the authors treat the events and characters of the saga, if the events really took place and the characters were not characters but persons of flesh and blood who once breathed the same air we breathe and walked on the same volcanic soil Icelanders walk on today? In other words, does the fact that *Sturlunga saga* is not a medieval work of art but of history put some limitations on what the authors can do?

My opinion is that texts such as *Sturlunga saga* have a different status from more fictional texts such as *Njáls saga* or *Hrafnkels saga*, and even more so, legendary material such as *Beowulf* or the *Nibelungen* material. In the former, we are dealing with real people – albeit alive eight hundred years ago – which left a vivid account of themselves. We owe it to them to give them as much space to exist outside of our definitions, our preconceptions, our cli-

[3] Örnólfur Thorsson *et al.* (1988).

chés, as we can. This applies not only to the writing of literary fiction but also to those of us who are trying to write the fiction of history. At the same time – and this is the paradox in which we live, novelists, historians and readers – these long dead people can only exist through the fictions we create.

I believe that the only way to deal with this paradox is by creating what could be called a dialogic text. By that I mean that the author is conscious of the fact that he is necessarily subjective in his perception, and therefore rendering, of the past material. This subjectivity must be made apparent since it cannot be avoided. But at the same time the author must show the utmost respect for what the sources he is working on tell him. Dialogue with the past must be his aim, rather than imposing his view of it to his readers.

It is obvious that I have some strong opinions on this subject that I know are debatable. I believe, however, that I can substantiate them through an analysis of the four novels under study. I will begin by presenting each of them and addressing the two issues, literary and ethical.

1. *The Little Horse*

I will start with the Norwegian one. Its title in the original language is *Den lille hesten*, the little horse, and the novelist's name is Thorvald Steen (b. 1954). He is quite a successful author in Norway, especially in the field of the historical novel. His first novel, *Don Carlos*, was about Charles Darwin and took place in the nineteenth century. His second novel was about a Norwegian king's trip to Constantinople around the year 1100 and drew on the medieval Icelander's, Snorri Sturluson's, chronicle of the kings of Norway, better known as *Heimskringla*. This brought his attention to the character of Snorri Sturluson who as a cultural figure is equally important for Icelanders and Norwegians, but not for the same reasons. In Iceland, he is remembered as a great author, but also as an ambiguous figure, ready to subject himself to the Norwegian king to further his own ambitions instead of defending Iceland's sovereignty. For Norwegians, he is known as the great historian whose work *Heimskringla* is at the core of their national identity.

As has already been said, we know a lot about Snorri, who is one of the main protagonists of *Sturlunga saga*. Indeed, the saga tells us his date of birth, where he was brought up and about many of the main events in his life, such as his wedding, his children, when and sometimes how he acquired various

parts of his domains, his travels abroad, his dealings with other chieftains and much more. It also describes the circumstances of his violent death. Steen's novel concentrates on the five final days of his life. Historical sources don't tell us what exactly happened during those days and Stein feels free to weave his own plot into them, on the basis of other elements of Snorri's biography. He does this by using a narrative technique that focalizes, though not exclusively, on Snorri's consciousness. He is walking around his estate, trying to write, talking to people. Mostly, however, he is thinking about the past. In order to do this, Steen invents a narrative voice, that of Snorri, which is engaged in a sort of interior monologue, however in the third person. Through these meandering reminiscences, the author describes Snorri's relationship with his unruly son Órækja and invokes scenes from the past, most of them invented, to substantiate his interpretation of the young man as a deeply disturbed character. He invents a mistress for Snorri called Margrét. Finally, he imagines that Snorri is trying to write a self-justificatory book where he defends himself against the accusations of his enemies, not only in Iceland, but also in the rest of medieval Europe.

At the same time, things are happening around Snorri that will eventually lead to his death, though he does not realize this. He is aware of some of these events but not of all. The latter are told in a conventional third person narrative. The most surprising of these – and this is totally invented by Stein – is that Pope Gregory IX is trying to get in touch with him in order to ask him to unite Norway and Iceland and lead a crusade to the Holy Land. However, Snorri's enemies in Iceland intercept the messengers and Snorri dies without knowing anything about this.

Den lille hesten is in many ways a well written and interesting novel. It uses the medieval sources quite extensively and usually accurately as far as individual events taken from them are concerned. However, it does not satisfy me, neither as a reader of novels or as a connoisseur of the contemporary sagas and the historical research that has developed around them. As a novel reader, I find the inner monologue rather primitive. It is often just a retelling of events disguised as a monologue. Consequently it makes too many assumptions based on a poorly informed picture of Snorri's times. Therefore the author becomes quite often guilty of anachronisms. The major one has to do with the way he constructs Snorri as an author. He transposes, barely changed, the literary world of the last two or three centuries, in which books are published in vernacular languages and authors can rapidly achieve an international readership, to the medieval world where books are painstakingly copied by hand and where there is no such thing as publishers or even

a reading public in any way comparable to what we know today. In short he views Snorri through very recent ideas of what it is to be a writer and of his role within society.

This is the basis for Thorvald Stein's idea of Snorri's international reputation that could make it plausible for him to be asked to play a role in European affairs. There is nothing to substantiate this in what we really know of Snorri's life. Indeed, all of it is very unlikely, since there is no evidence of Snorri or his works having traveled outside of the Nordic world during his lifetime and no obvious reason for foreigners to this world to take an interest in works such as *Heimskringla* or *Edda*. An important basis for the plot of *Den lille hesten*, i.e. the idea of Snorri intending to write a self-justificatory work of fiction aimed at an international reading public, is therefore highly improbable for the least. To my mind, this undermines the relevance of the book as a historical novel.

This brings me to the ethical issues I mentioned earlier. What could be the *raison d'être* of a historical novel? To put it differently, why write stories about people and events that really existed in the past, when you have history? The reason must be that the novel form brings us some kind of increased understanding of events and people of the past in ways not available to historians. Novelists have at their disposal narrative techniques, which enable them to bring them to life in the minds of readers. In addition, they can use their imagination in a less restrained way than historians, and invent scenes and episodes, even characters or events, that did not actually happen. In my opinion this can foster an increased proximity, and therefore an understanding, of the past. One condition must be fulfilled, however, and that is that the author's inventions be historically plausible. This has to do with the ethics of the relationship between author and reader: the implicit contract between reader and author of a historical novel is that the latter give as well-informed representation as possible of the period in which he sets his action. Why else should he write historical novels and not fantasy?

I would also argue that there is an ethical relationship with the people described, i.e. that the author must also commit to giving as honest a picture of these long dead people as he can. I do not believe he does this in the case of many of the characters. This is perhaps the most blatant in the case of Órækja, Snorri's son. In exploiting this character, Stein uses information from *Sturlunga saga* that there was considerable conflict between father and son. However, though the real Órækja often created trouble for himself and sometimes for his father, he was far from being the brute that Stein portrays.

Though his picture of a painful relationship between father and son is not without interest *per se*, it has no relevance to that which existed between the real Órækja and Snorri.

Even though they lived almost eight centuries ago, it can be considered an ethical duty not to deform their image, and project onto it preoccupations – and even less the preconceptions – of the present. The image Stein creates of them is his fabrication and one can ask oneself why he did not simply develop fictional characters if he wanted to explore a difficult father-son relationship rather than exploiting events from the lives of real persons as he does in *Den lille hesten*.

2. *The Rejoicing of Our Enemies*

The next novel is by the Icelandic novelist Einar Kárason (b. 1955). He is a successful writer in Iceland and quite a few of his works have been published in foreign translations, mainly into the Nordic languages and German. This is true of the novel under study. Its title, *Óvinafagnaður*, translates literally as "the joy of enemies" and is used when one party of a conflict plays into the hands of the opposing one by mistakes or because of inner strife. *Óvinafagnaður* also exploits the *Sturlunga saga* material and is indeed a tale of conflict and strife.

It is not Snorri who is in focus but his nephew Þórður Sighvatsson and the main action takes place after Snorri's death in 1241. A few years earlier, Þórður's father and Snorri's brother, Sighvatur Sturluson and four of his sons have been killed in a battle against the same people who planned Snorri's assassination. During all this period, Þórður has been abroad, serving the king of Norway. In 1242, he returns to Iceland to claim his inheritance but ends up by gaining control over all of the country.

This is a wonderful story of an individual achieving victory against all odds and is full of adventurous events such as a breath-taking pursuit through a snowstorm and a naval battle out on one of Iceland's larger fjords. All of this material is taken from the saga but the narrative technique used is quite distinctive and unlike that used by the Icelandic medieval authors. Indeed, each successive chapter has a different narrator who is one of the characters of the story. This enables the author to tell his story as a patchwork of different points of view. This is a technique one has seen occasionally in recent years. Examples I know of are novels by André Brink and Graham Swift. How-

ever, it derives ultimately from Faulkner's *Sound and Fury*, one of whom Kárason dedicates the book to.

It was perhaps not a good idea to draw the reader's attention to the American Nobel Prize winner, because Kárason's mastery of the technique pales in comparison with Faulkner's. The older writer creates a unique voice for each of his narrators, a voice which not only shows differences in wording and education, as well as point of view, but also through his mastery of language suggests to his readers the basic emotional composition of each of the characters. The most famous *tour de force* is of course Faulkner's rendering of Benji's voice, the mentally handicapped brother of Caddy, the young and beautiful girl who is the absent center of the novel as a whole.

In the Icelandic novel, each of the narrators does have a distinctive voice. However, the differences do not come through, except in quite a superficial way. This is due to two things, in my opinion. On the one hand, Kárason does not avail himself of opportunities given to him by the resources of the medieval language, using instead modern ways of expressing oneself for his characters. This leads to a flattening out of the differences between modern readers and medieval characters. Indeed, one sometimes does not know whether the characters are from the Middle Ages, from the late twentieth century, or maybe come out of a Western, a point I will come back to later.

On the other hand, Kárason does not use the narrative technique of "stream of consciousness" which was the one Faulkner developed and is of course eminently suited to representing individual subjectivities, be it their particular vision of events or things, their emotional states or idiosyncrasies. Instead, each narrator is just reporting the events as he sees them. Of course, he has his own view of them and expresses his emotional reaction to them. However, it has nothing to do with the mystery of recreating through language the inner life of different subjects that Faulkner masters so well. The use of multiple narrators in *Óvinafagnaður* is therefore more of a gimmick than it serves an artistic purpose. It is a shame because, as we shall see in the case of the next novel under study, the technique of stream of consciousness, though difficult, leads to quite satisfactory results in the writing of historical fiction.

Before leaving Kárason's novel, however, a few words are necessary about the ethical dimensions of his attempt to rewrite the particular part of *Sturlunga saga* that tells of Þórður Sighvatsson. First, he does not seem to rely so much on the original text as on a re-telling of the story by an Icelandic writer

of history, Ásgeir Jakobsson.[4] This leads him to make serious historical mistakes that are detrimental to his story, not only because of the deformation they bring to the lives of real people, but also because they allow stereotypes to replace reality. Two examples illustrate this: Þórður is portrayed as a recovering alcoholic. There is absolutely nothing to substantiate this in the medieval sources. However, there is a tradition dating probably only from the nineteenth century concerning his drunkenness. Kárason seizes this opportunity to inscribe Þórður's unlikely victory over his enemies in the well-known western movie stereotype of the alcoholic hero who sobers up and defeats his enemies. This does not add any substance to the character of Þórður. Indeed, being a stereotype he becomes less interesting as a character in a novel.

The same goes for Þórður's mother. For some reason, Kárason chooses to describe her plight after her husband's defeat and the killing of most of her sons as becoming that of a beggar woman, wandering from one part of the country to another. Not only is this not in conformity with what the sources tell us, but the mere idea of it reveals a serious lack of understanding of the society in which the people of the period evolve. Indeed, a person of the stature of Þórður's mother would never have been left without any means of subsistence. She was a part of the aristocracy, a close relation of many of the most powerful men in the country. The society would never have allowed that she has to beg in order to survive. The truth is that, after the death of her husband and four of her sons, she was given a large farm for her and her retinue.

Here Kárason is also being tempted by easy stereotypes. The wandering mother is a motif from modern Icelandic literature best illustrated by Halldór Laxness's *Iceland's Bell*. Of course, borrowings such as these are not grave offenses and are not only to be expected but quite legitimate when writing fiction. Historical fiction must however both be good history and good fiction and *Óvinafagnaður* is quite lacking in the former respect.

3. *Cantilena nell'erba*

Thor Vilhjálmsson's *Morgunþula í stráum* (Italian title: *Cantilena nell'erba*) is of quite a different caliber. Vilhjálmsson was born in 1925 and has been one of the most important Icelandic writers for decades. This particular novel received the Icelandic literary prize in 1999. Here, the central charac-

[4] Ásgeir Jakobsson (1988).

ter is Þórður's older brother, Sturla Sighvatsson. This nephew of Snorri Sturluson is one of the most interesting figures of the thirteenth century. He is an aristocrat and has many personal characteristics that enable him to fit well into the ideal image of a leader in that period. He is handsome, knows how to use his weapons and is not afraid to wield them. He is also a good leader of men. In addition, he seems to apply himself to conforming to the way of life of the medieval aristocrat. Like his uncle Snorri, he also has a taste for literature. Indeed, the mention that is made in *Sturlunga saga* of Sturla having Snorri's books copied for his own use is the only contemporary testimony we have of Snorri's literary activities.[5]

Like his uncle, Sturla knows how to behave at a royal court, and like him he ingratiates himself with the Norwegian rulers, when he stops in Bergen on his way to Rome. King Haakon, who is of roughly the same age as Sturla, honors him with his friendship and also assigns him the task of getting Iceland under royal control. Sturla attempts to achieve this aim, but in order to do so, he must use force to coerce other members of the aristocracy, among them many of his close cousins, who are unwilling to submit to his authority.

Snorri is the first to suffer from Sturla's ambition, because Sturla leads an army of over a thousand men into his domain, driving Snorri away and castrating Snorri's son Órækja. Father and son end up fleeing to Norway. Then Sturla tries to force Gissur Þorvaldsson, the leading chieftain of the southern part of Iceland, to swear submission to him. The result is that Gissur turns against him with all his might. Allying himself to Sturla's main competitor for power in the North, he attacks Sturla and kills him, his father and three of his brothers in the already mentioned battle of Örlygsstaðir.

Thor Vilhjálmsson does not tell a continuous story about Sturla. Instead he chooses to represent individual moments of his life. The novel is therefore a patchwork of fragments. Paradoxically, this brings the characters more to life than more conventional story-telling. The reason for this is probably that human existence is not a continuous narrative, but rather a string of events, moments, thoughts and feelings. We are immersed in these fragments that form our present, and do not live our lives as whole narratives, even if we may believe so. Indeed, one can question whether such a narrative exists. Isn't it just something we create afterwards, or even something we use to deceive ourselves? This might be true of Sturla. He probably constructed a narrative about himself in which he ended as ruler of Iceland. The blow inflicted to his head by his enemy Gissur puts an end to that story.

[5] Örnólfur Thorsson *et al.* (1988: 329).

Vilhjálmsson knows the medieval sources very well. Instead of having the characters retell the events through interior monologue, as Kárason does, he uses third person narrative staying however very close to the subjective experience of his main character. The events echo in Sturla's mind as he lives them: a trip on horseback or on a boat, a conversation, a walk through the countryside. At the same time he is also experiencing his environment. Vilhjálmsson's mastery of the literary language serves him well here. He has a strong sensual style and is very good at weaving sights, sounds, feelings, memories, thoughts, fears and desires into a rich textual tapestry which brings his main character to life as a multi-layered and complex human being.

But how does Vilhjálmsson manage to avoid anachronism? Is he dialoguing with the past or is he just mirroring himself (us) in this historical figure? I believe the way he writes brings him much closer to a dialogue than Kárason. The reason is that he manages to create a suggestive tension between the known and the unknown in Sturla's story. We see this in the way he uses the Icelandic landscape, which we can assume has not changed much since the thirteenth century. The way Vilhjálmsson brings this landscape to life in the consciousness of his characters allows the modern reader to relate his experience with Sturla's, without resorting to putting ideas or ways of thinking into his head which were not plausible for a medieval mind. More important is how he uses our unique knowledge of the diverse literature of the thirteenth century, especially the mythology and the sagas of the pagan past, as a basis for comparisons, metaphors, images, and stories that we can assume fueled the imagination of Icelanders during this period.

But it is important not to forget that they were also deeply religious – much more and in a different way from modern people. Sturla was a medieval Catholic who believed that he would either go to Hell or Heaven, eventually after a time spent in Purgatory. Vilhjálmsson knows this and uses it to develop what he sees as a major event and a turning point in Sturla's life. This is the trip he was forced to undertake all the way to Rome in order to obtain the absolution of the pope for having attacked the bishopric of northern Iceland.

During the pilgrimage, Sturla gets acquainted with the unknown. He is himself an unknown person in the foreign lands he travels through. That is why other people's picture of him – so strong and probably limiting – is no longer there both to guide him but also to contain him and tell him who he is. The road to Rome is therefore a sort of way to the self, but Vilhjálmsson's Sturla

does not withstand the pressure and something cracks in him, even though it is not apparent. When he returns to Iceland he is a changed – and in some ways a broken – man. This is Vilhjálmsson's attempt to interpret what seem to be the contradictions in Sturla's behavior during the last years of his life, when he is trying to submit Iceland to his rule. On the one hand he can be very decisive and sometimes quite cruel in his dealings with those he has to vanquish. On the other he is sometimes undecided and does not act in a way necessary for him to achieve his aims. It is this hesitation that leads to his downfall and Vilhjálmsson and the medieval sources seem to agree on this. The reasons for the flaw in his character have to do with his relationship with his father, in Vilhjálmsson's interpretation of Sturla, but are precipitated by what happens to him during the European trip.

Vilhjálmsson does a convincing job of bringing Sturla Sighvatsson to life in his novel. It is of course possible to have divergent opinions on the importance of individual events. For my part, I believe that the prolonged conflict between Sturla and his uncle Snorri Sturluson over control of the Dalir district played a more decisive role than that given to it by Vilhjálmsson. One must not forget that Sturla was ready to attack Snorri and kill him in 1229. We are even told of dreams he dreamt that Snorri would be put in his coffin before Sturla, a dream which did not come true. I also believe that one could go even further than Vilhjálmsson in making the inner life of thirteenth-century Icelanders different to that of a modern reader by using their literature. I would include other types of literary works, not only those which give us an idea of the pagan and heroic past, but also the religious literature of which was so abundant in the contemporary culture. He could also have gone further in staging Sturla as a medieval aristocrat. He is still under the influence of nineteenth and twentieth century scholars who tended to view the chieftains of the Sturlung period as ordinary, though rich, farmers and is not sufficiently aware of the recent literature on the layering of Icelandic society during the period.

Be that as it may, Vilhjálmsson engages in a genuine dialogue with the thirteenth century. The dialogue is useful because it changes our view of Sturla, makes him the catholic European he truly was. He also proposes a historically plausible interpretation of his personality. In addition, he tells a story which is of universal value about the dependence of the self on its image in a small society and how that image can be lost when one travels abroad. It says a lot about what it means to be an Icelander.

4. *The Novel of Iceland*

The final novel is by the Icelandic novelist Pétur Gunnarsson (b. 1947). Though little known abroad, he is one of the most influential writers of his generation, having authored ten novels as well as essays and important translations of French literary works. The work I will turn my attention to here is still not fully published. It has been coming out in separate installments, three of which are already out.

It is in many ways the most original of the four novels studied in this essay. Its collective title is *Skáldsaga Íslands* (The Novel of Iceland) and, indeed, the main character is the country, Iceland, beginning with its emergence from the sea as a result of volcanic eruptions and taking us to — one can presume — modern times. The three volumes, *Myndin af heiminum* (The Image of the World), *Leiðin til Rómar* (The Road to Rome), and *Vélar tímans* (The Engines of Time) that have thus far been published have focused on the natural history of Iceland, its settlement, and medieval times.

Gunnarsson seeks the roots of Icelandic history and culture within the larger context of European Christianity. In a break from the traditional view of Icelandic history, he does not hesitate to develop long chapters on figures such as Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, in many ways the ideological founders of Western culture with its guilt-ridden attitude to sexuality and obsessive interest in introspection; or Boethius and his praise of the consoling powers of philosophy. He even goes farther when, in an effort to understand better the character of the twelfth-century Icelandic historian Ari Þorgilsson fróði (the Wise), he makes a point-by-point comparison between Ari and his contemporary, the French theologian and philosopher Peter Abelard. In so doing, Gunnarsson is telling his readers that if they want to understand what the medieval literature has to tell them about the Icelanders of the first centuries after the Settlement in 874, they must make an effort to learn what was going on in the larger European civilization to which Iceland belonged during that period. Indeed, Iceland was in continual contact with the European continent, as the titles of the volumes imply. The worldview of the Icelanders is essentially a European one, especially if one understands this concept as a general way of constructing and perceiving man and his relationship to God, nature, and himself. During medieval times, when Icelanders were Roman Catholic, the center of this worldview was Rome, and everyone was metaphorically or physically on a pilgrimage to that city.

As a novel, *Skáldsaga Íslands* is a complex construction. In order to deal with the vast scope of the material, Gunnarsson invents a narrator who chiefly tells the story of Iceland and its culture, but also anecdotes about himself, his childhood, his decision to become a writer, and his job as a sailor on a fishing vessel. He is from the present, he might even be Gunnarsson himself, and it is from his perspective that the reader gains a view of the past. In addition, the narrator speaks to another character in the second person. His name is Máni and we are told more extensively about his childhood and youth. Here one can recognize motifs from Gunnarsson's previous work: the broken marriage of the hero's parents, a love-hate relationship with another, socially superior family, or the summer working on a farm. However, Máni's is a sadder and more forlorn experience than is the case of most of Gunnarsson's heroes. His parents divorce and the three brothers are split up, the oldest going to a boarding school, the youngest to his mother, while Máni, the middle child, lives with his widowed grandmother, a seamstress. As a child, Máni spends a lot of time alone and has no one to help him with his sorrow over his parents' separation, his uneasy relations with his mother's new husband, and a gnawing sense of guilt because he is unable to desist from stealing his grandmother's money to buy toy soldiers. There is a sense of abandonment, not felt in Gunnarsson's previous novels. It might arise from the fact that Máni's mother is the reason for the split because of an affair she has had.

In the second volume, the reader does not encounter Máni again until near the end. Before this encounter, the novel recapitulates narratives from Icelandic contemporary sagas, including the sagas of Icelandic bishops and chieftains. These narratives are exceptional in giving life to characters that are barely sketched out in the medieval sources. The danger of this approach would be to elaborate too much by giving the characters borrowed from the medieval sources feelings, opinions, and sensations that we cannot know they had, and would likely be a mere reflection of our own. Gunnarsson chooses to add as little as possible to his material, but rather to give it life by situating it in its proper contexts, both the Icelandic and the larger European ones. He does, however, allow himself an occasional flight of fancy, inventing for example a meeting between Einar Hafliðason, an Icelandic cleric who we know traveled to meet the pope in Avignon in the fourteenth century, and Petrarca, one of the greatest of the medieval love poets, a meeting which has its counterpoint in Máni's more obscure experiences in the same part of the world six centuries later.

It is impossible to say how this novel will develop in the volumes to come, especially since Gunnarsson has made no declarations about that. One can safely say, however, that he is breaking new ground for the novel as an art form. In this respect it is interesting to note that Milan Kundera, in his influential *Art of the Novel*, mentions that one of the possible ways for the novel to explore in the future is by transcending the limits of the human lifespan [Kundera (1987: 16)]. This is exactly what Gunnarsson does by putting a country, and not a person, in the position of main character.

I also think that he uses the medieval sources in an original way that can serve as a model for historical fiction. First of all, he creates a new understanding of the contemporary sagas and other material he uses by placing them in the broader context of the evolution of culture, especially Western civilization, especially those aspects of our culture which have shaped our relationship with ourselves, our feelings, our sexuality, etc. Secondly, through Máni, the character who is our contemporary, he tells a story in which the themes of selfhood and shame are developed. The context Gunnarsson creates shows that these are not only individual problems but also part of a wider story, that of how Judeo-Christianity has shaped our subjective selves.

From the ethical standpoint I developed earlier, however, the most important aspect of Gunnarsson's novel is the respect with which he treats his sources as has already been described. By doing this he allows the otherness of the medieval material to exist within his own text. In addition, he supplies a contextual framework that allows us to engage in dialogue with the otherness of these long dead people, so different to us but at the same time so much a part of whom we are.

