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*History, Fiction,  
Verisimilitude*  
*Studies in the Poetics*  
*of*  
*Gottfried's Tristan*

MARK CHINCA

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THE MODERN HUMANITIES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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## PREFACE

The present study is the revised version of my Cambridge Ph.D. dissertation, originally submitted in December 1987. It is a pleasure to record my gratitude to the various people who read the manuscript and suggested ways of improving it: Professor R. A. Wisbey and Dr A. K. Stevens in London and, in Oxford, the late Dr L. Seiffert, whose pertinent comments enabled me to bring many of the issues into clearer focus. Thanks are also due to my editor, Dr J. L. Flood, who met my procrastinations with tireless patience. And if I mention my supervisor, Professor D. H. Green, last, it is only to emphasize how greatly I have appreciated his unstinting and generous support throughout the time I was his research student and since; to him I offer my warmest thanks.

*Trinity College, Cambridge*  
*May, 1991*

M. G. C.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABÄG</i>	<i>Amsterdamer Beiträge zur Älteren Germanistik</i>
<i>AfD</i>	<i>Archiv für Diplomatik</i>
<i>AfK</i>	<i>Archiv für Kulturgeschichte</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>ATB</i>	<i>Altdeutsche Textbibliothek</i>
<i>BfdL</i>	<i>Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte</i>
<i>BDNL</i>	<i>Bibliothek der gesamten deutschen National-Literatur</i>
<i>Beiträge</i>	<i>Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur</i>
<i>BPEC</i>	<i>Bollettino del comitato per la preparazione dell'edizione nazionale dei classici greci e latini</i>
<i>CFMA</i>	<i>Classiques Français du Moyen Age</i>
<i>DTM</i>	<i>Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters</i>
<i>DVLG</i>	<i>Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte</i>
<i>GAG</i>	<i>Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik</i>
<i>GLL</i>	<i>German Life and Letters</i>
<i>GRM</i>	<i>Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>MSNH</i>	<i>Mémoires de la société néo-philologique de Helsingfors</i>
<i>MTU</i>	<i>Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen</i>
<i>PhStQ</i>	<i>Philologische Studien und Quellen</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
<i>RCCM</i>	<i>Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medioevale</i>
<i>SATF</i>	<i>Société des Anciens Textes Français</i>
<i>SB</i>	<i>Sitzungsbericht</i>
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>TLF</i>	<i>Textes Littéraires Français</i>
<i>WW</i>	<i>Wirkendes Wort</i>
<i>ZfdA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum</i>
<i>ZfdPh</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie</i>
<i>ZfK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
<i>ZfrPh</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie</i>



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

‘Warum dichtete man? Man lernte es auf der Schule.’ With characteristic vigour of formulation Ernst Robert Curtius drew attention to two of the most important facets of medieval poetry: the conception of the poet’s art as a learnable skill, and the role of the schools in teaching that skill. He continues:

Sehr viele mittelalterliche Autoren haben gedichtet, weil man es können mußte, um sich als *clericus* und *litteratus* auszuweisen; um Komplimente, Grabschriften, Bittschriften, Widmungen zu verfertigen und sich dadurch bei den Mächtigen in Gunst zu setzen oder mit Gleichstehenden zu korrespondieren; auch um des schnöden Mammons willen. Dichten ist lehr- und lernbar; es ist Schularbeit und Schulwissen.<sup>1</sup>

Any new contribution to the study of poetics in the Middle Ages would do well to begin by thinking over the implications of Curtius’s dictum, for its emphasis on poetry as school-lore, to be applied as occasion demanded, is as fruitful for our understanding of medieval writers and their work as it is problematic.

In the medieval school curriculum, which was based on the system of the seven liberal arts, poetics was not a subject in its own right; poetic doctrine was disseminated in the three arts of the trivium, grammar, rhetoric and dialectic, whose common feature is that they all have language as their object and medium. Grammar taught correct Latin, rhetoric effective and persuasive communication, and dialectic the method of logical disputation.<sup>2</sup> The relevance of dialectic to medieval poetics has received less attention than the contribution of the more obviously literary arts of grammar and rhetoric, although research in this area would undoubtedly cast light on such important matters as the role played in composition by topics.<sup>3</sup> The teaching of grammar and rhetoric drew on texts and traditions reaching back to classical antiquity. The reason for the survival of these traditions beyond the late Latin period, when the system of the seven liberal arts was codified, is twofold: firstly, Latin continued as the language of church, scholarship and administration in the Middle Ages, so that for the educated and professional classes a knowledge of its grammar and a mastery of its style never ceased to be necessary; secondly, Christianity pursued a policy of adaptively retaining the legacy of pagan learning and culture. The

wisdom of the ancients was put to use for new ends. A salient example is Augustine's vindication of rhetoric in *De doctrina christiana*, in which he argues that Christians should not eschew the pagan art of persuasion, but on the contrary should study and exploit it in order to propagate the word of God all the more effectively.<sup>4</sup>

Grammar was defined in Roman antiquity by Quintilian as 'recte loquendi scientia et poetarum enarratio';<sup>5</sup> in the Middle Ages its scope continued to extend beyond the teaching of the rules of correct Latin to embrace literary studies. Exercises in prose and verse composition imparted the elements of prosody and style, as did reading the set authors, whose medieval canon included pagan as well as Christian writers. Grammatical doctrine was enshrined in the works of traditional authorities such as Donatus and Priscian; in the twelfth century these were supplemented by new treatises, for instance the *Doctrinale* of Alexander of Villedieu and the *Grecismus* of Eberhard of Béthune. Intimately connected with the pedagogy of literature are the many surviving commentaries on curriculum authors, together with the short introductions to these writers and their works known as *accessus ad auctores*.<sup>6</sup> Commentaries and *accessus* are a rich source of poetic theory as it was rehearsed in the reading and elucidation of set texts in the schoolroom; they can provide insights as valuable as those contained in the more systematic presentation of theoretical issues that we find in treatises of rhetoric.

Classical rhetoric had three divisions or *genera*, forensic, deliberative, and demonstrative, corresponding to the three most important contexts in ancient Greek and Roman society where oratory had a place: in the lawcourt, in the political assembly and on public occasions, such as birthdays and funerals, where ceremonious speech was called for.<sup>7</sup> According to Curtius, it was the third genre that was instrumental in ensuring the survival of rhetoric into the Middle Ages and bringing about its close association with poetry: with the demise of the legal and political institutions that had supported the first two types of oratory, the *genus demonstrativum*, which because of its emphasis on eloquence for eloquence's sake<sup>8</sup> had always approached pure literature, came into its own; forensic and deliberative oratory meanwhile lived on as formal exercises in the schools. The beginnings of the alliance of poetry and rhetoric are traced by Curtius (pp. 73–76) to the Hellenistic period and to Augustan Rome; the systematization of demonstrative (or epideictic) eloquence occurred during late antiquity. But it was not only the association with poetry that kept rhetoric alive, for medieval society had its own uses for oratory, in preaching and letter-writing, giving rise to new manuals of style and composition, the *artes praedicandi* and *artes dictaminis*, which augmented the canon of classical treatises that continued to be studied. The most important ancient sources were Cicero's *De inventione*, the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (which was believed to be the work of Cicero) and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*. From the twelfth century

we also encounter new primers of literary rhetoric, the *artes poeticae* of Matthew of Vendôme, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, and John of Garland, to name but three of the high medieval contributors to the long and many-stranded tradition of the art of eloquence.<sup>9</sup>

The medieval tradition of school poetics, which I have sketched in its barest historical outline, is Latin. There is no comparable tradition of theoretical reflexion on the poet's art in the vernacular. Now, since I am going to be concerned with the poetics of a Middle High German writer, the question that must be posed is: what relevance does this Latin tradition have to vernacular literature? Here we encounter the first problem raised by Curtius's apophthegm, the problem of the relationship between Latin and vernacular. It would be surprising if the theories of the Latin schoolroom had not influenced vernacular practice, for two reasons: first, as the established language of education, administration, and devotion, with rich and subtle means of literary expression at its disposal, Latin enjoyed considerable prestige over the vernaculars, which in the Middle Ages were taking only their first steps towards becoming independent vehicles of written culture;<sup>10</sup> second, many vernacular authors, having attended schools and studied grammar and rhetoric, were *clerici* themselves, whose education stood them in good stead even when they were not writing in the language of the *litterati*.<sup>11</sup> The demonstrable influence of Latin poetics on the fledgling vernacular literatures of the Middle Ages (by which I mean *written* literature, as distinct from oral traditions), has given rise to a dependency theory, according to which Latin and vernacular are understood as donor and recipient cultures. Such a theory was formulated as early as 1919 by Gustav Ehrismann, writing about the style of Middle High German poetry: 'Die Stilkunst der führenden höfischen Dichter beruht in charakteristischen Ausdrucksformen auf der mittelalterlichen Schulrhetorik . . . Will man also die Grundlagen des mhd. höfischen Stils verstehen, so muß man auf die lateinische Rhetorik zurückgehen.'<sup>12</sup> Ehrismann demonstrated the fecundity of this theory with a detailed study of how the style of one Middle High German poet, Rudolf von Ems, was based on the precepts of medieval Latin poetics (pp. 57–78). A powerful buttress to this approach was the publication shortly afterwards, in 1924, of Edmond Faral's edition of *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle* which made readily accessible the principal texts of the *poetria nova*. From Faral's preface it is clear that he hoped medieval philology would rise to the challenge laid down by his work, namely that it should turn away from considering literary style as a matter of individual taste and instead place its inquiry on objective historical foundations (pp. xi–xvi). Indeed, the edition inspired numerous stylistic studies such as Hennig Brinkmann's book *Zu Wesen und Form mittelalterlicher Dichtung*, published in 1928, and Stanislaw Sawicki's monograph on *Gottfried von Straßburg und die Poetik des Mittelalters* of 1932, the findings of which are discussed at greater length towards the end of this introduction.

The most comprehensive and most influential formulation of the dependency theory has undoubtedly been the monumental book of Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, first published in 1948. Curtius's project was more ambitious than the work of any of the other scholars I have mentioned, in that he hoped to transcend the narrow specialism of medieval philology and promote a 'science of European literature'.<sup>13</sup> In the history of that literature, whose continuous tradition spans the twenty-six centuries from Homer to Goethe, medieval Latinity played the key part, for it formed the link between classical antiquity, whose cultural legacy it preserved, and the emerging vernacular literatures, which it fructified with that legacy (see especially pp. 20–21). As Curtius put it in the foreword he wrote for the English translation of his book: 'Without this Latin background, the vernacular literatures of the Middle Ages are incomprehensible.'<sup>14</sup> Curtius's is a dependency theory writ large, and not just because of the breadth of the historical canvas on which he paints. His inquiry is not limited to the influence of Latin on vernacular in matters of style and poetic technique; rather it is dedicated to showing that Latinity gave to the vernacular the very stuff of which literature is made. The 'cellars and foundations' of European literature are said to be *topoi*.<sup>15</sup> Cicero defines topics as 'disciplina inveniendorum argumentorum' and *topoi*, or *loci*, as 'sedes, e quibus argumenta promuntur';<sup>16</sup> these 'seats' are the various considerations from which arguments may be derived, for instance, similarity, difference, cause, antecedent, and so on. Antique topics was thus concerned with the 'general principles out of which arguments may be drawn for concrete cases',<sup>17</sup> and as such was germane to rhetoric and dialectic, the one concerned with winning arguments, the other with analysis of their logical form.<sup>18</sup> Curtius (p. 77) uses the term *topos* more loosely, however, to mean a cliché or a conventional figure or motif that the trained writer has at his disposal and makes use of as occasion requires. Thus there are *topoi* of beginning and concluding, of praise and consolation, of description, outdoing and inexpressibility, to name but a few, and a good deal of Curtius's book is devoted to tracing the tradition of these and other *topoi* in European literature. Topics, together with its counterpart metaphors (pp. 136–52), might be said to constitute the 'genes' of that literature; preserved and disseminated in the medieval schools' teaching of grammar and rhetoric, these genes were transmitted from there to the vernaculars, thus ensuring the continuity of the classical heritage.<sup>19</sup> According to Curtius, the Romance languages, French in particular, were the first vernaculars to receive the seed of Latinity: 'Die lateinische Bildung und Dichtung geht voraus, die französische folgt. Das Latein hat dem Französischen die Zunge gelöst. Weil Frankreich der Träger des *studium* war; weil die *artes*, Grammatik und Rhetorik an der Spitze, dort ihr Hauptquartier hatten — deshalb sproßt dort zuerst der Flor der volkssprachlichen Poesie' (p. 388). The Romance literatures maintained their pre-eminence from the time of the Crusades until the French

Revolution, radiating the legacy of the Latin Middle Ages to England and Germany (pp. 41–43).

Curtius's 'fulminantes Werk'<sup>20</sup> ignited scholarly interest in historical topics as an effective means of showing how the vernacular literatures of the Middle Ages had been moulded by Latin.<sup>21</sup> At the same time it has attracted criticism and provoked controversy. This is not surprising; books that attempt an Olympian synthesis of a vast field of knowledge can hardly avoid containing something to displease everyone. Thus Curtius has been taken to task for dabbling in Jungian psychology; for broadening the definition of the *topos* beyond what historical sources strictly allow; for underestimating the possibility of a Christian topics independent of the classical tradition (see Wehrli, pp. 130–37). Perhaps the most serious criticism is that Curtius misrepresents the relationship of Latin to vernacular. The argument is not that the emergent vernacular literatures owe nothing to Latin, nor even that this debt is not considerable; rather it is that if the rise of these literatures in the Middle Ages is to be accounted for adequately then the frame of reference must be widened beyond the simple donor-and-recipient model of the dependency theory. Max Wehrli writes: 'Die entscheidende Leistung des Mittelalters — mindestens nach ihrem Erfolg und ihrer Ursprünglichkeit gemessen — ist die Schöpfung *volkssprachlicher* Literaturen mit ihren praktisch eben auf diese Volkssprachen beschränkten Formen . . . und Gehalten' (p. 135). These specifically vernacular forms and contents (Wehrli has in mind the courtly romance and love lyric) were born of the confrontation and interaction between several traditions, Latin, Christian, and the profane oral culture of the *illiterati*. The problem with Curtius's approach, as Wehrli sees it, is that it does not acknowledge the role played in the formation of European literature by traditions other than those directly inspired by Latin (pp. 135–37).

A recent and radical apology for dropping the dependency theory in favour of a model that stresses the interaction between Latin and vernacular is Walter Haug's book *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter*, which appeared in 1985. He questions whether the study of vernacular poetics should be reduced to determining how far authors knew and applied Latin theories; such an approach inevitably neglects how school precepts were adapted, critically and creatively, to new needs that arose out of writing in a different language from Latin, for an audience with different expectations and experiences of literature. To recognize such adaptation is to allow that the history of vernacular poetics in the Middle Ages is more than the sum of its repeated borrowings from Latin theory; these borrowings are made into an evolving tradition which is acquiring a specificity of its own. Haug seeks to bring this tradition to light through a close and contextual reading of the prologues to vernacular narratives, Old French and Middle High German. It was in the prologue that medieval authors were most disposed to set out both the theoretical premises that governed their writing and

the terms on which they hoped to be understood; Haug shows that when exordial topics, the extreme conventionality of which has often led critics to dismiss them as little more than empty clichés, are set in their context they sometimes appear in a new light, as a vehicle for expressing subtle theoretical reflexions on the part of authors who are aware of the distinctiveness of the vernacular tradition in which they work. The all-important context is provided by relating the prologue to the rest of work and its themes, and by constantly trying to envisage the communicative situation in which the work was received. The alternative to such a contextual reading of literary topics is atomization; by limiting the mode of analysis to identifying *topoi* in a passage and assigning them to their respective traditions, the critic effectively dissolves the text into its constituent 'building blocks', ignoring the fact that it is more often than not the combination of *topoi* in any one text that reveals original moves. Curtius's method, with its emphasis on continuity, its obsession with pointing out how the same *topoi* recur in literature over hundreds of years, is moreover not well suited to registering the changes or even breaks through which a tradition renews and reorients itself. One innovation of momentous importance for European literature is the rise of the Arthurian romance, and with it what Haug sees as a poetics based on the discovery of the possibilities inherent in narrative fiction. Within the framework of the dependency theory, this development would never come into view, because Latin school poetics provides no categories that will capture the essence of Arthurian fiction.<sup>22</sup>

So far I have concentrated on the methodological issues raised by Curtius's assertion that medieval poets wrote because they learned to at school. The danger is that vernacular culture will simply be assimilated to Latin, and in this way a good deal of what is unique about it, and important for the future course of European literature, will be missed. But Curtius's emphasis on the school-room as the matrix of poetry also gives rise to a further set of questions, about form and meaning. If the ability to write poetry is largely a matter of having learned to manipulate the appropriate *topoi* for the occasion (funeral orations, dedications, petitions and so on), then the implication is that literature is really a technical affair whose meaning is exhausted in the matching of form to function. Indeed, for Curtius poetry is best approached through its form. *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* not only offers a new synthesis of the European tradition in which the Latin Middle Ages occupy the place of honour; it is also an attack on the hold exerted over literary criticism in Curtius's day by 'Geistesgeschichte'. The great mistake of 'Geistesgeschichte' was, Curtius maintained, that it did not study literature on literary terms, but borrowed its categories from other disciplines, leading to a misrecognition of the autonomous structure of literature (pp. 19–20). In place of what he regarded as a 'dilettantische Vernebelung von Sachverhalten' (p. 19), Curtius proposed a *Nova Rhetorica* based on historical topics and metaphors (p. 136); only by

highlighting the concrete formal constants of the literary tradition was it in his view possible to penetrate the very tissue of literature (pp. 233, 386).

It was the desire to base his science of literature on foundations more solid than the abstractions of 'Geistesgeschichte', together with the concern to establish the continuity of the European tradition, that led Curtius to cultivate the garden of literary forms (his metaphor, p. 23). Formal elements of poetry are the most tangible; their objective existence is not in dispute in the same way as is the meaning of a literary work of art. One effect of this orientation is, however, that the school disciplines through which the fundamentals of literature were taught — grammar and rhetoric — appear more formalist, more 'technicist', than they actually were, either in antiquity or in the Middle Ages. Quintilian, listing the qualities he considers indispensable in a good *grammaticus*, says that it is not enough to have read the poets; the teacher must be familiar with writers of every kind, and with music, astronomy, and philosophy, if he is to possess the background knowledge necessary for elucidating a literary text in all its aspects.<sup>23</sup> Grammar is thus more than the teaching of forms; it brings into play the general knowledge required to understand the poet's meaning. Rhetoric likewise is not all technique: Cicero insists that eloquence without knowledge ('eloquentia sine sapientia') is more worthless and more harmful to the well-being of the state than knowledge without eloquence.<sup>24</sup> Nor were the medieval *artes poeticae* concerned with form for form's sake, even though their preoccupation with the ornaments of style might give rise to that impression;<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey of Vinsauf for instance is insistent that the writer should first pay heed to what he wants to say, the *res* or *sententiae*, and only then attend to the outward form of the *verba*, which are to be selected with a view to their ability to express the desired meaning: 'In his quae dixeris esto/Argus et argutis oculis circumspice verba/In re proposita.'<sup>26</sup> Clearly, the cultivation of language in the schools concentrated on what was said no less than on how to say it.

How, in the light of what has been said about the need both to recognize the particularity of the vernacular tradition and to take questions of meaning into account, should we approach the poetics of Gottfried von Strassburg? Gottfried was a '*clericus par excellence*'.<sup>27</sup> In his *Tristan* he displays familiarity with a range of school-lore: classical poetry and mythology, legal terminology, music.<sup>28</sup> It is hard to explain how he could have acquired his considerable erudition if not from having gone to school. To exclude Latin rhetoric and poetics from the theoretical background against which we evaluate Gottfried's practice would be to deny his status as *clericus* and *litteratus*. But we must also consider that in his own work Gottfried sets himself in a tradition of poetry that is entirely vernacular. In an excursus he names Hartmann von Aue, Bligger von Steinach, Heinrich von Veldeke, Reinmar von Hagenau and Walther von der Vogelweide, all poets whose medium is the literary German language, as models of eloquence whom he admires and claims he cannot better.<sup>29</sup> This review of

poets, narrative and lyric, is no mere list; it is an attempt to establish a tradition and a canon.<sup>30</sup> Veldeke is said to have implanted the first twig of German eloquence, which since has so grown and flourished that all his successors can pluck its blossoms (4738–50). The presentation of the ‘verwaere’ or narrative authors centres on the dispute over who should wear the poet’s laurels, Hartmann, or ‘des hasen geselle’, the unnamed rival customarily identified with Wolfram von Eschenbach;<sup>31</sup> a panel of peers will judge the claims according to their artistic merit (4634–55). Likewise the roll-call of the ‘nahtegalen’ or minnesingers is subordinated to the question of who should carry their banner now that their leader, Reinmar, is dead; Walther is selected as worthy of the honour (4778–801). Paradoxically in a passage that is supposed to justify the narrator’s professed lack of confidence in his own rhetorical skills, Gottfried speaks throughout this excursus with the assuredness of one who is aware of belonging to a tradition that has its illustrious founders, is now at its brilliant apogee, and is already consolidating itself into a sort of exclusive club or academy whose fellows decide to whom the laureate or the honour of standard-bearer shall go.

Veldeke draws his artistry from the spring of Pegasus on Mount Helicon (4730–31); Reinmar sings with the tongue of Orpheus (4790–92); Walther’s melodies are said to come from Cithaeron, seat of the goddess of love (4806–10; Gottfried is here confusing or conflating Mount Cithaeron, traditionally one of the homes of the Muses, with Cythera, a shrine of Aphrodite).<sup>32</sup> It is interesting that the denizens of Gottfried’s German Parnassus should owe their talent to inspiration from pagan, classical sources, for this points to a relationship between Latin and vernacular similar to that proposed by medievalists such as Wehrli and Haug: classical culture inspires and fertilizes a tradition that is conscious of its growing independence. Gottfried’s own excursus indicates, then, how we should frame our inquiry into his poetics: the vernacular draws on the Latin legacy, but on its terms.

Accordingly, the place to begin is the German narrative tradition around 1200. I shall argue in the next chapter that here we find two divergent poetic principles at work. The one tendency, which I call ‘archival’, deals predominantly in historical subject-matter; it is the older of the two narrative types, and is heavily dependent on Latin historiography and Christian interpretations of history. Its more recent competitor, to which I give the name ‘experimental’ is a vernacular creation, and its development is bound up with the genre of romance. The material basis of experimental narratives is fictional, and the attitude to meaning is open, in contrast to the closed ideology of archival narratives. These two categories, archival and experimental, set the terms within which the subsequent chapters go on to investigate the relevance of various Latin theories to Gottfried’s narrative poetics. Here, the discussion is centred around the concepts of truth, fiction, and verisimilitude, and their



related genres of history, fable, and argument, as they are defined and applied in grammatical and rhetorical sources. My thesis will be that Gottfried bases his poetics on a principle of verisimilitude, using it to reconcile the tension between the poles of archive and experiment in the vernacular narrative tradition. It will be apparent that all of my categories — archive, experiment, history, fiction, verisimilitude — are concerned with the truth-value of narrative. In other words, they have been chosen with a view to emphasizing how poetic form is also a vehicle for the expression and production of meaning.

Before turning to the vernacular tradition in detail, some account of previous treatments of Gottfried's poetics is called for. I shall concentrate on the two most important — and indispensable — monographs that have appeared to date, bearing in mind the points that have been raised in the course of our discussion up to now. The relevance of Latin school poetics to Gottfried's narrative technique was convincingly demonstrated by Stanislaw Sawicki in his pioneering dissertation on *Gottfried von Straßburg und die Poetik des Mittelalters*, published in 1932. Sawicki, who noted that the study of literature, poetics, and rhetoric flourished in the monastery schools of Alsace,<sup>33</sup> compared Gottfried's practice with theoretical doctrine as it is represented in contemporary *artes poeticae* such as the *Ars versificatoria* of Matthew of Vendôme and the *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf. It was a line of investigation that continued Ehrismann's work on Rudolf von Ems and benefited from the recent publication of Faral's edition of the principal medieval doctrinal sources (see above, p. 3). Not only did Sawicki show that Gottfried used a wide range of amplificatory devices and stylistic ornaments as prescribed by the medieval theoreticians, he also established that Gottfried had absorbed their technical terminology into his own critical vocabulary in the literary excursus (pp. 56–167). Sawicki's conclusion, which can hardly be impugned in the light of the impressive array of evidence assembled in his monograph, is that 'Gottfried steht fest auf dem Boden der mittelalterlichen Poetik' (p. 178).

Sawicki conducts his inquiry within the terms of the dependency theory. He also confines poetics to the realm of the purely formal and ornamental. For him both the theory and the practice of poetry are concerned with the surface texture of language alone; his estimate of the *artes poeticae* is that they promote 'das Ideal des Pretiösen und Überornamentierten', and Gottfried himself is described as 'der Virtuose und Meister des . . . pretiös überkünstelten Stils' (pp. 48, 173). The techniques of poetics are presented as nothing more than a repertoire of decorative figures with which Gottfried adorns his style; within this ornamental conception of Gottfried's literary art it is impossible to pose (in the words of another of Sawicki's critics, Winfried Christ) 'die Frage, wie Stil und Bedeutung im Werk vermittelt sind'.<sup>34</sup>

Christ's book *Rhetorik und Roman: Untersuchungen zu Gottfrieds von Straßburg 'Tristan und Isold'* (1977) seeks to provide a corrective to an excessively formal

approach to Gottfried's poetics. Christ emphasizes the rhetorical basis of medieval literary technique and reminds us of the fundamental tenet of rhetoric, that eloquence is intended to persuade, edify and move the audience. Rhetoric is the art of effective public speaking, and a poetics based upon it will be a 'Wirkungspoetik': 'Dichtung war Ansprache, war dialogisch interessiert, war rhetorisch' (p. 343; see also pp. 14–41). This is poetics in my sense of the word, not concerned with art for art's sake but with the communication between author and public through the medium of the literary text. Christ bases his detailed examination of Gottfried's technique on a concept of the text as the rhetorical transformation of a traditional legend to which the author has applied his ingenuity in order to present the public with a story that will be interesting, entertaining and, above all, plausible (see pp. 291–330 in particular).

There are three criticisms that might be levelled at Christ's complex and frequently illuminating study. The first is that he comes no closer himself to answering the question he accuses Sawicki of neglecting, namely how technique assists the expression of meaning. In fact, Christ's account of rhetoric makes it impossible for him to tackle this problem. Gottfried's transformation of the Tristan story is, according to Christ, piecemeal and episodic; he is said to concentrate on representing individual scenes in an effective manner without paying much regard to their integration into a coherent and meaningful whole. Gottfried's rhetorical technique is thought by Christ to bring about the disintegration of the traditional myth into a loosely connected sequence of 'microstructures', each consistent in itself, but whose significance does not reach beyond the boundaries of the individual episode. Rhetoric is, in a way, corrosive of meaning; the consequence of what Christ terms Gottfried's 'rhetorischer Partikularismus', his focusing on one scene in isolation from others, is 'epische Diskontinuität' (pp. 109–16, 159, 341–48). Although Christ eschews an aesthetics of 'art for art's sake', he effectively adopts a position of 'rhetoric for rhetoric's sake', for he never gives a satisfactory explanation why Gottfried should devote so much rhetorical virtuosity to holding the attention and interest of his public over some twenty thousand lines, except to say that the poet wished to instruct, entertain, and convince. But convince the audience of what?

My second reservation is that Christ's insights into the rhetorical foundations of Gottfried's narrative practice remain schematic and unhistorical to a great degree. Christ is aware of the problem of knowing where to begin in his attempt to derive Gottfried's literary technique from rhetorical doctrine: 'Zwar ist die Rhetorik allgegenwärtig, aber darum auch in vielerlei Gestalten und Traditionen verfügbar' (p. 27); but a fear of making what he calls 'genetische Trugschlüsse' renders him unwilling to investigate the possible connexions between Gottfried's poetics and specific theories and traditions of rhetoric.

Instead, he interprets Gottfried's practice against the background of a general and supposedly omnipresent system of rhetoric — it is revealing that Christ does not go directly to the rhetoricians for his doctrine, but to Lausberg's *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, an admirable guide, to be sure, but with all the advantages and drawbacks that a highly schematized distillation of Quintilian entails (see pp. 28–31, 43–50, for Christ's exposition of his method). Christ's reluctance to get down to the level of individual rhetorical texts means that the relationship between theory and Gottfried's practice remains abstract. It is true that we possess so little information about Gottfried that we could never prove what, if any, rhetorical and poetic treatises he had read, but — I hope that my argument in the chapters to come will bear me out — it is at least possible to make connexions between aspects of his technique and specific sources that are representative of the *type* of theoretical tradition with which he may have been familiar. The question of genetic links cannot be side-stepped, for it is implicit in any approach that seeks to explain observable textual features by deriving them from a body of theoretical doctrine. Christ, it seems to me, wants to have it both ways: his analysis requires that there should be a relationship between Gottfried's narrative technique and the theory of rhetoric, but he does not want to make this relationship substantial, preferring instead to appeal to the omnipresence of rhetoric in the Middle Ages as a sufficient explanation.

One effect of Christ's schematic derivation of the poet's technique from a general system of rhetoric is that other forces that might have shaped Gottfried's poetics, such as the tradition of vernacular narrative in which he was working, are excluded from consideration. This brings me to my third criticism, that Christ does little to outline Gottfried's position within Middle High German literature and to explain why developments there might have favoured the application of certain poetic theories. His observation that there is a resemblance between the orator of antiquity and the medieval poet, who recites his work to a listening public, does no more than establish on a general level that there is scope for rhetoric in medieval literature (pp. 21–22). Quite apart from the fact that it underestimates the role increasingly played by reading in the reception of vernacular literature,<sup>35</sup> such an assimilation of the medieval performance context to classical rhetoric gives undue weight to the similarities between the two when, I would argue, it is the differences that are more telling. The vernacular poet of the Middle Ages is not the orator of the city-state of antiquity; he faces a different public, which has different expectations, and accordingly his eloquence fulfils a different function. For me, the particularity of vernacular literary culture must come first, since it is from this vantage-point that it becomes possible to see the general conditions under which specific rhetorical theories are applied and adapted. It is to this culture that we now turn.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. E. R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Berne, 1948), p. 464.
2. On the seven liberal arts and medieval education, see Louis John Paetow, *The Arts Course at Medieval Universities, with Special Reference to Grammar and Rhetoric* (Champaign, Illinois, 1910); Pierre Riché, *Les Écoles et l'enseignement dans l'occident chrétien* (Paris, 1979).
3. See Richard McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 17 (1942), 1–32; Lothar Bornscheuer, 'Topik', in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, vol. vi, second edition, edited by K. Kanzog and A. Masser (Berlin, 1984), pp. 454–75.
4. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, edited by W. M. Green, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 80 (Vienna, 1963), Book iv. See Erich Auerbach, *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter* (Berne, 1958), pp. 25–53.
5. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, edited by H. E. Butler, 4 vols (London, 1921–22), 1.4.2.
6. On grammar and curriculum authors in the Middle Ages see Curtius, pp. 50–62, 263–67, 445–63; Günter Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter: Entstehung und Wandlung des Lektürekansons bis 1200 nach den Quellen dargestellt*, Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung, 5 (Munich, 1970); Riché, pp. 247–52, 254–58. On *accessus ad auctores* see Edwin A. Quain, 'The medieval *accessus ad auctores*', *Traditio*, 3 (1945), 215–64; Paul Klopsch, *Einführung in die Dichtungslehren des lateinischen Mittelalters* (Darmstadt, 1980), pp. 48–64 (with references to further secondary literature).
7. See Werner Eisenhut, *Einführung in die antike Rhetorik und ihre Geschichte* (Darmstadt, 1974); Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, second edition, 2 vols (Munich, 1973).
8. Lausberg, para. 239, p. 130.
9. For medieval rhetoric and *artes poeticae* see Edmond Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XII<sup>e</sup> et du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du moyen âge*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Etudes, 238 (Paris, 1924); Charles Sears Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400): Interpreted from Representative Works* (New York, 1928); James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1974); Klopsch, pp. 64–163.
10. Max Wehrli, *Literatur im deutschen Mittelalter: Eine poetologische Einführung* (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 29–46.
11. The term *clericus* was not restricted to men in holy orders but could refer to anyone who had been educated in a Church school; it meant 'having a Latin education' and as such was synonymous with *litteratus*, 'able to read and write Latin'. See Herbert Grundmann, 'Litteratus — illitteratus: Der Wandel einer Bildungsnorm vom Altertum zum Mittelalter', *AfK*, 40 (1958), 1–63; Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur: Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, 2 vols (Munich, 1986), pp. 607–10, 682–85.
12. G. Ehrismann, *Studien über Rudolf von Ems: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Rhetorik und Ethik im Mittelalter*, SB der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse (Heidelberg, 1919), p. 23.
13. Curtius, p. 23: 'Eine solche "Wissenschaft von der europäischen Literatur" hat in dem spezialisierten Fächerwerk unserer Universitäten keinen Platz.'
14. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, translated by Willard R. Trask (London, 1953), p. viii.
15. Curtius, p. 87: 'Topik . . . , die selbst der "Literaturwissenschaftler" kaum den Namen nach kennt, weil er die Kellerräume — und Fundamente! — der europäischen Literatur entschlossen meidet'.
16. Cicero, *Topica*, edited by H. M. Hubbell (London, 1949), 1.2, 7.
17. I. M. Bochenski, *Ancient Formal Logic* (Amsterdam, 1951), p. 32.
18. On the definition and history of topics, see Bornscheuer, pp. 454–61.
19. 'Die Kontinuität der europäischen Literatur ist an die Schule gebunden' (Curtius, p. 44). Although Curtius does not use the genetic metaphor, in the foreword to the English edition of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* he alludes, interestingly, to the 'biology' of literature (p. ix).
20. Wehrli, *Literatur*, p. 130.
21. For a full bibliography of works up until 1972 see Peter Jehn, *Toposforschung: Eine Dokumentation*, *Respublica Literaria*, 10 (Frankfurt, 1972), 321–48. Of the numerous works that have followed on the trail blazed by Curtius one of special relevance to German is Werner Fechter's *Lateinische Dichtkunst und deutsches Mittelalter: Forschungen über Ausdrucksmittel, poetische Technik und Stil mittelhochdeutscher Dichtungen*, PhStQ, 23 (Berlin, 1964). Fechter identifies classical *topoi* in Hartmann von Aue and Wernher der Gartenaere, and also discusses the relationship between specific Latin sources and a number of Middle High German texts and authors, including the *Nibelungenlied*, Burkhart von Hohenfels, Rudolf von Ems, and Konrad von Würzburg.

22. Haug's methodological premises are set out in the introductory chapters of *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter: Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts: Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt, 1985), pp. 1–15. I discuss his account of fiction in the Arthurian romance at greater length in the following chapter, pp. 30–36. The proposition that the poetics of romance cannot be accommodated within the categories of Latin theory has also been advanced by Fritz Peter Knapp, 'Historische Wahrheit und poetische Lüge: Die Gattungen weltlicher Epik und ihre theoretische Rechtfertigung im Hochmittelalter', *DVLG*, 54 (1980), 582–83, 627–28.
23. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 1.4.4: 'Nec poetas legisse satis est: excutiendum omne scriptorum genus non propter historias modo sed verba, quae frequenter ius ab auctoribus sumunt. Tum neque citra musicen grammaticae potest esse perfecta, cum ei de metris rhythmisque dicendum sit, nec, si rationem siderum ignoret, poetas intelligat, qui (ut alia omittam) totiens ortu occasuque signorum in declarandis temporibus utantur; nec ignara philosophiae, cum propter plurimos in omnibus fere carminibus locos ex intima naturalium questionum subtilitate repetitos, tum vel propter Empedoclea in Graecis, Varronem ac Lucretium in Latinis, qui praecepta sapientiae versibus tradiderunt'.
24. Cicero, *De inventione*, edited by H. M. Hubbell (London, 1949), 1.1: 'ut existimem sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse civitatibus, eloquentiam vero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse nunquam. Quare si quis omissis rectissimis atque honestissimis studiis rationis et officii consumit omnem operam in exercitatione dicendi, is inutilis sibi, perniciosus patriae civis alitur'.
25. Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, p. 86.
26. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, lines 749–51, in Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, p. 220; see Christoph Huber, 'Wort-Ding-Entsprechungen: Zur Sprach- und Stiltheorie Gottfrieds von Straßburg', in *Befund und Deutung: Zum Verhältnis von Empirie und Interpretation in Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft: Hans Fromm zum 26. Mai 1979 von seinen Schülern*, edited by K. Grubmüller and others (Tübingen, 1979), pp. 284–90.
27. Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, p. 684.
28. See Wilhelm Hoffa, 'Antike Elemente bei Gottfried von Straßburg', *ZfdA*, 52 (1910), 339–50; Alois Wolf, 'Zur Frage des antiken Geistesgutes im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg', in *Natalicium Carolo Jax*, vol. II, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, 4 (Innsbruck, 1956), pp. 45–53; Rosemary Combridge, *Das Recht im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg*, PhStQ, 15, second edition (Berlin, 1964); Franzjosef Penschel, 'Rechtsgeschichtliches und Rechtssprachliches im epischen Werk Hartmanns von Aue und im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Humboldt University, Berlin, 1961). Lambertus Okken, *Kommentar zum Tristan-Roman Gottfrieds von Straßburg*, Amsterdamer Publikationen zur Sprache und Literatur, 57–58, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1984–85), contains an appendix on music by Martin van Schaik (II, 163–224); see also Luise Gnaedinger, *Musik und Minne im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg*, WW Beihefte, 19 (Düsseldorf, 1967), and, on Gottfried's and Boethius's theories of music, W. T. H. Jackson, 'Tristan the Artist in Gottfried's Poem', *PMLA*, 77 (1962), 364–72.
29. *Tristan und Isold*, edited by Friedrich Ranke, fourteenth edition (Dublin and Zurich, 1969), lines 4597–844. Line references to this edition will henceforth be given in the text.
30. See the entry 'Literaturexkurs' in each of the two volumes of Hans-Hugo Steinhoff, *Bibliographie zu Gottfried von Straßburg*, Bibliographien zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 5 (Berlin, 1971) and 9 (1986) for the extensive secondary literature on this passage. The following raise and discuss some of the issues I am concerned with: Ursula Schulze, 'Literarkritische Äußerungen im "Tristan" Gottfrieds von Straßburg', *Beiträge* (Tübingen series), 88 (1967), 285–310; Ingrid Hahn, 'Zu Gottfrieds von Straßburg Literaturschau', *ZfdA*, 96 (1967), 218–36; Johan H. Winkelmann, 'Die Baummetapher im literarischen Exkurs Gottfrieds von Straßburg', *ABAG*, 8 (1975), 85–112.
31. For the controversy surrounding the supposed enmity between Gottfried and Wolfram, and the large secondary literature, see Gerhild Geil, *Gottfried von Straßburg und Wolfram von Eschenbach als literarische Antipoden: Zur Genese eines literaturgeschichtlichen Topos* (Cologne and Vienna, 1973).
32. I discuss these classical references more fully below, pp. 68–70.
33. S. Sawicki, *Gottfried von Straßburg und die Poetik des Mittelalters*, Germanische Studien, 124 (Berlin, 1932), pp. 24–25, 51.
34. Christ, *Rhetorik und Roman: Untersuchungen zu Gottfrieds von Straßburg "Tristan und Isold"*, Deutsche Studien, 31 (Meisenheim, 1977), pp. 11–12. Sawicki's formalism is also criticized by Heinz Scharschuch, *Gottfried von Straßburg: Stilmittel — Stilästhetik*, Germanische Studien, 197 (Berlin, 1938), p. 305; for him Gottfried's style expresses a series of polarities that symbolize 'die künstliche Synthese deutscher und französischer Wesenszüge' (p. iii), and this synthesis is

itself said to be a reflexion of the special historical and geographical position of Alsace which, moreover, Alsatians such as Scharschuch himself are best placed to appreciate (p. iv). Form is for Scharschuch an expression of national mentality; this is conceptual territory where critics would be reluctant to tread nowadays.