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Revisiting the past: P.O. Sundman's rewrite of Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða

Summary. P.O. Sundman's *Berättelsen om Såm* (1977) represents a peculiar reworking of one of the most popular and intensely studied Icelandic sagas, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* and clearly expresses its author's life-long admiration for the Icelandic literature of the Middle Ages. The aim of this paper is to propose an analysis of some of the main features which characterize Sundman's novel as a rewrite of the saga. Besides a discussion of the reasons underlying Sundman's interest in the medieval narrative, particular attention will be given to the investigation of the rewriting strategy that comes out of the comparison between the hypotext and the hypertext, in an attempt to try to work out the mechanisms governing the reshaping of the text and the dynamics regulating them. In addition, we will see how both the traditional elements and the innovations of the novel mirror to different degrees *discourses* of the present in which the novel has been written.

1. *Introduction*

Among the literary works of the 20th century which grew out of the vivid interest that Scandinavian writers have persistently shown for the literature and culture of the Nordic Middle Ages,[1] P.O. Sundman's *Berättelsen om Såm* (1977) is worth particular attention since it represents a singular rewrite of one of the most popular and intensely studied Icelandic sagas, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*.

As is widely known, this saga belongs to the corpus of the so-called *Íslendingasögur* ("Sagas of Icelanders") and, according to the majority of scholars, it was probably written in the second half of the 13th century,[2] although it is extant almost exclusively in later paper manuscripts.[3]

[1] On the post-medieval reception of Nordic literature of the Middle Ages in Scandinavia see Mjöberg (1967-1968). See also Wawn (1994) and Wawn (2005).

[2] See Ólason (2005: 115).

[3] The only exception is represented by a vellum fragment preserved in ms. AM 162 I, fol. which dates from the first-half of the 15th century. See Jóhannesson (1950: LVI-LVII).

Despite its shortness and its narrative linearity in comparison with other sagas of the same group, *Hrafnkels saga* contains a number of interesting themes and aspects which have attracted the attention of critics.
In this respect, there is no doubt that a significant turning point in the scholarly debate on the saga took place after the publication of an important study by Sigurður Nordal (1940), which addressed the complex issue of the origins of the saga between oral tradition and literary fiction. Moreover, the ideas developed by the Icelandic scholar in this monograph were not confined to the case of *Hrafnkels saga* and were bound to exert a noteworthy and far-reaching influence on saga scholarship in the following years. In fact, as Clover (1982: 243) points out:

> ever since Sigurður Nordal published his 1940 monograph declaring *Hrafnkelssaga* to be 'pure fiction' with no traditionalist basis whatsoever, the larger discussion of origins has centred on that saga and that analysis of the evidence.

The considerable number of academic studies about this saga that have been written since – most of them, between the 1960s and 70s, more or less directly as a reaction to Nordal's opinion – undoubtedly bear witness to the lively interest in this work.[4] On the contrary, unlike other *Íslendingasögur* which gave rise to various literary reworkings between the 19th and the 20th centuries,[5] *Hrafnkels saga* has not been blessed by the same success.[6]
The aim of this paper is to propose an analysis of some of the main features which characterize P.O. Sundman's novel as a rewrite of the saga.
Understanding rewriting as "the very process which enables texts to cross cultures and endure history" [Helgason (1999: 4)], through *Berättelsen om Såm* (henceforth abbreviated as *BoS*) two different cultures and two different historical contexts enter into a dialogue whose characteristics will be outlined below. Consequently, we will first examine how the Swedish author selects the material of the medieval narrative to be "translated" into his novel. After this preliminary phase, we will focus on the investigation of the rewriting strategy that comes out of the comparison between the hypotext and the hypertext,[7] in an attempt to try to work out the mechanisms govern-

[4] For a brief presentation of the most important reactions to Nordal's positions see Clover (1985: 243-245).
[5] Major examples that can be cited here are *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar, Laxdæla saga* and *Njáls saga*. See Simek / Pálsson (1987: 79, 117, 226, 260). See also Jón Karl Helgason's article in this volume.
[6] To my knowledge, the only other literary work clearly inspired by the saga is *Nord fra Vatnajøkel* (1994) by the Danish art historian and writer Poul Vad.
[7] Both terms – hypotext and hypertext – are derived from Genette (1982).

ing the reshaping of the text and the dynamics regulating them. The perspective from which the analysis will be carried out is based on the reflections recently developed by *New Historicism* regarding the crucial interplay between text and context[8] and its relevance for the interpretation of a literary work. Adopting this theoretical framework, we will see how in the rewritten text we can trace both traditional elements which are present in the hypotext and innovative aspects, determined by the rewriter's own purpose and clearly recognisable as an expression of the influence exerted by the cultural system in which the process of rewriting takes place. In particular, we will touch upon some of these features; we will see how both the traditional elements and the innovations of the novel mirror to different degrees *discourses* of the present in which *BoS* has been written.[9]

2. *P.O. Sundman and the Icelandic sagas*

Per Olof Sundman (1922-1992) is without any doubt one of the most prominent figures of Swedish literature of the 1960s.[10] In Sweden's post-war literary scene, his works distinguish themselves through a predilection for a spare style that intentionally avoids any psychological introspection in portraying the characters, which in their turn are described through their appearance and actions within a group.

This way of writing led many critics to link the author to the tradition of the Icelandic sagas.[11] Since his literary debut in 1957, Sundman undeniably showed a great interest in the Icelandic literature of the Middle Ages:

[8] On *New Historicism* see Brannigan (1998) and Salkeld (2001).

[9] As S. Würth (1999: 193) points out, *New Historicism* aims at showing "wie zeitgenössische Diskurse in literarische Texte eingehen, sich dort kreuzen und auf welche Weise sie diese Texte wieder verlassen".

[10] On Sundman's life and work see Warme (1984) and Åsling (1970).

[11] In fact, from the very beginning of Sundman's literary activity many attempts have been made to trace his narrative models. As Warme (1984: xviii) points out, "his seemingly simple and straightforward prose, the extreme economy of expression, and the terse dialogue were reminiscent of the Icelandic sagas and of Pär Lagerkvist's cubism. Hemingway was mentioned as a remote literary kin. Some critics, noting the absence of psychological interpretation and the predominance of surface observations in Sundman's stories, pointed to the contemporary experimentations in French literature, where *le nouveau roman* was beginning to attract attention". Besides, a significant role in the development of Sundman's style was played by his early acquaintance with the behaviouristic theory of John Watson and with Frans Bengtsson's works. On these aspects see McGregor (1994: 33-51).

> Det finns för mig en litteratur som jag tror har haft helt avgörande betydelse för mig och det tror jag att jag många gånger också framfört. Det är helt enkelt den litterära tradition som började på 1200-talet, dom isländska sagorna, både ättesagorna och dom direkt diktade sagorna, som jag ständigt återvänder till. Där har jag mina rötter och jag tror att det är min starkaste litterära anknytning [Geber (1977: 228)].[12]

In his overall literary production the influence of the narrative model and techniques of the sagas is apparent. Yet, as McGregor (1994) has persuasively demonstrated, this influence is not limited to the mere acquisition of stylistic traits. In fact, rather often in Sundman's works we find allusions or clear references to literary texts of the Old Icelandic tradition, especially to *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur*.[13] What is new in the case of *BoS* is that it explicitly represents a reworking of a single saga.[14]

The genesis of Sundman's interest in *Hrafnkels saga* can be traced back to the period when he was attending *Katarina realskola* in Stockholm. At that time he read the saga in the classical Swedish translation by Hjalmar Alving (1935-1945). Many years later, after having spent much time in Härjedalen and Jämtland, he re-read it in Sven Bertil Jansson's revised translation (1966). In 1968 he was elected member of the Swedish parliament. Among other things, his intense political activity gave him many occasions to visit Iceland and to get to know its culture.[15] In 1969, during his first Icelandic trip, what most struck him about the country was its peculiar blend of elements belonging both to the past and to the present, "en märklig blandning av forntid och nutid", an aspect which he would transform into a structural element of *BoS* some time later. In 1970, another stay in Iceland represented a decisive stage in the development of Sundman's interest for *Hrafnkels saga*:

> Det var på midsommarafton 1970. Jag satt på det s k Lagberget norr om Reykjavik [sic] tillsammans med chefredaktören for Morgonbladid [sic], Is-

[12] "There is for me a literature that I believe has had a completely crucial significance for me and I believe that I have said so on many occasions too. It is quite simply the literary tradition that began in the thirteenth century, the Icelandic sagas, both the family sagas and the more directly fictional sagas, which I continually return to. It is there I have my roots and I believe it is my strongest literary connection" [McGregor (1994: 42)].

[13] See especially McGregor (1994: 1-50).

[14] It needs to be mentioned, however, that according to McGregor (1994: 230-235), in the novel it is possible to detect allusions to other texts of the Icelandic literature of the Middle Ages.

[15] In fact, beside his political activity in 1969 he also became delegate of *Nordiska Rådet* (the Nordic Council).

> lands största dagstidning. Vi såg en buss komma och två ryttare på packhälstar. Det var så jag kom på idén att låta kämparna åka jeep till de slag som utkämpas [Landin (1977:42)].[16]

In the summer of 1976, he took part in the Swedish radio series "Sommarpratare" where he read *Hrafnkels saga*; in fact, it was while collaborating on this project that Sundman started to think about the idea of reworking the saga by retelling it from the point of view of Sámr.[17]

3. *Why did Sundman decide to rewrite* Hrafnkels saga?

If we now turn our attention to examining the reasons behind the writing of *BoS*, what is clear is that they go far beyond Sundman's admiration for the style of saga literature as mentioned above. It can be claimed that in the medieval narrative telling of the struggle between the mighty chieftain Hrafnkell and his opponent Sámr in the region of the eastern fjords in Iceland he found an interesting representation of a constellation of motifs he had always been interested in since the very beginning of his career as a writer. As Lars Warme (1984: 165) comments upon the writer's interest in the saga,

> the material had a number of ingredients that had earlier attracted the author: a stark and drastic fable built around two central characters representing opposing ideologies, a thoroughly realistic story whose ultimate moral is puzzling and questionable and open to interpretation.

In this respect, it is safe to assert that the "sociological interests" lying at the very heart of Sundman's literary world found in the plot of the saga a significant ground for investigation. In particular, his attention was directed to the patterns of behaviour, the schemes of interactions among individuals, and the relationships of power that characterize the world depicted in the medieval narrative.

[16] "It was on Midsummer Eve 1970. I was sitting on the so-called Law Rock north of Reykjavík with the editor of *Morgunblaðið*, Iceland's largest daily paper. We saw a bus arrive and two riders on pack-horses. That was how I hit upon the idea of having the warriors travel by jeep to the battles which are fought" [McGregor (1994: 200)].

[17] See McGregor (1994: 199-249) for a detailed presentation of the lines of development of Sundman's interest in *Hrafnkels saga* and for a comparison between the saga and the Swedish novel.

In many of his previous works – both short stories and novels – he had portrayed tensions mainly within small groups, often in the form of contrasts between the individual and the collectivity. In the saga, these contrasts are described within a strongly hierarchical society, where the rights of the mighty outweigh the rights of the poor:

> Det sagan skildrar är den dramatiska, oförsonliga och blodiga maktkampen mellan två män av helt olika sinnelag och beskaffenhet. Det är en sammansatt berättelse om släktbundens krav, om lojalitet och rätten att med våld taga sin rätt [Sundman (1977)].[18]

Undeniably, a central aspect of the saga's appeal for Sundman is to be found in the topicality of its story. As we will see in some detail later on, according to the Swedish writer, the modernity of the saga affects both the level of interpersonal relationships and the level of power relations.

Commenting upon his novel as a whole in comparison with the medieval narrative, Sundman (1977) states:

> De komplicerade rättsliga regler som präglade konflikten mellan Ravnkel och Såm var en realitet i fristaten Island för tusen år sedan. De finns i dag i andra länder, nödtorftigt dolda i västerländskt präglade formuleringar.[19]

Judging from this and other similar statements, it seems clear that his main concern was to try to point out the timelessness of the themes the saga dealt with, the metahistoricity of the dynamics lying behind the events depicted in the saga:

> Jag ville låta handlingen utspelas i vår tid med t ex bilar i stället för hästar. Tyckte att de moraliska problem som sagan handlar om skulle gå förlorade bakom runda sköldar, blanka hjälmar och vassa svärd [Björsson (1977: 3)].[20]

[18] "What the saga depicts is the dramatic, irreconcilable and bloody struggle for power between two men of completely different nature. It is a complex story about the duties linked to blood ties, about loyalty and about the right to exercise your own will with violence". Every quotation from the 1977 edition of the novel which is not followed by page numbers refers to Sundman'own statements printed on the book jacket.

[19] "The complex legal rules that characterize the conflict between Ravnkel and Såm were present in the Icelandic free state one thousand years ago. Today they are still evident in other countries, barely concealed behind Western formulations".

[20] "I wanted to let the action be set in our time with for example cars instead of horses. Thought that the moral problems that the saga deals with would be lost behind round shields, shining helmets and sharp swords" [McGregor (1994: 201)].

Consequently, the mechanisms of rewriting the hypotext, which will be analysed below, are determined and influenced first of all by the achievement of this goal.

4. *Revisiting the past*: *modalities of rewriting of* Hrafnkels saga

The choice of retelling the story by setting it in the present forces the writer to adapt or substantially modify some central features of the saga. Thus, all the elements explicitly pertaining to the chronological setting in the Middle Ages are left out. As a result, the references to the time of the *landnám* which are to be found in the saga[21] are not present in *BoS*. Moreover, if the places where the actions take place in *Hrafnkels saga* are identifiable with the region of the eastern fjords, the rewrite describes a landscape which, although undoubtedly reminiscent of the Icelandic one, is not Iceland.[22]
Furthermore, the re-contextualization of the story in a different age – the 20th century – and culture – that of Sweden – also results in the reshaping of some cultural features of the medieval text. In fact, the comparison between *BoS* and the saga brings to the fore that the major changes the Swedish writer introduces regard those aspects of the hypotext which can hardly find a full equivalent in the present, and whose unaltered 'translation' into modern times would bring about an effect of estrangement. I am referring in particular to the issues linked with the question of heathenism mirrored in the saga.

In comparison with the hypotext, the religious aspects connected with the relationship between Hrafnkell[23] and the god Freyr in Sundman's narrative are emptied of the value they possess there.[24]

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[21] Jóhannesson (1950: 97): "Þat var á d□gum Haralds konungs ins hárfagra, Hálfdanar sonar ins svarta, Guðrøðar sonar veiðikonungs, Hálfdanar sonar ins milda ok ins matarilla, Eysteins sonar frets, Óláfs sonar trételgju Svíakonungs, at sá maðr kom skipi sínu til Íslands í Breiðdal, er Hallfreðr hét". Hreinsson (1997: 261): "It was in the days of King Harald Fair-hair, son of Halfdan the Black, son of Gudrod the Hunting King, son of Halfdan the Mild and Mealstingy, son of Eystein Fart, son of Olaf Wood-carver, King of the Swedes, that a man named Hallfred brought his ship to Breiddal in Iceland".

[22] Sundman (1977): "Mitt landskap är isländskt men det är inte Island" ("My landscape is Icelandic but it is not Iceland").

[23] As regards proper names and place names, in this paper I will distinguish between the spelling of the saga (Hrafnkell, Sámr, Einarr, Þorbj□rn, Aðalból) and the spelling of Sundman's novel (Ravnkel, Såm, Einar, Torbjörn, Adabol).

[24] When dealing with this issue, it needs to be emphasized that what *Hrafnkels saga* depicts is not to be interpreted as a true account of actual practices of pagan Iceland, but rather as a pro-

In fact, Freyr does not play the same role he plays in the medieval narrative; significantly, in *BoS* his presence is expressed by a wooden statue in Ravnkel's rumpus room (*gillestuga*).[25]
This, in its turn, corresponds to Hrafnkell's temple in the hypotext, built for the worship of the heathen god.[26]

Consistently, throughout the novel the horse is not said to belong to both Ravnkel and the god, nor does it show any relationship with Freyr. Moreover, while in the saga it is mainly because of Freyfaxi that Einarr is killed by Hrafnkell – who swears an oath to kill anyone who rides the horse he has consecrated to Freyr – in Sundman's rewrite it seems rather to be Ravnkel's jealousy and his fear of being deprived of his unlimited power that stirs him to murder the young boy.[27]

Given this clear intention to demythicize the religious elements the hypotext shows, the appearance of Frey's statue and its description seem to serve the purpose of giving concrete expression to Ravnkel's nature. In *BoS*, Freyr is connected with the sole sphere of sexuality, as the phallic attribute of his statue exemplifies, while in the saga there is no element indicating this trait of the god. Here it seems probable that the writer, in the attempt to preserve at least one traditional feature of the divine figure, chose the one that seemed more functional to his own purpose, as we will see in some detail further on.

Hrafnkell's nature of *goði*, though itself emptied of any religious meaning, is not completely lost in the rewriting process. Although he is portrayed as a powerful chieftain whose actions are inspired by a sharp sense of superiority and excessive pride, the description of his feasts on Fridays, in the presence of Frey's statue, could constitute an attempt to translate into modern concepts what the saga aimed at depicting as a religious reality from heathen times: an attempt to refunctionalize it, from the religious sphere of the hypotext to the sexual one of the hypertext.

Significantly, whereas the adaptation of the mythic-religious elements clearly indicates the alterity of both the age and the culture into which the narrative material of the saga is transferred, and corresponds to the necessity

jection into the past of the knowledge Icelandic people had of their heathen times. For a recent discussion of these aspects see Orton (2005).
[25] Sundman (1977: 45-46).
[26] Jóhannesson (1950: 98-99): "En þá er Hrafnkell hafði land numið á Aðalbóli, þá efldi hann blót mikil. Hrafnkell lét gera hof mikið". Hreinsson (1997: 262): "When Hrafnkel had taken the land at Adalbol, he held great sacrifices, and had a great temple built".
[27] See McGregor (1994: 210).

of rewriting these features, in the case of the "translation" of the legal system – another central aspect of the saga – as it is presented in the Icelandic narrative, Sundman's attitude is different and could even be described as rather conservative.

In fact, not only does he preserve it in his novel as it is in the hypotext, but he also adds further information about the system of laws of medieval Iceland not given in the saga. Furthermore, the description of the whole trial is clearly expanded in comparison with the medieval narrative and is rendered in detail.[28] If the historical accuracy that Sundman apparently aimed to achieve with these descriptions is again a trait we find in his whole production, the transposition of the legal rules without significant changes into the present expresses the author's point of view regarding their topicality for his own time.

After the killing of Einar, the plot in *BoS* faithfully follows the main lines of narrative development of the hypotext; at the end of the trial, Såm and his supporters go to Ravnkel's farm to punish him. Some of them – Torkel and Torgeir in particular – want to kill him, but Såm gives him the opportunity to choose between ceding his own properties to him or being killed. Ravnkel chooses to live and is forced to move away; some time later, he builds another farm and progressively regains all the power he used to have before the trial. Seven years later, he kills Såm's brother Eyvind to exact revenge for the humiliation he had suffered by Såm and his men. Then, he forces Såm to leave Adabol and deprives him of all his possessions.

An interesting feature of Sundman's novel consists in the presence of elements expressing a belonging to the past and of aspects clearly linked to the present. In particular, the insistence on the description of modern machines and the activities in which they are used contributes to highlighting the sharp contrast between the fixity of the social development of mankind throughout the centuries and the innovation of technological progress. Once again, this very aspect represents the reworking of a theme Sundman frequently deals with in his works.[29]

Thus, the rewriting strategy outlined so far apparently gives birth to a text whose temporal setting is intentionally depicted as swinging between two opposite poles in order to stress the translatability of some major features of the past into the present.

Going deeper into the analysis of the novel in comparison with the saga, much attention needs to be devoted to the reshaping of the roles some cate-

[28] Sundman (1977: 119-128).
[29] See Warme (1984: 159-169).

gories of characters play in *BoS*. In fact, in retelling the story from Såm's point of view – the loser's point of view – Sundman reorganizes the distribution of roles. In particular, as Såm is the main character (as the title itself suggests), his supporters are given particular prominence. Therefore, new characters are introduced and named, all contributing, among other things, to the portrayal of the protagonist himself because it is through their acting on Såm's side, through their relationships to him, that the reasons behind his behaviour are at least partially explained.[30]

Another central innovative feature regards the prominent role given to women in the novel.[31] In *BoS*, women contribute to determining all the tragic events of the story. Einar is killed by Ravnkel because he has been informed by Åsa, his young lover, that Torbjörn's son had slept with his wife the night before and that the same had happened with Åsa herself a few days earlier.[32] As regards Såm, it is his wife who prompts him to help his uncle against Ravnkel, thus setting the development of the tragedy in motion.[33] When Eyvind, Såm's brother, comes back home from a long journey abroad, it is again a serving woman – like in the saga[34] – who sees the prominent man on his way to his brother's farm and let Åsa tell Ravnkel about it.[35]

Thus, in Sundman's novel we notice a clear tendency to picture the private sphere of relationships between men and women, a feature that is completely absent in the hypotext. To date, scholars have generally confined themselves to recording the expansion of female characters' roles in the text, without paying adequate attention to the possible reasons lying behind this choice.[36] In this respect, it seems to me that the writer probably felt that the little space assigned to women in the hypotext would not fit the setting of the events in the present, where the thematization of the man/woman relationship undoubtedly reflects a condition whose relevance for a full understanding of

[30] "A person must be placed in relation to other people and to an environment in order to have significance and form. An isolated person simply does not exist. Or, to borrow a formulation from mathematics, a human being must be expressed in something – in an environment and, most particularly, in fellow human beings" [Warme (1984: 44)].
[31] "Det blev nödvändigt för mig att tillskapa och namge nya personer. Särskilt angeläget var det att understryka den roll kvinnorna spelar" (It became necessary for me to create and name new characters. It was particularly important to stress the role that the women play) [Sundman (1977)].
[32] Sundman (1977: 62-64).
[33] Sundman (1977: 78-80).
[34] Jóhannesson (1950: 126-127).
[35] See Sundman (1977: 207-210). In the saga, however, it is the serving woman who informs Hrafnkell and spurns him to take revenge.
[36] See McGregor (1994: 210-213); Warme (1984: 167-168).

the dynamics governing the modern society is rather significant. Moreover, this choice is consistent with Sundman's previously mentioned interest in portraying the complex net of relationships among individuals as a means to understand how and why people behave and act the way they do.

Given these premises, the seemingly negative role women play in the rewrite contributes, on the contrary, to highlighting the nature of the male characters. This is certainly apparent in the case of Ravnkel throughout the whole novel. Furthermore, the same can be said about his adversary: for example, Såm's incapability of making a decision as regards his uncle's request for help against Ravnkel is signalled by the fact that he himself calls for help, asking his wife to decide for him.

The emphasis given to the description of women's sexual dimension and to the sexual connotations linked to the man-woman relationship is another significant issue for our discussion. In fact, while it apparently represents an evidence of the influence exerted by the writer's own time, it could also directly reflect the contemporary debate on sexuality and sexual customs, which reached its height in the 1970s and was particularly lively in Swedish society.

A further important set of motifs lying at the heart of the novel is connected with the issue of power and its control. In particular, the contrast between Ravnkel and Såm represents the opposition of two different ideologies. While Ravnkel is driven by his thirst for power and wants to have control over everything and everyone in his valley, Såm is a quiet man, adverse to the fight, a little man who unwillingly takes upon himself the responsibility of a suit against a mighty chieftain. Nevertheless, he seems to be more concerned about his reputation than about the final outcome of the suit:

> Jag har mitt anseende att tänka på. Jag har inte mod och djärvhet nog att ge upp [Sundman (1977: 114)].[37]

If on one level the story of the saga represents different patterns of behaviour, different schemes of interactions and relationships of power among individuals, on another level it becomes apparent that it also points out the political and ideological potential the medieval narrative possesses.
Thus, the depiction of the microcosm represented by the valley where Ravnkel lives takes the form of a paradigmatic representation of the actual situa-

[37] "I have to think of my own reputation. I don't have sufficient courage and boldness to give up" [Warme (1984: 168)].

tion of the world at the end of the past century.[38] The relevance of this paradigmatic nature for a full understanding of Sundman's strategy contributes to an explanation of why he chose to avoid imbuing his story with any specific connotation of temporal and geographical setting.

The contrast between little and poor people on the one side, and mighty men on the other, is as the author stated a "timeless conflict". The solution of the conflict, both in the saga and in the novel, is the same: if it is true that the attempt to subvert the order in the valley – undertaken by the little ones, driven by the weak Såm – is doomed to fail in both texts, it is significant that in Sundman's novel it is more emphasized. The way these relationships of power are portrayed and the final outcome of the rebellion throw a long shadow of pessimism over the story and can be reasonably taken as an expression of Sundman's position towards an array of themes he had taken up in some of his previous works: what leaders must we have? How are they supposed to be chosen? Are we always bound to follow them?