35. D. H. Green, review of Christ, *MLR*, 75 (1980), 442.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE VERNACULAR NARRATIVE BETWEEN ARCHIVE AND EXPERIMENT

#### ARCHIVAL NARRATIVES

In one of the most celebrated passages of *Tristan*, the literary excursus, Heinrich von Veldeke is presented as the inaugurator of the splendid vernacular eloquence that Gottfried sees all around him and before which he is struck dumb (4726–50). What Gottfried considers to be a beginning, however, might appear to the historian of literature as the end of a long development, for Veldeke's *Eneasroman* is in many ways the culmination of a narrative tradition reaching back to the middle of the eleventh century, when the *Ezzolied* marks the recommencement of the writing down of literature in German after a break of some 150 years. It is a tradition of narrative whose orientation is overwhelmingly historiographic, though this does not mean that in the century or so that separates the *Ezzolied* from the *Eneasroman* there had not been change and evolution. A recent survey by Gisela Vollmann-Profe of literature written in German between 1050 and 1170<sup>1</sup> draws attention to how in that period the narrative tradition develops from an initial preoccupation with *historia salutis*, with the course of history understood in theological terms as the unfolding of God's plan for mankind, to a new interest, becoming dominant from the 1130s, in *historia mundana*, the history of human affairs in their purely worldly dimension, without reference to their eschatological or soteriological significance. This shift of emphasis reflects the changing sociology of literary production and consumption. Up until the 1130s, literature in the vernacular was produced predominantly by clerics for those with little or no Latin — the lay aristocracy, but also nuns, and men and women who, without actually being in holy orders, devoted themselves to a religious life: communities of lay brothers, recluses and the like. The period 1050–1130 is thus characteristically one of clerical production and lay consumption. But after that laymen come to play a more active part in literary life, commissioning works and constituting an audience sufficiently confirmed in its secular self-awareness as to be interested in a literary representation of its world and its concerns.

*Historia salutis* is the theme of the biblical narratives that flourished in the vernacular in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries; to this tradition belong works such as the *Altdeutsche Genesis* and *Exodus*, the *Vorauer Bücher Mosis*, the *Ezzolied*, and the New Testament narratives of Frau Ava. These works focus on what, from a Christian point of view, is the only historical narrative of real significance: the story of God's dealings with mankind and the world, beginning with the creation, continuing through humanity's fall and redemption, and culminating in the end of the world and man's salvation. Within this grand soteriological schema the story of men and their institutions has no weight of its own; human affairs are regarded as transient and have meaning only in so far as they may be read as indexes of the unfolding of the master narrative. In order to bring about this link between *historia mundana* and *historia divina* Christian authors such as Jerome, Augustine, Isidore, and Bede schematized the course of human affairs into teleological sequences, such as the six *aetates mundi* or the four kingdoms, which run from the creation of the world to its destruction. For all these authors human history had already reached the last stage, the sixth age or the fourth kingdom, which preceded the appearance of the Antichrist, the second coming and the end of the world.<sup>2</sup>

The subordination of secular history to the soteriological schema is illustrated by the *Annolied*, a work probably written around 1080 to commemorate Anno, Bishop of Cologne, who died in 1075. It recounts his career as ruler of that city and as regent for Heinrich IV. The subject is thus taken from *historia mundana*, and from the very recent past. But the author approaches his secular theme by way of *historia salutis*. The poem begins with an account of the creation and fall, of Christ's incarnation and mankind's redemption. Both of the canonical schemata of human history, the six ages of the world and the four kingdoms, are cited,<sup>3</sup> in a way that enables the author to circle in on Anno and Cologne. The sixth, post-incarnation age is the epoch in which men live *sub gratia*, and the propagation of this message is the task of the saints and office-holders of the Church, foremost among them Anno. The succession of kingdoms culminates in the Roman Empire, and during the reign of Augustus fall the birth of Christ and the foundation of Cologne, the scene of Anno's career, the narration of which begins only now, after some thirty-three strophes of eschatological and universal historical exposition which make up almost two thirds of the entire poem. Within this setting, Anno's life has no significance in itself; the author refers to it as a 'bispil' (34, 3), and indeed Anno's good works and the miracles that occur after his death are to be read as signs of the efficacy of God's grace in the world and its availability to all who seek it: 'ci diu daz wir verstûntin/des rîchin godis gûte' (49, 21–22). The narrative, having focused for a while on the actions of Anno in the world, returns to the level of *historia salutis* with the concluding episode, the story of Volprecht, whose sight is miraculously restored after he was blinded for doubting Anno's holiness (46–48). Volprecht is



in the grip of the devil when he utters his blasphemies against the now deceased bishop, and his cure is a triumph of God's power over Satan: 'sô scône ist diu godis craft' (48, 14). At the beginning of the *Annolied* it had been narrated how Lucifer had held sway over mankind for five ages of the world, from Adam until the incarnation, when his dominion was broken by God's sacrifice (3–4); the miracle demonstrates the living reality of God's grace, now, in the sixth age. The final stage of God's grand design is in sight, and it behoves every man to make a choice: either God and salvation or the devil and damnation. With its closing demonstration of the saving power of grace, the *Annolied* encourages each and every man to realize the universal historical process in himself.<sup>4</sup>

In the narrative literature produced in Germany from around 1140 up until the time of Veldeke secular history, which in the *Annolied* is subordinated to *historia divina*, comes to hold the stage in its own right. Roman imperial history (which for writers of the day continued into the present political reality of the empire) constituted the theme of works such as the *Kaiserchronik*, the *Rolandslied*, and Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneasroman*. More remote ancient history provided the subject-matter of the various surviving versions of the *Alexanderlied*, and of a work that takes us beyond Veldeke into the time of Gottfried's *Tristan*, Herbort von Fritzlar's *Liet von Troye*, written at some time between 1210 and 1220. This period of German literature is also characterized by the first intensive reception of romance and epic from France: the *Alexanderlied*, *Rolandslied*, *Eneasroman*, and *Liet von Troye* are all adapted from Old French models.<sup>5</sup> The Old French (and Anglo-Norman) narrative tradition of the twelfth century was, like the German, overwhelmingly historiographic, although the emphasis seems always to have been on profane history: the *chansons de geste* recount the deeds of the kings and nobles of France, while ancient Troy, Greece, and Rome provide the theme of the so-called *romans antiques*, and Wace's romances chronicle the history of Britain and the lives of the dukes of Normandy.<sup>6</sup>

The new orientation to *historia mundana*, and to the flourishing secular and vernacular literature of France, reflects the increased participation of laymen in cultural life. According to Vollmann-Profe (pp. 81–82, 105–12, 193–94), *historia salutis* always contained within it the seeds of this turn to *historia mundana*: it required only a concentration of narrative interest on the sixth *aetas mundi* or the fourth kingdom for the all-embracing teleological design to recede into the background and the history of human affairs and institutions to acquire a specific gravity of its own. Such a change of perspective is, moreover, merely a stage in a process in which vernacular narrative gradually shakes off first theological schemata, and then any historiographic orientation whatsoever, in order to reach the goal of independent literary fiction. This goal is realized with the rise of the Arthurian romance in German in the last two decades of the twelfth century. Vollmann-Profe represents this evolutionary and emancipatory progress of vernacular narrative from history to fiction as a smooth, linear development,

which appears to be no less teleological and inevitable than the theologians' schemata of the six ages or the four kingdoms. The end of the process is visible even at its very beginning, when the preference shown by authors of biblical epics for material drawn from the Old Testament rather than the New is said to betoken an incipient desire for narratorial freedom:

Diese Texte (sc. des Alten Testaments) gehören zwar auch zum Kanon der inspirierten Schriften, sie enthalten jedoch nicht die Worte Jesu selbst, sind daher weniger sakrosankt als die Bücher des Neuen Testaments. Dies ermöglicht dem volkssprachigen Bibelepiker eine etwas größere Freiheit im Umgang mit der Quelle. Beschäftigung mit dem Alten Testament signalisiert *auch* das Streben nach erzählerischer Emanzipation. In der Zuwendung zu den Büchern des Alten Bundes zeichnet sich der Beginn einer literarischen Entwicklung ab, die von der nachdichtenden Wiedergabe der biblisch abgesicherten Geschichte zur dichterischen Darstellung von Profangeschichte und von dort zur Erfindung profaner Geschichten fortschreiten wird: Bibeldichtung, Darstellung der nachchristlichen Heilsgeschichte ('Kaiserchronik'), Profangeschichte mit biblischem Anknüpfungspunkt ('Alexanderlied'), Antikenroman, Artusroman — das sind die Stationen, die die Epik des 12. Jahrhunderts in raschem Lauf durchheilt. (pp. 90–91)

There can be no doubt that between 1050 and 1170 a process of secularization has taken place, affecting the nature of the material susceptible of narrative treatment and modifying the ideological outlook of texts in line with the expectations and interests of a changing audience. Nevertheless there are reasons why one might be skeptical about Vollmann-Profe's account of the evolution of vernacular narrative in this period. Her teleology presupposes, as we saw, that the end of the process is already present at its beginning, in the authors' desire to cast off the restraints imposed on their freedom by theology and history. In accordance with a sort of Whig interpretation of literary history, the development of vernacular narrative in Germany is seen as the story of the progressive realization of this emancipatory desire, a process that reaches fulfilment in the telos of literary fiction. Individual texts of the transitional period therefore break down into a mixture of old and new, of backward-looking and forward-looking traits.<sup>7</sup> The difficulty with this view is that it encourages a mode of interpretation that values texts above all for their forward-looking features, while the elements of the old, where they persist, are in danger of being written off as the dead weight of a tradition that is in the process of withering away.

In fact it seems that contrary to what is implied by Vollmann-Profe's model these remnants of an outmoded ideology remained productive throughout the twelfth century as a means of ordering and shaping narrative. Vollmann-Profe herself acknowledges that in the *Kaiserchronik*, a work that in her view has already moved on from 'Heilsgeschichte' to attain the stage of 'religiös durchdachte Profangeschichte', and in whose narrative technique she discerns the anticipation of the *bele conjointure* of Chrétien de Troyes (pp. 46, 111), the narrated events are nevertheless rendered significant through their being set in a framework of divine history: the popes and emperors whose careers are

chronicled in this work are saved or damned, according to how they have performed God's will.<sup>8</sup> She also points out that the story of Alexander, the founder of the third of the four canonical kingdoms, is integrated into the schema of universal history in virtue of the position of the *Alexanderlied* in the Vorau manuscript, where it is placed between the Old Testament narratives and Frau Ava's life of Jesus (p. 207). Walter Haug and Alois Wolf have also drawn attention to the continuing religious orientation of German vernacular narrative in the pre-classical period, which is often more pronounced than in the Old French models for this literature, where these exist: Haug describes the reception of the Roland and Alexander stories in Germany as part of a process of 'geistliche Umformulierung profaner Typen' (pp. 75–90), and Wolf charts a similar process of theologically inspired historicization at work in the German adaptations of the *romans antiques* (pp. 309–22). All of this suggests that theological schemata were not moribund, but very much alive. Wolf in particular argues that with the coronation of Barbarossa as emperor in 1155 such schemata received a new lease of life, as Hohenstaufen propaganda disseminated the idea of a *sacrum imperium* (the term was first used in 1157). The idea of the empire as the earthly fulfilment of God's plan for human history was further impressed on lay consciousness by the canonization of Charlemagne in 1165 (Wolf, pp. 41–61). That the history of the empire was understood as part of *historia salutis*, that the laymen who made this history were to be considered as actors in God's plan for mankind is brought out by Wolf in his reading of Heinrich von Veldeke's representation of the Aeneas story (pp. 319–22). At the end of the *Eneasroman* Aeneas is enthroned as the new king in Italy; there follows a description of the celebrations accompanying his coronation, and then the enumeration of Roman kings and emperors down to the time of Augustus, during whose reign, Veldeke adds, Christ's incarnation and passion occurred, which redeemed mankind from the fall.<sup>9</sup> The narrative thus concludes in the sixth and final *aetas mundi*. Veldeke does more than bring the history of the world up to date, however, for he also gives various signs that the contemporary political order in Germany stands for not just the continuity of the empire founded by Aeneas, but also its supersession in the new age of grace inaugurated by the incarnation. Thus the court festivities at Aeneas's coronation are contrasted with the still greater pomp of the court held by his successor Barbarossa at Mainz in 1184, the splendour of which will be talked about until doomsday (13222–52). A clearer signal still is the burial of Pallas. Veldeke describes how Evander put in his son's tomb a lamp, which never ceased to burn until Barbarossa arrived in Rome to be anointed. When the grave was opened for the emperor to see, the light went out (8350–408). The coronation of Frederick Barbarossa is the dawning of a new day, a renewal of the *sacrum imperium* in the last age of the world. Neither of these signals, the comparison with Barbarossa's court and the extinction of Pallas's lamp, is suggested by the *Roman d'Eneas*. Their addition demonstrates

how, in a work that was completed in the 1180s, eschatological and soteriological habits of thought continued to be productive as a way of making sense of the history of the secular political institution that was the empire.

The persistence of eschatological references even in the narrative literature of the late twelfth century suggests that the laity, who came to exert ever more influence on literary life, wanted to see their world, their institutions and affairs, themselves indeed, represented as instruments and agents in the grand narrative of *historia salutis*. This constitutes a sacralization of worldly affairs and might therefore be taken as evidence for the continued subordination of the secular realm to the ideological hegemony of the Church. Such sacralization conceals however a declaration of lay independence: God's plan for history is fulfilled in a secular institution, the state, which can lead mankind to salvation without the Church. Marianne Ott-Meimberg, who has studied the *Rolandslied* in the context of the cult of Charlemagne, remarks on the interests of laymen in the canonization of this emperor, at Frederick Barbarossa's request, by the antipope Paschal III on 29 December 1165:

Der Wunsch, eigene Ansprüche und eigenes — durchaus laikales — Selbstbewußtsein auf diesem Wege selbständig, aber doch im Reflex auf die vorgegebenen kirchlichen Muster und Möglichkeiten von Legitimität, in Vorbild- und Identifikationsfiguren zu manifestieren, war offensichtlich im Adel besonders groß . . . Die Anknüpfung an Karl den Großen, der Versuch, an seiner spezifischen Heiligkeit, an seinem Heil, teilzuhaben, erscheint als Chiffre, als Modell für die Möglichkeit zur Versicherung und Legitimierung von Laienheil — hier eines höchsten, imperialen Anspruchs zwar, aber eben doch laikal im wesentlichen und autark von päpstlich-kanonischen Heiligkeits- und Heilsformen.<sup>10</sup>

Narrative literature in German from the *Ezzolied* to Veldeke is, we have seen, predominantly historical in subject-matter, and this matter, which is presented in accordance with soteriological and eschatological schemata, is derived from sources. Here the vernacular narrative follows the norms that obtain in historical writing in Latin. Historiography is the written reconstruction of the past in and for the present. Knowledge of history is accumulated in a vast archive, the sum of the narratives inherited from the past, and the historian is an archivist, someone who deals in sources, finding and evaluating them, making them speak to his contemporaries. The poetics of historiography consists in engaging the reader in a representation of the past pieced together out of and — a crucial point — guaranteed by sources. Medieval historiographers ranked different types of source according to their reliability: the most trustworthy historical reports were those of eyewitnesses; next came written documents; least reliable was the evidence of hearsay.<sup>11</sup> The preference for eyewitness accounts stemmed from the belief that there was an original connexion between history and vision, a belief that could invoke the authority of Isidore of Seville. In the *Etymologiae* he derives the Latin word *historia* from the Greek *apo tou historein*, meaning 'to see' or 'know', and explains:

Apud veteres nemo conscribebat historiam, nisi is qui interfuisset, et ea quae conscribenda essent vidisset. Melius enim oculis quae fiunt deprehendimus, quam quae auditione colligimus. Quae enim viderentur, sine mendacio proferentur.<sup>12</sup>

According to Isidore, eyewitnesses enjoyed greatest authority because of their temporal priority (the ancient historians observed the events they described at first hand) and also because of the assumed superiority of sight over hearing in general. This second argument, about the comparative reliability of different modes of perception, could also explain why historians preferred written sources to oral ones: taking in something with the eyes, as a reader does, is more accurate than listening.<sup>13</sup> The Isidorean etymology was repeated by later authors, who maintained the belief it implied in an essential connexion between history and eyewitness report.<sup>14</sup>

The attitude of Isidore and later writers to historical sources and their relative authority informs much of the topics of medieval Latin historiography. The overall purpose of such topics — chiefly exordial, but by no means confined to the prefaces of historical writings — is to signal the genre to the reader and to encourage him to interpret the work in the right way; thus, for instance, it is conventional for the historian to declare the past to be a source of useful instruction for the present.<sup>15</sup> Within the general topics of historiography, there is a set of specialized *topoi* that authors use in order to indicate their sources and vouch for their reliability (see Simon, especially part II, pp. 89–94). These *topoi* are more than a description of the historian's way of working, telling us about what sources he used and how; they are also an instrument of poetics, for their purpose is to ensure that the reader will believe what is written. Thus Einhard, in the preface to his life of Charlemagne, presents himself as the most reliable source of all, an eyewitness: 'quando mihi conscius eram nullum ea veracius quam me scribere posse, quibus ipse interfui, quaeque praesens oculata, ut dicunt, fide cognovi'.<sup>16</sup> Here author and source are one, as was the case with the first historians mentioned by Isidore. The same is maintained by the author of an eleventh-century chronicle of the monastery of St-Mihiel near Verdun, a work that is especially interesting because it refers to the entire range of sources, from visual to oral, and organizes and selects its material accordingly. A large part of the chronicle is devoted to the history of the monastery during the author's lifetime; he insists on the veracity of his account of miracles performed there, for he and others witnessed them in person.<sup>17</sup> When it comes to an event that the writer could not have seen himself, the transfer of the relics of St Anatole from Cahors to St-Mihiel, which occurred during the abbacy of Ermengaud in the reign of Charlemagne, the necessary authority is provided by a book kept in the monastery church.<sup>18</sup> For the remote history of the foundation however there are no written sources: 'De abbatibus autem qui loco puerant ante tempora Karoli Magni, nichil scriptum invenimus' (p. 7). In the prologue the author states that the uncertainty surrounding accounts of the monastery's earliest days

has constrained him to be brief in this respect: 'Antiquiora vero a fidelibus viris narrata, vera vel verisimilia idcirco decrevi abbrevianda, quia nullius eorum preter unius, dico autem Zmaragdi, scripto vel visu vel auditu perceperim'.<sup>19</sup> Taken together with author's later reference to the lack of written sources for the pre-Carolingian period, this statement must mean that the writer has seen fit to abbreviate the 'antiquiora a fidelibus viris narrata' because these are unverifiable oral reports; at any rate he concludes his exposition of the monastery's history 'usque a nostra tempora' with the remark 'sola ea quae scripto potius quam relatu colligere potuimus, simpliciter at succincte perstrinximus' (p. 13). The prologue refers to the three ways of ascertaining historical truth: seeing, reading, hearing; the author of this chronicle gives pride of place to recent history, what he can see in other words, and for the earlier periods, where he is obliged to rely on the two other modes of historical cognition, he gives preference to reading, even though this principle means he will be severely restricted in what he can say, given the dearth of written sources. Similarly, Widukind had to rely almost entirely on oral testimony for the earliest history of the Saxons and is careful to introduce a measure of critical distance between himself and this material,<sup>20</sup> while Gozwin evidently felt uneasy about undertaking to write the life of St Albanus on the basis of scanty evidence, for he recounts how he was reassured by his elders that there was no need to scruple 'cum pene hystoria vel chronica magis audita quam visa denarret'.<sup>21</sup> Gozwin's scruples on the one hand and his elders' pragmatism on the other are a microcosm of medieval historiography at large, theoretically distrustful of an oral tradition it nevertheless could not avoid using; on such occasions the practice was often justified by emphasizing the reliability of the witnesses or even by appealing to the example of the evangelists.<sup>22</sup>

Like the Latin historiographers, the authors of vernacular narratives based on historical material mediate between the archive of the past and the audience in the present. Like the Latin historiographers, French and German poets discriminate between seeing, reading, and hearing as pathways to historical truth, deploying the same topics in a poetic strategy in which the reliability of the sources inherited from the past is supposed to guarantee the credibility of the present narrative.<sup>23</sup> Eyewitness evidence is claimed by Benoît de Saint-Maure as the foundation of his *Roman de Troie*. In the prologue he declares that he intends to tell the true story of the Trojan War ('la verité'), not according to Homer who, he says, lived over a hundred years after the event, but as it was chronicled by a certain Dares who, because he was an eyewitness, wrote the historical truth, 'de l'estoire le veir escrit'.<sup>24</sup> From seeing we pass to writing; Benoît goes on to relate how Dares's history was translated from Greek into Latin by Cornelius, a kinsman of Sallust, and that this is the version he has followed (lines 45–144). We thus have a continuous line of descent running from the authoritative original vision, through an unimpeachable written tradition, to Benoît's

narrative. Sight and script are also allied in Herbot von Fritzlar's adaptation of the *Roman de Troie*; like Benoît the German author prefers Dares to Homer because the former 'da mit was gewesen/Ds screip in uñ liz in lesen'.<sup>25</sup> The author of the second redaction of the *Moniage Guillaume*, one of the cycle of *chansons de geste* devoted to the exploits of William of Orange, is rather like the historian of St-Mihiel, for whom the next most reliable source after eyewitness evidence is the written 'libellus' safely stored in the church archives; he reassures his public that 'l'estoire en est el role a Saint Denis'.<sup>26</sup> The Strassburg *Alexander* and the *Rolandslied* similarly place their narratives within the security of a written tradition preserved by clerics; in the prologue to the former work the author, 'pfaße Lamprecht', claims to recount the story 'alse daz buch saget',<sup>27</sup> while in the epilogue to the latter work the writer, a cleric named Konrad, relates how he translated the French book into Latin, and from Latin into German, without adding or omitting anything, thus guaranteeing the integrity of his text within a written tradition.<sup>28</sup> Veldeke's narrative of classical history, the *Eneasroman*, is also presented as the latest link in a chain of writing, which in its own way also runs from Latin through French into German; at the end of the work Heinrich says he read the story he has narrated in a French book, which in turn was based on Virgil's truthful account (lines 13506–15). The *Kaiserchronik* and Wace's *Roman de Brut* are also characterized by a clerical insistence on working from written sources, which they confront with the third mode of learning about the past, hearing. Both of these works narrate a succession of rulers, the Roman kings and popes on the one hand and the kings of Britain on the other, and for both writing is what guarantees the truth of this historiographic and genealogical project: the past has been reconstructed on the basis of what is contained in books, and is vouchsafed to the present in the form of another book. The author of the *Kaiserchronik* (possibly a Regensburg cleric)<sup>29</sup> calls his work a 'buoch' in the prologue and underlines its continuity with Latin historiography by designating it more specifically still as a *cronica*;<sup>30</sup> for him books evidently constitute the only admissible way of reconstructing the past accurately; attacking what is presumably an oral tradition, that Attila and Theoderic were contemporaries, the author maintains that it is reliably attested that Theoderic was born some forty-three years after Attila's death and challenges whoever thinks otherwise to adduce a written source as proof: 'der haize daz buoch vür tragen' (line 14178). In the prologue to the *Roman de Brut* Wace — who describes himself elsewhere as a cleric at the Plantagenet court<sup>31</sup> — signals the historiographic genre by stating the genealogical theme of the work,<sup>32</sup> then reinforces this with a specific archival *topos*: the author is telling the truth, he has translated his narrative from a book (commonly supposed to be Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*).<sup>33</sup> Wace also draws a contrast between the reliability of writing on the one hand and the unreliability of hearing on the other. Narrating the adventures of King Arthur that supposedly took place in

the twelve years of peace following the king's first conquests, Wace adopts a cautious attitude to these reports:

Ne tut mençunge, ne tut veir,  
 Tut folie ne tut saveir.  
 Tant unt li cunteür cunté  
 E li fableür tant flablé  
 Pur le cuntes anbeleter,  
 Que tut unt fait fable sembler. (lines 9793–98)

The important word is *fable*, which in Old French exordial topics is often invoked in order to dismiss rival versions of the story as mendacious; the term is frequently contrasted with *verité* or *estoire*, to which the authors lay claim (see Mölk under 'fable'). In the *Etymologiae* (i.40.1.) Isidore places before his exposition of *historia*, etymologically connected with sight, an explanation of the term *fabula*, etymologically connected with speech: 'Fabulas poetae a fando nominaverunt, quia non sunt res factae, sed tantum loquendo fictae'. Wace's attitude to his material in the *Roman de Brut* thus rests on an implied contrast between writing, truth, and history on the one hand, and hearsay, falsehood, and fable on the other; although he does not go so far as to condemn the stories of Arthur's adventures outright, his skepticism indicates that he certainly fears they may be untrue because they are orally transmitted.<sup>34</sup> William of Malmesbury, commenting on Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace's source, is more forthright: 'Hic est Artur de quo Britonum nugae hodieque delirant; dignus plane quem non fallaces somniarent fabulae, sed veraces praedicarent historiae'.<sup>35</sup> It has been suggested that Wace's comments are a toned-down reproduction of William's stinging criticism.<sup>36</sup>

Behind the topics of source reference and evaluation found in Latin and vernacular writing alike lies an attitude to narration that may be termed 'archival'. This attitude involves more than the authors' willingness to tell only the stories that are stored in and whose authenticity is assured by the archive of sources, whether these are eyewitness reports, written evidence or mere hearsay. It involves the belief that what can be told, together with its meaning, is a fixed quantity, determined in advance by God, who has planned the course of human history from beginning to end. As Max Wehrli has put it: 'Die Zeit ist geschaffen, endlich, sozusagen räumlich überblickbar'.<sup>37</sup> Time is like an archive, an enclosed space where all the events that have happened or will happen are stored and catalogued according to a system of God's devising. Narrative, which is a representation of time, is therefore not a matter of open-ended speculation, but a retrieval of the contents of this archive and a demonstration of its finite order. Source references and allusions to soteriological schemata are the hallmarks of archival narratives; the former establish that the narrative's content is being called up from the archive, the latter assign to the individual events their proper place in the divine architectonics of history.



The archival orientation of vernacular narrative in the eleventh and twelfth centuries is a reflexion of the inclinations and attitudes of the authors on the one hand, and of the interests of the audience on the other. Increasingly scholarship has come to lay emphasis on the important role played by clerical authors in the emergence of a written court literature during this period.<sup>38</sup> The medieval Latin designation *clericus* was not restricted to men in holy orders, but could refer to anyone, even laymen, who had been educated in a Church school; it is not surprising therefore that *clerici* should have been writing literature at the court, as well as in the cloister. The authors of the *Alexanderlied* (line 4) and the *Rolandlied* (line 9079) style themselves 'pfaffe', and Herbort von Fritzlar calls himself a 'gelarter schulere' (*Liet von Troye*, line 18451); in the case of authors who are not as explicit about their status, but who, like Veldeke or the anonymous compiler of the *Kaiserchronik*, reveal that they are competent in the written medium and work from written, especially Latin, sources, it may be assumed that they too are *clerici* and *litterati*.<sup>39</sup> The similarities that we noted between the archival topics of vernacular literature on the one hand and Latin historiography on the other may thus be accounted for by the common educational background of Latin and vernacular writers. The bookish approach of these authors, their respect for authority and tradition enshrined in writing, is part of the archival mentality. For these clerkly writers the material world does not constitute an open field of investigation about which new information may be discovered by a process of experimental inquiry; on the contrary, the world is made up of a finite set of truths to be retrieved from authoritative books.<sup>40</sup>

The historiographic orientation of German narrative in the eleventh and twelfth centuries can be explained only in part by the mentality and educational background of its authors, important though this is. Doubtless clerics carried over into the vernacular the bookish attitudes and methods they had acquired in the Latin schools. But this still begs the question of why they should have done so at all. A satisfactory answer can be given only if one assumes that the authors' obsession with the past was matched by an interest in history on the 'reception side', among the lay nobles whose involvement in literary life, as a public and also as patrons, was steadily growing. Attempts to explain the rise of a vernacular historiographic tradition exclusively from the 'production side' ring somewhat hollow: a tradition so persistent and so widespread cannot be put down to inveterate clerical habit alone, nor is it in my view sufficient to argue that rigoristic condemnation of profane letters led authors to prefer the *res factae* of history to the *res fictae* of poetry, for one imagines that those who took seriously the Church's dictum 'Prohibetur Christianus legere figmenta poetarum' would not have been prominent among the audience for profane literature in the vernacular.<sup>41</sup> The point I want to make is, then, that the audience too must be considered as carriers of the archival mentality expressed in the literature they read or listened to.

My argument that any explanation of the rise of a historiographic narrative tradition in the vernacular needs to take into account not only the clerical training of the authors, but also the interests of the laymen or *illiterati* who constituted the audience for this kind of literature brings us back to a point that was made earlier, in a different context. I suggested that the change in emphasis from *historia salutis* to *historia mundana* reflected an increasing cultural self-awareness among laymen, who were becoming interested in hearing how the history of their world and their institutions fitted into the divine scheme, who desired in other words to hear about the role they played as subjects in the historical process. I also suggested that this change in emphasis was perhaps not adequately described as a teleological progress from theological tutelage to fictional freedom, but that it was more appropriate to think of it as a process in which the laity came to take possession of the history that had previously been the exclusive domain of the clerics (see above, pp. 17–20). In order to develop this point I wish to focus on one work where the author's clerkly mentality and the patron's fascination with history coincide.

In the epilogue to the *Rolandslied* the author, who identifies himself as 'phaffe Chunrat' and describes how he translated the work from French into Latin, and thence into German, names as the instigators of this work of translation 'der herzog Hainrich' and 'di edele herzoginne,/aines richen chûniges barn' (lines 9016–25, 9079–83). It is now generally accepted that the reference is to Heinrich der Löwe, Duke of Saxony, and his wife Matilda, daughter of Henry II of England, and that the *Rolandslied* was written around 1170.<sup>42</sup> All the art patronized by Heinrich — literature, painting, architecture — has as its hallmark an archaistic imperial style. It testifies to his regal and imperial pretensions, and the retrospective style reveals how he stabilized his self-image, and made it cohere, by constantly embedding it in history, tradition, and lineage. Thus, whenever Heinrich is named as the benefactor of a work he is presented as the descendant and kinsman of kings and emperors, as in the Helmarshausen Gospel, commissioned by him for the cathedral of St Blasius at Brunswick, the illustrations of which hark back to the imperial style of late Ottonian book-painting, while the cathedral itself is consciously modelled on that at Goslar, built by emperor Heinrich III.<sup>43</sup> In Heinrich der Löwe we have an outstanding example of a lay prince who seeks to exploit history in order to shore up his self-understanding and the legitimacy of his rule in the present. At a time when the idea of the *sacrum imperium* was being spread by Hohenstaufen propaganda, Heinrich was also seeking to be represented as a leading actor on the stage of universal history, depicting himself as direct continuator of an imperial tradition of self-representation. This is a patron with a desire for history, a salient case of a layman who wanted access to the Latin scholarship of the *clerici*, so much so that it is reported of him that he had works of history collected, written down, and read to him.<sup>44</sup>

The *Rolandslied* presents an idealized view of the empire as the earthly institution through which the divine will is realized. The function of the empire is the defence and propagation of Christianity, a task set it by God, and it is the emperor, Charlemagne, who occupies the key position of intermediary between God and men: God sends an angel to Charlemagne, instructing him to fight the infidel in Spain, Charlemagne passes the message on to the paladins, who in turn gather their troops (53–176).<sup>45</sup> In the epilogue (9039–45) Konrad identifies Heinrich with Charlemagne by comparing him with David, the prototype of the Christian ruler: nobody may be more fittingly likened to David than Duke Heinrich, to whom God has granted success in defeating his enemies, honouring Christendom and converting pagans (the allusion is probably to his campaigns against the Slavs). Heinrich's success as a defender of the faith makes him like David, and also, therefore, like Charlemagne, to whom the by-name David was regularly given.<sup>46</sup> Heinrich is thus represented as the direct continuator of the imperial office; he is praised as a just and God-fearing ruler in words echoing David's resolutions in Psalm 101 (9050–65; cf. Bertau, pp. 11–12). Even the commissioning of the *Rolandslied* is depicted as though it were an imperial gesture, intended for the good of the realm: 'da ist daz riche wol mit geret' (9034). Konrad brings the epilogue to a close with a request for prayers for his patron and for the souls of all believers (9086–90), which is derived from a similar prayer in the *Kaiserchronik* (lines 17165–69), for the soul of emperor Lothar, Heinrich's grandfather.

We see then that the representation of imperial history in the *Rolandslied* serves its patron's attempts at self-definition as a Christian ruler in the present.<sup>47</sup> But this is complicated by the fact that in addition to the network of references identifying Heinrich with Charlemagne and David there are also allusions that connect him not with the emperor, but with his foremost liegeman, Roland. Heinrich's emblem, the lion, is also featured on Roland's shield (3986), and Roland's sword, Durndart, is said to contain, among other holy relics, those of St Blasius (6875). This detail, which is not in the *Chanson de Roland*,<sup>48</sup> must have been added by Konrad deliberately, for St Blasius was Heinrich's patron saint; the Cathedral at Brunswick is dedicated to him, as is the church at Heinrich's palace in Dankwarderode, and in the Helmarshausen Gospel Heinrich is depicted handing the book over to the saint. In 1173, moreover, Heinrich presented the cathedral with several relics of St Blasius. Roland is therefore identified with Heinrich by being protected by the same saint. There is, then, an ambivalence in the *Rolandslied*, for its patron is identified with both the emperor and his vassal. In this connexion the fate of Roland's sword, Durndart, becomes interesting. It does not remain with Roland, but circulates throughout the entire hierarchy of the empire: an angel brings it from God to Charlemagne, with the instruction that he should hand it on to Roland; when he dies, the sword returns to Charlemagne, who hands it to another vassal 'in Rölantes stat' (6863–69;

7767–70). Just as Durndart circulates between emperor and liegeman, so Heinrich, associated with the sword through the allusion to the Blasius relics, is a ‘free floater’ in the political order, identified now with the ruler, now with the vassal.

This ambivalent status reflects the real position of the territorial princes in Germany, of whom Heinrich was among the foremost: technically vassals of the king, they increasingly consolidated their own territorial rule at the expense of the monarchy, and in their exercise of power came to resemble kings themselves. It could be said, with Vollmann-Profe (*Wiederbeginn volkssprachiger Schriftlichkeit*, pp. 135–36), that the *Rolandslied* addresses itself to this political reality. For her the intention of the work is not to establish any claim of Heinrich’s to be emperor in place of Barbarossa; rather its message is that the exercise of temporal sovereignty is not exclusively the right of the monarch, but may also be devolved to the princes (and here it is relevant to note that the *Rolandslied* consistently depicts Charlemagne as an emperor who seeks his princes’ advice and rules with their consent and co-operation). Accordingly the identification of Heinrich with rulers such as Charlemagne and David, far from insinuating that the duke ought to be emperor, serves to establish his kingly qualification and thus his fitness to wield the temporal sword, while the emphasis on his concern for the honour of the empire, his motive for commissioning Konrad to translate the *Rolandslied*, is intended as a reassurance that he will wield that sword not out of self-interest, but for the higher good of the state. One could pursue Vollmann-Profe’s line of argument further and interpret the association of Heinrich with Roland as yet another reassurance that with the power he legitimately wields the duke wishes to serve the state, not supplant its head. Ott-Meimberg on the other hand is cautious about identifying the message of the *Rolandslied* so closely with the political ambitions of its patron. She reads the work on a more general level, as the expression of the aspirations of an entire princely-artistocratic class, whose number would naturally include Duke Heinrich (*Kreuzzugsepos*, pp. 261–75). For her the central message of the *Rolandslied* is the sanctification of the state, ‘daz riche’, understood not as an abstract concept, but in personal terms, as the collective of nobles who direct the affairs of state (see especially p. 272). The work is a celebration of princely confidence in their role in carrying out the divine will and bringing mankind closer to salvation by propagating and defending the faith, independently of the church, through their own secular institution, the state. According to this reading, the *Rolandslied* would still be an articulation of Heinrich’s personal ambitions, but only because these are in any case a particular instance of the interests of an entire class of laymen, to whose sense of self as agents in the historical process this work of clerical authorship gives powerful expression.