In this respect, it is significant that the writer does not present Såm as a hero. On the contrary, he stresses all those aspects of his nature that express his weakness, thus indicating that it is primarily because of his weakness as a leader that the attempt to found a new order in the valley fails. Moreover, along with Lars Warme (1984: 173) we can observe that:

> as a political parable, *The Story of Såm* presents a very contemporary reality of international power struggle where "Ravnkel's law" is being practised in the absence of any effective supra-international agency to act as public prosecution or to police the violations. According to this law, might is right, and agreements can be broken with impunity. Through the ancient fable Sundman discusses the possibilities of revolt against oppression, the chances of honor and decency in the frontier world of international conflicts, the question of responsible leadership and the sacrifice of moral principles in exchange for material security.

Thus, Sundman's rewrite is to some extent a reflection on history and takes the form of a disenchanted diagnosis of the present because it depicts its actual condition through the comparison with the past mirrored in the saga, which was itself the result of a construction *a posteriori*.[39]

[38] See Sundman's statement on page 4 (footnote 19).

[39] The use of the past in Sundman's work is not confined to *BoS*. As Warme (1984: 160) points our referring to the novels *Expeditionen* (*The Expedition*, 1962) and *Ingenjör Andrées luftfärd* (*The Flight of the Eagle*, 1967), "both of Sundman's expedition novels use the recent historical past to provide a perspective on our present world. These two parables of doom and

5. *Final remarks*

On the basis of the analysis I have proposed, we can say that Sundman's process of rewriting moves along two major lines. On the one hand, he reshapes and changes some aspects of the hypotext in order to adapt it to the reception into a new cultural and historical context. Furthermore, he introduces new elements into the plot, as a consequence of his interest in pointing out some of the aspects that remain under the surface in the saga or that are completely absent in it. On the other hand, he preserves in his novel a number of key issues and themes of the hypotext, without changing them. This strategy of conservation is particularly interesting in that it overtly contributes to emphasizing the degree of topicality of the themes the saga presents.

Unlike other Scandinavian writers – for example Frans G. Bengtsson and J. Fridegård[40] – who (re)constructed the Nordic Middle Ages in their works in order to project a discussion of relevant issues of their own times into that era, Sundman's operation finds its starting point in the Middle Ages. From his perspective, the "saga age" is seen as an eloquent term of comparison in order to judge the present and is a means for trying to understand it.

Accordingly, the rewritten text is built on the interlacement between 'past' and 'present' and becomes their point of encounter. The less the significant features of the medieval narrative need to be reshaped, the more they tell the modern reader how much, in Sundman's world, the past is an actual reality.

"fall" present a pessimistic vision, which is getting dangerously close to becoming a reality in our twentieth century".

[40] Frans G. Bengtsson, *Röde Orm* (1941-1945); Jan Fridegård, *Trägudars land* (1940); *Gryningsfolket* (1944); *Offerrök* (1949). On Fridegård and Bengtsson see Mjöberg (1967-68, v. 2: 252-260, 333-344).

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Crossing paths in the Middle Ages: the Physiologus *in Iceland*

Summary. The *Physiologus*, originally written down in Alexandria, Egypt, between the end of the second and the beginning of the third century A.D., became one of the most popular handbooks of the Middle Ages since its material dealing with real and imaginary animals, plants and stones, could be constantly manipulated to suit audiences and employed in instructing Christian believers.
The two Icelandic fragments, conventionally called *Physiologus A* and *Physiologus B*, are independent of each other and seem to have been written in about 1200. Scholars agree in thinking that their source is to be found in the Latin version conventionally called *Versio B*. Although this statement is true in a general sense, it acts as a screen which hides a much more complex reality: textual and iconographic features give evidence of their derivation from models whose origins lie in England. Moreover the analysis of the chapters dealing with onocentaurs highlights that the two Icelandic *Physiologi*, in which tradition and innovation mingle profoundly with each other, are original manipulations of the ancient matter.

While preparing for this Conference, it gave me great pleasure to reflect once more on the Icelandic *Physiologi* in order to be able to follow the paths that lead to this garden more precisely. I like to preserve the pleasant image of the Conference's title because it is in real accordance with the texts I shall examine here: the *Physiologus* too may be considered "un giardino (pieno di sterpi pungenti) dove si incrociano i sentieri del Testo e dell'Immaginario", as Corrado Bologna[1] writes referring to *Liber monstrorum de diversis generibus*. Here I shall consider only the *exempla* regarding the onocentaur leaving for a future occasion the analysis of the other chapters and the consequent definition of the Icelandic versions' place within the physiological tradition.

The manuscripts of the two Icelandic fragments, conventionally called *Physiologus A* and *Physiologus B*, were for many years preserved in Copenhagen; today they are again in Iceland, part of the Arni Magnusson Institute in Reykjavík. They are particularly precious because they represent the first illustrated manuscripts produced in Iceland now extant. The two versions are

[1] Cf. Bologna (1997: 27).

both derived from Latin models, but are independent of each other and seem to have been written in about 1200, probably copies of earlier ones about which, however, we have no information. So they are among the oldest literary writings in Iceland and although they may seem less important than other literary production of this period, they are, however, of great interest since they show how the Latin-Christian culture was soon assimilated and manipulated.[2]

MS AM 673 a I, 4°, f. 1 *recto* and *verso* preserves the five paragraphs of *Physiologus A*: 1. The Phœnix, 2. The Hoopoe, 3. The Siren, 4. The Fly, 5. The Onocentaur, this being the only chapter without illustration. The hand that traced the four drawings of this *folio* is the same as produced the illustrations we can see in f. 2 *recto* and *verso*: although they are devoid of text it is generally acknowledged that they represent the fabulous nations which are mentioned in Bk. XI, 3 of Isidore's *Etymologiae*.[3]

MS. AM 673 a II, 4°, preserves in its first six *folios* the nineteen *exempla* of *Physiologus B*: 1. The Hydra, 2. The Goat, 3. The Wild Ass, 4. The Monkey, 5. The Heron, 6. The Coot, 7. The Panther, 8. The Whale, 9. The Partridge, 10. The Onocentaur, 11. The Weasel, 12. The Asp, 13. The Turtle-dove, 14. The Deer, 15. The Salamander, 16. The Kite, 17. The Boar, 18. The Owl, 19. The Elephant. Each of them is illustrated with the exception of the deer; the elephant is represented in two different drawings, the second of which is devoid of text.[4]

It is not necessary to rewrite the general history of the *Physiologus* here, but it is sufficient to remember that it was originally written down in Alexandria, Egypt, between the end of the second and the beginning of the third century A.D. The first Greek version is known through later Byzantine manuscripts dating from the tenth century.[5] This short book takes legends, myths, symbols common to ancient Eastern and Mediterranean cultures - particularly Egyptian and Indian - to spread Christian moral and religious teachings. As we all know, *Physiologus* is both the title of the book and the name of the author who is a special kind of 'naturalist' with a thorough knowledge of nature which he interprets in a Christian-allegorical key.[6]

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[2] On the subject see, for example, Hermannsson (1935: 7-9); Hermannsson (1938: 1-4) and Marchand (1976: 501).

[3] For more details concerning the *monstra* in the Middle Ages see Lendinara[a] (2004) and Lendinara[b] (2004) .

[4] On the history of the manuscripts and on their palaeographic characteristics cf. Del Zotto Tozzoli (1992: 17-26).

[5] An extensive analysis of the *Physiologus* tradition and of its various translations and manipulations may be found in Dolcetti Corazza (1992).

[6] Cf. Zambon (1984: 709-719).

The chapters of the *Physiologus* concern beasts - real or imaginary - stones and trees; the structure of each chapter is the same and has undergone little change over the centuries: one part is made up of quotations from the *Holy Scriptures* which deal with the contents of the *exemplum* and support the Christian symbolism; another gives an account of the 'nature' (φύσις) of the beast, the stone or the tree in question, and the last presents their allegorical interpretation (ἑρμενεία).
At the end of the fourth century the Greek *Physiologus* began to spread to regions far removed from its place of origin and reached Russia in the east and Iceland in the west obviously in the course of many centuries. Its various translations or rewritings are usually divided into eastern (Ethiopian, Coptic, Syrian, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Slavic [Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Czech], Rumanian) and western (Latin). The Germanic (Old-English, High-Old-German and Icelandic) and the Romance versions (French, Provençal, Italian, Waldensian, Catalan) derive from Latin models. Thus the *Physiologus* gradually becomes a kind of best-seller and one of the most popular handbooks of the Middle Ages since its material can be constantly manipulated to suit audiences and employed in instructing Christian believers who were further acquainted with its beast, stone or plant symbology through sermons, sculptures, stained glass windows, paintings, illuminated manuscripts and so on.[7]

The path from Latin versions of the *Physiologus* to the Icelandic ones, leads through England which, as we are aware, fulfilled an important role in spreading written culture in Iceland.
There is no knowing when a Latin *Physiologus* came to England, but in the second half of the ninth century it was profoundly manipulated here and rewritten in alliterative form. The so-called *Anglo-Saxon Physiologus*[8] is the earliest European vernacular version of the *Physiologus* and it gives clear evidence of the well-known cultural relations between England and the Continent - particularly France - and of the special English interest in the physiological matter. It appears as the mature and original composition of a poet

[7] From the thirteenth century the most luxurious manuscripts of *Bibles*, *Psalters* and *Book of Hours* are often decorated with *marginalia*: "Sometimes, bestiary creatures were grouped together in the margins in a way that suggests that the viewer would have understood the significance of the grouping based on his or her familiarity with the bestiary texts and imagery" [Hassig (1997: 174)]. The marginal image which presents a pair of centaurs in love is particular effective [*Isabella Psalter*, f. 11^{r}: cf. Hassig (1997: 179-180 and plate 23)]: it shows the female standing very close to the male and holding his hand in one hand and his chin in the other.
[8] It is preserved in the *Exeter Book* (Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501, ff. 95^{v}-98^{r}) which dates back to the second half of the tenth century.

who, from his source, chose only three animals: the panther, the whale and the partridge.[9] Their symbolic meanings link the three poems to each other and are intended to guide Christians along a spiritual path leading to eternal Glory.[10]

Between the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries many illustrated Latin *Physiologi* and *Bestiaries* were written down in English *scriptoria*. Their manuscripts are often decorated with splendid miniatures[11] and they show very clearly how *Bestiaries* gradually evolved out of the *Physiologus*.[12]

No doubt the Icelandic *Physiologi* derive from models whose origins lie in England: some textual and iconographic features give evidence of this. Here I give only two examples chosen from among the clearest. The first regards the manuscript of *Physiologus A* and more specifically the presence of full-page pen drawings arranged on three rows which illustrate the Isidorian *monstra* (giants, pigmies, cyclops and so on). The presence of drawings of

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[9] The last poem of the *Anglo-Saxon Physiologus* is fragmentary: it concerns a bird whose name is not expressed, but the context suggests a very probable identification with the partridge: for more details see Dolcetti Corazza (1992: 109-114).

[10] On the subject cf. Dolcetti Corazza (1992: 116-119).

[11] According to Muratova (1988: 183):

> cette floraison [...] doit être liéé aux particularités de la culture anglaise qui préserve les échos vivants du folklore celtique, très sensible aux merveilles de la nature. Cette culture prête d'autre part une grande attention au développement de la connaissence de la nature et du monde, formulant les premiers principes d'une méthodologie scientifique. Nulle part ailleurs qu'en Angleterre, le *Bestiaire* ne reçoit une telle importance en tant qu'œvre indépendente, un si riche dévelopment, une telle expression poetique, un tel dècor luxueux.

On the relations between *Bestiaries* e Romanesque stone carving see Muratova (1987: 337-354). Particularly on the iconographic features cf. Boase (1953: 88-91); Klingender (1971: 382-400) and Kauffmann (1975:11-15). A more general presentation is to be found in Rickert (1961) who reproduces about sixty illustrations from illuminated manuscripts of *Psalters*, *Calendars, Bibles* and *Books of Hours*. For details on the important centres of *Bestiary* use in England cf. Baxter (1998: 169-181).

[12] In order to follow the variation and growth of *Bestiaries* we still refer to the system of Bestiary Families built on the works of James (1928: 5-25) and McCullock (1962: 25-40): in short it is made up of a 'First Family' which is formed by the so called *B+Is* versions (that is manuscripts which follow the order and content of the *Versio B*, but which contain additions from Isidore), of a 'Second Family' whose manuscripts are characterized by the classification of the content following Isidore Bk. XII, the inclusion of many chapters with no moral interpretation and the addition of material from Solinus and Ambrose, of a 'Third Family' and of a 'Fourth Family' which contain ever-wider *Bestiaries* with chapters derived from the vast Latin mediaeval encyclopaedias. See also Yapp (1985: 7-11). On a critical revision of this system see Baxter (1998: 87-143). The division into families aims to clarify the evolution of the physiological matter, but obviously the manipulation and rewriting typical of these texts defy rigid classifications.

this kind in *Bestiaries* can be found in many English manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century which follow a different pattern: the drawings may precede or follow the text or may or may not be accompanied by a text.[13] The second example shows a plainly English linguistic-textual influence. It is found in the chapter dedicated to the goat in *Physiologus B*: here the animal is called *gāt*, a word which compared with the Old-Icelandic *geit* clearly reveals its Old-English origin. The Icelandic compiler was evidently looking at a Latin manuscript which had come from England complete with Old-English glosses.[14]

Scholars agree in thinking that the source of the Icelandic *Physiologi* is to be found in the Latin version conventionally called *Versio B*.[15] Although this statement is true in a general sense, it acts as a screen which hides a much more complex reality, even if it is justified by the great popularity enjoyed by the *Versio B* in Europe. In fact it is preserved in about twenty manuscripts: the most important is Berne, Burgerbibliothek, MS lat. 233, ff. 1^{r}-13^{r} (ninth century). According to Carmody's edition[16] it presents thirty seven chapters traditionally dealing with beasts, stones and plants;[17] however it shows some independence from its Greek model both in the sequence of the chapters and in their contents which appear manipulated and enriched with greater details concerning quotations from the *Bible* and moral teachings. Evidence of this may be found by comparing, for instance, the Greek *exem-*

[13] See for example Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 88, ff. 68^{r}-116^{v}; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 254, ff. 1^{r}-48^{r}; Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk 4.25, ff. 48^{r}-86^{r}; London, Westminster Abbey Library, MS 22, ff. 1^{r}-54^{r} (of particular interest because a symbolic meaning - obviously negative - is given to these *monstra* too, in order to communicate moral messages); London, Sion College, MS Arc. L. 40. 2/L. 28, ff. 73^{r}-104^{v}, 110^{r}-112^{v}, 113^{r}-116^{r} (the *Bestiary*), ff. 117^{r}-120^{r} (the pictures of *monstra*): cf. Ker (1969: 283-284). For their description and more details cf. James (1928: 23-25), McCullock (1962: 39), Friedmann (1981: 123-125), Morgan (1982: no. 53, 55), Morgan (1988: no. 172).

[14] Cf. Dolcetti Corazza (1992: 196, 216).

[15] Among the large number of the extant Latin manuscripts scholars have been able to distinguish different versions called *Versio A*, *B*, *C*, *Y*; the earliest surviving manuscripts date back to the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries: for more details see Dolcetti Corazza (1992: 49-56).

[16] Cf. Carmody (1939). The English translation by Curley (1979) is based on this edition; he also took into account the *Versio Y* edited by Carmody (1941).

[17] They are: 1. The Lion, 2. The Antelope, 3. The Fire Stones, 4. The Swordfish, 5. The Charadrius, 6. The Pelican, 7. The Owl, 8. The Eagle, 9. The Phoenix, 10. The Hoopoe, 11. The Ant, 12. The Siren and the Onocentaur, 13. The Hedgehog, 14. The Ibis, 15. The Fox, 16. The Unicorn, 17. The Beaver, 18. The Hyena, 19. The Hydra, 20. The Gazelle, 21. The Wild Ass and the Monkey, 22. The Heron, 23. The Panther, 24. The Whale, 25. The Partridge, 26. The Weasel, 27. The Ostrich, 28. The Turtle-dove, 29. The Deer, 30. The Salamander, 31. The Doves, 32. The Peridexion Tree, 33. The Elephant, 34. The Sycomore, 35. The Adamant Stone, 36. The Pearl, 37. The Lizard.

plum dealing with the siren and the onocentaur with the Latin version of the same chapter:

> *On Sirens and Onocentaurs*[18]
> The prophet Isaiah said: "Demons and sirens and hedgehogs will dance in Babylon" (*Is*. 13. 22*)*. The Physiologus says about sirens and onocentaurs that sirens are murderous animals, and live in the sea, and with their melodious voices charm those who hear them so that they are led to sleep and even to death. Their upper half as far as the navel has a human appearance, the lower half is like that of a goose. Similarly centaurs have upper parts like those of a man, but its lower parts are like those of an ass.
> *Interpretation*
> Thus it is for "every man who is hesitant and uncertain in his designs" (*Jam*. 1. 8). There are men who gather in the church and have the appearance of pi-

[18] Cf. Kaimakis (1974: 42a):

> Περὶ σειρήνων καὶ ονοκενταύρων
> Ἐλάλησεν Ἐσαΐας ὁ προφήτης ὅτι ″δαιμόνια καὶ σειρῆνες καὶ ἐχῖνοι ὀρχήσονται ἐν Βαβυλῶνι.῾Ο Φυσιόλογος ἔλεξεν περὶ τῶν σειρήνων καὶ τῶν ονοκενταύρων, ὅτι αἱ μὲν σειρῆνες ζῶᾳ θανάσιμά εἰσιν ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ, καὶ μουσικαῖς ταῖς φωναῖς ἡδύνουσι τοὺς ἀκούοντας, ὥστε καὶ εἰς ὕπνον τραπῆναι μέχρι καὶ θανάτου. Τὸ μὲν ἥμισυ μέρος ἕως ὀμφαλοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔχουσιν μορφήν, καὶ τὸ ἥμισυ ἕως ἔξω χηνός.
> ῾Ομοίως καὶ οἱ ὀνοκένταυροι τὸ ἥμισυ μέρος ἔχουσι ἀνθρώπου, τὸ δὲ ἥμισυ ἕως ἔξω ὄνου.
> ῾Ερμηνεία.
> Οὕτως καὶ πᾶς ἀνὴρ δίψυχος ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις τοῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦς· εἰσίν τινες συναγόμενοι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ μόρφωσιν μὲν ἔχοντες εὐσεβείας, τὴν δὲ δύναμιν αὐτῆς ἀρνούμενοι· καὶ ἐν ᾗ ἐκκλησίᾳ ὡς ἄνθρωποί εἰσιν, ἐπὰν δὲ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἀπολυθῶσιν, ἀποκτηοῦνται· οἱ τοιοῦτοι οὖν σειρήνων καὶ ὀνοκενταύρων πρόσωπον.

Hippocentaurs (centaurs) may be found instead of onocentaurs in some manuscripts of the Greek *Physiologus* [cf. Kaimakis (1974: 42a-42b)]. Onocentaurs are destined to prevail in the latter versions while hippocentaurs continue to be present in texts dealing with fabulous animals, where, however, onocentaurs also appear: see, for example, chapters 7 and 10 of *Liber monstrorum de diversis generibus*: [Bologna (1977: 44, 46)]. A centaur with a bow and arrows is Sagittarius – emblem of the homonymous constellation – which may often be seen in the illuminated manuscripts of medieval calenders: cf. Henkel (1976: 175, note 72) and Ohlgren (1986: 72, 81, 152, 250, 251). Onocentaurs too are often provided with bows and arrows as we can see, for example, in Cambrige, MS Sidney Sussex College 100, ff. 26^{r}-43^{r}, thirteenth century, [cf. George-Yupp (1991: 78-79), James (1928:11) and McCullock (1962:32-33)] and in London, British Library, MS Sloane 278, ff. 44^{r}-57^{r}, thirteenth century, which preserves a version of *Dicta Chrisostomi* [cf. George-Yupp (1991: 78-79) and McCullock (1962: 42)]; in Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk. 4. 25, ff. 48^{r}-86^{r}, thirteenth century, the hippocentaur shoots an arrow while the onocentaur brandishes a club [cf. George-Yupp (1991: 79-80) and James (1928: 23-24)].

ety, although they deny its power (*II Tim*. 3, 5). In the Church they are like men, but when they leave the church, they become beasts. They are like sirens and onocentaurs.

Sirenae et oncentauri (*Versio B*)
Isaias propheta dicit: Sirena et daemonia saltabunt in Babylonia, et herinacii et onocentauri habitabunt in domibus eorum [Esai. 13.22]. Unius cuisque natura Physiologus disseruit: sirenae (inquit) animalia sunt mortifera; quae a capite usque ad umbilicum figuram hominis habent, extrema uero pars usque ad pedes uolatilis habent figuram; et musicum quoddam ac dulcissimum melodiae carmen canunt, ita ut per suauitatem uocis auditus hominum a longe nauigantium mulceant et ad se trahant, ac nimia suauitate modulationis prolixae aures ac sensus eorum delinientes in somnum uertunt. Tunc deinde, cum uiderint eos grauissimo somno sopitos, inuadunt eos et dilaniant carnes eorum, ac sic persuasionis uocis ignaros et insipientes homines decipiunt et mortificant sibi. Sic igitur et illi decipiuntur qui deliciis huius saeculi et pompis et theatralibus uoluptatibus, tragediis ac diuersis musicis dissoluti, et uelut grauati somno sopiti efficiuntur aduersariorum praeda.
Onocentaurus duabus naturis constare Physiologus asserit, id est: superior pars hominis similis est, inferiores uero partis membra sunt naturae ualde agrestis. Huic assimilantur uecordes atque bilingues homines informes; dicente apostolo: Habentes autem promissionem pietatis, uirtutem autem eius abnegantes [2 Tim. 3. 5]. Propheta Dauid dicit: Homo cum in honore esset, non intellexit: comparatus est iumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis [Ps. 48. 21]. [19]

In order to go on with my considerations, it is time to introduce the Icelandic texts on the onocentaur:

Physiologus A

Honocentaurus heitir dýr þat vér kǫllum finngálkan. Þat er maðr fram en dýr aptr, ok markar þat óeinarðarmenn í vexti sínum. Þat kallask at bókmáli rangt ok dýrum glíkt, ef maðr mælir eptir þeim, sem þá er hjá, þótt sá mæli rangt. Réttorðr skal góðr maðr of alla hluti ávalt, hvárt sem er auðigri eða snauðr.[20]

Honocentaurus is the name of the animal we call *finngálkan*. It is a man in its fore part and an animal in its hind part and symbolizes unfaithful men in its appearance**.** In the Holy Scriptures it is considered false and worthy of a beast for a man to flatter those who are near him, although they speak falsely.[21] Good men, both rich and poor, must always be sincere.

[19] Cf. Carmody (1939: 25-26).
[20] For the Icelandic texts see Hermannsson (1938: 17, 20). For a lithographic facsimile of the manuscript included in a diplomatic edition see Dahlerup (1889: 199-290, 8 facsims.)
[21] Cf. *2Tim*. 3, 5 e *Ps.* 48, 21.

Physiologus B

Honocentaurus hefir upp líking manns en niðr dýrs, ok hefir tvenn mál ok hefsk á teigum úti at mæla við menn.
Svá sem postoli mælir: 'Hafendr fyrirheit mildi, en krapt hans neitendr'; ok David propheta: 'maðr, þá er hann var í vegsemd, eigi skildi hann, ok er hann samvirðr óvitrum kykvendum ok er þeim orðinn glíkr.

Honocentaurus has its fore part like a man and its hind part like an animal, it has a double tongue and lingers in the meadows to talk with men.
So as the Apostle says: "He promises gentleness, but denies his force";[22] and the prophet David: "Man, when he was in Glory, did not understand, and is considered to be like a foolish animal and has become similar to them".[23]

If we compare the above quoted piece of the Latin text concerning the onocentaur with the two Icelandic chapters, we immediately realize that the latter are so concise that they cannot be in anyway considered 'translations' in the proper sense of the word. This characteristic is common to every *exemplum* of the Icelandic versions whose illustrations usually integrate what is omitted in the text.
Since no illustrated manuscripts of the *Versio B* are extant, it follows that it is necessary to look for other models within the Latin production originating in England. So in this case the transmission of the text and the transmission of the illustrative cycles interlace with each other in a complex way.[24] To understand the kind of relationship and dependence which links the Icelandic *Physiologi* to their sources – textual as well as iconographic – we must attempt to untie this knot.

In the physiological tradition the sequence of the chapters is an important feature in defining the interdependence of the different versions on each other. As regards this aspect, the two Icelandic *Physiologi* vary in differing degrees from the Latin *Versio B*. In fact the five *exempla* of the *Physiologus A* reproduce the order of chapters nine-twelve of the Latin version, but a very significant difference may be seen: the siren and the onocentaur are dealt with in two different paragraphs and are separated by the ant.[25] *Physi-*

[22] Cf. *2Tim*. 3, 5.
[23] Cf. *Ps.* 48, 21.
[24] On the problem of relations between transmission of text and transmission of illuminations in English Bestiary manuscripts see Muratova (1994: 579- 605).
[25] See p. 224 and p. 227, note 17.

ologus B is much more independent of the Latin source and includes chapters about the heron, the kite and the boar which are absent in the *Versio B*.[26] The separate presentation of the siren and the onocentaur[27] breaks the more ancient physiological tradition where the two *monstra* occurred in the same chapter since they are both characterized by a bodily ambiguity which symbolizes false and deceitful behaviour.[28]

The separation from the siren decided the future fate of the onocentaur: it may be intended, I think, as the prelude of its premature disappearance from the scene[29] in favour of the siren that enjoys great success throughout the Middle Ages (and beyond). In fact, while the onocentaur's physical appearance remains unchanged over the centuries, the siren is so dynamic that it undergoes important metamorphoses and feeds the fantasy of poets, writers, painters and so on.[30]

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[26] See p. 224 and p. 227, note 17. Both the Icelandic *Physiologi* lack chapters dealing with plants or stones.

[27] At first it may be found in versions derived on the whole from the Latin *Versio B-Is* and later in many *Bestiaries* written down especially in England as we can see in the Bk. II of *De Bestiis et aliis rebus* (twelfth century), incorrectly attributed to Hugo of Saint Victor [cf. McCulloch (1962: 30-31)], in the *Bestiaire* of the Anglo-Norman poet Philippe de Thaon [twelfth century; cf. Wright (1841: 23-24, 27-28)], in the *Bestiary* preserved in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 81 [twelfth century; cf. Kauffmann (1975: 126-127)], in a *Bestiary* of the thirteenth century [cf. Millar (1958: ff. 9^{v}, 14^{r})]; here the onocentaur is called *monocentaurus*!), in the rhymed *Bestiaire* of the Norman poet Gervaise [thirteenth century, cf. Meyer (1872: 19-20)]. However, the siren and the onocentaur are still treated together, for example, in the *Physiologus* preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 167, ff. 1^{r}-12^{r}, thirteenth century [cf. McCulloch (1962: 29 and plate VIII, 2)].

[28] On the Christian symbolism of these *monstra* see Réau (1955: 118-120; 121-124).

[29] The onocentaur begins to be absent in the *Bestiaries* of the Second Family; see, for example, the *Bestiaries* preserved in the following manuscripts (twelfth-thirteenth century): Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii. 4. 26**,** ff. 1^{r}-74^{r}; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1511 and MS Bodley 764 [for short descriptions of manuscripts in the Bodleian Library cf. Pächt-Alexander (1973)]; London, British Library MS Add. 11283; Aberdeen, University Library, MS 24. Cf. Morgan (1982: no. 17, 21) and Morgan (1988: no. 98).

[30] In the chapter dedicated to the siren in *Libro della natura degli animali* or *Bestiario toscano* (thirteenth century) the siren seems to have 'absorbed' the centaur according to that process of contamination and accumulation which characterizes the physiological matter and which sometimes produces new *monstra*:

> La serena si è una criatura molto nova, ché elle sonno di tre nature. L'una si è meço pescie e meça facta a similitudine de femena; l'altra si è meço uccello e meço femena; l'altra si è meço como cavallo e meço como femena.

Cf. Morini (1996: 444).

Now I will turn my attention to onocentaurs in order to redress the wrongs they suffered.

In the Icelandic *Physiologi* the onocentaur is present and it is actually the one animal that appears in both the versions,[31] but only in *B* the relative illustration has been preserved (see Table 1). The chapters dealing with the onocentaur are concise in comparison with the Latin source and report just the essential features:

1. the Latin name *onocentaurus*; it is obviously a loan-word from the Gr. ὀνοκένταυρος which is first to be found in Aelian's *De natura animalium* Bk. XVII, 9,[32] where the *monstrum* is described in this way: "[...] it is like a man in the face; [...] its back, flanks, belly, and hind feet resemble an ass, and it is of a grey colour as an ass, but under the belly (at the flanks) it approaches to white [...]".[33]As Druce noted,[34] the analogies with the ass caused it to receive the name of ὀνοκένταυρος on the model of ἱπποκένταυρος, a more appropriate word than κένταυρος for defining the physical aspect of this animal, half man and half horse. According to classical mythology centaurs are characterized by a great physical force and by violent and brutal behaviour: in consequence of this in the Christian sources they become symbols of evil passions and of Satan himself.[35]
2. The physical description: half man, half animal, without any other details.
3. The symbolic meaning (falseness), obviously connected with the physical ambiguity.
4. The references to the *Holy Scriptures*.[36]

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[31] See pp. 229-230.

[32] Cf. Liddell-Scott (1992[9]: s. u. ὀνοκένταυρος). For Aelian's influence on the *Physiologus* see Sbordone (1936: 21-23).

[33] Cf. Druce (1915: 179).

[34] Druce (1915: 179).

[35] However, a part of this race shows positive qualities as, for example, Chiron, the well-known tutor of Achilles: Cf. Clébert (1971: 80-81) and Charbonneau-Lassay (1995: 503-510). Further details about centaurs as literary characters in Indo-European myths and religious rites, may be found in Dumézil (1929).

[36] The Icelandic versions do not report the quotation which in the *Versio B* introduces the chapter *Sirenae et onocentauri* (see p. 229) where the onocentaur is mentioned together with the siren [see also the Latin *Versio Y*: "*Syrene et onocentauri et daemonia et heranacii uenient in Babilonia et saltabunt*". Cf. Carmody (1941: 113)]. The passage refers to *Isaiah* 13, 21. 22 where we read the prophecy of the fall of Babylon: "But wild beasts shall rest there, and their houses shall be filled with serpents, and ostriches shall dwell there, and the hairy ones shall dance there, and owls shall answer one another there, in the houses thereof, and sirens in the temples of pleasure". Cf. Kaiser (2002: 39) and Blenkinsopp (2000: 280). In this dramatic description the names of the animals quoted may be different from version to version: in fact the onocentaur does not occur in the Hebrew *Bible*, but makes its entry into the Greek version (*Septuaginta*) where the term ὀνοκένταυρος 'translates' the Hebr. *'iyyîm* lit. 'those who howl'

These elements are common to both Icelandic chapters and bind them to tradition, even though to a different degree; other features introduce innovations which are not shared, however, by the two *Physiologi*. Their content, thus, appears different, but their catechizing and didactic purpose remains identical, and is even reinforced when compared with the source.

As regards *Physiologus A*, the compiler identifies the onocentaur with a native monster called *finngálkan*.[37] The etymological analysis of the word suggests that it was a *monstrum* provided with magic powers,[38] while literary sources give evidence of a dangerous, aggressive, half-human creature described in later sagas as a flying female monster.[39] We cannot assess this identification correctly since unfortunately the drawing is lost: however, I think that the reference to the *finngálkan* can be explained on the assumption that the author was not particularly interested in presenting a foreign monster with specific physical characteristics, but rather in presenting a creature which was known to behave badly. In this way the negative symbology represented by the onocentaur's 'nature' and the exhortation to avoid it (that is to avoid those who deceive by flattery) become easier for all to understand. This didactic purpose is confirmed by the final exhortation to be sincere which has not been suggested by the Latin *Versio B* where the description of the onocentaur's 'nature' and symbolism simply continue the items of the passage on the siren.

In *Physiologus B* the didactic purpose is equally as important, but is expressed in a completely different way. When the author writes "[the onocen-

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that is 'jackals' [cf. Vigouroux (1895: 613); id. (1908: 821-822)]. In *Vulgata* it was substituted by *ululae* 'owls', as Jerome himself says in Bk. V of his *Commentary to Isaiah*: "*Pro onocentauris quoque, quos soli LXX interpretati sunt, imitantes gentilium fabulas, qui dicunt fuisse hippocentauros, tres reliqui interpretes ipsum posuere uerbum hebraicum IHIM, quod nos in ululas uertimus*" [cf. Gryson / Deproost (1994: 712)]. At this point it is evident that the compiler of the *Versio B* was acquainted with the possible presence of the onocentaur in this context [cf. critical *apparatus* concerning these passages in *Biblia Sacra* (1969: 68)] and made the right choice to cite this *monstrum* in the introduction to the chapter dealing with the siren and the onocentaur. The onocentaur also occurs in *Vulgata* in *Isaiah* 34, 14: "*et occurrent daemonia onocentauris* [...]*"* [cf. *Biblia Sacra* (1969: 136)]: the context is very similar to the one previously quoted since it concerns the ruin of Edom.

[37] In the various versions of the *Physiologus* I have had the opportunity to read, I have never found other examples of identification between fabulous creatures belonging to different cultures.

[38] For this problem cf. Dolcetti Corazza (1985-86: 147-150).

[39] Cf. Hermannsson (1966: 9). For what I am about to say I feel unable to share his hypothesis: "[...] I am inclined to think that he [= the author] conceived of the onocentaur as a bird-siren [...]".

taur] lingers in the meadows to talk with men", he resorts to a narrative feature which – as far as I am aware – does not appear in this form anywhere else. The novelty consists both in having placed the onocentaur itself standing in front of the men and in having indicated the meadows as the place where the dialogue takes place. In some Latin versions similar situations may be found, but the onocentaur is never the leading character. The leading characters are the men, those who speak in one way and behave in another – even though they go to Church[40] – or those who like to go to the theatre[41] or take the *pulpita* (that is, the pulpits for preachers or the stages in a theatre).[42] The didactic message of this chapter is emphasized by the relative illustration which, as it follows the text, is clearly subordinated to it (see Table 1).

In both the Icelandic *Physiologi* the pen drawings were inserted with the purpose of telling what the text omits:[43] they usually appear between chapters, unframed, but sometimes partially defined by a simple line. They are not of excellent quality and now very little of the original colouring can be seen. On the whole they appear as an example of one of the two styles of illustrating medieval *Physiologi* and *Bestiaries*, the other one being illumination. Here I cannot enter into details, but I might mention that these two styles are linked by definite connections – although sometimes difficult to single out – and both belong "to the same Carolingian revival of late ancient art that supplied the models for the Anglo-Saxon illustrators of scientific books".[44]
The two different styles are well represented by the two earlier illustrated Latin *Physiologi* that survive: the oldest is preserved in Berne, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 318 (ff. 7^{r}-22^{v}, ninth century) and is decorated with illuminations which point to a late Alexandrian model,[45] the second in Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS. 10066-77 (ff. 140^{r}-156^{v}, tenth century) where the chap-

[40] As may be read in the *Versio Y* with references to the *Holy Scriptures*: cfr. Carmody (1941: 114).
[41] As may be read in a passage of the chapter *De Syrenis et Onocentauris* in *Dicta Chrisostomi*: cf. Wilhelm (1960: 24).
[42] As may be read in *Physiologus Theobaldi*: cf. Eden (1972: 62-63).
[43] Some exceptions may be found: they are caused by serious misunderstandings of the source as in the chapters dealing with the hoopoe and the ant; cf. Dolcetti Corazza (1992: 210-213). For some aspects of the complex relationship that links the verbal and iconographic features in medieval Germanic manuscripts see Saibene / Buzzoni (2001).
[44] Cf. Klingender (1971: 383). For the importance of the Carolingian revival in the development of Christian imagery cf. Lecouteux (1998^{2}: 61-66).
[45] It belongs to the school of Rheims – probably it was illustrated at Fleury – and contains the so called *Versio C* regarded as the earliest Latin version (twenty-four *exempla* dealing with animals, stones and plants): cf. Steiger / Homburger (1964). For the relationship between text and image see Lund (1997).

ters in ff. 140^{v}-147^{r} are illustrated by pen drawings (spaces left blank lead to presume that a greater number of illustrations were intended). Unlike most bestiary illustrations, these show also the text's moralization.[46]
The comparison between the illustrations of the siren and the onocentaur which appear in the two manuscripts quoted above (see Tables 2 and 3) reveals an obviously different technique, but above all it proves that they correspond to a different way of representing the text: the *Bernensis* 318 shows the traditional representation of the two *monstra* combined in the same miniature as they were described in the same chapter, while the *Bruxellensis* 10066-77 presents two separate drawings which are real narrative scenes enriched with new details, even though the text continues to reflect the tradition. The drawing of the onocentaur is placed after that of the siren and represents the monster in a very particular attitude: it is holding up a hare by its hind legs and piercing it with a spear.[47] The moralization is illustrated by the presence of two men wearing tunics, one also with a mantel fastened by a brooch on the right shoulder: their lively dialogue is emphasized by gestures. In this case it is evident that text and image follow two different traditions and originate from the contamination of different examples.

The earlier Latin *Physiologi* written down in England in the first half of the twelfth century and illustrated with line drawings follow the iconographic model of the *Bruxellensis*, but omit the moralization: they are the Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Misc. Laud 247 and the London, British Library, MS Stowe 1067[48] (see Tables 4 and 5).

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[46] It was probably compiled in northern France and contains the so called *Versio A* which shows a composite origin with elements derived from *Versio Y* and *Versio B* (thirty-six *exempla* dealing with animals, stones and plants). For the commented edition of the text cf. Cahier / Martin (1951-56). The drawings of the *Physiologus* are very similar to those which decorate a copy of Prudence's *Psychomachia* preserved in the same codex, ff. 112^{r}-139^{r}: cf. Stettiner (1895: 61-69). Further details about these manuscripts may be found in Klingender (1971: 382-384), in Silvestre (1979: 140-143), in Muratova (1984: 384-390) and in Baxter (1998: 62-72).

[47] An onocentaur holding a hare in its right hand and a spear in its left may be seen in an illustrated copy of Cicero's *Aratea* preserved in London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B. V., f. 43^{r}: cf. Ohlgren (1986: 252). In the physiological Christian context the hare's presence underlines the negative symbology linked to the onocentaur-hunter: in fact in Christian mentality hunting becomes the symbol of the struggle between good and evil. Thus the hunter represents the devil himself and hunted animals, such as deer, hares, doves, represent the souls he tempts and strikes. The same symbolism may be attributed to the snake held up by the onocentaur in one of the illustrations (f. 9^{v}) of the *Bestiary* preserved in the Library of Alnwick Castle: cf. Millar (1958) and Morgan (1988: no. 115).

[48] Cf. Kauffmann (1975: 75-76) and Baxter (1998: 83-100) where the author compares the two manuscripts. For further details see James (1928: 7-10); Klingender (1971: 384) and Mu-

In Laud 247 (f. 147^{r}) the onocentaur is combined with the siren who seems to beckon him. The two monsters are of course physically different, but they share two iconographic details: the belt connecting their human half to the animal, and the gesture of the beckoning finger which appears to establish some kind of contact between them, further emphasized by their glances. The onocentaur wears a pointed cap. These latter two features may be found in the drawing of the onocentaur in the MS Stowe 1067 (f. 1^{v}) even though here the cap has two points and the representation appears on the whole more complex (here the onocentaur is separated from the siren).

As I said above, the step from England to Iceland is a short one: the pen drawing representing the Icelandic onocentaur belongs to the same graphic tradition as these manuscripts, especially with regards to the details of the scene (see Table 1).
Here the monster is placed in a narrative scene which illustrates the text faithfully and effectually even though references to nature (the meadow, for example) have been omitted. It shows a dialogue situation where the monster and the men are on the same level and this very fact may be evidence that the illustrator wanted to emphasize the onocentaur's human part to the detriment of the animal. Obviously this choice might have been dictated by a lack of space, however I have never found this feature elsewhere. The onocentaur is bare-headed with some short hair on the nape of the neck. There is no trace of violence in its attitude, and indeed its face has a mild and persuasive look[49] while it is turning to the men with its arms open and its finger beckoning to them. Our attention is drawn by the large open right hand which might have a particular meaning since in medieval symbology large hands represent 'power' and when they belong to ancient pagan creatures, this 'power' has a negative quality.[50] The whole scene shows that the onocentaur has lost, so to speak, the abstract quality of its symbolism and has become a 'human' creature which appears exactly like the men who seduce by flattering words, but are deceptive in their actions.

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ratova (1985: 1330-33). The same iconographic tradition is present in London, British Library, MS Additional 11283: cf. Rickert (1954: 76).

[49] On the contrary in some English *Bestiaries* the representation of the struggle between onocentaurs and men is accompanied by violent behaviour: see, for example, the *Bestiary* (late thirteenth century) preserved in the Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 602 (ff. 1^{r}-36^{r}). Here the illustration shows a pair of onocentaurs which have caught a man, cut him in half and slung him across their flanks. The male is holding a sword while a man on the left is piercing it near the right shoulder. On the right the female is being pierced in the breast with an arrow shot by a man hidden on a tree. It is a fight scene which is completely independent from the text: cf. Druce (1915: 182), Morgan (1982: no. 54) and George / Yapp (1991: 78-79).

[50] Cf. Beigbeder (1989: 74).

The moralization is represented by the two men on the right who are listening to the words of the onocentaur; they appear to be on the defensive, perhaps afraid. One of the two figures is naked while the other is clothed and armed with a sword. I believe that this iconography is not meaningless, but has a deep symbolic significance: it indicates the contrast between he who is prey to flattery (that is to the devil) and he who succeeds, or has succeeded, in overcoming temptations. In fact many biblical passages demonstrate the infamy of nudity: I will mention only the episode of the Gadarene man possessed by the devil who is described as naked, but when he is rid of the devil, he is clothed (Lk. 8, 27. 35).[51] Thus in the Icelandic drawing the clothed man symbolizes him who has been able to fight and win (see the sword) and his gesture of covering the naked man with his mantle as if he wanted to aid and protect him, may suggest and prefigure the triumph of good.
If my interpretation is correct, it follows that here the image and the text interact with each other profoundly and succeed in making very effective that didactic message the author was interested in communicating.

From the analysis of the chapters dealing with the onocentaurs in the Icelandic *Physiologi*, I am enabled to express some hypotheses which are not definite for the moment since they must be confirmed (or not) by the analysis of the other *exempla*. The two versions, although independent of each other, present however the common characteristic of being rewritings and manipulations of the physiological matter for which it is neither possible nor correct to indicate a single source. Their dependence on the Latin *Versio B* must be considered as nothing other than a distant landmark: other sources are to be taken into account even if they cannot be recognized precisely since, from the eleventh century onwards, the channels of transmission of physiological data show a tendency to increase in number and to cross each other. In all probability versions of these renewed Latin *Physiologi* – and from now on it is better to speak of *Bestiaries* – reached Iceland and became the model for the Icelandic fragments. Although they originate from an ancient tradition, each of them appears however to be characterized by the new features I underlined above; moreover, in both of them the narrative proceeds with a colloquial and moralizing tone which may not be found in the earlier versions of the *Physiologus*. Evidence for this prevailing didactic purpose may also be considered the omission of the biblical quotations which traditionally introduce the animals dealt with in each chapter, while

[51] Even the onocentaur is depicted as naked and appears so in almost all artistic representations including sculptures which adorn Romanesque cathedrals: cf. Beigbeder (1989: 289-290).

the final biblical references have been kept since they exhort to good behaviour. Thus the two Icelandic *Physiologi*, in which tradition and innovation mingle profoundly with each other, became indispensable books for the local clergy in many occasions: they may be supposed to have been used for individual meditation, as schoolbooks for instructing novices, for being read aloud to an audience of monks and especially for preparing sermons for which their texts and illustrations provided a good deal of material.[52]

[52] For similar conclusions see the analysis of the chapter dealing with the kite (*Physiologus B* 16) by Faraci (1990: 108-126).

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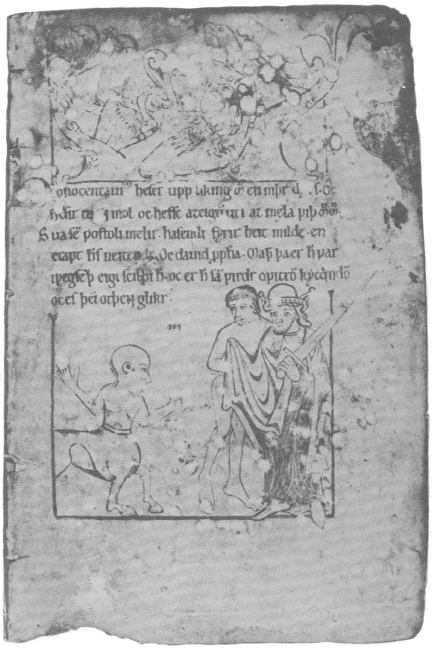

Table 1. Reykjavík, Árni Magnússon Institute, MS AM 673 a II 4°, f 4[r]

Table 2. Berne, Burgerbibliothek, MS 318, f. 13[v]

Table 3. Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 10066-77 f. 146[v]

Table 4. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud 247, f. 147[r]

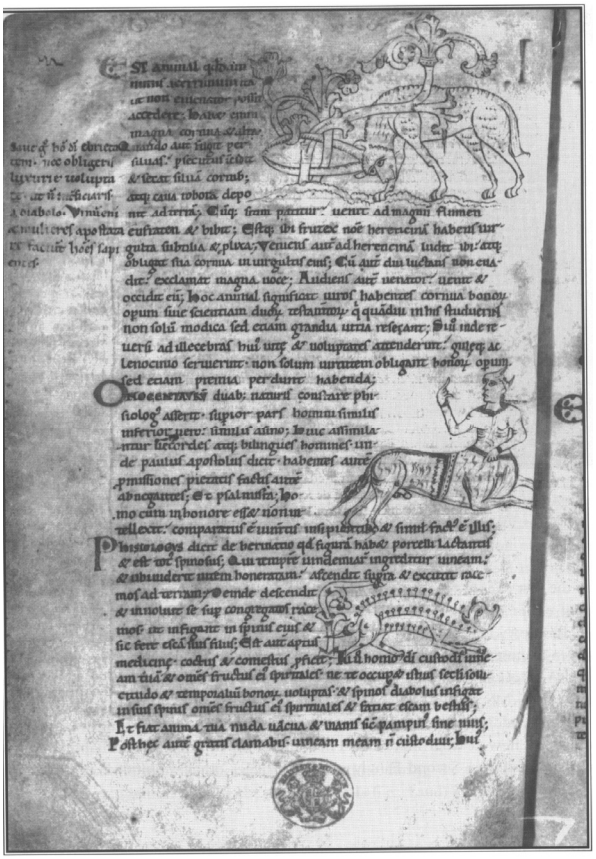

Table 5. London, British Library, MS Stowe 1067, f. 1[v]

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The Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd: *an Icelandic reworking of* Tristrams saga

Summary. The *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd*, which is also known as *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar*, is an Old Icelandic reworking of the Tristan legend, dating back to the 14th century. In the past, critics analyzed the *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd* in relation to its alleged source, *Tristrams saga*, which is the Old Norse prose translation of Thomas' *Tristan*; more recently, critics have argued for the necessity of studying this saga in the context of the wider Icelandic and European cultural and literary framework. Following this suggestion, this essay investigates some aspects of structure and style in the Old Icelandic reworking. The analysis of the composition technique reveals that the use of the conventions of various different literary forms which were current in medieval Iceland (such as translated *Riddarasögur*, original *Riddarasögur* and *Íslendingasögur*), has been crucial to the reshaping of the Tristan legend.

1. *Introduction*

The *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd*, also known as *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar*, is a prose work written in Iceland in the 14th century and handed down in a 15th century manuscript. It is a reworking of the legend of Tristan and Isolt and its model has been traced to *Tristrams saga*, a Norwegian prose translation of the Anglo-Norman poem *Tristan* by Thomas.

In their studies on the *Saga af Tristram*, Leach, Schach and Kalinke focused on its relation to *Tristrams saga*, whilst Thomas and Barnes have more recently enlarged the field of comparison by placing the Icelandic work in the literary framework of its time. Leach (1921: 169-198) held the Icelandic work to be a vulgarization of *Tristrams saga*, written for a less refined audience. Schach (1964: 281) at first deemed it a "clumsy retelling of *Tristrams saga* based on a faulty recollection of the original", further distorted by the addition of names and situations from other sources, and as a result an unintentional parody; he later changed his mind and spoke of "a deliberate reply", of a farcical imitation of *Tristrams saga* [Schach (1964: 281), (1987: 95)]. Kalinke, noting that the Icelandic reworking has but scarce affinities with the tragic love story we know from the Norwegian translation [Kalinke

(1985: 348)] speaks of an "iconoclastic approach" [Kalinke (1981: 211)], considering the *Saga af Tristram* a parody of translated *Riddarasögur* and of Arthurian romance in general; in her opinion, the Icelandic work, by means of distorsion and exaggeration of certain motifs, mocks the behavioural patterns put forward by courtly literature [Kalinke (1981: 199-211)].

Whereas Schach and Kalinke see a burlesque purpose, M.F. Thomas (1983: 54) rejects the idea of parody and considers the Icelandic work in the light of the influence of other European traditions; she claims that it is essential to enlarge the field of comparison beyond *Tristrams saga* and to place the Icelandic work in the wider European context of the Tristan issue as a whole. Finally, Geraldine Barnes (1999: 380) argues that the Icelandic work should be placed in the cultural context of late medieval Iceland and not only compared to the Norwegian translation.
This paper, following the suggestions of Barnes and Thomas, will analyze some structural and stylistic features of the *Saga af Tristram*, with the purpose of highlighting how and why it strays from the Norwegian translation: the characters, the narrative strategies and analogies in structure and style to genres of Scandinavian literature such as *Íslendingasögur*, translated *Riddarasögur*, and original *Riddarasögur*, will be investigated.