It does not fall within the scope of this survey of archival narratives to reconcile differences over the interpretation of the *Rolandslied*. But whether one

identifies its message with the personal ambitions of Heinrich der Löwe, or more generally with the political ideology of the class of princes to which he belongs,<sup>49</sup> the most important point for us to register is that in the *Rolandslied* we have evidence of how the author's clerical conception of history and the aspirations of a lay public coincided in an interest in the past as the guarantor of aristocratic legitimacy in the present. Konrad's clerical training, which he emphasizes in his description of his activity as translator, allows him access to the stories contained in the archive of history, and his technical competence, thus established, in reading, narrating, and interpreting history is matched on the reception side by a desire on the part of the lay patron and public to see themselves represented as actors in that history. The *Rolandslied* shows them how God's plan is realized in the institution of the 'riche', which they constitute. In other words, it assures them of their special place in the archive of the divine order. The *Rolandslied* indicates therefore that the mentality associated with archival narratives was alive in lay aristocratic circles in Germany around 1170, at a time when Hartmann von Aue was importing something radically different onto the literary scene.

#### EXPERIMENTAL NARRATIVES

Mîn her Hartman von Ouwe,  
vrou Ginôvêr, iuwer vrouwe,  
und iuwer herre, der kûnec Artûs,  
den kumt ein mîn gast ze hûs.

With these words Wolfram announces the arrival of Parzival at the court of King Arthur.<sup>50</sup> His identification of the Arthurian world with Hartmann von Aue is a reminder that it was this author that introduced the Arthurian romance into Germany, first with *Erec* (c. 1185) and then *Iwein* (c. 1200), both of them adaptations of romances by Chrétien de Troyes.

The Arthurian romance, inaugurated by Chrétien in France and brought by Hartmann to Germany, represents a departure from the tradition of archival narrative whose outlines we have been tracing. It is a world of adventure and fairy-tale, removed from history, not readily locatable in real time and space, inassimilable to the universalizing schemata of the four kingdoms and the six ages.<sup>51</sup> The literary evolution of the *matière de Bretagne* is characterized by a process of dehistoricization, in the course of which an initial concentration on the figure of the king as historical, national hero gives way to an interest in the fictional adventures of the knights of the Round Table.<sup>52</sup> The first written manifestations of the legend of King Arthur represent him as a British king who ruled at the time of the Saxon invasions in the early sixth century. In this guise he appears in literature from the *Historia Britonum* in the ninth century to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and Wace's translation of that influential work,

the *Geste des Bretons*, or *Roman de Brut*, in the twelfth.<sup>53</sup> In the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, written around 1135–38, Arthur is integrated into a line of British kings supposedly beginning with Brutus, grandson of Aeneas, and ending with Cadwallader, who is said to have died in 689 (the date of Arthur's own death is given as 542).<sup>54</sup> Geoffrey synchronizes his history of the British kings with events in world history, from the fall of Troy to the arrival of Augustine in Britain in 689. Although these cross-references are principally to kings and judges of the Old Testament and Roman emperors, leading figures in *historia mundana* in other words, Geoffrey also makes connexions with important stations in *historia salutis*: the prophecies of Isaiah, the birth of Christ, the spread of the Christian faith by missionaries sent from Rome (II, 15; IV, 11, 19; XI, 12). Arthur is thus given his historical place, not only in the lineage of the kings of Britain, but also in the soteriological scheme of universal history. It is with Chrétien that the decisive turn from history is made. In his Arthurian romances the Arthur of historical tradition, the heroic *dux bellorum*, is relegated to the background, where he is a passive and pacific figure, a *primus inter pares* among the knights of the Round Table, whose deeds, unreported by Geoffrey and by Wace, provide the narrative with its focus.<sup>55</sup> It is precisely these deeds that Wace — who introduced the idea of the Round Table — scrupled to recount (see above, p. 24). The 'fables', 'merveilles' and 'aventures' of Arthur are, however, the starting-point for Chrétien. With him Arthurian narrative is removed from the archive of history and opened up to adventure and experiment.

Archival narratives are characterized by their preference for historical subjects and the belief that all history fits into and confirms a universal pattern determined from the outset by God. Theirs is a poetics of boundedness: the stories that can be told are limited to the ones safely stored in the archive of sources, and the meaning of these stories is arrived at through their integration into a closed schema of interpretation. Archival narrative is therefore a question of deriving the subject-matter together with its significance from a fixed store of knowledge. With the Arthurian romance, by contrast, meaning is not locked up in an archive, waiting to be recalled by the authors and their public; it is what is created in the course of narration itself, which accordingly takes on an open-ended, experimental quality. This has been convincingly demonstrated by Haug, whose account of the poetics of Arthurian romance forms the basis of what follows (*Literaturtheorie*, pp. 91–130).

The Arthurian romance, in the form created by Chrétien, typically narrates the encounters between a knightly hero and an other: women with whom he falls in love, adversaries, and obstacles, often inhuman and magical, which he must overcome in combat. Love and deeds of arms are constitutive of the knight's mode of existence. His encounters in both of these spheres are not narrated in a random, purely additive fashion, but organized into a structure, which gives them shape and reveals their sense as the story unfolds. A significant

design is perceptible in both the spatial and the temporal arrangement of the narrative, and the features of this design are alternation, cycle, and repetition. The action alternates between two scenes, the court and the outside world. The court, the point of departure and return for the hero, is the domain where love and chivalry are made into social values through the institutions of marriage, the Round Table and kingship. The public ceremonies and festivities, the seemingly ceaseless round of weddings, coronations, tournaments, and entertainments in which courtly life consists, underline the fact that the knight lives out his erotic and aggressive drives within the representative forms of an ideal social order. By contrast, the world outside the court, typically an enchanted forest, where the hero's encounters with the other take place, is markedly anti-social. It is a realm where erotic and martial energies dominate as absolute ends in themselves, as demonic and destructive forces. In *Erec et Enide*, for instance, the forest through which the hero rides is populated by violent predators: the robbers who threaten his life, the giants who torture the knight they hold captive, the counts who desire Enide and are prepared to use force to obtain her. The spatial design of the romance, with its alternation between court and other world, social and anti-social space, brings home to the reader the ambivalence of eros and aggression, allowing him or her to experience these drives as now civilizational, now destructive. The other world functions as a sort of primal scene of civilization, where play the elemental forces that are sublimated in the institutions and representations of the courtly order. The narrative is set in train when the stability of this order is imperilled by the forces of the other world, by a return of the repressed, as it were, which prompts the hero to leave the court and confront the threat. This brings us to the second feature of romance structure. The spatial alternation is projected along a temporal axis by the knight's passage from court to other world and back in a cycle of departure, adventure, and return. In his adventures the knight defeats the anti-social forces of the other world and acquires a wife, increased honour at the court, and sovereignty. Erec marries Enide and at the end of the story succeeds his father as king of Estre-Gales, Yvain marries Laudine and becomes lord of her realm, Perceval marries Blanche-flor and (to go by Wolfram) eventually becomes Grail king. The sense that unfolds with the cycle is one of how victories over the other world accumulate as cultural capital; it might be said that the Arthurian romance is a fictional account of the process of civilization. The fiction is enacted on two levels, the social and the individual. This double aspect is introduced into the texture of the narrative by the third design feature, repetition. The romance usually contains two cycles of departure, adventure, and return, so that the narrative repeats itself. It is not a question of telling the same story twice, but of a structural repetition that allows one to recognize significant changes of accent from one cycle to the next. In the first cycle, the impetus to adventure comes from without, when the courtly order is unsettled by a representative of the

other world. At the beginning of *Erec et Enide* an act of aggression, when Yder's dwarf strikes one of Guinevere's ladies-in-waiting, impels the hero to leave the court in order to make up for the shame he incurs in not avenging this slight on the spot, for he is unarmed.<sup>56</sup> In *Yvain* the hero sets off after hearing how another knight of the Round Table, his cousin Calogrenant, was defeated in combat by the guardian of a magical fountain; Yvain's expressed motive is to avenge his kinsman's shame.<sup>57</sup> The second cycle, by contrast to the first, is set in motion by an inner crisis, with no provocation from outside. The hero lapses into anti-social behaviour, as when Erec's obsessive love for Enide causes him to neglect chivalry and damages his courtly honour,<sup>58</sup> or when Yvain's addiction to tournaments brings shame upon him because he forgets his wife Laudine.<sup>59</sup> Love and the impulse to knightly action have become compulsive, absolute demands, as they are in the other world. It is as though its anarchic forces have come to dwell within the knight. If the first cycle is external, concerned with injuries that are inflicted on the courtly world from outside its domain, in the second cycle the threat has been internalized, for this time the problems — again involving loss of honour — arise out of the behavioural dysfunctions of one of the court's leading representatives. If the first cycle is about civilization, the second is about socialization, the enactment of the civilizing process in the individual.<sup>60</sup>

The structural design of Arthurian romance is what makes it possible to trace a meaning in the narrative. Its function is thus analogous to the soteriological schemata such as the four kingdoms or the *aetates mundi* in historiographic literature. Unlike them, however, it was a literary construction from the outset, created with the genre of romance.<sup>61</sup> In the prologue to *Erec et Enide* Chrétien introduces himself to his public as the author who 'tret d'un conte d'avanture/ une molt bele conjointure' (13–14). A few lines later he accuses professional storytellers ('cil qui de conter vivre vuelent') of garbling and corrupting ('depecier et corronpre') the tale of Erec (21–22). The term 'conjointure' has been much discussed, but whatever its origins or appropriate translation, the context makes clear that it refers to the putting together of the narrative in a coherent whole, a process in other words of drawing structure and significance out of the disorder and confusion of the raw material.<sup>62</sup> To the shapeless narration of his predecessors and rivals Chrétien opposes an ordered design, which he presents as a distinctive achievement of his; the prologue concludes with the boast that *his* telling of the story of Erec will last to the end of Christendom (23–26).<sup>63</sup> The poetics of the 'conjointure' marks a complete break with archival poetics, just as the incorporation of the *matière de Bretagne* into the narrative tradition meant a turn away from historical themes. In archival and historiographic narratives the seat of meaning is located outside the text, in a transcendental schema, and in other texts, the sources that guarantee the present book's integrity. In romance significance is produced out of the text's internal



resources, by the progressive unfolding of the narrative structure with its alternations, cycles, repetitions.<sup>64</sup> Without a transcendental frame, these textual operations enter the foreground; the aesthetic experience of them becomes the indispensable precondition for the apperception of meaning. Because it is dependent on the progressive experience of the text, meaning itself becomes a process; it is not something already known that can be pointed to, as when an event is assigned its place in the providential order of human history, but something that has to be created out of the experience of literature. The poetics of the Arthurian romance is experimental, in the sense that it requires a 'going through' the text in order to trace a significance that is not already given.<sup>65</sup>

In accordance with the new experimental poetics, the Arthurian romances of Chrétien largely dispense with the apparatus of source references, the archival topics, that we found in historiographic literature.<sup>66</sup> In neither *Yvain* nor the *Chevalier de la Charrete* does Chrétien allude to a written source,<sup>67</sup> and the same is true of *Erec et Enide*, if one disregards the one passage where the author states that he has taken his description of the robe worn by Erec on his coronation from Macrobius.<sup>68</sup> This reference cannot however underpin the whole story, only the truth of the appearance of Erec's robe which, embroidered with the figures of the quadrivium, constitutes the most clerkly passage in the romance.<sup>69</sup> The lack of references to written sources presumably reflects the fact that Chrétien was reworking stories that circulated in oral tradition, putting them into writing for the first time.<sup>70</sup> The existence of such a tradition outside the 'historical' treatment of Arthur by Geoffrey and Wace is suggested by Wace's own comments about the fabulous tales told by 'conteür' and 'fableür' as well as by Chrétien's own disparaging remarks about other storytellers in the prologue to *Erec et Enide*.<sup>71</sup> However, the two other romances (disregarding *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, which may not be by Chrétien) do purport to have written sources. In the prologue to *Cligès* Chrétien claims that the story is contained in a book in the library of the cathedral of St-Pierre at Beauvais, and this guarantees its truth,<sup>72</sup> while the prologue to *Perceval* states that the source of the Grail story is a book obtained for the author by his patron, Count Philip of Flanders.<sup>73</sup> Neither of these books has been successfully identified,<sup>74</sup> but this question is of less interest to us than the fact there should be some romances by Chrétien that claim to have a basis in written sources and others that do not. Both *Cligès* and *Perceval* stand apart from the other romances as more clerkly in their themes. The story of Cligès and Alexander, emperors of Constantinople, is located in the identifiably historical and imperial world of Greece and Germany and therefore has an affinity with the *roman antique*; the quest of the Grail, with its Christian symbolism and messianic overtones, points towards transcendent truths of religion. It seems then that for narratives that move within the traditionally clerical domains of history and religion, Chrétien is prepared to continue the convention of guaranteeing their truth by archival

means; the absence of book-references from the other romances indicates that these fall outside the purview of the archive.<sup>75</sup>

Hartmann certainly understood the principles of experimental poetics, for both *Erec* and *Iwein* preserve Chrétien's 'conjointure', tightening it up even,<sup>76</sup> and in the prologue to *Iwein* he makes what Haug describes as a programmatic declaration of allegiance to the new poetics (*Literaturtheorie*, pp. 118–26). There he states that he would not want to live at the time of Arthur and the Round Table if it meant having to forego the stories that are told about them nowadays.<sup>77</sup> Literature is superior to history. It therefore seems at first sight anomalous that Hartmann should include archival references in both of his romances, when neither of the French models contains any such reference. In *Iwein* he introduces himself in the prologue as 'ein rîter, der gelêret was/unde ez an den buochen las . . . der tihte diz maere' (21–30), and in *Erec* the narration is interspersed with assurances of the type 'als ich ez (an sînem buoche) las', 'ob uns daz buoch niht liuget'.<sup>78</sup> The difference between Chrétien and Hartmann in this respect reflects not a process of 're-archivalization', however, but the fact that the German author does have a written source for his Arthurian romances, for Chrétien has put oral tradition into writing (Green, 'Oral Poetry', p. 208).

Hans Robert Jauss has spoken of a rediscovery of fiction in the twelfth century, a development that for him embraces the vernacular romance as well as the Latin cosmographic epics of Bernard Silvestris and Alan of Lille, and in which he discerns the repetition of certain poetic principles that characterized fiction when it was discovered for the first time by the Greeks.<sup>79</sup> In the new, experimental poetics of romance Haug also sees a rediscovery of fiction (*Literaturtheorie*, pp. 91, 105), but unlike Jauss, he insists on the fundamental difference between this medieval, vernacular species of fiction and other modes of imaginative writing, both classical Greek and medieval Latin. The difference between the poetics of romance and classical theories of fiction turns on the concept of verisimilitude. According to Aristotle's famous distinction, historiography is factual, chronicling what actually happened, while poetry is fictitious yet verisimilar, recounting what might have happened, in accordance with the principles of likelihood (*to eikos*) and necessity (*to anankaion*). The truth of history is limited and particular, whereas poetic representation can transcend the contingencies of time and space to arrive at a universal validity; fiction is thus superior to reality.<sup>80</sup> For Haug, the Aristotelian principle of verisimilitude is irrelevant to the poetics of medieval romance because — quite apart from the fact that the *Poetics* was hardly known in the Middle Ages — the medieval genre depends on the exploitation of the fantastic and non-verisimilar in order to produce a meaning.<sup>81</sup> Aristotle (*Poetics*, 1451b, 1461b), associates *poiësis* very closely with philosophy and exemplarity: the universality of fiction makes it more philosophical and serious (*philosophôteron kai spoudaioteron*) than history, and the credible representation of the improbable is said to be preferable to what

is probable but incredible, because it is capable of expressing an exemplary ideal (*paradeigma*). The notion that fictional representation is readable in moral or philosophical terms reappears in certain theories of *fabula* from late antiquity onwards; for Haug it is the inapplicability of these theories to the romance that constitutes the second of his dividing lines, that between vernacular and Latin varieties of fiction in the Middle Ages. In late classical times Isidore, Priscian, and Macrobius all describe *fabula* as *fictio* that can nevertheless have a true meaning. Priscian is the most radical, defining fable as ‘*oratio ficta verisimili dispositione imaginem exhibens veritatis*’;<sup>82</sup> Isidore and Macrobius recognize truth only in certain species of the genre, the former in those fables that can be interpreted ‘*ad naturam rerum*’ or ‘*ad mores hominum*’,<sup>83</sup> the latter in the divine myths of Hesiod and Orpheus and the mystical ideas of the Pythagoreans, which he calls *narratio fabulosa* in order to distinguish them from the completely mendacious *fabula*.<sup>84</sup> In the twelfth century this philosophically ennobled concept of *narratio fabulosa* was taken up by Bernard Silvestris and re-named *integumentum*. In his commentary on Martianus Capella he distinguishes between that term and *allegoria*: the latter is a historical narrative containing a true meaning different from the outward appearance, the former is a fictitious narrative that encloses a true meaning (‘*sub fabulosa narratione verum claudens intellectum*’).<sup>85</sup> The integumental theory found practical application in Bernard’s commentary on the *Aeneid*, which he reads as a veiled philosophical message about the nature of human life,<sup>86</sup> and in his own and Alan of Lille’s Neo-Platonist epics, the *Cosmographia*, the *Anticlaudianus*, and the *De Planctu Naturae*.<sup>87</sup>

Basic to all of these theories and practices of fable and integument is the idea that the exterior, invented narrative contains a kernel of truth, a *sensus moralis* or *philosophica veritas*, which is uncovered by exegesis (Alan of Lille speaks of the ‘*dulcior nucleus veritatis*’ concealed beneath the surface of falsehood).<sup>88</sup> It has been suggested that the romance — whose rise is roughly contemporary with the philosophical epics of the school of Chartres — is also amenable to moral or philosophical interpretation.<sup>89</sup> Support for such a view comes from two sources. On the one hand there are statements by the authors themselves that appear to invite a moral exegesis of the romance, as when, for instance, Hartmann mentions the *lêre* to be derived from the example of King Arthur (*Iwein*, line 4); on the other hand there is the early thirteenth-century testimony of Thomasin von Zerklære who, conceding the didactic usefulness of otherwise mendacious adventures, explains their truth-value by means of a vestimentary metaphor which could be taken to imply that romances are constructed as *integumenta*.<sup>90</sup> Against the temptation to assimilate romance to the theoretical tradition of integument and fable Haug argues that a careful, contextual reading of authorial statements reveals not an unequivocal commitment to a didactic programme, moral or philosophical, but rather an attempt to express the new

poetics of the romance through the inherited terminology of Latin theory; he also argues that Thomasin von Zerklære's position is a reductive misrepresentation or misunderstanding of the new poetics; and most important of all, he argues that romances are not open to moral or integumental exegesis because their significance cannot be reduced to didactic maxims or philosophical dogma.<sup>91</sup> The meaning of episodes such as Erec's combat with Mabonagrain (the adventure of the 'Joie de la Court') or Yvain's madness is not concealed underneath the fictional surface, waiting to be discovered and restated as a moral truth; it can only be intuited through an appreciation of the place these events have in the narrative cycle, of the parallels and contrasts between them and certain earlier scenes they repeat. Such an intuition arises out of the reader's experience of the romance's structural design.<sup>92</sup> In other words, experience of the literary medium is an indispensable and irreducible constituent of meaning. By contrast, in the *integumentum* fiction is negated at the moment of exegetical revelation: once the truth has been arrived at, the wraps that veiled it can be discarded, and aesthetics is dislodged by epistemology.