2. *The manuscript tradition of the* Saga af Tristram

The composition of the *Saga af Tristram* probably dates back to the early 14th century; the work was handed down in a mid-15th century manuscript, AM 489, 4to, which was a little more recent than the oldest manuscript of *Tristrams saga* (which was written between the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century). While AM 489, 4to is the oldest and the most authoritative manuscript, two later manuscripts are also extant: NKS 1754, 4to (18th century), a copy of AM 489, 4to, and 2316, 4to (dating from about 1850).

AM 489, 4to is made up of two different manuscripts, AM 489A and AM 489B, bound in a single codex: AM 489A comprises ff. 1-26, originally part of AM 471, 4to, and AM 489B comprises ff. 27-56.[1] AM 489, 4to contains

[1] There were originally two distinct codices. One of them, AM 489, 4to, contained *Hrings saga ok Tryggva*, *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*, *Saga af Tristram*, *Ívens saga*. The other, AM 471, 4to, contained *Barðar saga*, *Kirjalax saga*, *Þorðar saga Hreðu*, *Króka-refs saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Ketils saga Hængs*, *Gríms saga Loðinkinna*, *Örvar-Odds saga*, *Viktors saga ok*

six sagas, or parts of them. AM 489A contains *Barðar saga Snæfellsáss* and *Kirjalax saga*, while AM 489B contains *Hrings saga ok Tryggva* (the conclusion only), *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr* (a translation from French), *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd*, and *Ívens saga* (another translation from French; the conclusion is missing).

A comprehensive view of the manuscript tradition allows us to infer some data: the oldest extant manuscript was written down about half a century later than the oldest Icelandic manuscript of *Tristrams saga*, during a period, the 15th century, that saw the flourishing and manuscript dissemination of original *Riddarasögur*. Unlike these latter, however, which were handed down with an abundance of copies over a long time span (until the 19th century), the *Saga af Tristram* appears to have existed in only one vellum from the 15th century, and in two later paper manuscripts, from the 18th and 19th centuries respectively.

AM 489, 4to is an important witness for two romances which ultimately derive from medieval French works (i.e. the only complete vellum of *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*, and one of the two vellums of *Ívens saga*) and of a third romance of similar origin (i.e.the only complete vellum of the *Saga af Tristram*). It thus forms an important link in the trasmission and development of the so-called *Riddarasögur* [Blaisdell (1980: 9)].

3. *The translated* Riddarasögur

The Norwegian translation of *Tristan* was commissioned in 1226 by king Hákon Hákonarson "The Old" to a monk named Robert;[2] it is the first in a series of translations from French courtly romances[3] which form a distinct group of works within saga literature, the *Riddarasögur* ('sagas of knights', 'chivalric sagas'), also called "translated *Riddarasögur*" since they are translations and must be distinguished from the so-called "original *Ridda-*

Blávus. The folios containing *Barðar saga* and *Kirjalax saga* were then removed (we cannot determine when and why) from AM 471, 4to and added to AM 489, 4to.

[2] That the translation was commissioned by the king from Brother Robert is stated in the prologue of *Tristrams saga* in the manuscript AM 543, 4to, dating from the 17th century. Brother Robert lived in the monastery of Lyse, near Bergen, which was the seat of the Norwegian royal court. An Abbot Robert is mentioned as translator of *Elis saga*, also commissioned by Hákon and written a little later than *Tristrams saga*. This Abbot Robert is probably the same person as Brother Robert, who had in the meantime advanced in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

[3] *Chansons de geste* were also translated, for example *Elis saga* is the translation of *Elie de St. Gilles*.

rasögur", which are later, original creations, though they were greatly influenced by the translated ones. *Tristrams saga*, *Elis saga*, *Ívens saga*, *Möttuls saga*, *Parcevals saga*, *Válvers Þáttr* and the *Strengleikar* are products of Hákon's cultural activity and were probably all translated by Brother Robert.[4] The translated *Riddarasögur*, however, were not unaffected by the influence of native literature; the translations were executed in the 13th century, a time when a large number of *Íslendingasögur* ('sagas of Icelanders', also called "family sagas") were being written down; around 1220 Snorri was composing *Edda* and *Heimskringla* [Mitchell (1959: 462)].

The introduction of this translated literature to Norway was part of Hákon's political programme. Under his rule the crown became stronger and the king strove to claim a place among European monarchies; the translations represent Hákon's endeavour to make Norway conform to the great courts of his time, where chivalric literature was flourishing. Hákon's model was the Plantagenet court in England; indeed, commercial and cultural relations between Norway and England were thriving and they probably advanced the knowledge in Norway of the literature written in French which was prospering in England under the patronage of the Angevin kings and their barons.[5] English influence was strong in literature, architecture and church affairs [Helle (1968: 107, 109)] and the majority of the manuscripts of the romances which were then translated probably came from England, including the *Tristan* of Thomas [Leach (1921: 152)].

4. *The original* Riddarasögur

This activity of translating French romances lasted just as long as Hákon's reign [Togeby (1975: 183-185)]. The translated works themselves, however, lived on in Iceland, where they were copied over a span of more than six centuries [Kalinke (1982: 36)]. The majority of manuscripts containing translated *Riddarasögur* are Icelandic copies[6] of Norwegian originals, ranging from the 14th to the 18th century; as these copies are geographically and

[4] These sagas reveal affinities in their vocabulary: see Hallberg (1971: 114-138); Blaisdell (1974: 134-139); Hallberg (1975: 1-17).

[5] The 13th century was a period of growth for trade in the North Sea and the market for Norwegian dried fish was expanding; Bergen, the seat of Hákon's court, was the main trading centre for dried fish. Norway imported cereals, fabrics and other handmanufactured articles from England, and exported fish and fish by-products, timber, furs and falcons.

[6] Only Icelandic copies are extant of *Tristrams saga*, *Ívens saga*, *Möttuls saga* and *Válvers Þáttr*. As for the Norwegian manuscript tradition of translated *Riddarasögur*, we have some parchment fragments and the codex de la Gardie 4-7.

chronologically removed from the Norwegian translations of the 13th century, it is not easy to determine how much of the text handed down in these manuscripts is the actual work of Norwegian translators and how much is that of Icelandic copyists. The question of omissions[7] must be considered in light of the fact that Robert's translation is no longer extant. Indeed, we only have manuscripts which are later Icelandic copies, so that, compared to the French originals, omissions and differences may be, in part at least, due to the taste of Icelanders who were accustomed to the style of the sagas.

The style of the saga form tends towards economy: there is little description and chiefly action, dialogues are limited in number and concise, narratorial intervention is scarce and, with regard to subject matter, the psychology of love is almost absent. The text of *Tristrams saga*, when compared to its model, appears to have been influenced by these characteristics of the *Íslendingasögur*, which were in fact being copied down in parchment in the very same years when manuscripts of the translated *Riddarasögur* were being produced [Boyer (1995: 1520)]. It is also possible that the saga style affected the texts at the moment of their translation in Norway.

In the 14th century, the translated *Riddarasögur* in Iceland contributed to the shaping of the original *Riddarasögur*, which were influenced both by the chivalric subject matter of the translated works and by stories based on Scandinavian subjects known as *Fornaldarsögu*r [Weber (1986: 426)].[8] The original *Riddarasögur* contain a great number of narrative elements borrowed from various sources, both written and oral, rearranged in a new structure. The influence of translated *Riddarasögur* is remarkable above all in terms of the setting, which is courtly society.

4.1. *Tristan in the* Saga af Tristram

In the *Saga af Tristram*, Tristram is portrayed as the typical perfect knight. This portrayal was taken from translated *Riddarasögur* and had become a

[7] And the question of additions: for example, the prayer of the dying Ísodd to God in *Tristrams saga*.

[8] The *Fornaldarsögur* are the 'sagas of ancient times' and are also called "mythical-heroic sagas". The most remarkable difference compared to *Fornaldarsögur* lies in the courtly influence which permeates the original *Riddarasögur*; moreover, the atmosphere in the *Fornaldarsögur* is often tragic, but this is never the case in the original *Riddarasögur*. The *Fornaldarsögur* hand down a corpus of legendary traditions which has the function of a "legendary history" of Iceland; this aspect distinguishes them from the original *Riddarasögur*. In any case, the subject matter of both genres involves marvellous happenings.

rhetorical stereotype in the original *Riddarasögur*, where the knight is described as a youth of noble birth, a skillful and brave warrior, handsome and courageous. The Icelandic Tristram does not shine for his learning, and while Thomas' hero is a talented musician and blessed with great eloquence, the skills of the Icelandic Tristram are rather of a physical and martial nature. In Eilhart's version as well Tristan is first and foremost a warrior[9] and it was probably the influence of the Germanic epic tradition that induced Eilhart to emphasize Tristan's martial exploits.

The Tristan of the tradition is a warrior as well as a lover; he performs deeds which call to mind the deeds of Germanic heroes. There are characters that made Tristan familiar to the Scandinavian audience, not so much as a lover but rather as a dragon slayer, like Sigurðr, and as a giant slayer, like Þórr [Boyer (1995: 1525)]. In particular, there are many similarities between Tristram and Sigurðr: both were conceived by a dying father, both are outsiders in a society where they appear at first as saviours, and where, however, they both bring about disgregation; both are dragon slayers and warriors who perform heroic deeds; both incur the envy of the milieu into which they have entered; and, finally, both obtain the best bride for their kings, through disguise and deception [Gillespie (1990: 156)]. Although the design of king, bride and helper who wins the bride for his king is traditional and widespread, only in the stories of Sigurðr and of Tristan is the outcome tragic, since the helper (Sigurðr, Tristan) actually proves fitter for the bride than the king. In the *Saga af Tristram*, the tragic tone has disappeared since here Tristram does not experience any sense of moral dilemma from his adulterous relationship with his uncle's wife, and afterwards he consummates his own marriage with the second Ísönd begetting a son. Tristram's progeny is an innovation which helps to construct an epilogue in the fashion of the *Íslendingasögur*, where narratives usually end with mention of the descendants' exploits; as a consequence, Tristram appears here as the founder of a prominent family, like a character from *Íslendingasögur*, instead of the tragic lover of tradition (in all the other versions Tristan has no children).

In the *Saga af Tristram* Tristram is involved in an episode (not found in the Norwegian translation) in which he acts like a typical figure of the original *Riddarasögur*, the so-called *kolbítr*. The *kolbítr* is a lazy and slow-witted lad with flaws such as a lack of speech who, in the end, however, turns out to be

[9] There are some features of Eilhart's Tristan that make him very different from Thomas's Tristan: for example, his not well-pondered decision to marry the second Isolt, his saying that he has left her a virgin because she mistreats him, and his decision to consummate his marriage just to tease his lover.

more clever and more valiant than anyone else.[10] Tristram is sold to the pirates and his obstinate silence enrages them;[11] to compel him to speak, they beat him savagely and then shave and tar his head. The shaving of the head was a common practice in medieval Scandinavia for the purpose of stigmatizing slaves and criminals and it is often depicted in the original *Riddarasögur*; Tristram's head is shaved here to mark his fall in rank.[12] The episode can also be read in relation to versions of the legend that belong to the "common" branch of the Tristan tradition.[13] In the German poem *Tristrant* by Eilhart, Tristan receives a head injury in battle and is therefore shaved because of his wound; in the *Folie de Berne*, a poem in French written down in the 13th century, Tristan, in his madness, cuts off his hair. The shaved head is a motif that was most likely suggested by versions of the story other than the Norwegian translation and its inclusion in the Icelandic reworking may have been prompted by the presence of analogous situations in the original *Riddarasögur*.

Tristram himself acts ruthlessly when he instigates a slaughter on board the ship bound to Ireland, bringing about the death of all the men of the crew.[14] This massacre is not found in *Tristrams saga*, the alleged source of the reworking. In Schach's opinion (1960: 344), the episode is aimed at lowering Tristram's stature, with the purpose of criticising the futility of courtly literature. Wanton cruelty, however, is common in the original *Riddarasögur*; the slaughter Tristram instigates on board and the maltreatment he suffers at the hands of the pirates are typical instances of the gratuitous and grotesque violence which permeates them, and *Fornaldarsögur* as well [Barnes (1999: 390)].

These episodes give a picture of Tristram which does not fit the one portrayed by Thomas; it also clashes with the conventional laudatory portrait sketched out at the beginning of the saga. As often happens in the original *Riddarasögur*, characters which are at first described as compassionate and generous turn out through their actions to be cruel and ruthless. In the Icelandic reworking and in the original *Riddarasögur*, this contradiction is pro-

[10] The *kolbítr* is a figure which originated in folklore.

[11] Tristram's temporary mutism recalls that of the hero of the original *riddarasaga Sigurðar saga þögla*, who in his youth was thought to be unable to speak. Naturally, he later becomes the most valiant knight of all.

[12] In the Middle Ages the shaved head was associated with the lowering of social dignity: monks shaved their heads as a sign of humility and criminals were shaved as a mark of their degradation in society.

[13] While *Tristrams saga* belongs to the "courtly" tradition.

[14] No reason is given in the saga for this carnage; it is probably a blind motif.

duced by the juxtaposition of ancient customs and the new more refined manners postulated by the translated *Riddarasögur* [Barnes (1999: 393)]. The *Saga af Tristram* is concerned only with the martial, exterior aspects of chivalry and takes no interest in ethical issues; the annullment of Tristram's interior dilemmas is typical of the indifference of the original *Riddarasögur* to ethical concerns which are, on the contrary, the focus of most European courtly literature.

4.2. *The female characters and the concept of love*

As is usual in many original *Riddarasögur*, the *Saga af Tristram* contains a dispute for succession to the throne, when Blenziblý rises in arms against the new king Mórodd, her own brother. Blenziblý is Tristram's mother[15] and in the Icelandic reworking she is endowed with qualities which are typical of the so-called *meykongr*, a figure peculiar to the original *Riddarasögur*, which are peopled by two types of female characters. On the one hand, we have the passive ones, who are given in marriage by male relatives, fathers or brothers, to recompense friends and benefactors, to appease enemies or to seal pacts: this is the case of Ísodd Svarta (Tristram's wife) and of Ísodd herself. On the other hand, we find women who have sovereign power in their own kingdoms and who are military leaders. These women very often have a misogamous turn of mind; they belong to the literary type known as the *meykongr*, 'maiden king'.[16] Blenziblý is not misogamous but she does wage war and she wants to rule as a king rules; her *meykongr*-like nature, which is aggressive and commanding, emerges openly in her dialogue with Pollornis:

> Síðan kallaði kóngsdóttir til sín Pollornis sendimann sinn: "Ek hefi sét í dag," sagði hún, "þann mann at ek hefi eigi litit hans jafningja, ok þér satt at segja, þá hefi ek svá mikla ást felt til hans, at ek má fyrir engan mun annat, en nú þegar í stað verð ek at senda þik til fundar við Kalegras, ok bið hann koma til mín, ok seg at ek vil hafa ást hans." Pollornis svarar: "Frú, þú munt vera drukkin, er þér mælit slíka fólsku, þar sem hann hefir gert yðr svá mikinn skaða, at hann hefir drepit Plegrus riddara, vin yðvarn, er fyrir skömmu settuð þér höfðingja yðvars hers. Líz mér hitt ráðliga, at ek fara ok drepa hann ok færa [ek þér] höfuð hans; er þá vel hefnt várs manns." Hún svarar: "Ef þú ferr [ekki] eptir því, sem ek mæli fyrir, þá skaltu sporna hinn hæsta gálga,

[15] She is called Blancheflúr in Thomas' poem, and Blensinbil in the Norwegian translation.
[16] On the literary cliché of the *meykongr* see Wahlgren (1938); Kalinke (1990); Francini (2004).

> þegar er sól rýðr [á viðu á] morgin, ella skaltu hafa annan hinn versta dauða, þann er finnz á öllu Englandi."[17]
>
> Then the princess sent for her page Pollornis: "I have seen today," she said, "the man whose equal I have never seen, and to tell you the truth, I then fell deeply in love with him that, as a result, now, at this moment, I can act in no other way than to send you to meet Kalegras. Ask him to come to me, and say that I desire to have his love." Pollornis replied: "Lady, you must be drunk since you say such foolish things, seeing that he has done you so much harm in that he has killed the knight Plegrus, your friend, whom not long ago you appointed as commander of your army. It seems a better idea to me that I should go and kill him and bring you his head. Then our man will be properly avenged." She answered: "If you do not act in accordance with what I said before, you shall dance from the highest gallows as soon as the sun reddens the woodlands in the morning, or you shall have another kind of death, the worst that can be experienced in all England."[18]

As we can see, when Blenziblý falls in love she is not tortured by the inner pangs she experiences in *Tristrams saga*; on the contrary, she is resolved to claim her beloved as opposed to offering herself and her love to him. This alteration in her character may be due to the influence of the literary conventions of the *Íslendingasögur*, where the inner lives of the personages are almost never described and their personalities and emotions are revealed only through their behaviour. As a result, the maiden's overpowering feelings, which are described by reporting her psychological toilings in *Tristrams saga*, are instead given expression in the Icelandic work through her overbearing manners.

Blenziblý had fallen in love with Kalegras[19] while watching the fight from above in which he kills her previous lover and then the two retired to her bower for three years; there is no hint in *Tristrams saga* about the killing of the lover and about these three years of uninterrupted love-making. The sudden passion for the knight who has killed the princess' lover has probably been inspired by the lady's instant fancy for her husband's killer in *Ívens Saga*, the Norse translation of Chrétien's *Yvain*. The motif of the long retirement from the world spent in love-making has probably been taken from another translated *riddarasaga*, *Erex Saga*, the Norse translation of Chrétien's *Erec*. Blenziblý has catalysed the rewriter's attention, since her char-

[17] Kölbing (1978: *Saga af Tristram*, ch. 3).
[18] Translation by Hill (1999: 249-251).
[19] In the Icelandic reworking Kalegras is the name of Tristram's father, while the form is Kanelangres in the Norwegian translation.

acter has undergone considerable changes and a great deal of motifs from other sources have been attached to her figure. Ísodd also acts like Blenziblý when she reveals openly to Tristram that she is attracted by him; her straightforwardness in dealing with men is common among the *meykongr*-heroines of the original *Riddarasögur*.[20]

The picture of love given in the Icelandic reworking is a radical departure from *Tristrams saga*; the conflict between love and honour, already played down in *Tristrams saga*, disappears almost completely in the *Saga af Tristram*, where love is not an ethical value but rather a further demonstration of the excellence of the knight, as is the case in the original *Riddarasögur*. In any case, love plays a major role in the original *Riddarasögur*, while love and women scarcely occupy any place in *Íslendingasögur*, where few women are mentioned and only thanks to their remarkable characters rather than to the feelings of love they may kindle in men: a love relationship is never the central theme in *Íslendingasögur*.
In the course of time, the legend of Tristan and Isolt has undergone many accretions and alterations; its basic theme is nevertheless an adulterous passion, which may have been perceived as an oddity when the story first appeared in Scandinavia. Norse ethics were in fact centred on lineage (Old Norse *ætt*), so while a woman could also have been viewed as a love object, her main task was nevertheless the continuity of the clan. As a consequence, *Tristrams saga* and its picture of love may have appeared revolutionary and strange to the typical Scandinavian mind of the time. The Icelandic work dilutes this unconventionality by underplaying the relevance of love in the life of the protagonist and by shaping the subject matter according to the rules of a more familiar literary tradition. After all, the *Saga af Tristram*, like the original *Riddarasögur*, does not relate a love story but rather a martial and dynastic triumph. The romantic relationship, which is the core of Thomas' *Tristan*, is only a part of a wider narrative frame in this saga, which is non-tragic in its essence and narrated not so much because there is an interest in the love relationship, but rather with the purpose of praising the merits and martial prowess of the hero.

5.1. *The narrative technique*

The discrepancies between *Tristrams saga* and the Icelandic reworking are so numerous and substantial that it has been questioned whether the Norwegian translation is the real direct source [Bibire (1985: 70)]. The *Saga af*

[20] For example, Sedentiana in *Sigurðar saga þögla*.

Tristram is considerably shorter than the Norwegian translation. The monologues and the characters' introspections, already reduced in the translation, have been almost completely omitted in the reworking, which takes some key characters and most of its situations from the Tristan story, but inserts them into a new narrative frame; figures and motifs, extrapolated from other sources and traditions, both written and oral, are recombined in a different structure, thus following a practice of contamination which is typical of the original *Riddarasögur*. The borrowing of names and motifs from different sources concurs with the shifting of the focus of the story, since some narrative elements of the Tristan story have been voided of their original meaning through the use of other models, as in the case of Blenziblý, who is modelled on the *meykongr* figure.

Some names are taken from other chivalric sagas: for example, Tristram's maternal grandfather is King Philippus, a name commonly used for kings in the original *Riddarasögur*. Tristram is brought up by Biring, whose name recalls the hero of *Bærings saga*, another original *riddarasaga*. In the *Saga af Tristram* the Irish courtier who falsely claims to have killed the dragon is called Kæi, a name that belongs to the Arthurian cycle, where Kæi is one of the knights of the Round Table. Not only names, but also motifs from other works and traditions are included in the narrative: Blenziblý claims the sceptre; Tristram instigates a slaughter among the crew on the ship bound to Ireland; the story begins two generations before the birth of Tristram, with the mention of his maternal grandparents; and after Tristram's death the saga briefly relates the deeds of his son and grandchildren.

A narrative element which is common in Family sagas but is even more typical of the original *Riddarasögur* is the so-called "epic triad", which is widely used in the *Saga af Tristram*: Kalegras and Blenziblý retire to their love-making for three years; Kalegras dies three nights after Blenziblý has reached his death-bed; the sword fragment is hammered into Tristram's skull during the third attack by Engres; queen Flúrent gives Tristram three ships; Tristram communicates Mórodd's message to Flúrent and Ísodd after three nights; Ísodd is offered thrice to Tristram (by her mother Flúrent, by herself and by king Mórodd) and is thrice turned down by him; the two lovers prolong the sea voyage to Mórodd's court for three months; Bringven substitutes Ísodd in the marital bed for three nights; the king puts the lovers to the test thrice to be sure they are guilty; Ísodd Svarta gives birth to Tristram's son after three years of marriage; and, finally, Ísodd survives Tristram for three days.

5.2. *The analogies with* Íslendingasögur

The opening chapter of the *Saga af Tristram* has affinities with *Íslendingasögur*, where the first sentence usually gives some brief information about the time in which the story takes place and about the characters who first appear in the narrative. This structure can be found in many of the original *Riddarasögur*: for example, in *Sigurðar saga Turnara*, *Valdimars saga*, *Sigrgards saga ok Valbrands*, *Sigrgarðs saga frækna* and so on. The other type of incipit in the original *Riddarasögur* does not involve a presentation of the characters but rather explanations about the literary origins of the tale [van Nahl (1981:13)].

Another parallelism that links this saga to the form of the *Íslendingasögur* is that about a quarter of the story takes place before the birth of the eponimous hero, while in *Tristrams saga* the events which involve Tristan's parents are narrated more briefly. The *Saga af Tristram* shows an interest in genealogy which is typical of *Íslendingasögur*, for the narrative begins with the mention of Tristram's grandparents, then relates at length the vicissitudes of Tristram's parents and, in the conclusion, the fortunes of Tristram's son and grandchildren are mentioned as well. The genealogical knowledge communicated in the introductive and final parts has a specific function in *Íslendingasögur*, since it singles out the families involved in the conflict and locates this conflict in Icelandic history, with reference to the past through the mention of the ancestors of the characters, and to the future with the mention of their prominent descendants [Hume (1973: 600)]. In the *Saga af Tristram* this type of beginning and ending are by now mannered structures, since they do not retain their original function of conveying knowledge about real ancestors of real Icelanders.

The saga begins like an *Íslendingasaga* and, delineating the fortunes of the hero's progeny, it also ends like an *íslendingasaga*;[21] the conclusion, however, includes elements typical of the original *Riddarasögur*, which generally end with a wedding, or even more than one. The wedding that Tristram's son, Kalegras, celebrates with the daughter of the Emperor of Saxland[22] provides the happy ending which is typical of the original *Riddarasögur*; at the same time, it fulfils the structure requirements of *Íslendin-*

[21] There are three kinds of endings in the *Íslendingasögur*: 1) the saga relates the rest of the life of the main character (e.g. *Egils saga*); 2) the saga tells of the main character's descendants or other remarkable relatives (e.g. *Grettis saga*); 3) the saga focuses on the descendants of other characters (e.g. *Hrafnkels saga*). The conclusion of the *Saga af Tristram* falls into type 2 (like *Grettis saga*).

[22] *Saxland* is the name used in original *Riddarasögur* to indicate German-speaking countries.

gasögur, since the story ends with an epilogue which briefly recounts the fates of Kalegras Tristramsson and his children.
The *Íslendingasögur* tend to close with traditional formulas such as "this story ends here" [van Nahl (1981: 22)],[23] whose function is to signal that the tale is a concluded whole and not only a part whose completion has been lost. The *Saga af Tristram*, on the contrary, ends with the statement that "there is a great saga" about the children of Kalegras Tristramsson. Some *Fornaldarsögur* are linked together by family ties between characters, for example Grímur of *Gríms saga Lóðinskinna* is the son of Ketill of *Ketils saga Hængs* and the father of Örvar-Oddr of *Örvar-Odds saga*. This never occurs in the original *Riddarasögur*, but family ties do exist between the characters of the original *Riddarasögur* and the characters of the *Fornaldarsögur*, for example Vilmundr of *Vilmundar saga* (an original *riddarasaga*) is the son of Bósi of *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs* (a *fornaldarsaga*).

5.2.1. *Stylistic features of the* Saga af Tristram

The style of the *Saga af Tristram* shows similarities to the *Íslendingasögur*. The Icelandic reworking dates back to the 14th century, one hundred years after the beginning of the *Íslendingasögur*' scribal period, a period extending to the 14th century and beyond. It is therefore natural that the *Íslendingasögur* affected the style of the *Riddarasögur* in general, and the style of the *Saga af Tristram* in particular. *Tristrams saga*, when compared to the *Íslendingasögur*, is written in a redundant style; compared to the style of European courtly literature, however, it reveals a certain degree of laconicism, a liking for litotes, and the tendency to abridge the lengthy monologues and detailed description of the feelings of the characters, which is altogether missing in the Icelandic reworking.

Whereas *Tristrams saga*, like the other translated *Riddarasögur*, has a predilection for long and ornate sentences and tends to imitate Latin syntax, the prose of the *Saga af Tristram*, favouring the use of brief and concise sentences and leaving out psychological details, tends to the economy which is typical of the *Íslendingasögur*. As for dialogues, in *Tristrams saga* we find magniloquent and rhetorical utterances, in opposition to the *íslendingasaga*-like conciseness of the direct speech of the Icelandic reworking; and, moreover, it must be remarked that the most commonly used rhetorical figure is the litotes, which, again, is a typical feature of the 'sagas of Icelanders'.

[23] E.g.: "Ok lýkr hér nú frásögu þessari", "Lýkr hér sögu Grettis Ásmundarsonar", and so on.

The description of the characters in the *Saga af Tristram* draws on the stereotypes of the original *Riddarasögur*, but also on the patterns of the *Íslendingasögur*, according to which the characters are fleshed out with few words, while in the original *Riddarasögur* they are portrayed with a profusion of adjectives. A rhetorical device of *Tristrams saga* is the practice whereby the name of a newly-introduced character is not revealed immediately, but rather is told only at the end of the description of the character, or even later. In the *Saga af Tristram*, on the contrary, a new character is always introduced by telling his/her name, as is usual in the *Íslendingasögur*. In addition, the description of the external world is as succint as the *Íslendingasögur* style demands, while the original *Riddarasögur* depict a rich, colourful and exotic world, with numerous descriptions of precious, luxurious and shining things.

In *Tristrams saga* the omniscient narrator organizes events in a temporal continuum by means of logical connections which are expressed syntactically by subordination; this means that the sentences, like the events, follow one after the other in a relationship which is not only temporal, but also resultive and causitive. The Icelandic work, on the contrary, relates the sequence of events by means of independent, coordinate clauses, whose relation to each other is temporal and signalled by adverbs. The most recurrent adverb, in the Icelandic reworking, as well as in the *Íslendingasögur*, is *þá* 'then', which does not connect events and clauses, in a logical sequence, but rather in a purely chronological manner, conveying as a result a sense of "objectivity" [Schosmann (1985: 198)].

The *Saga af Tristram* relates the story in a "fragmentary" or "desultory" way, in the stylistic fashion of the *Íslendingasögur*, so that events are not chronicled moment by moment from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. Instead, we find well calculated omissions in the sequence of facts. Rossenbeck (1970: 62) defines this stylistic feature of the *Íslendingasögur* "fragmentarische Erzählen in wohlberechtneten Sprüngen". An example of this technique is the way the *Saga af Tristram* relates the "ambiguous oath": the text says only that before the oath the two lovers met on a street, without revealing that on this occasion Ísodd gave instructions to Tristram on how to behave during the oath; after the oath has taken place, the real identity of the beggar is not disclosed by the narrator, who leaves to the reader the task of inferring that the beggar was Tristram in disguise.
For the most part, the differences between *Tristrams saga* and the *Saga af Tristram* are differences of literary genre, since the Icelandic reworking was

influenced by the style of the *Íslendingasögur* to a greater extent than the Norwegian translation. These formal differences are felt most in terms of the content; indeed, the preponderance of action and the lack of introspection and psychological struggle in the *Saga af Tristram* are connected to the borrowing of style from the *Íslendingasögur*.

5.3. *From translated* Riddarasögur *to original* Riddarasögur

Some of the translated *Riddarasögur* or, rather, some of their Icelandic manuscripts, have undergone changes and accretions that bring them closer to the form of the original *Riddarasögur*. In the Icelandic manuscript Stockholm 6, 4to (15th century), a first hand copied the text of *Elis saga* (a translation of the *chanson de geste Elie de St. Gilles*) from the Norwegian manuscript de la Gardie 4-7 while another, more recent and less expert hand added a long conclusion in which Elis marries Rosamunda, thus providing the typical happy ending of an original *Riddarasaga*. *Parcevals saga* is another case where elements suggested by the conventions of the original *Riddarasögur* have been attached to a translated work: *Parcevals saga* is the translation of Chrétien's *Perceval* and survives only in the Icelandic manuscript Stockholm 6, 4to, where, in a final addition, Parceval meets Blankiflúr again and marries her. The comparison between the 14th century Norwegian parchment fragment and the two 15th century Icelandic manuscripts of *Flóres saga* (which is the translation of *Floire et Blancheflor*) reveals that the Icelandic manuscripts contain an abridged text; in addition, the *Saga af Tristram*, which is part of AM 489, 4to, one of the Icelandic manuscripts of *Flóres saga*, is much shorter than the Norwegian translation.

The original *Riddarasögur* rearrange motifs from heterogeneous sources but, unlike the translated ones and the *Fornaldarsögur*, they do not make use of pre-existent stories; the only exceptions are the *Saga af Tristram*, which reworks the Tristan subject matter, and, perhaps, *Mágus saga* [Bibire (1985: 65)] and *Vilmundar saga viðutan*. *Mágus saga* is one of the oldest original *Riddarasögur*, dating back to about 1300. It has been suggested that its source is the *chanson de geste Renaud de Montauban* [Glauser (1983: 269)]. Around a narrative core, perhaps taken from this foreign source, various narrative elements from other sources can be identified: the breach of three prohibitions,[24] magic spells, the search for a bride of equal rank and dignity, and

[24] The "epic triad" is very frequently used both in *Mágus saga* and in the *Saga af Tristram*; it is often found in the *Íslendingasögur*.

a *meykongr*-like figure at the beginning of the story (as in the *Saga af Tristram*). *Mágus saga* may be, like the *Saga af Tristram*, a reworking of a foreign work. *Vilmundar saga* is a *riddarasaga* dating from the 14th century; the first part tells how Vilmundr grew up with his parents in isolation from the rest of the world and then went to the court of the king of Garðaríki, where he behaved at first like a naively ignorant fool (like Perceval), but proved himself a valiant knight in the end. According to Margaret Schlauch (1934: 165-167), this section of *Vilmundar saga* has been shaped on Chrétien's *Perceval* or its Norwegian translation, the *Parcevals saga*.

6. *"Version commune" and "version courtoise" in the* Saga af Tristram

Conventionally, two branches are distinguished in the Tristan legend: one is the "common" branch, whose representatives are the works by Béroul,[25] Eilhart,[26] the *Tristan en Prose*[27] and the Berne *Folie Tristan*;[28] the other is the "courtly" branch, comprising the poem by Thomas,[29] *Tristrams saga*, the poem by Gottfried von Strassburg[30] and *Sir Tristrem*.[31] *Tristrams saga* has special importance as the only complete witness of Thomas' version; however, it also contains non-courtly elements. In recounting the tale of the wounded Tristan who, borne by the sea-current lands in Ireland by sheer chance, the *Tristrams saga* concurs with Eilhart's version. In the *Saga af Tristram* the hero sails in a chosen direction and lands in Ireland on purpose, since he knows that only the Irish royal ladies can heal him, as in the Gottfried's version, which is a representative of the "courtly" branch.[32] In

[25] Béroul's *Tristan*, in the Norman dialect, was probably composed after 1191. It has survived in fragments comprising 4485 lines.

[26] The *Tristrant und Isalde* of Eilhart von Oberge, in Middle High German, dates from 1175/1180. It has come down to us in early fragments and late (15th century), modernised manuscripts.

[27] The *Tristan en Prose*, from the 13th century, is a French prose romance handed down in a large number of manuscripts.

[28] The Berne *Folie Tristan* (in Old French, 12th century) in its 572 verses relates an episode, already found in Eilhart, in which Tristan, disguised as a court fool, tries to reach Isolt at Mark's court.

[29] Thomas was an Anglo-Norman poet who probably worked at the court of Henry II of England in the period between 1155 and 1170. Only fragments of his *Tristan* are extant, totalling about 3150 lines.

[30] Gottfried's poem *Tristan und Isolt* was written in Middle High German around 1210. Of this poem, 19548 lines survive and only the conclusion is missing.

[31] *Sir Tristrem* is a Middle English poem from the late 13th century. It is derived from Thomas' *Tristan*.

[32] In the Icelandic folktale *Tistram og Ísól*, Tristan as a new-born baby arrives from the sea in a basket; this basket is perhaps a modification of the "oarless boat", which belongs to the

the final episode, both in the translation and in the reworking, two plants grow from the lovers' tombs and interwine their branches.[33] This image is found in Eilhart and in the *Tristan en Prose*, but not in the "courtly" branch. The last part of Thomas' *Tristan* is contained in the manuscript fragments Douce[34] and Sneyd[35] and they do not include the episode of the interwining trees. According to Varvaro (1970: 1062-1063), this motif, as found in Eilhart and in the *Tristan en Prose*, stems from popular oral sources. The image of the interwining trees is found in Gottfried's continuation authors, Ulrich von Türheim and Heinrich von Freiberg. The final part of Gottfried's *Tristan* is lacking, however; Ulrich and Heinrich based their continuations on Eilhart's narrative and they probably did not know Thomas' work [Blakeslee (1986: 130)].

In the episode of the "ambiguous oath" as presented in the *Tristrams saga*, Ísönd arrives by boat, while Tristram waits for her on the riverbank, disguised as a pilgrim. Ísönd asks him to carry her from the boat to the shore, and in so doing Tristram stumbles and falls on top of her; she is therefore able to swear that no man, except the king and the pilgrim, has ever approached her and she can then grasp the hot iron without burning her hand. In the *Saga af Tristram*, Ísodd arrives by horseback, but her horse stumbles making her fall in a pool of mud and Tristram, disguised as a beggar, lifts her up; there is no ordeal by hot iron. In this episode, the *Saga af Tristram* departs from *Tristrams saga* since it contains elements from the "common" branch. The ambiguous oath as related in the Icelandic saga is similar to the handling of the motif in *Spesar þáttr* [Togeby (1972: 376)] an episode of *Grettis saga*[36] probably based on the "common" branch of the Tristan legend. In the *þáttr* Þorsteinn, disguised as a beggar, carries his mistress Spes over a muddy pool and falls on her, who can therefore swear the truthful oath that no man has ever touched her, except her husband and that beggar.

Béroul-Eilhart branch but it is also contained in *Tristrams saga*. The arrival of a child in a basket brought by the waters is common in folktale and literature (Moses in the Bible; Scyld Scefing in *Beowulf*; Gregory of the medieval legend); it is however the connection of this motif with the request (contained in a writ which is found in the basket) that the baby should be christened with the name "Tristan" that suggests here a derivation of the motif from the Tristan legend.

[33] The same image appears in the medieval Icelandic ballad *Tristrams kvæði*.

[34] Bodleian Library MS. Douce d.6.

[35] Bodleian Library MS. Fr. d. 16.

[36] *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* is the title of an *Íslendingasaga* whose redaction dates back to 1320/1330. It relates the story of the warrior and poet Grettir. The last part of this saga is the so-called *Spesar Þáttr*, which tells how Grettir's half-brother Þorsteinn avenges his death in Byzantium, where he wins the love of the Greek lady Spes.

In the courtly version and in *Tristrams saga*, the lovers exiled in the forest lead an idyllic life; in the *Saga af Tristram*, on the other hand, the banishment in the forest takes the form of an imprisonment in a cave without food, as is the case in Eilhart, where the life in the woods is an experience of suffering and hardships.[37]

Both *Tristrams saga* and the *Saga af Tristram* show a mixture of "courtly" and "common" elements. The *Saga af Tristram* reveals a knowledge of the so-called "common" tradition, which can be inferred from some details in *Tristrams saga*. It must, in any case, be borne in mind that *Tristrams saga* in its complete form is contained in a 17th century Icelandic manuscript so that many changes may have arisen in the course of tradition, in particular as far as elements of the "common" branch are concerned. Thomas focuses not so much on external events as on the inner feelings of the characters, expressed in lengthy monologues, while Béroul is more interested in the adventure story. Eilhart's version shows the effects of ineluctable destiny and portrays Tristan chiefly as a warrior; additionally, it relates many stratagems designed to attest to the two lovers' ingenuity and cleverness. The psychological delineation of the characters in the Icelandic reworking is more similar to that of the "common" branch versions, and to Eilhart in particular, than to *Tristrams saga* and the "courtly" tradition. The affinity of the cultural context explains, in part at least, this similarity in characterisation.[38] However, the interweaving of elements from the two traditions, the "courtly" and the "common", is a result of the typical composition technique of the original *Riddarasögur*, i.e. contamination which draws on different sources, oral and written.

[37] The Eden-like life in the forest and the episode of the "hall of statues" are found only in the Thomas, courtly branch and are not related in the *Saga af Tristram*; *Tristrams saga* however contains both episodes.

[38] Adventure, cunning and martial exploits are the focus of both Eilhart's *Tristrant* and of the *Saga af Tristram*; the two works mirror the values of a society whose primary concerns were far removed from Thomas' more refined interest in love and psychology and from courtly "delicacies" in general. The Icelandic aristocracy lacked that feudal ideology mirrored in chivalric values; this ideology was typical of French and English aristocracies and, later, of the German aristocracy at the court of Hermann of Thuringia [Weber (1986: 425)].

7. *Conclusion*

It can be concluded that the particularities of the rewriting in comparison to the translation are to be ascribed to the different cultural milieu and to the use of different conventions of genre.

The *Saga af Tristram*, like the other Scandinavian works based on the Tristan legend (the Feringian and the Danish ballads and the Icelandic folktale *Tistram og Ísol*)[39] are medleys made up of various motifs of the Tristan legend and from other sources.[40] The oral tradition, which tends to expand, combine and embellish its materials must be also taken into account [Schach (1964: 295)].[41]
In Thomas' *Tristan*, destiny and death are the primary focus; these themes are also central in Germanic heroic legend and struck a "culturally resonant chord" in the audience of *Tristrams saga*, first in Norway and then in Iceland [Barnes (1999: 396)]. The ensuing reworkings reflect the conventions of various medieval Scandinavian literary forms. In the rest of Europe as well, in France, Italy and Spain, from the 13th to the 15th century the prose romance is the prevailing form. These prose romances were new conceptions, not simply prose translations since "i materiali tristaniani vengono inseriti in strutture nuove, condizionate da nuove motivazioni" [Varvaro (1967:13)].[42]

The heart of the Tristan legend is a tragic and fateful love which is so strong and exclusive that it violates the most binding social and religious taboos; the plot consists in a series of episodes where the two lovers, with cunning and clever tricks, outsmart the deceived husband and social control. The various Icelandic reworkings follow one or the other of these two directions of interpretation and development: the Icelandic ballad follows the tragic de-

[39] This is not the case of the Icelandic ballad, which is monothematic and emphasizes only one aspect, the fatalistic one, of the legend.
[40] Additional, older European versions of the Tristan story contain elements of popular legend and folktale, as evidenced by Schoepperle (1913).
[41] The rich and varied developments of the legend make it difficult to trace either the relations among the various reworkings or the relations between these reworkings and their sources. For instance, the Icelandic ballad *Tristrams kvæði* recounts an episode of *Tristrams saga* which is not found in the Icelandic saga; the names of the characters Ísodd Bjarta (Isolt the Fair) and Ísodd Svarta ("dark, black Isolt", for Isolt *au blanche mains*), however, concur with the latter. The works based on Tristan subject matter in Iceland from the 14th century forward reveal a confluence of diverse traditions, elitist and popular, "common" and "courtly", oral and written, so that the story undergoes radical modifications in plot and characters.
[42] 'The Tristan material is inserted into new structures, which are conditioned by new motivations'.

lineation, while the *Saga af Tristram*, to the contrary, hinges upon the tricks and stratagems of the secret lovers. Undertoning the tragic and fatalistic elements of the story, the Icelandic saga adopts the scenarios of the coeval literature of the original *Riddarasögur*. Like the original *Riddarasögur*, the story which this rewriting tells is an adventure story. Taken in the broader context of Icelandic literature, what appeared as oddity and parody with respect to *Tristrams Saga* is instead narrative and stylistic convention that belongs to a different literary form [Barnes (1999: 384)].

The Tristan subject matter was adopted by different genres in Iceland during the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries [Bonnetain (2003: 148)]; various motifs from the Tristan legend were included in original works and taken up as the subject of ballads and folktales; this was a process that spanned over different genres and that involved translated *Riddarasögur*, original *Riddarasögur*, ballads and folktales. The Icelanders kept the elements which matched their taste and, being similar to elements of their own tradition, were familiar to them (e.g. battles, fights, cunning). The *Saga af Tristram* is a sort of transition between the rewriting of a translated *riddarasaga* and the creation of an original *riddarasaga*: gratuitous violence, disregard for courtly manners and courtly complexities are genre marks, so that the reworking is a product which belongs to a narrative form whose structure, style and ethics are quite different in respect to Thomas', and even Robert's courtly code [Barnes (1999: 384)].

The differentiating principle of the various reworkings of the Tristan story is the responsiveness of each culture to certain aspects of the subject. In Iceland, courtly literature was absorbed into entertainment literature because its essential features, such as the ennobling function of love and the ethical duties and moral conflict of the knight were not properly understood. The *Saga af Tristram* adopts an interpretation of the basic Tristan literary theme which is in keeping with the Icelandic cultural milieu of its time.

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Riscritture eddiche. Il caso della Atlakviða *e degli* Atlamál

Summary. After a preliminary general section on the concept of rewriting and the main issues linked to it, this article aims at analysing the relationship between two Old Norse Eddic lays, the *Atlakviða in grœnlenzka* [*Akv.*] and *Atlamál in grœnlenzko* [*Am.*], both preserved in Codex Regius nr. 2365, 4°. In particular, it discusses the question whether *Am.* should be considered as derived from *Akv.* by presenting and investigating their main features and the substantial and formal differences existing between them.

1. *Scepter'd isle*

Nel mio giardino cresce un bel cespuglio di rose. Come si usa, la rosa ha un nome, insolito per la verità. Si chiama *Scepter'd isle*, ed è una rosa inglese, ibridata da David Austin nel 1996.[1] Le rose portano, in generale, nomi femminili, sovente di personalità illustri, oppure nomi maschili; possono portare anche denominazioni ispirate al loro colore o al loro aspetto. Questo è l'unico caso, a mia conoscenza, di una rosa che tragga il proprio nome da un verso, da un verso di Shakespeare, per l'esattezza: *This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle ...*[2]

Che questo stupendo oggetto sia una "riscrittura"? Può essere una rosa la "riscrittura" di un celebre passo di Shakespeare, qui compendiato in due parole, noto un tempo a tutti gli studenti d'inglese dalle scuole medie inferiori? Comunque sia, di questo fiore regale faccio omaggio alla nostra gentile e implacabile ospite.

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[1] "Una rosa molto graziosa che produce numerosi fiori a coppa, rosa delicato che sfuma in rosa più pallido ai bordi, con stami interessanti al centro. Eretta, reca le corolle alte sulle foglie; di lunga e continua fioritura, ha un forte profumo, il tipico profumo delle Rose Inglesi, basato su una nota di mirra introdotta da Constance Spry." [Austin (s.i.d.): 19].

[2] Riccardo II, atto II, scena I, v. 40 (l'amico e collega Franco Giacobelli dell'Università di Padova mi ha trovato subito il passo, che ricordavo a mente, ma erroneamente attribuivo ai *Sonetti*).

2. *"Riscrittura"*

Il concetto di "riscrittura" mi è sostanzialmente estraneo, come si comprenderà alla fine di questa relazione. Può darsi che con "riscrittura" s'intenda la rielaborazione di un testo-base. Se questo è vero, certamente i *Cantos I-II* di Ezra Pound sono una "riscrittura" della *nékuyia*; assai probabilmente le *Argonautiche* di Valerio Flacco possono considerarsi una "riscrittura" delle altre *Argonautiche* di Apollonio Rodio; sarei però in dubbio se considerare le cosiddette *Argonautiche orfiche* "riscrittura" del poema di Apollonio e non, piuttosto, una rielaborazione del mito comune a entrambe con eventuali contaminazioni.

È ovvio che per definire il concetto di "riscrittura" occorrono due o più testi, non necessariamente della stessa categoria semiotica, e una gerarchia cronologica fra questi testi. Ezra Pound può "riscrivere" Omero, ma non viceversa; e così è per Valerio Flacco, le *Argonautiche orfiche* e Apollonio Rodio; e allo stesso modo, la rosa che porta il nome tratta da un verso di Shakespeare può considerarsi "riscrittura" di quel verso e dell'intero brano, ma non viceversa. In via ideale si potrebbe considerare un unico testo "riscrittura" di se stesso, come forse si può intendere nel celeberrimo racconto di J. L. Borges a proposito di un tale che intendeva "riscrivere" il *Don Chisciotte*.

Questo è necessario perché si parli di "riscrittura", ma non sufficiente. È, infatti, necessario che qualcuno conosca sia il testo-base sia il testo d'arrivo. Se qualcuno ignora la *nékuyia*, ignorerà anche che i primi due *Cantos* del Pound ne costituiscono una "riscrittura". Questo principio è facilmente assimilabile da chi si occupi di stilistica e poetica norrena, poiché si potrà constatare che, alla fin fine, il risultato di una "riscrittura" altro non è se non una *kenning* madornale. In effetti, per comprendere la denotazione di *hraunhvalr* "balena della lava" occorre conoscere il significato del termine *jötunn* "gigante" e anche qualcosa in più sulla fisionomia e sulla collocazione dei giganti nell'ordine cosmico. "Riscrittura" e "riconoscimento" (questo è il significato di *kenning*) vanno di pari passo.

3. *Alcuni perché*

Non si "riscrive" sempre per lo stesso motivo. Il tipo più semplice di "riscrittura" è forse la traduzione. Qui la spinta che muove il "riscrittore" è l'informazione, nel caso il testo-base sia inedito, o l'adeguamento a nuovi gusti e a una forma d'espressione più moderna, nel caso di testi già tradotti.

La "riscrittura" può tuttavia assumere aspetti originali e artistici, nel caso di traduzioni approntate da scrittori illustri. Esempi sono sotto gli occhi di tutti e ciascuno può scegliere quello che più gli fa comodo.

L'occasione e il successo di una "riscrittura" possono risultare dall'apprezzamento che il testo-base riceve, ma anche dalle capacità e dalla collocazione culturale del "riscrittore". Si può dire che nel *Prologo in teatro* del *Faust* Goethe abbia "riscritto" il prologo della *Śakuntalā* di Kālidāsa, ma è certo che questa "riscrittura" assume un ruolo del tutto particolare proprio in virtù dell'opera del più grande poeta tedesco moderno.

Sussiste, a parer mio, un altro aspetto significativo della "riscrittura" che riguarda, ancora, la competenza del destinatario. Essere in grado di qualificare un testo come testo-base e la sua "riscrittura" offre un parametro sicuro e comprovato dell'appartenenza a una società che condivida i medesimi valori culturali. Se qualcuno mi cita il verso *Se un dì io non andrò sempre fuggendo* e io di rimando recito *Multas per gentes et multa per aequora vectus*, ci riconosceremo indubbiamente un medesimo bagaglio culturale, maturato assai probabilmente sui banchi di un ginnasio.[3] Chi ha pratica con la letteratura norrena riconoscerà in questo meccanismo una certa affinità coi numerosi certami di sapienza, a partire dai *Vafþrúðnismál*, presenti nella tradizione scandinava medievale; purtroppo non è questa l'occasione per approfondire questo aspetto non privo d'interesse ma, ai nostri fini, piuttosto marginale.