I would like to conclude this section with a few remarks on the sociological background to the Arthurian romance. In the discussion of archival narratives I suggested that vernacular epics with *historia mundana* as their theme reflected the clerkly mentality of the authors on the one hand and the interests of the aristocratic patrons on the other (see above, pp. 26–29). The question therefore arises whether the romance, whose representation of the profane world dispenses with history and eschatology, is the product of a different configuration of interests. So far as we can tell, the sociology of authorship and patronship is the same for the first romances as it was for archival narratives. Chrétien presents himself in the prologue to *Cligès* as a *homo litteratus*, the heir to the knowledge of the ancients, whose 'chevalerie' and 'clergie' now reside and flourish in France;<sup>93</sup> Hartmann describes himself as 'ein rîter, der gelêret was', as a *miles* and *clericus* in other words, a combination that is not so odd if one supposes that he might have been destined for ecclesiastical office but, for whatever reason, returned to the lay estate.<sup>94</sup> Marie de France, Countess of Champagne and daughter of Louis VII, and Philip, Count of Flanders are named as the patrons of *Lancelot* and *Perceval* respectively;<sup>95</sup> for Hartmann we have no information, but there is much to be said for the view that his patron is to be sought among the dukes of Zähringen.<sup>96</sup> The theory has been advanced that the romance nevertheless also reflects the interests of laymen lower down the social scale than the aristocratic grandees who commissioned works of this genre. For France, Erich Köhler has argued that Chrétien's romances represent what is, from the point of view of the high aristocracy, an ideal feudal order, one with a weak monarchy, but that these aristocrats also sought to accommodate the lesser nobility by involving them in a vision of chivalry that transcended all distinctions of rank;<sup>97</sup> for Germany, Gerd Kaiser has attempted to show that

Hartmann adapted Chrétien from the perspective of the *ministeriales*, for instance emphasizing Erec's service as a knight at the expense of his monarchic functions, in order to facilitate that group's identification with the hero.<sup>98</sup> The difficulty with these hypotheses is that we know very little about the sociological composition of the audiences for vernacular literature. Bumke's researches on the court of Hermann of Thuringia suggest that only a fairly small and exclusive circle of people, perhaps no more than twenty to twenty-five in number, was intimately involved in literary life at the court: the patron and his family, court clerics, important functionaries and their wives, and certain other noblemen who were the lord's closest advisers. The participation of other social groups would have been intermittent, for they would have augmented the regular audience for courtly literature only on special festive occasions, and would therefore have had little chance of hearing a long narrative work in its entirety (*Höfische Kultur*, pp. 702–04). If this pattern is typical of other courts, then one may have to conclude that the involvement of minor nobles and *ministeriales* in courtly romance was marginal.

#### GOTTFRIED VON STRASSBURG: *POETA* OR *HISTORIOGRAPHUS*?

Vernacular narrative before Gottfried contains two tendencies: the one, archival, deals in a fixed form of truth that can stand independently of the experience of its textual representation; the other, experimental, creates a meaning out of the aesthetic experience of a text's internal structure. The question is: with which of these tendencies are we to identify Gottfried's poetics? Haug assigns *Tristan* to the experimental mode, though he acknowledges that this work does not possess the structure typical of the Arthurian romances of Hartmann and Chrétien (*Literaturtheorie*, pp. 191, 193, 207, 213). Nevertheless Gottfried's eucharistic analogy in the prologue and his discussion in the literary excursus of the relationship between words and meaning are said by Haug to represent Gottfried's attempt to describe the poetics of an autonomous literary language whose meaning is realized in the process of its reception (pp. 210–11, 214–16). Moreover, the missing structure of Arthurian romance finds its functionally identical counterpart in Gottfried's use of repetition and figural associations to encourage the experimental construction of a meaning through the aesthetic experience of parallels and divergences (pp. 217–21). Sawicki, by contrast, emphasizes the archival topics in Gottfried's prologue and insists that the author wished to be considered as a *historiographus* rather than a *poeta*.<sup>99</sup> His position is shared by Boesch, Knapp, and Huber.<sup>100</sup>

Any new inquiry into Gottfried's poetics — such as the present study — must take into account the existence of these opposed positions. If in the following chapters I do not set about trying to disprove the one side or the other, this is because I think that the very fact that scholarship has been able to support

mutually contradictory conclusions may be an indication that Gottfried's literary technique is more complex than the argumentative structure of 'either *historiographus* or *poeta*' can reveal. On the one hand there is the Gottfried who refuses to include everything that has been narrated about Tristan's exploits in exile, declaring:

die fabelen, die hier under sint,  
die sol ich werfen an den wint:  
mir ist doch mit der warheit  
ein michel arbeit uf geleit (18463–66).

This reads like an archivist's rejection of *res fictae* or *fabulae* in favour of the *res factae* or *historia* preserved in reliable sources. On the other hand, however, there is the narrator who is prepared to argue that the duel between Morold and Tristan was a battle of armies, 'swie ich doch daz nie gelas/an Tristandes maere' (6874–75). Here, the narrative leaves the archive behind and becomes experimental.<sup>101</sup>

The hypothesis from which I shall be working in the following chapters is that Gottfried's narrative poetics involves taking material he considered archival and treating it in an experimental way. From a story whose foundations are perceived and presented as history he derives meanings that, in the final analysis, are generated in the interplay of the textual and empirical experience of his readers and listeners. In this experiment with the material, history, what is found in the archive, is not effaced; it is the precondition for experiment.

The plausibility of this hypothesis is suggested in the first place by what Haug says about the different positions in which Gottfried and Chrétien found themselves with regard to the matter of their romances: 'Gottfried sieht sich nicht wie Chrétien beim "Erec" einer mündlichen Überlieferung konfrontiert, die er erst auf die schriftliche Stufe heben und dabei über eine strukturelle Konzeption mit Sinn erfüllen müßte. Er kann sich vielmehr in eine schon etablierte schriftliterarische Tradition stellen' (*Literaturtheorie*, p. 207). As Gottfried acknowledges in his prologue, there already exist written versions of the story of Tristan and Isolde, among them the romance of Thomas (131–54); his position is therefore comparable to that of the historian, working from written sources he has taken from the archive. His obligation to these sources will naturally impose constraints on any experimentation with his material he may wish to undertake. The idea that Gottfried's poetics in some way weds archival and experimental principles of narration also gains in plausibility when one considers the direction taken by the romance in the thirteenth century after Gottfried. There, fictional characters and scenarios are combined with historical and eschatological references: Konrad Fleck makes Flore and Blanscheflur into the grandparents of Charlemagne;<sup>102</sup> Albrecht, author of the *Jüngerer Titurel*, traces the grail dynasty back to ancient Troy and Rome, and identifies the grail itself with the vessel used by Christ at the Last Supper;<sup>103</sup> Rudolf von Ems sets

the story of *Der guote Gerhart* in the Holy Roman Empire under the reign of Otto and the kingdom of England under William.<sup>104</sup> It is important to distinguish the different ways in which history and fiction are combined in these and other texts; in some a fictional narrative is implanted in history,<sup>105</sup> in others an archivally secured *fundamentum historiae* is poeticized.<sup>106</sup> But what matters for us is the general point that in the years after Gottfried the vernacular narrative attempted to accommodate the two tendencies of archive and experiment, for this gives us encouragement to seek the same accommodation in the work of an author who, for several of these narrative poets of the thirteenth century, was a revered and respected model.<sup>107</sup>

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. *Wiederbeginn volkssprachiger Schriftlichkeit im hohen Mittelalter (1050/60–1160/70)*, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit (Königstein, 1986). The following is a necessarily oversimplified summary of the aspects of this book I consider most important for my discussion; see especially pp. 15–47, 81–112, 115–37, 193–232. For a survey of the same period that also emphasizes the historical orientation of narrative see Max Wehrli, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur vom frühen Mittelalter bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*, (Stuttgart, 1980), pp. 134–202.
2. The six ages, set out by Isidore, Bede, and Augustine, are: 1. from Adam to Noah, 2. Noah to Abraham, 3. Abraham to David, 4. David to the Babylonian captivity, 5. captivity to incarnation, 6. incarnation to the end of the world. See Roderick Schmidt, 'Aetates mundi: Die Weltalter als Gliederungsprinzip der Geschichte', *ZfK*, 67 (1955/56), 288–317. The four kingdoms, derived from Jerome's exegesis of Daniel's dream of the four beasts (Daniel 7), are the empires of Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, and Rome.
3. *Das Annolied*, edited by Eberhard Nellmann (Stuttgart, 1975), 4, 4; 11, 1–16, 12. Further references to this edition will be given in the text.
4. The poem's final concentration of interest on the individual as the place where the universal historical process is realized has occasioned divergent interpretations. Vollmann-Profe, pp. 106–09, reads the end of the *Annolied* as the sign of a lack of confidence in the ideology of *historia salutis*. Anno fails to assert himself in this world, cannot prevent political catastrophe and, when internecine strife breaks out in the empire, desires only to die (40). There is a sense, therefore, of how the history of the world is a process whose logic is impenetrable and autonomous, resistant to integration into God's plan: *historia divina* and *historia mundana* cannot be co-ordinated. Instead of showing all human society progressing towards the ultimate goal of history, the author retreats to a solution on the personal level: let every man do what is right for him in order to find his individual path to salvation. The interpretation of Walter Haug, *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter*, pp. 60–66, on the other hand, does not suppose any fracture in the mantle of *historia salutis*, or any contradiction in the way in which the poem changes perspective from the general to the individual. Haug reads the depiction of chaos in the empire in strophe 40 as a sign of the approaching end of the sixth age (which reading would reintegrate the history of the world into the divine schema): precisely now, when the end of humanity is at hand, the time has come for making individual choices. The inference I draw from Haug's reading is that the *Annolied* represents a Christian account of the role of the human subject in the objective historical process, an account in which the orthodox insistence on the freedom of the human will is balanced with faith in God's providence: as history progresses according to plan, so men are faced with personal choices.
5. On the political, economic and cultural background to Franco-German literary relations see Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur: Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, pp. 83–136.
6. See Reto R. Bezzola, *Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en occident (500–1200)*, 3 vols, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, 218, 313, 319–20 (Paris, 1944–63), II, 485–526, III, I, 126–39, 150–75; Alois Wolf, *Deutsche Kultur im Hochmittelalter 1150–1250* (Essen, 1986), pp. 259–65, 269–74, 292–97.
7. See for instance her interpretations of the *Annolied*, p. 109, and the *Kaiserchronik*, pp. 111–12.
8. p. 106; see also Haug, *Literaturtheorie*, pp. 66–70.

9. *Eneide*, edited by Gabriele Schieb and Theodor Frings, DTM, 58–59, 2 vols (Berlin, 1964–65), lines 13120–428. Further references will be given in the text.
10. Marianne Ott-Meimberg, *Kreuzzugešepos oder Staatsroman? Strukturen adliger Heilsversicherung im deutschen Rolandslied*, MTU, 70 (Munich, 1980), pp. 264, 267. On the sacralization of the state under Barbarossa and its concealed secularization Ott-Meimberg quotes the historian Theodor Mayer: 'Für Friedrich war also das regnum selbständig neben dem sacerdotium, es war unmittelbar zu Gott und infolgedessen heilig. Diese Auffassung lag der Heiligsprechung Karls des Großen zugrunde, . . . denn Karl war der ideale Repräsentant des regnum. Damit war der Staat als solcher in die sakrale Sphäre gehoben, nicht mehr wie früher als Glied einer sakralen, von Staat und Kirche gebildeten Einheit . . . Man könnte den Vorgang als die Kanonisation des Staates bezeichnen, in der praktischen Auswirkung aber bedeutete er eine Säkularisierung' (p. 265).
11. Marie Schulz, *Die Lehre von der historischen Methode bei den Geschichtschreibern des Mittelalters, (VI.–XIII. Jahrhundert)*, Abhandlungen zur Mittleren und Neueren Geschichte, 13 (Berlin and Leipzig, 1909), pp. 15–42.
12. *Etymologiae*, edited by W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols (Oxford, 1911), i.41.1.
13. D. H. Green, 'Oral Poetry and Written Composition. (An Aspect of the Feud between Gottfried and Wolfram)', in D. H. Green and L. P. Johnson, *Approaches to Wolfram von Eschenbach: Five Essays*, Mikrokosmos, 5 (Berne, Frankfurt, Las Vegas, 1978), pp. 195–96.
14. Otto von Freising, *Gesta Friderici I. imperatoris*, edited by G. Waitz, MGH *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* (Hanover and Leipzig, 1912), II, 41 ('Nam antiquorum mos fuisse traditur, ut illi, qui res ipsas prout gestae fuerunt sensibus perceperant, earundem scriptores existerent. Unde et hystoria ab hysteron, quod in Greco "videre" sonat, appellari consuevit'); Bernard of Utrecht, *Commentum in Theodolum*, in R. B. C. Huygens, *Accessus ad auctores. Bernard d'Utrecht. Conrad d'Hirsau: Dialogus super auctores* (Leiden, 1970), p. 63 ('historia . . . tracta apo to ystorin id est videre: solos enim fieri rem videntes olim scribere licebat'); Conrad of Hirsau, *Dialogus uper auctores*, in Huygens (1970), p. 75 ('historia . . . res visa, res gesta: historin enim grece, latine visio dicitur, unde historiografus rei visae scriptor dicitur').
15. On topics of historiography see Gertrud Simon, 'Untersuchungen zur Topik der Widmungsbriefe mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreiber bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts', 2 parts, *AJD*, 4 (1958), 52–119, and 5 (1959), 73–153.
16. *Vita Karoli Magni*, edited by G. H. Pertz, MGH *Scriptores*, 2 (Hanover, 1829), p. 443. The phrase 'ut dicunt' indicates that 'oculata fide' is a *topos*; see Schulz, p. 16.
17. *Chronique et chartes de l'abbaye de Saint-Mihiel*, edited by A. Lesort, Mettensia, 6 (Paris, 1909), p. 21: 'Nec duorum aut trium eget testimonio; pene omnibus circumquaque degentibus notum quod referre in primis volumus miraculum'; p. 23: 'Si quis in hoc fit dubius, cottidiano visu et alloquio est enim in promptu, cum ea confabulando poterit nosse plenius'; p. 35: a miracle took place in the outhouse 'ubi et ego qui haec scribo, pre angustia loci, noviter incepti quiescebam'.
18. p. 7: 'in quodam ipsius ecclesiae libello legitur'.
19. p. 2: Smaragdus was abbot during the reign of Louis the Pious.
20. Widukind of Corvey, *Sachsengeschichte*, edited by G. Waitz, MGH *Scriptores*, 3 (Hanover, 1839), p. 417: 'Et primum quidem de origine statuque gentis pauca expediam, solam pene famam sequens in hac parte, nimia vetustate omnem fere certitudinem obscurante'.
21. Gozwin, *Passio sancti Albani martyris*, edited by O. Holder-Egger, MGH *Scriptores*, 15 (Hanover, 1887), p. 986. Of his sources Gozwin relates: 'quae hac illac per sedas dispersa erant et quae sanu seniorum fide auctore didiceram in unum stilo subserviente collegi' (*ibid.*).
22. Schulz, pp. 27–31, 36–42; Simon, part II, pp. 91–92.
23. Examples, with varying degrees of interpretation, for the period up to and including the thirteenth century, are to be found in: Albert Blumenröder, 'Die Quellenberufungen in der mittelhochdeutschen Dichtung' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Marburg, 1922); Bruno Boesch, *Die Kunstsanschauung in der mittelhochdeutschen Dichtung von der Blütezeit bis zum Meistergesang* (Berne and Leipzig, 1936), pp. 75–88; Xenja von Ertzdorff, 'Die Wahrheit der höfischen Romane des Mittelalters', *ZfPh*, 86 (1967), 375–89; D. H. Green, 'Oral Poetry and Written Composition'; Käthe Iwand, *Die Schlüsse der mittelhochdeutschen Epen*, Germanische Studien, 16 (Berlin, 1922), pp. 117–36; Fritz Peter Knapp, 'Historische Wahrheit und poetische Lüge', pp. 596–605; Carl Lofmark, *The Authority of the Source in Middle High German Narrative Poetry*, Bithell Series of Dissertations, 5 (London, 1981), pp. 35–47; Ulrich Mölk, *Französische Literaturästhetik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts: Prologe — Exkurse — Epiloge*, Sammlung Romanischer Übungstexte, 54 (Tübingen, 1969); F. P. Pickering, *Augustinus oder Boethius? Geschichtsschreibung und epische Dichtung im Mittelalter* —