4. *Una definizione*

È forse giunto il momento di offrire una definizione di "riscrittura", con l'avvertenza che si tratta di una definizione intuitiva, la quale si basa su *exempla* piuttosto che su un'analisi serrata del concetto. Inoltre, essa appare limitata all'ambito letterario, per quanto non mi senta di escludere che possa risultare valida anche per forme di espressione diverse e più ampie.

In sostanza, ritengo "riscrittura" la rielaborazione di un testo-base in un nuovo testo non identico al primo, il quale deve comunque essere "riconosciuto" dal lettore. L'operazione di riconoscimento deve fondarsi su elementi certi. Se concepiamo testo-base e testo-riscritto alla stregua di insiemi, dovranno essere presenti uno o più elementi comuni che rendano possibile l'identificazione del rapporto, cosciente nel "riscrittore", fra i due. Nel caso della traduzione il processo di "riscrittura" è chiaro, così come nei casi citati

[3] Cito volutamente i due versi a memoria senza alcun riferimento alle fonti.

all'inizio di questa relazione. Meno chiaro appare in altri casi. Consideriamo, a esempio, il noto verso del Carducci *è l'ombra di un sogno fuggente* (soggetto è la vita). Si tratta di una "riscrittura" del luogo di Pindaro *skiâs ónar ánthrōpos*?[4] Oppure di una reminescenza dotta? Si può discutere su questo, anche se il dettato diverso ("sogno di un'ombra" in greco) lascerebbe supporre che si tratti piuttosto di una reminescenza dotta.

5. *"Riscritture" geometriche*

Tutti conoscono il teorema di Pitagora, la cui dimostrazione è reperibile negli *Elementi* (I 47) di Euclide. Il teorema era certamente noto ai Babilonesi, che l'utilizzavano, sebbene non sia reperibile una dimostrazione nella documentazione archeologica.[5] Esistono numerose dimostrazioni del teorema di Pitagora, non solo in Occidente, ma anche in Cina e in India. Fra queste si segnala principalmente per la eccezionalità dell'autore la dimostrazione prodotta nel 1876 dal Presidente degli Stati Uniti di America J. A. Garfield. Una semplice occhiata alle due dimostrazioni[6] permette di constatare la loro diversità. La dimostrazione del Presidente americano può considerarsi una "riscrittura" della dimostrazione presente negli *Elementi*? Certamente Garfield la conosceva, ma possiamo dire che le due hanno poco in comune, se non i principi della geometria euclidea. È a partire dai medesimi principi che Euclide e Garfield hanno riposto a una domanda comune: "È proprio vero che, preso un qualsiasi triangolo rettangolo, l'area del quadrato che ha per lato l'ipotenusa è uguale alla somma delle aree dei quadrati che hanno per lati i cateti?"

Da un certo punto di vista qui non esiste un testo-base, poiché la dimostrazione di Garfield non ricalca quella di Euclide; da un altro punto di vista le due dimostrazioni hanno entrambe in comune un particolare tipo di testo-base, vale a dire gli assiomi e i metodi inferenziali stabiliti o seguiti da Euclide negli *Elementi*. Il caso è interessante e merita di esser ricordato, poiché ha non poco a che fare con il cuore della nostra relazione, le "riscritture" eddiche.

[4] *Pitiche*, VIII 95

[5] Bunt / Jones / Bedient (1988).

[6] Varie dimostrazioni, fra cui quella di J.A. Garfield, del teorema di Pitagora possono trovarsi facilmente in rete.

6. *Due carmi, un'origine*

Nel *Canzoniere eddico* si trovano due carmi dedicati alla vicenda finale della leggenda nibelungica, dove si tratta della fine dei Nibelunghi e della morte di Attila. Poiché i miei spettatori conoscono come me e forse meglio di me i termini della questione mi limito ad alcune osservazioni essenziali. I due carmi compaiono uno dietro l'altro nel *Codex Regius* nr. 2365, 4°, il manoscritto, appunto, dell'*Edda poetica* o *Canzoniere eddico*.[7] Il primo è noto col titolo *Atlakviða in grœnlenzka* "Carme groenlandese di Attila" [*Akv.*], l'altro col titolo *Atlamál in grœnlenzko* "Canzone groenlandese di Attila" [*Am.*]. Evidentemente entrambi i componimenti poetici discendono da una tradizione radicata in Groenlandia, che l'islandese Eiríkr il rosso[8] esplorò fra il 982 e il 984 d.C. e che venne successivamente colonizzata con insediamenti che si mantennero fino ai primi decenni del XV secolo. La conservazione di materiale leggendario, e non solo, di particolare pregio e valore in luoghi periferici della diaspora norvegese prima, islandese poi, non deve sorprendere, come mostra la redazione del primo "trattato" di metrica norrena, il *Háttalykill in fornu* ("Clavis metrica antiqua"), avvenuta nelle Orcadi per opera dello *jarl* Rögnvaldr Kali e dello scaldo islandese Hallr Þórarinsson fra il 1140 e il 1150 d.C.

I due componimenti eddici sono molto diversi. L'*Akv*. è composta nel metro "classico" della narrazione eroica, il *fornyrðislag* ("ritmo della dizione antica"), un ritmo nervoso, irregolare, con bruschi e repentini mutamenti e, talvolta, cedimenti a una più distesa prosa ritmata. Gli *Am.*, di contro, sono composti in *málaháttr* ("metro narrativo") che si distingue dal primo per una decisa tendenza all'isosillabismo, contando ciascun semiverso cinque (o almeno quattro) sillabe. È un metro più disteso e regolare, con una cadenza sovente monotona che anticipa, per certi versi, il monotono andamento delle ballate.

Anche il lessico è diverso. Quello della *Akv.* si mostra più arcaico, con termini non sempre di agevole comprensione, quale *aringreypr* (strofe 1g, 16c) e *mélgreypr* (strofe 4d, 13c), oppure formule incisive e sorprendenti come *vín í valhöllu* (strofa 2c) "vino nella sala esiziale". La formula, inoltre, torna a comparire nella strofa 14m. Soffermiamoci su questa formula per un attimo. Innanzitutto qui *valhalla* è usato non in senso proprio, poiché si fa riferimento prima alla sala di Gunnarr, poi a quella di Attila, dove i guerrieri stanno bevendo, ignari di quanto si profila all'orizzonte; inoltre la menzione

[7] Se ne veda il testo in Neckel (1962) e la traduzione italiana in Scardigli (1982).
[8] Il racconto si può leggere in Caprini (1995).

del vino, bevanda principalmente conosciuta nelle prossimità del Reno, come già conosceva Tacito,[9] assicura sull'antichità della formula poetica. Infine, sia *vín* sia *valhöllu* allitterano, apparentemente in maniera irregolare con *reiði* (dat. sing.) forma più recente per un antico *vreiði*, che talvolta viene restituito dagli editori. Altro elemento di arcaicità del carme è riconoscibile nella formula di giuramento presente alla strofa 30, la quale costituisce una fonte per quanto discussa assai notevole per le costumanze religiose norrene.

7. *Due carmi, diverse sensibilità*

La lettura dei due carmi rivela, poi, gusti e sensibilità diverse. Negli *Am*. sono inserite le descrizioni di numerosi sogni che annunciano la fine tragica della vicenda (strofe 14-18) così come la descrizione minuziosa della battaglia che vede impegnati Gunnarr, Högni, i figli e il nipote di quest'ultimo e la stessa Guðrún contro Attila e i suoi (strofe 48-53). Niente di tutto questo si trova nella *Akv.*, la cui scarna essenzialità lascia molto all'integrazione dell'uditorio.

Anche l'uso del discorso diretto è radicalmente diverso. Nella *Akv.* assume una dimensione teatrale di sicura efficacia, mentre negli *Am.* il discorso diretto è una semplice variazione narrativa con fini esplicativi. È possibile constatarlo nel motivo del messaggio dell'anello, introdotto in maniera drammatica in *Akv.*, strofa 8, ma presente in maniera semplicemente discorsiva negli *Am.*, strofa 4 e strofe 11-13.

Anche i valori in gioco sono diversi. Negli *Am.* è pressoché assente il motivo del tesoro[10] nibelungico. Se negli *Akv.*, il motivo dell'inganno di Attila è l'avidità, negli *Am.* sembra suscitato semplicemente dalla brama di potere, congiunta a reciproche cause di vendetta (strofe 54-57). Si noti inoltre che Gunnarr e i suoi negli *Am.* (strofa 13) sembrano attratti dalla promessa di doni preziosi e ingenti da parte di Attila, mentre nell'*Akv.* le profferte del re Unno sono orgogliosamente rifiutate (strofa 7) e la motivazione ultima del viaggio risiede nella necessità di soddisfare i reciproci obblighi di ospitalità.

Infine, diversa è la dimensione psicologica dei personaggi nei due carmi. Nell'*Akv.* i tipi sono magistralmente definiti secondo i canoni della narrazione eroica: Gunnarr e Högni rappresentano i re sventurati, ma nobili nell'accettare il dovere di ottemperare alla parola data; Attila, di contro, è il

[9] *Germania*, cap. XXIII.
[10] Forse se ne trova un cenno, ma del tutto acontestualizzato in *Am.*, strofa 69.

re funesto, temibile, ma non riprovevole, nella sua crudeltà. Diversamente negli *Am.* traspare una maggior cura nella definizione psicologica dei personaggi, della loro ingenuità e avidità, del loro rancore, come del loro dolore. Esemplare è, a questo riguardo, l'episodio di Hjalli, il cuoco di corte (*Akv.*, strofa 22; *Am.*, strofe 61-64) al quale viene strappato il cuore nel tentativo d'ingannare Gunnarr e di spacciarlo per quello di Högni. La narrazione dell'*Akv.* è semplice, poco più di un cenno, mentre quella degli *Am.* è più precisa nel descrivere la vigliaccheria del povero cuoco, con toni che sfiorano il farsesco.

8. *Nomi propri*

La maggiore diversità dei carmi sta tuttavia nell'onomastica. Nessun toponimo è presente negli *Am.*, dove si cita soltanto Límafjörðr (strofa 4g)[11] che ha soltanto rilevanza geografica e non leggendaria. Il toponimo rivela l'ambientazione scandinava del carme; in effetti negli *Am.* il viaggio verso la corte di Attila avviene per mare (strofa 3) e la collocazione continentale della vicenda è completamente assente. Inoltre, negli *Am.* compaiono soltanto i nomi propri più significativi della tradizione leggendaria di cui il carme è considerato testimonianza: Gjúki (strofa 1), Gunnarr, Högni, Buðli (strofa 38), Niflungar (i "Nibelunghi", strofa 47, termine che denota Gunnarr e Högni), Sigurðr (strofa 98). Per il resto, Vingi sostituisce il Knéfröðr della *Akv.* (strofa 1), Glaumvör e Kostbera, mogli rispettivamente di Gunnarr e Högni, sono menzionate soltanto negli Am., allo stesso modo dei figli e del nipote di Högni citati alla strofa 30. Di contro i figli di Attila e Guðrún, Erpr e Eitill sono menzionati nella *Akv.* (strofa 37), ma non negli *Am.* (cfr. strofe 75-79), mentre il nome del cuoco, Hjalli è citato in entrambi i carmi (*Akv.*, strofe 22-23; *Am.*, strofa 61).

Nell'*Akv.* abbondano i riferimenti onomastici e toponomastici propri della leggenda nibelungica. Più volte compare il nome della selva Myrkviðr ("Selva Oscura", strofe 3d, 5h, 13d, 42d), che separa il regno di Attila da quello di Gunnarr, compaiono Gnitaheiðr, toponimo con cui si designa il luogo dove è conservato il tesoro (strofa 5b), e il Dnjepr (*staðir Danpar*, strofa 5f), fiume che chiama in causa la tradizione gotica. Compare anche il Reno (strofe 17e, 27e), che costituisce un sicuro riferimento alla leggenda nibelungica. Più volte compare l'etnonimo Niflungar ("Nibelunghi") in *kenningar* che designano il tesoro: *arfi Niflunga* ("eredità dei Nibelunghi", strofe 11b, 27h) e *hodd Niflunga* ("tesoro dei Nibelunghi", strofa 26g). Niflun-

[11] L'attuale Limfjorden sulla costa orientale dello Jutland settentrionale.

gar ("Nibelunghi"), per indicare i sudditi di Gunnarr, occorre alla strofa 17b. Compaiono anche i Burgundi nella locuzione *vinir Burgunda* ("alleati dei Burgundi", 17c), forse con riferimento agli Unni, e i Goti nell'espressione *Gotna þjóðann* ("signore dei Goti", strofa 20c), appellativo di Gunnarr.[12]

Anche le determinazioni geografiche sono in accordo con la leggenda nibelungica. Il messaggero di Attila Knéfröðr è detto *seggr inn suðrœni* ("l'uomo meridionale", strofa 2g) e gli Unni sono detti *suðrþjóðir* ("popoli del sud", strofa 14e). Del viaggio dalla corte di Gunnarr a quella di Attila si è già detto che avviene per via terrestre e probabilmente da settentrione verso meridione.

Occorre infine menzionare la presenza del termine Kjárr (strofa 7), qui considerato un antroponimo. È assai probabile che il termine sia un prestito dal lat. *caesar* (con sonorizzazione e successiva rotacizzazione della *s* intervocalica) e che originariamente abbia designato l'Imperatore Romano. Si ricordi, peraltro, che le vicende le quali hanno dato spunto alla leggenda della fine dei Nibelunghi (Burgundi) risalgono alla metà del V sec. d.C.

9. *Domanda e risposta*

Eccoci, dunque, alla domanda fondamentale: l'autore degli *Am.* conosceva l'*Akv.*? Occorre qui ricordare che entrambi i carmi sono anonimi, come richiede la tradizione eroica più autentica; è assai probabile che autore ed esecutore si confondessero e che, secondo i principi comuni alla tradizione orale, il poeta rielaborasse materiale a lui preesistente adattandolo all'uditorio, pur non innovando, dal momento che l'originalità poetica non costituiva elemento di distinzione particolare per il poeta-esecutore. Se l'autore degli *Am*. conosceva l'*Akv.* è logico concludere che l'abbia "riscritta" e, allora, gli *Am.* saranno una "riscrittura" della *Akv.*

Come si è visto i due carmi rispondono a esigenze di gusto assai diverse; ma, a parer mio, c'è di più. Se noi sostituissimo negli *Am.* nomi qualsiasi al posto degli antroponimi tràditi e chiamassimo per esempio Gunarr Björn, Högni Sölmundr, Guðrún Steingerðr, Atli Kári, e così via, la narrazione sarebbe del tutto comprensibile e si ridurrebbe a una vicenda in cui un inganno trova fer-

[12] Le due locuzioni presentano qualche problema d'interpretazione, sebbene gli etnonimi siano certi; nell'ultima, in particolare, è probabile che *Gotna* (gen. plur. di *Gotar*) valga in generale "guerrieri".

tile terreno nell'avidità degli ingannati, i quali vengono uccisi, e alla successiva vendetta famigliare.

Può dirsi lo stesso della *Akv*.? Certamente no, poiché resterebbero i toponimi e gli antroponimi a rivelare che abbiamo a che fare con l'ultima parte della leggenda nibelungica; e allora ci chiederemmo per quale motivo certi nomi e non altri siano stati cambiati.

Si potrebbe ipotizzare che l'autore degli *Am.* abbia eliminato di proposito i riferimenti più stringenti alla leggenda nibelungica perché il suo racconto assumesse caratteristiche più universali e maggiormente comprensibili a un uditorio più "moderno". Questo, tuttavia urterebbe con la conservatività della tradizione orale, che affiora a distanza anche di secoli, come mostrano le ballate feringe, fissate nella scrittura intorno alla metà del XIX secolo.

Potrebbe però anche darsi che il poeta-esecutore conoscesse, allo stesso modo in cui J.A. Garfiled conosceva i principi della geometria euclidea, un repertorio, più o meno ampio, di formule ed elementi narrativi relativi al patrimonio leggendario eroico. Con questi avrebbe potuto "eseguire" sia l'*Akv*. sia gli *Am*., utilizzandoli in una parte più cospicua o meno. Per analizzare gli *Am*. non è necessario, dunque, né auspicabile far riferimento alla *Akv.*, bensì a un patrimonio comune a entrambe, sia dal punto di vista narrativo che dal punto di vista della tecnica poetica.

10. *La conclusione*

Non è dunque detto che il poeta-esecutore degli *Am.* non conoscesse l'*Akv.* Certamente, per il suo modo di comporre, non era tenuto a conoscerla; era tenuto, invece, a conoscere il patrimonio stilistico e leggendario che distingueva il suo mestiere. A questo poteva accedere con una certa libertà, purché gli elementi tecnici e narrativi fossero riconoscibili dall'uditorio.

Ne emerge una conclusione interessante: il concetto di "riscrittura" non vale, a parer mio, per la tradizione orale, dove non esiste né può esistere un testo-base. "Riscrittura", in sostanza, è un concetto proprio dell'analisi (semiotica?) moderna che può allontanare l'esegeta dalla corretta comprensione di testi medievali tràditi oralmente.

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Istanze prefative e riscrittura nelle traduzioni anglosassoni d'epoca alfrediana

Summary. The aim of this article is to analyse the features of paratextual elements of Old English translations during the age of Alfred the Great with special reference to prologues. Considering translation as a process of rewriting a source text in order to adapt it to a different context of reception, this article highlights the relevance of the prefatory sections in the process of transmission of the translated text.

Il prologo in versi alla traduzione anglosassone del *Liber regulae pastoralis* di Gregorio Magno è un breve poema composto da sedici versi allitteranti collocato, come una pietra di confine, in apertura dell'opera da cui, alla fine del IX secolo, prende avvio la riforma culturale alfrediana.[1] Con efficace scelta stilistica, il testo vi assume la funzione di voce narrante e si rivolge al pubblico per raccontare in prima persona le proprie origini e vicissitudini. Dice che fu trasportato da Roma "sul mare salato" (*ofer sealtne sæ*, v. 2) dal missionario Agostino per essere consegnato agli abitanti dell'Inghilterra nella forma in cui venne composto da papa Gregorio Magno (*Swa hit ær fore / adihtode dryhtnes cempa. / Rome Papa*, vv. 3-5); re Alfredo lo tradusse poi integralmente in lingua inglese (*Siððan min on englisc Ælfred kyning awende worda gehwelc*, vv. 11-12) e lo distribuì ovunque nell'isola affinché i suoi scribi ricavassero altre copie da quell'unico esemplare (*bi ðære bisene*, v. 14); queste copie, a loro volta, furono distribuite ai vescovi del regno poiché alcuni di essi, conclude il testo parlante, conoscevano poco il latino (*ða ðe lædenspræce leste cudon*, v. 16).

Il prologo mette dunque in evidenza tappe e modalità della trasmissione dell'opera gregoriana in Inghilterra, distinguendo chiaramente le fasi della composizione originale, della traduzione, della copia dei manoscritti e della

[1] Sweet (1871). Citiamo il prologo in versi dall'edizione di van Kirk Dobbie (1942: 110). Come dimostra la celebre lettera prefatoria che l'accompagna, la *Cura pastoralis* fu la prima opera tradotta in lingua inglese da Alfredo. Cfr. in proposito Whitelock (1966: 67-103), spec. p. 75: "This preface implies that the *Cura Pastoralis* was the first work to be circulated in connection with a general scheme to improve the state of learning".

loro distribuzione ai destinatari. In questa felice rappresentazione delle avventure editoriali del testo, la fase della traduzione non si presenta come un'alternativa all'opera originale, bensì piuttosto come una sua variante evolutiva, naturalmente integrata nel più ampio e complesso processo della trasmissione testuale. In misura ben maggiore del noto proverbio paronomastico *traduttore=traditore* maliziosamente citato da Roman Jakobson, che insiste sulla deviazione e sullo scarto creativo, nella coscienza del traduttore anglosassone sembra radicato piuttosto il binomio dialettico caro a Gianfranco Folena *traduzione=tradizione*, che del tradurre sottolinea la costruttiva funzione mediatrice e, al contempo, mette in evidenza il senso vivissimo dell'utilità del volgare al fine di guadagnare nuovo e più ampio pubblico al consumo dei testi.[2]

Il ricorso al tradurre come pratica funzionale innanzi tutto a un'efficace trasmissione testuale è probabilmente il dato di maggiore rilievo dell'intera riforma alfrediana.[3] Mai l'Inghilterra, in effetti, aveva elaborato fino a quel momento un vero e proprio programma sistematico di acquisizione di opere latine fondato sulla loro integrale riscrittura in lingua volgare. In epoca prealfrediana questa eventualità fu, anzi, sempre esclusa *a priori*: nella lettera prefatoria allegata alla traduzione della *Cura pastoralis*[4] è lo stesso re del Wessex a ricordare quanto esplicita e ferma fosse la volontà degli "antichi" di non tradurre mai "nemmeno in parte" i libri in loro possesso, poiché ritenevano "che ci sarebbe stata tanta più sapienza in patria quante più fossero state le lingue conosciute" (*ðæt her ðy mara wisdom on londe wære ðy we ma geðeoda cuðon*, *Pref.* 48-49).

Ma è noto che alla fine del IX secolo la situazione è drammaticamente mutata e che quella linea secolare di trasmissione di testi e di saperi basata sul diffuso plurilinguismo appare ormai irrimediabilmente interrotta. E non certo solo per colpa delle invasioni dei Vichinghi: ben prima che questi tutto distruggessero e incendiassero, infatti, assai pochi tra i laici o tra gli uomini di chiesa erano in grado di accedere all'imponente patrimonio librario custodito

[2] Jakobson (1966: 64); Folena (1991: 3, 10); D'Agostino (2001).
[3] Su questa tematica si veda De Vivo (2004) e la bibliografia ivi citata.
[4] Citiamo la lettera prefatoria (*Pref.*) nell'edizione a cura di Whitelock (1967: 4-7). La lettera è tramandata in cinque dei sei manoscritti della *Cura pastoralis* anglosassone e segnatamente: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 20 (890-897); London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. XI + Kassel, Landesbibliothek, Anhang 19 (890-897); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 12 (sec. X^2); London, British Library, Cotton Otho B. II + Cotton Otho B. X (sec. X/XI); Cambridge, University Library, Ii. 2. 4 (terzo quarto del sec. XI). Per una descrizione dei manoscritti cfr. Sweet (1871: XIII-XIX) e Ripley Ker (1957: nn. 324, 195, 30, 175, 19).
[4] Cfr. Sweet (1871: XIII-XIV) e Whitelock (1966: 75, nota 1).

nelle sedi ecclesiastiche o nei monasteri a causa dell'ormai diffusa incapacità di leggere in lingua latina. L'esempio scelto da Alfredo per rappresentare lo stato di devastazione culturale vigente al tempo della sua ascesa al trono si riferisce, significativamente, proprio all'incompetenza in materia di traduzione.[5] Egli giudica dunque urgente invertire questa tendenza e porre mano a un piano di riforma che renda nuovamente disponibili ricchezza e sapienza (*wæl ond wisdom*) giudicate ormai perdute. Alfredo assume così la decisione, radicale eppure necessaria, di tradurre *in extenso* "alcuni libri che è indispensabile che ogni uomo conosca" (*sumæ bec, ða ðe niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to wiotonne*, *Pref.* 57-58) nella lingua che tutti possono comprendere.