- und in der Neuzeit, PhStQ, 39, 80, 2 vols (Berlin, 1967–76), II, 146–68; Uwe Pörksen, *Der Erzähler im mittelhochdeutschen Epos: Formen seines Hervortretens bei Lamprecht, Konrad, Hartmann, in Wolframs Willehalm und in den 'Spielmannsepen'*, PhStQ, 58 (Berlin, 1971), pp. 60–75; A. Roßmann, 'Wort und Begriff der Wahrheit in der frühmittelhochdeutschen Literatur' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Tübingen, 1953).
24. *Le Roman de Troie* edited by Leopold Constans, SATF, 6 vols (Paris, 1904–12), lines 30–44. Dares Phrygius, author of a history of the Trojan War which is in fact a sixth-century adaptation of an earlier Greek romance (see Rudolf Helm, *Der antike Roman* (Göttingen, 1956), p. 21), enjoyed a certain prestige in the Middle Ages because of his supposed status as eyewitness; Isidore mentions him as the first gentile historian (*Etymologiae*, I.42.1.).
  25. Herbot von Fritzlar, *Liet von Troie*, edited by G. K. Frommann, BDNL, 5 (Quedlinburg and Leipzig, 1837), lines 54–55.
  26. *Les Deux Rédactions en vers du Mariage Guillaume: Chansons de geste du XIIe siècle*, edited by Wilhelm Cloetta, SATF, 2 vols (Paris, 1906–11), line 4. The archives of the abbey of St-Denis are also mentioned as authority in *Berte aus grans piés*, the narrative of Charlemagne's mother written up in the thirteenth century by Adenet le Roi from a redaction that dates back to the twelfth century; Adenet claims he knew a monk at St-Denis named Savari who showed him a 'livre as estoires' containing the story of Bertha and Pippin (*Berte aus grans piés*, edited by U. T. Holmes, Jr, University of Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 6 (Chapel Hill, 1946), lines 6–11).
  27. *Das Alexanderlied des Pfaffen Lamprecht*, edited by Irene Ruttman (Darmstadt, 1974), lines 4–7.
  28. *Das Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad*, edited by Carl Wesle, revised by P. Wapnewski, ATB, 69 (Tübingen, 1967), lines 9079–85: 'ich haize der phaffe Chunrat./also iz an dem bûche gescribin stat/in franczischer zungen./so han ich iz in die latine bedwngin./danne in di tusiske gekeret./ich nehän der nicht an gemeret./ich nehän dir nicht uber haben'.
  29. See *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, edited by Kurt Ruh (Berlin, 1978–), vol. IV, cols 951–52.
  30. *Die Kaiserchronik eines Regensburger Geistlichen*, edited by Edward Schröder, MGH Deutsche Chroniken, I, 1 (Hanover, 1892), lines 15–23: 'Ein buoch ist ze diute getihtet,/daz uns Rômîsches rîches wol berihet,/gêhaizzen ist iz crônîcâ./iz chundet uns dâ/von den bâbesen unt von den chunigen,/baidiu guoten unt ubelen,/die vor uns wâren/unt Rômîsches rîches phlâgen/ unze an disen hiutegeen tac'. On *chronica* as a genre of medieval historiography see Herbert Grundmann, *Geschichtsschreibung im Mittelalter: Gattungen — Epochen — Eigenart* (Göttingen, 1965), pp. 18–27.
  31. *Le Roman de Rou*, edited by A. J. Holden, SATF, 3 vols (Paris, 1970–73), II, 36 (III, lines 179–80).
  32. *Le Roman de Brut*, edited by I. Arnold, SATF, 2 vols (Paris, 1938–40), lines 1–6: 'Ki vult oir e vult saveir/De rei en rei e d'eir en eir/Ki cil furent e dunt il vindrent/Ki Engleterre primes tindrent,/Quels reis i ad en ordre eü,/Ki anceis e ki puis i fu.'
  33. Lines 7–9: 'Maistre Wace l'ad translatee/Ki en conte la verité./Si cum li livres le devise.'
  34. Green, 'Oral Poetry and Written Composition', pp. 202–03. Not all usages of the term *fabula* equate it in an uncomplicated manner with oral tradition and falsehood, however; see below, p. 35.
  35. *Gesta regum Anglorum*, edited by W. Stubbs, 2 vols (London, 1887–89), I, 11 (Book I, chapter 8).
  36. M. Delbouille, 'Le Témoignage de Wace sur la légende arthurienne', *Romania*, 74 (1953), 179.
  37. *Literatur im deutschen Mittelalter*, p. 97.
  38. For French see Bezzola, *Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise*, I, xviii–xxi, and II, 129–39, 243; for Germany, Lofmark, pp. 19–32; Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, pp. 682–85.
  39. See note 11 to Chapter One above for the synonymy of *clericus* and *litteratus*.
  40. Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, p. 65: 'Medizin lernt man aus Galen, Weltgeschichte aus Orosius'; Wehrli, *Literatur*, pp. 95–104.
  41. These arguments, that the historiographic orientation of early vernacular narrative is attributable to the clerical mentality of the authors and rigoristic condemnation of profane letters, are implicit in Lofmark, p. 19: 'The early poets, who created and established the courtly tradition, were either clerics or men of clerical training. . . . Respect for written authority was especially important for men trained in the religion of a book'; p. 31: 'Vernacular literature might become more secular, and its authors no longer be clerics, but still it had to compete with clerical literature and be measured by clerical standards of truth, seriousness, and moral value. In this way the clerical tradition continued to exert its influence on courtly poetry'. For the rigoristic position see L. Gompf, 'Figmenta poetarum', in *Literatur und Sprache im*

- europäischen Mittelalter: Festschrift für Karl Langosch*, edited by A. Önnersfors, J. Rathofer, F. Wagner (Darmstadt, 1973).
42. See Dieter Karttschoke, *Die Datierung des deutschen Rolandsliedes*, Germanistische Abhandlungen, 9 (Stuttgart, 1965); Joachim Bumke, *Mäzene im Mittelalter: Die Gönner und Auftraggeber der höfischen Literatur in Deutschland 1150–1300* (Munich, 1979), pp. 85–91.
  43. See Karl Bertau, 'Das deutsche Rolandslied und die Repräsentationskunst Heinrichs des Löwen', *Der Deutschunterricht*, 20, ii (1968), 13; Wolf, *Deutsche Kultur im Hochmittelalter*, pp. 57–59.
  44. 'Antiqua scripta conicorum colligi praecipit et conscribi et coram recitari', Gerhard von Stederburg, cited by Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, p. 608.
  45. Bertau, 'Das deutsche Rolandslied', p. 13: 'Es ist wie bei einem ins Wasser geworfenen Stein, der immer weitere Kreise um sich zieht.'
  46. Bertau, p. 10; Wolf, *Deutsche Kultur*, p. 54.
  47. Wehrli, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, p. 198: 'Dessen (sc. Heinrichs) Interesse an dem Stoff . . . lag im Wunsch, die eigene Abkunft von Karl und den eigenen imperialen Herrscherrang zu demonstrieren.'
  48. Compare *La Chanson de Roland*, edited by F. Whitehead (Oxford, 1975), lines 2346–48.
  49. Vollmann-Profe does go in the direction of Ott-Meimberg's interpretation when she writes: 'Aus dem Gesagten folgt, daß das "Rolandslied" . . . welfische oder allgemeiner: fürstliche Interessen vertritt' (p. 137).
  50. Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, edited by Albert Leitzmann, revised by W. Deinert, ATB, 12–14, 3 vols (Tübingen, 1961–65); 143, 21–24.
  51. Wehrli, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, pp. 272–80, especially p. 273: 'In der Tat bedeutet der Artusroman die Befreiung der Erzähler von aller geschichtlicher Bindung'; Wolf, *Deutsche Kultur im Hochmittelalter*, pp. 322–31. In this survey I am concerned with the dominant features of the archival and experimental tendencies; it is not my intention to deny the occurrence of fantastic and wondrous elements in historical epics, for instance the Alexander story. On this see D. H. Green, 'The Alexanderlied and the Emergence of the Romance', *GLL*, 28 (1975), 246–63; Haug, *Literaturtheorie*, pp. 83–89.
  52. Wehrli, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, p. 273; Kurt Ruh, *Höfische Epik des deutschen Mittelalters*, Grundlagen der Germanistik, 7, 25, 2 vols (Berlin, 1977, 1980), i, 100.
  53. See Edmond Faral, *La Légende arthurienne: Études et documents*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, 255–57, 3 vols (Paris, 1929); Bezzola, *Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise*, ii, 527–48, iii, i, 126–39; Karl O. Brogsitter, *Artusepik*, Sammlung Metzler, 38 (Stuttgart, 1965), pp. 20–38; Ruh, *Höfische Epik*, i, 97–101.
  54. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, edited by Acton Griscom (London, 1929), xi, 2.
  55. Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris, 1957), p. 35; Ruh, *Höfische Epik*, i, 100–01.
  56. *Erec et Enide*, edited by Mario Roques, CFMA, 80 (Paris, 1978), lines 245–46: 'Que, se je puis, je vangerai/ma honte.'
  57. *Le Chevalier au lion (Yvain)*, edited by Mario Roques, CFMA, 89 (Paris, 1971), line 589: 'G'irai vostre honte vangier.'
  58. Lines 2430–31, 2459: 'Mes tant l'ama Erec d'amors,/que d'armes mes ne li chaloit . . . Tant fu blasmez de totes genz.'
  59. Lines 2672–703; Yvain's 'blasme' comes when, in the presence of Arthur's court, a messenger from Laudine denounces his treachery, lines 2718–75.
  60. See Haug's analysis of the structure of *Erec et Enide*, *Literaturtheorie*, pp. 93–100. Of fundamental importance for the structure of Arthurian romance are Reto R. Bezzola, *Le Sens de l'aventure et de l'amour (Chrétien de Troyes)*, (Paris, 1947), especially pp. 75–247, and Erich Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik: Studien zur Form der frühen Artus- und Graldichtung*, *ZfPh Beihefte*, 97, second edition (Tübingen, 1970), pp. 236–61.
  61. Haug, *Literaturtheorie*, p. 92; Hans Fromm, 'Doppelweg', in *Werk-Typ-Situation: Studien zu poetologischen Bedingungen in der älteren deutschen Literatur*, edited by I. Glier, W. Haug, B. Wachinger (Stuttgart, 1969), pp. 64–79.
  62. See Gerold Hilty, 'Zum Erec-Prolog von Chrétien de Troyes', in *Philologica Romanica: Erhard Lommatzsch gewidmet*, edited by E. von Richthofen, M. Bambeck, H. H. Christmann (Munich, 1975), pp. 249–51 (with comprehensive references to secondary literature) and, following him, Haug, *Literaturtheorie*, pp. 101–02.
  63. See Haug, *Literaturtheorie*, p. 103; Hilty, p. 251, refers to the 'conjointure' as a 'Schöpfungsakt' by Chrétien.
  64. Ruh, *Höfische Epik*, i, 163: '(Der Artusroman) lebt aus der dichterischen Kraft, das eine unmittelbar im andern, den *san* in der *matiere*, das Geistige im Sinnlichen, das Transzendente im Irdischen sichtbar zu machen.'

65. See the interpretation of Iwein's madness in Haug, *Literaturtheorie*, pp. 129–30.
66. Haug, p. 92: 'Was immer in Quellen vorausliegen mag, es wird in der Weise über sie verfügt, daß sie in erster Linie als Motivfundus dienen.'
67. *Yvain* contains no information about sources; the prologue to the *Charrete* recounts how the patroness, Marie de Champagne, provided the author with 'matiere et san', without however specifying the form of this material; *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, edited by Mario Roques, CFMA, 86 (Paris, 1978), lines 26–27.
68. Lines 6674–80: 'Lisant trovomes an l'estoire / la description de la robe, / si an trai a garant Macrobe / qui an l'estoire mist s'antante, / qui l'antandî, que je ne mante. / Macrobe m'anseigne a descrivre, / si con je l'ai trovê el livre.' The reference is presumably to Macrobius's commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*. It is not clear whether the 'conte d'avanture' mentioned by Chrétien in the prologue (line 13) was already in book-form before he turned it into his 'conjointure'.
69. Green, 'Oral Poetry and Written Composition', p. 203, however suggests that 'by appealing to the written testimony of Macrobius over such a detail Chrétien may hope to insinuate that his whole work enjoys a similar authority'.
70. Green, p. 207. In the *Charrete* Chrétien calls his own work, the treatment of the 'matiere et san' given him by his patroness, a 'livre' (line 25).
71. For the existence of the *matière de Bretagne* in oral and possibly also written traditions before Chrétien and independently of Geoffrey, see Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, pp. 36–61.
72. *Cligès*, edited by Alexandre Micha, CFMA, 84 (Paris, 1978), lines 18–24: 'Ceste estoire trovons escrite, / Que conter vos vuel et retraire. / En un des livres de l'aumaire / Mon seignor saint Pere a Biauvez; / De la fu li contes estrez / Qui tesmoinge l'estoire a voire: / Por ce fet ele mialz a croire.' Compare the prologues to the *Moniage Guillaume* and *Berte aus grans piés*, note 26 above.
73. *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, edited by Félix Lecoy, CFMA, 100, 103, 2 vols (Paris, 1975), lines 66–67: 'Ce est li contes del graal, / don li cuens li baille le livre.'
74. There exist analogues to the story of Cligès, though it is not certain in what form Chrétien's book might have contained them; see p. ix of Micha's edition. Recent interpretations of the *Perceval* prologue suggest perspectives in which the question of the source-book's identity becomes irrelevant: Roger Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre au Moyen Age (Le Conte du Graal)* (Paris, 1980), p. 119; Rupert T. Pickens, 'Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)', in *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: A Symposium*, edited by D. Kelly (Lexington, 1985), pp. 241–42.
75. Green, 'Oral Poetry and Written Composition', pp. 207–08.
76. See Hugo Kuhn, 'Erec', in *Festschrift Paul Kluckhohn und Hermann Schneider* (Tübingen, 1948), pp. 122–47; Ruh, *Höfische Epik*, I, 116–41.
77. *Iwein*, edited by G. F. Benecke and K. Lachmann, revised by L. Wolff, seventh edition (Berlin, 1968), lines 54–57.
78. *Erec*, edited by A. Leitzmann, revised by L. Wolff, ATB, 39, fourth edition (Tübingen, 1967), lines 7491, 8698, 9019, 9723. On Hartmann's source references see Pörksen, pp. 69–70.
79. H. R. Jauss, 'Zur historischen Genese der Scheidung von Fiktion und Realität', in *Funktionen des Fiktiven*, edited by D. Henrich and W. Iser, *Poetik und Hermeneutik*, x (Munich, 1983), pp. 423–31, especially p. 429.
80. Aristotle, *Poetics*, edited by D. W. Lucas, (Oxford, 1968), 1451b.
81. Haug, *Literaturtheorie*, pp. 105–06. For the medieval reception of the *Poetics* see Klopsch, pp. 40–41.
82. Priscian, *Praeexercitamina*, in Karl Halm, *Rhetores latini minores* (Leipzig, 1863), p. 551.
83. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, I.40.3–6: 'Fabulas poetae quasdam delectandi causa finxerunt, quasdam ad naturam rerum, nonnullas ad mores hominum interpretati sunt . . . Ad naturam rerum fabulas fingunt, ut "Vulcanus claudus", quia per naturam numquam rectus est ignis . . . Ad mores, ut apud Horatium mus loquitur muri et mustela vulpeculae, ut per narrationem fictam ad id quod agitur verax significatio referatur.'
84. Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, edited by J. Willis (Leipzig, 1963), I.2.9: 'In quibusdam enim et argumentum ex ficto locatur et per mendacia ipse relationis ordo contexitur, ut sunt illae Aesopi fabulae elegantia fictionis illustres, at in aliis argumentum quidem fundatur veri soliditate sed haec ipsa veritas per quaedam composita et ficta profertur, et hoc iam vocatur narratio fabulosa, non fabula, ut sunt caerimoniarum sacra, ut Hesiodi et Orphei quae de deorum progenie actuve narrantur, ut mystica Pythagoreorum sensa referuntur.'
85. Edouard Jeuneau, 'Note sur l'École de Chartres', *Studi medievali*, third series, 5, ii (1964), p. 856: 'Est autem allegoria oratio sub historica narratione verum et ab exteriori diversum involvens intellectum, ut de lucta Iacob. Integumentum vero est oratio sub fabulosa narratione

- verum claudens intellectum, ut de Orpheo . . . Allegoria quidem divina pagine, integumentum vero philosophice competit.'
86. *Commentary on the First Six Books of the 'Aeneid' of Vergil*, edited by Julian Ward Jones and Elizabeth Frances Jones (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1977), p. 3: 'Scribit ergo in quantum est philosophus humane vite naturam. Modus agendi talis est: sub integumento describit quid agat vel quid paciatur humanus spiritus in humano corpore temporaliter positus'; compare Bernard's commentary on Martianus Capella: 'Virgilius humani spiritus temporalem cum corpore vitam describens integumentis usus est' (Jeauneau, p. 856).
  87. See Hennig Brinkmann, 'Verhüllung (integumentum) als literarische Darstellungsform im Mittelalter', in *Der Begriff der Repraesentatio im Mittelalter: Stellvertretung, Symbol, Zeichen, Bild*, edited by A. Zimmermann, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, 8 (Berlin and New York, 1971), pp. 314–39; Knapp, 'Historische Wahrheit und poetische Lüge', pp. 611–24; Peter Dronke, *Fabula: Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Mediaeval Platonism*, *Mittellateinische Studien und Texte*, 9 (Leiden and Cologne, 1974); P. Demats, *Fabula: Trois études de mythographie antique et medievale* (Geneva, 1973); Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres* (Princeton, 1972).
  88. Alan de Lille, *De Planctu Naturae*, in *The Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets and Epigrammatists of the Twelfth Century*, vol. II, edited by T. Wright (London, 1872), p. 465.
  89. Ottmar Carls, 'Die Auffassung der Wahrheit im "Tristan" Gottfrieds von Straßburg', *ZfPh*, 93 (1974), 11–34, especially p. 14; Jauss, 'Zur historischen Genese', p. 429; Wolfgang Dittmann, 'Dune hâst niht wâr, Hartman! Zum Begriff der wârheit in Hartmanns "Iwein"', in *Festgabe für Ulrich Pretzel*, edited by W. Simon, W. Bachofer, W. Dittmann (Berlin, 1963), pp. 150–61; Lofmark, pp. 137–42.
  90. *Der Wälsche Gast*, edited by H. Rückert, BDNL, 30 (Quedlinburg, 1852), lines 1118–26: 'Die äventiure sint gekleit / dicke mit lüge harte schöne: / diu lüge ist ir gezierte kröne. / ich schilt die äventiure niht, / swie uns ze liegen geschiht / von der äventiure rât, / wan si bezeichnenunge hât / der zuht und der wârheit: / daz wâr man mit lüge kleit'. See C. S. Jaeger, *Medieval Humanism in Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan und Isolde*, (Heidelberg, 1977), pp. 153–79, who attempts a complete integumental reading of Gottfried, and Brinkmann, 'Verhüllung', p. 322.
  91. Haug, *Literaturtheorie*, pp. 103–05, 124–26, 222–34. On Thomasin, whose account of romance poetics is in any case not integumental in the strict sense, because he places its didactic message on a lower level than the 'tiefe sinne' (line 1108) of genuine philosophical speculation, see also Knapp, 'Historische Wahrheit und poetische Lüge', pp. 610–11, 623–24. A reading of Gottfried within the framework of contemporary philosophical concerns is offered by R. A. Wisbey, 'The *renovatio amoris* in Gottfried's *Tristan*', in *London German Studies*, vol. I, edited by C. V. Bock, Publications of the Institute of Germanic Studies, 26 (London, 1980), pp. 1–66.
  92. Haug, *Literaturtheorie*, pp. 96–97, 130.
  93. *Cligès*, lines 1–42. On Chrétien's learning and education see Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, pp. 9, 16–21.
  94. *Iwein*, line 21; see Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, pp. 683–84 and Peter Wapnewski, *Hartmann von Aue*, Sammlung Metzler, 17, seventh edition (Stuttgart, 1979), pp. 13–15.
  95. *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, line 1; *Le Conte du Graal*, lines 13, 64.
  96. Ruh, *Höfische Epik*, I, 108–09; Bumke, *Mäzene im Mittelalter*, p. 172.
  97. Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik*, pp. 5–36.
  98. Kaiser, *Textauslegung und gesellschaftliche Selbstdeutung: Aspekte einer sozialgeschichtlichen Interpretation von Hartmanns Artusepen* (Frankfurt, 1973).
  99. Sawicki, *Gottfried von Straßburg und die Poetik des Mittelalters*, p. 158.
  100. Boesch, p. 75; Knapp, 'Historische Wahrheit und poetische Lüge', p. 600 (both citing Sawicki, though Knapp wonders how seriously Gottfried wanted his archival topics to be taken); Christopher Huber, *Gottfried von Straßburg, 'Tristan und Isolde': Eine Einführung* (Munich and Zurich, 1986), p. 36.
  101. I discuss this passage at greater length in Chapter Six, pp. 104–07 below.
  102. *Flore und Blancheftur*, edited by Emil Sommer, BDNL, 12 (Quedlinburg and Leipzig, 1849), lines 307, 7858.
  103. Albrecht von Scharfenberg, *Der Jüngere Titurel*, edited by Werner Wolf, DTM, 45, 55/61, 2 vols (Berlin, 1955–68), strophes 89–94, 6166–74.
  104. *Der quote Gerhart*, edited by John A. Asher, ATB, 56 (Tübingen, 1971), lines 80–86, 1743–44.
  105. Alfred Ebenbauer, 'Das Dilemma mit der Wahrheit: Gedanken zum "historisierenden Roman" des 13. Jahrhunderts', in *Geschichtsbewußtsein in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Tübinger Colloquium 1983*, edited by Christoph Gerhardt, Nigel F. Palmer, Burghart Wachinger (Tübingen, 1985), pp. 69–71; Joachim Heinze, *Wandlungen und Neuansätze im 13. Jahrhundert (1220/30–1280/90)*, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit*, vol. II, part 2 (Königstein, 1984), pp. 135–50.