Questa irruzione del volgare nella trasmissione del testo investe inevitabilmente il versante più sociale della pratica letteraria, agendo come un fattore di divaricazione tra categorie diverse di lettori. Nei piani di Alfredo, i testi in lingua inglese non sono intesi, infatti, a sostituire quelli in lingua latina, bensì piuttosto ad affiancarli in conseguenza di una preliminare classificazione del pubblico: all'istruzione "di tutti i figli degli uomini liberi" sono destinate le opere in inglese, a chi verrà invece selezionato per proseguire la propria istruzione verso i ranghi superiori, presumibilmente quelli ecclesiastici, si rivolgono invece le opere in latino.[6]

Non stupisce che a questo radicale cambiamento delle intenzioni comunicative all'origine dell'impresa traduttiva faccia riscontro una modalità di traduzione nella quale viene nei fatti superato ogni scrupolo di rispetto dogmatico dell'opera originale. È peraltro ben noto l'atteggiamento di disinvolta apertura che il volgarizzatore medievale manifesta nei confronti di quella "letteratura secondaria" costituita da commentari, glosse, lessici e quant'altro di certo affiancava il testo da tradurre, e spesso interviene a determinarne la nuova fisionomia nella lingua di arrivo.[7]

Di qui l'obiettiva difficoltà a identificare con assoluta certezza l'opera originale alla base della traduzione, anche alla luce del contesto, tipicamente alfrediano, nel quale si ambienta la prassi del volgarizzamento, fondata

[5] *Pref.* 14-18: *Swæ clæne hio wæs oðfeallenu on Angelcynne ðæt swiðe feawa wæron behionan Humbre ðe hiora ðeninga cuðen understondan on Englisc oððe furðum an ærendgewrit of Lædene on Englisc areccean.*

[6] *Pref.* 61-66: *Eall sio gioguð ðe nu is on Angelcynne friora monna, ðara ðe ða speda hæbben ðæt hie ðæm befeolan mægen, sien to liornunga oðfæste, ða hwile ðe hie to nanre oðerre note ne mægen, oð ðone first ðe hie wel cunnen Englisc gewrit arædan. Lære mon siððan furður on Lædengeðiode ða ðe mon furðor læran wille ond to hierran hade don wille.*

[7] Guerrieri (1991: 4).

sull'attività di una vera e propria "comunità testuale" che legge, interpreta e produce collettivamente i testi.[8] Questa origine collettiva del volgarizzamento alfrediano è chiaramente descritta nella lettera prefatoria allegata alla traduzione della *Cura pastoralis*, laddove Alfredo tiene a precisare che la traduzione dell'opera gregoriana fu effettuata solo nella misura in cui egli ne comprese il contenuto sulla base delle spiegazioni dei suoi collaboratori, segnatamente l'arcivescovo Plegmund, il vescovo Asser, i preti Grimbold e Iohannes. L'appassionato impegno del re nell'ascoltare letture pubbliche di opere in lingua anglosassone o in lingua latina, per lui diversamente inaccessibili, è del resto ricordata in più di una occasione dal vescovo Asser nella sua *Vita* di re Alfredo.[9] Né si deve dimenticare che lo stesso Alfredo, in qualità di traduttore, conferisce il massimo rilievo alla pratica collettiva della produzione e del consumo dei testi quando non esita a intervenire sull'originale dei *Soliloquia* agostiniani nel punto in cui la Ragione, nel consigliare ad Agostino di non ingombrare inutilmente la memoria con troppi pensieri, lo invita a ritirarsi in solitudine e a consegnare le proprie riflessioni alla scrittura. A partire da questo invito, Alfredo conserva di buon grado l'idea della scrittura come aiuto alla memoria; rifiuta tuttavia recisamente l'idea che l'operazione possa avvenire, come vuole Agostino, in perfetta solitudine, opponendo ad essa un significativo esempio di lavoro intellettuale svolto in ambiente comunitario: "avresti bisogno", dice la Ragione nella traduzione alfrediana, "di uno spazio privato libero da distrazioni e di prendere con te alcuni uomini esperti che non ti disturbino in alcun modo, ma che ti aiutino nel tuo lavoro".[10]

Solo attraverso una serrata pratica di lavoro collettivo si arriva, dunque, a formare il necessario consenso sul significato del testo. Si tratta del passo preliminare e, diremmo, fondativo di qualunque attività di traduzione. Nell'ottica alfrediana, d'altronde, questa è intesa a fornire al pubblico, assieme ai libri indispensabili a ogni uomo, anche tutte le informazioni necessarie alla loro piena comprensione e a un uso appropriato nel sistema culturale di arrivo.[11] Operando in vista di una nuova organizzazione dei rapporti

[8] Importanti osservazioni sul concetto di *textual community* in ambiente anglosassone vengono proposte da Stock (1983).

[9] Stevenson (1959).

[10] Carnicelli (1969: 49.19-21): *þu be þorftest þæt ðu hæfdest digele stoge and æmanne ælces oðres þinges, and fæawa cuðe men and creftige mid þe, ðe nan wiht ne amydran, ac fultmoden to þinum crefte*. Per i rapporti di questo passo con l'originale latino si veda la nota del Carnicelli, op. cit., p. 99: "Alfred's mention of the need for advisers contradicts the sense of the Latin *Sol.*: *Nec ista dictari debent; nam solitudinem meam desiderant*".

[11] Si vedano anche le osservazioni in proposito di Bately (1984: 15): "what in the hands of a less adventurous and highly motivated writer might have been a simple translation, becomes

tra testo e pubblico, la traduzione alfrediana tende così a risolversi istituzionalmente nel rifacimento.

In questa nuova dimensione, assunta a ideale-guida della prassi traduttiva fin nelle istanze prefative, Alfredo conserva tuttavia sempre viva l'idea che il senso ultimo del tradurre debba pur provarsi in un atto sintetico e formatore. Si ricordi, a tale proposito, sia la chiara e univoca assunzione di responsabilità personale circa la traduzione della *Cura pastoralis* da parte dello stesso Alfredo[12] (sebbene mitigata dalla piena coscienza che i limiti imposti dalle esigenze interpretative non escludono che altri possano fare meglio in futuro),[13] sia la metafora della traduzione-ricreazione contenuta nella prefazione alla traduzione dei *Soliloquia*, dove l'incidenza delle scelte sull'originario impianto strutturale dell'opera è così forte che non può essere taciuta: la raccolta dei legni nel bosco e la costruizione della casa sul ciglio della strada vengono evocate a rappresentare, con originale efficacia, il processo laborioso della riscrittura del testo, che, a partire da una vasta gamma di fonti, tende pur sempre verso un proprio assetto unitario.[14]

Alla luce di questo aspetto composito e, per così dire, programmaticamente perfettibile della traduzione, non desta meraviglia che essa raramente si presenti, per così dire, nella sua nudità, priva cioè di quel caratteristico apparato paratestuale che la prolunga e la presenta al pubblico nella forma che di volta in volta i suoi produttori – siano essi committenti, autori, revisori o scribi – giudicano più adeguata all'idea della sua corretta ricezione. Oltre al ricco insieme di modificazioni, soppressioni e ampliamenti testuali che caratterizzano ogni genere di traduzione medievale nei confronti dell'opera originale, si offrono così all'analisi elementi significativi raccolti nel vasto insieme dei dispositivi editoriali che contribuiscono in modo essenziale alla sua attualizzazione in forma di libro. Non è difficile individuare il teatro di questi interventi innovativi negli spazi situati ai limiti del testo oppure nei suoi interstizi, nei luoghi cioè dove si raccolgono prefazioni, epiloghi, titoli, indici e altre ibride formule che, per loro collocazione, stato e funzione, fini-

translation and commentary rolled into one, an interpretation, in a limited sense a transformation".

[12] *Pref.* 7.68-71: *ða ongan ic ongemang oðrum mislicum ond manigfealdum bisgum ðisses kynerices ða boc wendan on Englisc ðe is genemned on Læden Pastoralis, ond on Englisc 'Hierdeboc'*.

[13] Recita a tal proposito, con limpida chiarezza, la prefazione in prosa alla traduzione del *De consolatione Philosophiae*: *7 him ne wite gif he hit rihtlicor ongite þonne he mihte; forþamþe ælc mon sceal be his andgites mæðe 7 be his æmettan sprecan þæt he sprecað, 7 don þæt þæt he deþ*. L'edizione è a cura di Sedgefield (1899: 1.12-15).

[14] Carnicelli (1969: 48-49).

scono col costituire il luogo privilegiato di una pragmatica e di una strategia d'azione sul pubblico, "una zona", per dirla con Gérard Genette, "non solo di transizione, ma di transazione" tra il testo e ciò che è fuori.[15]

Sull'area del paratesto si esercita, ad esempio, l'anonimo volgarizzatore della bediana *Historia ecclesiasica gentis Anglorum,*[16] il quale, evitando intrusioni vistose nel dettato dell'originale, preferisce piuttosto intervenire, in modo discreto e diffuso, ma sempre sulla scorta in un definito piano editoriale, sull'apparato dei capitoli e degli indici,[17] senza trascurare di modificare il titolo stesso dell'opera per adeguarlo al nuovo orizzonte di attesa del pubblico sassone occidentale: così, laddove nella prefazione originale Beda dichiara di voler inviare al re northumbrico Ceolwulf una *Historiam gentis Anglorum ecclesiasticam*,[18] il traduttore anglosassone introduce, significativamente, il nome dei Sassoni accanto a quello degli Angli: *ic þe sende þæt spell, þæt ic niwan awrat be Angelþeode 7 Seaxum* (2.2-3). Non stupisce che questo intervento abbia dato origine, a partire dalla fine del X secolo, a un'autorevole tradizione medievale che ha finito per attribuire la traduzione dell'opera bediana alla persona dello stesso re Alfredo.[19]

Non v'è dubbio, tuttavia, che il terreno privilegiato degli interventi innovativi a carico del paratesto dei volgarizzamenti anglosassoni è certamente costituito dalle istanze prefative che sovente li accompagnano. Le quattro traduzioni oggi considerate di sicura attribuzione alfrediana – e cioè la *Cura pastoralis*, il *De consolatione Philosophiae*, i *Soliloquia* e i primi cinquanta Salmi del cosiddetto *Paris Psalter*[20] – fanno ampio e articolato uso di prefa-

[15] Genette [1987 (1989: 4)].
[16] Miller (1890-98).
[17] Cfr. Whitelock (1974); Bately (2002).
[18] Colgrave / Mynors (1969: 2).
[19] Riassumiamo solo i tratti generali di questa tradizione: 1) in un'omelia su Gregorio Magno scritta nell'anno 992, Ælfric, abate di Eynsham, scrive: *Manega halige bec cyðað his drohtnunge 7 his halige lif, 7 eac historia anglorum, ða ðe Ælfred cyning of ledene on englisc awende* [Godden (1979: 116)]; 2) due distici latini contenuti nel ms. Cambridge, University Library Kk. 3. 18 (seconda metà dell'XI secolo) della traduzione anglosassone della *Historia ecclesiastica* sembrano confermare questa opinione: *Historicus quondam fecit me Beda latinum, / Ælfred rex Saxo transtulit ille pius*; 3) ancora nel XII secolo Guglielmo di Malmesbury è convinto che il re del Wessex tradusse la *Historia ecclesiastica*, assieme alle *Historiae* di Paolo Orosio, alla *Cura pastoralis*, alla *Consolatio Philosophiae* e a un *Manuale* oggi perduto, Cfr. Stubbs (1887-89: 132): *Denique plurimam partem Romanæ bibliothecæ Anglorum auribus dedit […] cuius præcipui sunt libri, Orosius, Patoralis Gregory Gesta Anglorum Bedæ, Boetius De Consolatione Philosophiæ*.
[20] O'Neill (2001).

zioni, come pure la traduzione dei *Dialogi* di Gregorio Magno, attribuita da Asser a Werferth, vescovo di Worcester dall'873 al 915.[21]

Se è cosa perfino ovvia constatare la diretta funzionalità delle prefazioni all'ambiente di fruizione a cui, nella volontà degli autori, sono destinate le opere in cui esse fungono da cornice testuale, non di rado, coerentemente con la pratica collettiva della produzione testuale di cui prima si diceva, è impossibile attribuire all'intervento del solo traduttore l'assetto definitivo, insieme, di testo e paratesto così come tramandati nel libro manoscritto. Sovente il paratesto conserva, infatti, tracce evidenti di chi successivamente intervenne, a vario titolo, a mediare tra l'opera e il suo pubblico in rapporto alle mutate circostanze materiali della sua trasmissione e della sua fruizione.

Un caso particolarmente interessante è attestato, ad esempio, nella traduzione dei *Dialogi* di Gregorio Magno, opera tramandata in quattro manoscritti redatti in un arco di tempo compreso tra la fine del X e la prima metà dell'XI secolo.[22] Oltre alla prefazione derivata dall'opera originale di Gregorio Magno, due nuove e diverse istanze prefative vennero aggiunte al testo inglese indipendentemente dalla volontà del suo traduttore, andando a caratterizzare rami distinti della sua tradizione manoscritta:[23] da un lato, si tratta di una breve prefazione in prosa il cui incipit (*Ic Ælfred geofendum Criste mid cynehades mærnysse geweorðod*, *GD* 1.1-3) individua nel re del Wessex il destinatore formale; dall'altro, di un prologo in versi allitteranti nel quale il "testo parlante" dichiara di essere stato preparato per ordine di Wulfsige vescovo di Sherborne (*Me awritan het Wulfsige bisceop*, v. 12) assumendo a modello di copia un esemplare trasmesso dal re del Wessex. I manoscritti contenenti, con poche varianti, la prefazione in prosa sono il Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 322 e l'Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 76, risalenti entrambi alla prima metà dell'XI secolo.[24] Il prologo in versi si trova invece nel solo manoscritto London, British Library, Cotton Otho C I vol. 2, dell'inizio dell'XI secolo.[25]

Nella prefazione in prosa, re Alfredo si presenta nelle vesti, insieme, di committente e fruitore del libro, dichiarando che l'opera fu preparata per il proprio personale beneficio spirituale allo scopo di consentirgli il

[21] Cfr. Stevenson (1959: 77.1-10).
[22] Per una descrizione, pur sommaria, dei codici si veda Hecht (1900-1907) e Ripley Ker (1957: nn. 60, 96, 182.1, 328A.1).
[23] Su questo problema si veda Yerkes (1986).
[24] L'edizione critica del testo è in Hecht (1900-1907: vol. I).
[25] Per l'edizione critica si veda van Kirk Dobbie (1942: 112-13) e soprattutto Yerkes (1980: 505-13).

raccoglimento e la riflessione sulle cose celesti, lontano dalle molteplici afflizioni derivanti dalla sua alta carica.[26] La prefazione menziona gli "amici fidati" (*minum getreowum freondum*, *GD* 1.13-14) che fecero collettivamente l'opera, e introduce il tema, tipicamente alfrediano, degli affanni derivanti dalla responsabilità di governo, che ricorre anche in altre istanze prefative attribuite al sovrano del Wessex: si veda, in particolare, la prefazione in prosa al *De consolatione Philosophiae* (1.2-6) e la lettera prefatoria alla *Cura pastoralis* (5.22-25), nella quale, anzi, l'invito ad allontanarsi dagli affari terreni per rivolgersi alla meditazione e all'esercizio spirituale diventa l'argomento principale su cui si basa l'appello ai vescovi a fare uso di quella sapienza che Dio ha loro concesso e che, diversamente, rischia di andare perduta.

Ben diversa è la situazione comunicativa rappresentata nel prologo in versi ai *Dialogi* del manoscritto cottoniano. Sebbene composto per conto di chi commissionò il libro, il suo destinatore formale non risulta essere il committente dell'opera, bensì "il libro […] che ora tieni tra le mani e che stai guardando" (*ðas boc [...] þe þu on þinum handum nu hafast and sceawast*, vv. 16-17), preparato per ordine di Wulfsige sulla base dell' "esemplare" (*ðas bysene*, v. 23) trasmesso da Alfredo al vescovo di Sherborne.[27] Segue il rituale appello al lettore perché preghi per l'anima di Wulfsige affinché egli possa riposare in pace accanto a re Alfredo, "il più nobile dispensatore di tesori" (*se seledsða sinces brytta*, v. 24).

L'esplicita menzione delle circostanze a cui si deve l'allestimento del libro manoscritto assegna al prologo in versi ai *Dialogi* l'indubbio merito di confermare fattualmente l'efficacia delle direttive circa le modalità di distribuzione delle traduzioni alfrediane ai vescovi contenute sia nella lettera

[26] Ben sottolinea questo aspetto Whitelock (1966: 68), la quale, nel commentare la prefazione in prosa alla traduzione dei *Dialogi*, così si esprime: "Alfred's preface shows that he desired this translation for his own use, and not expressely to increase the standard of learning in his kingdom".

[27] Il nome del vescovo Wulfsige citato nella prefazione in versi alla traduzione dei *Dialogi* appare in effetti alterato in *Wulfstan* nel manoscritto cottoniano dei *Dialogi* in lingua anglosassone. Prova dell'alterazione è la rasura che cancellò le ultime tre lettere del nome *Wulfige* per sostituirle con *-tan* e fare in modo che il manoscritto apparisse commissionato, invece che da Wulfsige, dal vescovo Wulfstan I di Worcester. Su questo problema si vedano Sisam (1953: 225-31) e Keynes / Lapidge (1983: 123).

prefatoria della *Cura pastoralis,*[28] sia nel suo prologo in versi.[29] L'ipotesi che una copia della traduzione dei *Dialogi* venne distribuita presso le sedi vescovili del regno di Alfredo secondo le modalità previste dalla riforma risulta, anzi, confermata dal fatto che, oltre a un esemplare dei *Dialogi*, il vescovo Wulfsige ricevette effettivamente anche un codice della *Cura*: si tratta dell'esemplare da cui derivò il manoscritto Cambridge, University Library, Ii. 2.4, prodotto a Exeter nel terzo quarto dell'XI secolo,[30] la cui lettera prefatoria individua, nella formula di saluto iniziale (*Ælfred kyning hateð gretan Wulfsige bisceop his wordum luflice*), appunto in Wulfsige il destinatario del libro.

Le diverse modalità di presentazione al pubblico attestate, rispettivamente, nella prefazione in prosa e nel prologo in versi documentano, dunque, la mutata destinazione d'uso del testo, che dalla sfera della privata edificazione del sovrano del Wessex viene integrato nella politica di alfabetizzazione del clero e della nobiltà anglosassone. La successione degli eventi è del resto facilmente ricostruibile sulla base di alcune circostanze cronologiche: è noto, infatti, che la biografia di Asser fu conclusa o interrotta assai probabilmente prima dell'avvio della riforma stessa, come dimostra il silenzio del vescovo gallese sia sugli importanti interventi previsti dal re del Wessex in campo culturale, sia sulla stessa traduzione della *Cura pastoralis*, alla cui preparazione, per l'esplicita testimonianza di Alfredo contenuta nella lettera prefatoria, egli collaborò attivamente. D'altra parte, all'epoca della redazione della *Vita Ælfredi* la traduzione dei *Dialogi* era già compiuta, visto che lo stesso Asser ne attribuisce la paternità a Werferth, il quale, a dire del biografo del re del Wessex, tradusse l'opera gregoriana *in Saxonicam linguam.*[31]

È infine appena il caso di rilevare che il prologo anglosssone ai *Dialogi* gregoriani presenta numerose affinità con i due prologhi poetici di diretta attribuzione alfrediana premessi, rispettivamente, alle traduzioni della *Cura pa-*

[28] I temi della certificazione dell'autenticità del testo e della distribuzione controllata dei manoscritti che lo contengono sono gli argomenti principali della chiusa dell'epistola prefatoria della *Cura pastoralis* anglosassone. Alfredo vi afferma che ogni copia del libro messa in circolazione deve essere accompagnata da una sorta di segnalibro, detto *æstel*, del quale è dichiarato anche il corrispondente valore monetario, e da chiare regole relative al trasferimento del libro dal luogo di originaria destinatazione (*Pref.* 77-85).

[29] *Ælfred kyning / awende worda gehwelc, and me his writerum / sende suð and norð, / heht him swelcra ma / brengan bi ðære bisene* (vv. 11-14).

[30] Ker (1957: n. 19).

[31] Stevenson (1959: cap. 77). L'anteriorità della traduzione dei *Dialogi* alla riforma alfrediana è difesa anche da Whitelock (1966: 74). Le stesse circostanze valgono probabilmente anche per la traduzione della bediana *Historia ecclesiastica*, che con i *Dialogi* ha in comune la facies linguistica, originariamente mercica, e molte soluzioni di traduzione. Cfr. Potter (1931).

storalis e del *De consolatione Philosophiae*. Fatta salva la posizione iniziale e, dunque, di assoluta preminenza sempre accordata a questi brevi testi, le loro caratteristiche di stile e di contenuto sembrano richiamare la tradizione, tipicamente medievale, del colophon dello scriba:[32] vi si osserva, infatti, il regolare ricorso alla convenzione del "testo parlante", che si rivolge in prima persona al pubblico per informare circa l'origine dell'opera, le circostanze della sua redazione e le tappe della sua trasmissione. In tutti i casi la scelta degli autori, siano essi traduttori o scribi, converge inoltre nell'assegnare a questo particolare tipo di paratesto la forma del poema in versi allitteranti. È singolare che la natura poetica dei prologhi alfrediani abbia, talvolta, attirato giudizi negativi: Henry Sweet, ad esempio, definì il prologo in versi della *Cura pastoralis* "a curious doggerel" e "dislocated prose"; ne fornì dunque una trascrizione in prosa, relegando nelle note critiche della sua edizione la rappresentazione del testo nell'usuale forma editoriale della poesia allitterante. In modo non dissimile, Kenneth Sisam valutò i versi del prologo alfrediano alla traduzione della *Consolatio Philosophiae* come irrimediabilmente poveri.[33]

La storia editoriale di questi paratesti poetici, del resto, tende a ignorare la natura eteronoma e ausiliare del discorso che vi viene svolto, sempre al servizio del testo da cui esso trae, dopotutto, la propria ragion d'essere. Come ha ben dimostrato Fred Robinson a proposito dell'epilogo in versi della *Historia ecclesiastica* anglosassone contenuto nel manoscritto Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 41 (primo quarto dell'XI secolo), lo sradicamento dell'elemento paratestuale dal contesto del manoscritto in cui si trova, unito alla moderna prassi di darne forma editoriale autonoma, ne ha spesso compromesso l'adeguata comprensione talvolta perfino sul piano strettamente linguistico.[34]

Se, dunque, solo la restituzione dei poemi di esordio e di epilogo all'ambiente testuale del manoscritto a cui appartengono consente di valutarne appieno le caratteristiche formali e pragmatiche, ciò vale in modo particolare per i prologhi poetici che accompagnano le traduzioni alfrediane. La peculiare convenzione del "testo parlante" che li caratterizza rappresenta infatti, con sintesi efficacissima, il rapporto simbiotico che, agli occhi delle comunità dei produttori e dei fruitori del manoscritto, sempre sussiste tra il testo e il libro che lo contiene. Da questo punto di vista, la testimonianza forse più eloquente e, insieme, più originale è rappresentata dal prologo in versi alla

[32] Si veda su questo argomento Robinson (1980: 11-29; 157-61); Earl (1989).
[33] Sisam (1953: 293-97).
[34] Robinson (1980).

traduzione del *De consolatione Philosophiae* contenuto nel manoscritto London, British Library, Cotton Otho A VI (metà del X secolo),[35] che tramanda anche i *Metra* di Boezio nella forma di versi allitteranti anglosassoni:

Ðus Ælfred us ealdspell reahte,
cyning Westseaxna, cræft meldode,
leoðwyrhta list. him wæs lust micel
ðæt he ðiossum leodum leoð spellode,
monnum myrgen, mislice cwidas,
þy læs ælinge ut adrife
selflicne secg, þonne he swelces lyt
gymð for his gilpe. ic sceal giet sprecan,
fon on fitte, folccuðne ræd
hæleðum secgean; hliste se þe wille.

La soluzione narrativa adottata prevede che siano proprio i *Metra* in lingua inglese a prendere la parola e a introdurre, attraverso l'inedita personificazione di un soggetto testuale collettivo, il nome del loro autore: *Ælfred us ealdspell reahte* (v. 1). Poco più innanzi, con un felice quanto inatteso intervento del poeta sugli stessi gangli grammaticali del discorso, al pronome plurale *us* riferito ai *Metra* si sostituisce il pronome singolare *ic* del libro manoscritto (*ic sceal giet sprecan*, v. 8). Nell'unità inscindibile tra testo e libro, la traduzione dei versi di Boezio può così presentarsi al pubblico sotto forma di materia narrativa viva e pulsante, che in prima persona rivolge agli ascoltatori il tradizionale invito all'ascolto nel caratteristico stile della poesia orale-formulare: "Ascolti chi vuole!" (*hliste se þe wille,* v. 10).

I prologhi che aprono le traduzioni alfrediane si fondano, dunque, sull'assunto che traduzione è sempre, letteralmente, anche riscrittura, e cioè, in senso stretto, trasformazione del testo scritto in un altro testo scritto. L'elaborazione della tematica del volgarizzamento, della sua trasmissione e della sua presentazione al pubblico nella forma di libro manoscritto è peraltro perfettamente coerente col desiderio di re Alfredo di dare alle traduzioni completa e autonoma dignità testuale. Per la sua spiccata vocazione ad adeguarsi alla situazione comunicativa in cui è chiamato di volta in volta a intervenire, questa forma del peritesto alfrediano si adatta felicemente al mutato orizzonte di ricezione e alle mutate pratiche di lettura del sistema culturale anglosassone. Essa, anzi, lo riflette fedelmente, favorendo la diffusione dei testi presso un pubblico che si vuole poco esperto in lingua latina, ma che è palesemente ancora assai sensibile alle formule e ai ritmi antichi del verso

[35] Ker (1957).

allitterante. E se, come vuole Alfredo nei *Soliloquia*, il rifacimento è la casa costruita con i legni del bosco lungo la via della salvezza, la sua cornice testuale ne rappresenta la soglia naturale, lo spazio liminare portatore di un messaggio o di un commento di quell'ampia e variegata comunità dei produttori che orienta la lettura e contribuisce a trasformare il testo in un nuovo e originale monumento letterario.

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