106. Helmut Brackert, *Rudolf von Ems: Dichtung und Geschichte* (Heidelberg, 1968).
107. The eulogies of 'meister Gotfrit' by narrative poets of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries are conveniently anthologized in Günther Schweikle, *Dichter über Dichter in mittelhochdeutscher Literatur*, Deutsche Texte, 12 (Tübingen, 1970), pp. 18–19, 24 (Rudolf von Ems), p. 56 (Konrad von Würzburg), p. 59 (Konrad von Stoffeln), pp. 67–69 (Heinrich von Freiberg, Johann von Würzburg).

## CHAPTER THREE

### HISTORY AND THE LOVE STORY: ARCHIVAL TOPICS IN *TRISTAN*

#### RETROSPECTION

Whenever Gottfried talks about love stories, he implies that they have a historical dimension: whoever narrates them directs his gaze backwards, on to people who really lived in the past. So it is with Tristan and Isolde, the characters 'von den diz senemaere seit . . . al eine und sin si lange tot' (211, 222), and it evidently holds for the genre as a whole; in an excursus berating the abuse of Minne in his own day and age, Gottfried speaks of the solace afforded by love stories in general:

swaz ieman schoener maere hat  
von vriuntlichen dingen,  
swaz wir mit rede vür bringen  
von den, die wilent waren  
vor manegen hundert jaren,  
daz tuot uns in dem herzen wol. (12320–25)

The historical dimension of love stories is evoked for a third time when the author describes how Tristan and Isolde themselves tell such stories as part of their daily routine during their stay in the cave of lovers:

und triben ir senemaere  
von den, die vor ir jaren  
von sene verdorben waren. (17184–86)

The objects of this particular exercise in retrospective narration, whom Gottfried goes on to name as Phyllis, Canacea, Biblis, Dido (17189–96), are all to be found in Ovid and Virgil.<sup>1</sup> Yet Gottfried does not mention these poets by name, making these ill-starred lovers appear to be not literary figures, but women who really did live a long time ago.

Are we to conclude that for Gottfried love stories, including that of Tristan and Isolde, are history? We ought to distinguish between the lovers and the stories told about them, for Gottfried insists only that the characters in these narratives really existed, and from there it does not follow that the stories

themselves are necessarily historically true down to the last detail.<sup>2</sup> The terms by which he designates these narratives, 'senemaere', 'schoeniu maere von vriuntlichen dingen', are not recognizable as names of historiographic genres. Like the historian, the narrator of love stories looks back to the past, but while the former strives to produce a 'narratio rei gestae, per quam ea, quae in praeterito facta sunt, dinoscuntur' (Isidore of Seville's definition of *historia* in *Etymologiae*, I.41.1), the latter's retrospection gives rise to a narrative whose value as an instrument of historical cognition is not specified. So far as Gottfried is concerned, it seems that while love stories have a foundation in history, they are not reducible to history; only the personages in what is otherwise a non-historiographic narrative are taken from the archive.

That is how a twelfth-century *accessus* to Ovid understands the relationship of history to narrative in the *Heroides*, on which work Gottfried's catalogue of tragic lovers draws. It is called the *Heroides* or *Epistolae*

propter hanc causam, quia diversae sunt epistolae in hoc volumine, quae poterant mitti vel mittebantur grecis viris in obsidione Troiae manentibus vel illuc tendentibus aut inde redeuntibus, cuique de uxore sua . . . Unde quidam intitulant eum Ovidium Heroum, id est matronarum, vel Librum Heroidos . . . Ideo autem sic intitulatur, quia scriptus est sub personis illarum grecarum nobilium mulierum, quarum viri demorabantur in obsidione Troiae et quia heroides excellentiores matronae erant in Grecia, a quibus et maxima parte amatoribus suis hae epistolae mittebantur.<sup>3</sup>

The historical context of the epistles — the Trojan War and the consequent separation of the women from their menfolk — is only a point of departure, for these are letters that, if they were not actually sent, could be sent in the circumstances ('quae poterant mitti vel mittebantur'). An act of imagination is required in the understanding of the epistles, which are located in history without needing to be read as historical documents.

### ISTORJE, GESTE AND THE SENEMAERE

Where Gottfried does use explicitly historiographic terms, it only confirms our impression that if there is a link between the love story and history, there is also an irreducible difference. He is, from the lexicographical evidence, the first author in Germany to use the vernacular terms *istorje* and *geste* for Latin *historia* and *gesta* or Old French *estoire* and *geste*.<sup>4</sup> It is noticeable that he only ever calls sources, and never his own work, by these names.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the information he claims to have derived from historical records is background, names, and circumstances that do not constitute the narrative proper. Thus, of King Mark and King Gurmun respectively we are told that

ouch saget diu istorje von im daz,  
daz allen den bilanden,  
diu sinen namen erkanden,  
kein küneec so werder was als er; (450–53)

der do zIrlanden künic was,  
 als ichz an der istorje las  
 und als daz rehte maere seit,  
 der hiez Gurmun Gemuotheit  
 und was geborn von Affrica  
 und was sin vater künic da. (5879–84)

In the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (xi.8–10) Geoffrey of Monmouth recounts how Gormundus, king of the Africans, conquered Ireland and was then called over to England by the Saxons to assist them in their war against Keredic, king of Britain. With an army of 160,000 Africans Gormundus besieges Keredic in Cirencester, captures the town and chases the enemy into Wales, ravaging the entire land. He then hands Loegria (all of England apart from Cornwall) over to the Saxons. Gottfried's report of Gurmun's political and military career has the following points in common with Geoffrey: Gurmun's status as king of Africa (5885–87); his conquest of Ireland (5915–19); the invasion of Britain, including England and Cornwall, which Marke then rules as Gurmun's tributary (5924–30). Geoffrey's account is repeated by Wace in the *Roman de Brut* (lines 13381–656); it has been supposed that from there the story found its way into Gottfried through the intermediacy of Thomas,<sup>6</sup> although it is also conceivable that Gottfried also knew Geoffrey or Wace at first hand, since in the prologue to *Tristan* he claims to have done research 'in beider hande buochen/walschen und latinen' (158–59). There are however details in Gottfried's version (and, presumably, Thomas's) that are not present in either Geoffrey or Wace, in particular the account of how Gurmun obtained permission from the Romans to rule his foreign conquests as their client (5905–11).<sup>7</sup> This divergence has given rise to speculation that Thomas and Gottfried might have drawn on oral or lost written traditions about Gormundus that are independent of Geoffrey.<sup>8</sup>

Another point of contact between Gottfried and Geoffrey or Wace is the name 'Corineus', Describing how Tristan had discovered the cave of lovers while hunting in the wilderness, Gottfried adds:

daz selbe hol was wilent e  
 under der heidenischen e  
 vor Corineis jaren,  
 do risen da herren waren,  
 gehouwen in den wilden berc. (16689–93)

Corineus figures in the *Historia* as the leader of a group of fugitives from Troy; he accompanied Brutus on his occupation of Britain, landing with him in Cornwall and driving the original inhabitants, giants, into caves in the mountains. Cornwall is said to be named after him.<sup>9</sup> Gottfried thus anchors his cave in British prehistory and, for those who recognize the allusion, gives the sack of Troy as a reference-point for establishing its antiquity.



The authority of the 'istorje' is invoked on two more occasions, once in order to introduce the giant Urgan and, finally, during a brief sketch of the military situation of Duke Jovelin in Arundel:

Als uns diu ware istorje seit  
 von Tristandes manheit,  
 so was des selben males  
 dem lande ze Swales  
 ein rise bi gesezzen; (15915–19)  
 dem haeten, als uns diu istorje saget,  
 sin umbesaezen starke  
 sin gerihte und sine marke  
 verurliuget unde benomen; (18692–95)

The 'geste' is referred to by Gottfried once only:

wider daz tal zAnferginan;  
 daz was des trachen heimwist,  
 also man an der geste list. (8940–42)

It is impossible to determine whether the 'geste' and the 'istorje' are one and the same, since we cannot identify the source or sources that lie behind these terms with any certainty. It is possible that Gottfried is referring to Thomas on every occasion, or (in the case of Gurmun) to Geoffrey or Wace, or to some other unknown work of history. Whatever the ultimate source of these references, it is important to Gottfried that they should have an authoritative aura,<sup>10</sup> for even though they provide only background information, their effect is to suggest that the entire *senemaere* of Tristan and Isolde is underpinned with history.

## THE PATH THROUGH THE ARCHIVES

Of all the passages that could be cited as evidence of Gottfried's archival orientation, the most famous is the account, in the prologue, of his research into the sources of the Tristan story. Here, it has been maintained, Gottfried rejects the many unreliable versions of the legend that are in circulation in favour of the historically authentic version offered by Thomas, whom he follows.<sup>11</sup> By a close reading of these lines I hope to show that Gottfried vests authority in a version of the story that uses historical information, but is not necessarily historiographic in intention.

Gottfried's attitude to narrating the story of Tristan and Isolde promises to be archival: he is aware of standing in a tradition whose diversity requires the author to separate the correct from the incorrect by means of painstaking research. The account he gives in the prologue of his labours in the archives is, nevertheless, characterized by a simultaneous evocation and evasion of the idea of an authoritative source. He begins:

Ich weiz wol, ir ist vil gewesen,  
 die von Tristande hant gelesen;  
 und ist ir doch niht vil gewesen,  
 die von im rehte haben gelesen. (131–34)

Many have gone before Gottfried in telling the story of Tristan, but few of them have told it aright.<sup>12</sup> This is a form of the exordial *topos* of denigrating one's rivals,<sup>13</sup> though Gottfried is careful to temper his criticism with generosity, immediately adding that even if these other poets were wrong, they nevertheless deserve recognition for their good intentions (135–45). This *topos*, with which authors hope to win the audience for their own version of the story, usually operates by applying the test of historical truthfulness to the versions of rival storytellers, and rejecting them for being based on unreliable sources<sup>14</sup> (though Chrétien changes the criterion to an aesthetic one in *Erec*, when he contrasts his 'conjointure' to the garbled confusion of his competitors; see above, p. 32). It is not clear what constitutes the correct way of narrating for Gottfried: does 'rehte lesen' mean to tell the story according to an authoritative historical source, or can it signify narration guided by certain other, purely literary, precepts? And if so, what precepts? Gottfried continues:

aber als ich gesprochen han,  
 daz si niht rehte haben gelesen,  
 daz ist, als ich iu sage, gewesen:  
 sin sprachen in der rihte niht,  
 als Thomas von Britanje giht. (146–50)

Correct narration ('rehte lesen') consists in speaking in the right way ('in der rihte sprechen'), as did a certain Thomas of 'Britanje' (which may denote either Britain or Brittany). That would be a tautologous argument (the others were wrong because they were not right) if Gottfried did not go on to explain why conformity with the account given by Thomas should be the standard by which all other versions are to be judged:

der aventiure meister was  
 und an britunschen buochen las  
 aller der lantherren leben  
 und ez uns ze künde hat gegeben. (151–54)

The turn of phrase 'aller der lantherren leben' suggests that the British (or Breton) books read by Thomas were historical sources; one thinks, for instance, of the genealogical and dynastic literature that chronicled the history of individual noble houses and was establishing itself in France from the eleventh century.<sup>15</sup> The implication is that the principal characters in the Tristan story (who else might the 'lantherren' here be?) belonged to historical reality. Thomas then passed on the information he had gleaned from his historical research, which means, presumably, that he made use of it in his own work. From there it

does not follow, however, that Thomas's narrative consists exclusively of such information as he might have read in these sources, whatever they were. Nor does it follow that Thomas deserves to be imitated for the single reason that his version is historically accurate. Gottfried commends Thomas because he was 'aventureur meister', a formulation that does not obviously translate as 'a master historian', but conceivably might allude to the French author's pre-eminence in the experimental genre of romance. It is difficult to determine whether the clause introduced by 'und' in line 152 is intended to explain the assertion that Thomas was a master of adventure or whether it is meant to supplement it. In the latter case, the careful research into 'aller der lantherren leben' would be no more than an — admittedly indispensable — aspect of Thomas's consummate skill as a storyteller, and there would be more to the exemplary mode of narration than accuracy in matters of historical fact. Gottfried does not say exactly what that something more might be (though the phrase 'aventureur meister' may imply skilful handling of literary fiction), but it would at any rate be the case that he only connects, and does not wholly identify, Thomas's model account of the exploits of Tristan with history. The input to his narrative would be 'aller der lantherren leben', the output a masterful 'aventureur'.<sup>16</sup>

Having established Thomas's exemplarity, which cannot be proved to rest on historical scholarship alone, Gottfried next speaks of his own relationship to the French author:

Als der von Tristande seit,  
 die rihte und die warheit  
 begunde ich sere suochen  
 in beider hande buochen  
 walschen und latinen  
 und begunde mich des pinen,  
 daz ich in siner rihte  
 rihte dise tihte. (155–62)

Because the version of Thomas is correct and true — and from the foregoing argument it is evident that the terms 'rihte' and 'warheit' cannot be reduced to historical accuracy and truth, although these notions are certainly implicated — Gottfried has decided that he will direct his own poem along the same lines. This is a declaration of orientation, not of dependence.<sup>17</sup> What this can mean in practice is revealed on the only occasion outside the prologue when Gottfried appeals to the authority of Thomas by name: certain storytellers, says Gottfried, maintain that Tristan's father comes from Lohnois, but this is incorrect, because Thomas assures us that he is a native of Parmenie (324–30). As far as we can make out from the Old Norse and Middle English adaptations of Thomas's romance, in the French version Riwalin's homeland must have been called 'Ermenie', not 'Parmenie'.<sup>18</sup> 'Gottfried is here ironically hoodwinking his audience: at the very moment when he implies his slavish loyalty to a source

whose historicity he underlines, he goes his own way and makes his personal alterations.<sup>19</sup>

While acknowledging his debt to his predecessor, Gottfried simultaneously stresses that he has done his own painstaking research into the story of Tristan and Isolde. We are told nothing about the nature of the books Gottfried says he has scoured, except that they are in Romance and Latin. One interpretation of these lines is that they describe Gottfried's quest for a manuscript of Thomas.<sup>20</sup> The difficulty with this reading is that Gottfried would have no need of examining Latin sources in order to locate a work in French (Schröder, p. 308), unless one assumes that when he began his search he did not know in what language Thomas's version was written.<sup>21</sup> Another possibility is that Gottfried is claiming to have gone back to the very sources used by Thomas, double-checking the French author's account as it were. We have already seen, in the preceding section, that the story of Tristan draws some of its historical background from Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, and possibly other sources of information unknown to us; it is conceivable that Gottfried was not content to rely on Thomas as the bridge between him and these Latin and French books, but read them for himself. Such an interpretation would of course have to reconcile Gottfried's claim to have read books in 'walsch' and 'latin' with his statement that Thomas's sources are 'britunsch'.<sup>22</sup> A third interpretation, therefore, is that Gottfried is claiming to have conducted his own independent research, using books that Thomas did not know. However one reads these lines, it is evident that Gottfried attaches great importance to his thorough work in the archive, which will establish him as a reliable narrator in his own right.

Gottfried's researches lead to the discovery of a single book on which his version is allegedly based:

sus treip ich manege suoche,  
unz ich an eime buoche  
alle sine jehe gelas,  
wie dirre aventiure was.  
waz aber min lesen do waere  
von disem senemaere:  
daz lege ich miner willekür  
allen edelen herzen vür. (163–70)

We are not told the name of this book, nor in what language it is written (it might be in Latin or a Romance vernacular), and we do not know what kind of source it is. It is not necessarily identical with Thomas's romance, for Gottfried's declaration that in this book he read everything the French author had asserted ('alle sine jehe') leaves open the question whether the source did not contain more besides. It evidently provided Gottfried with information about the 'aventiere' and 'senemaere' (not the 'leben') of Tristan and Isolde. This terminology suggests that it may not be a history-book. Because, however, it is

in some way related to Thomas's romance it presumably reflects the historical research that the latter conducted.

The sum of our reading of this passage is: Gottfried says that his love story is based on an unnamed book, which stands in some unclarified relation to Thomas, who had read about the lives of the great nobles and included this information in his narrative, which is not necessarily a work of pure historiography. The argument reveals a curious double movement: as Gottfried's account takes us ever deeper into the archive, so it leads us ever further away from a precise identification of the source. The path through the archives begins with the many 'die von Tristande hant gelesen', to terminate at the particular, the single book; at the same time there is a progressive blurring of focus so that the book, whose location, genre and exact contents remain obscure, is the least tangible of all the sources Gottfried mentions. This effect may of course not be calculated authorial strategy, but a reflexion of the fact that we, almost eight hundred years after Gottfried, are severely restricted in our ability to reconstruct his references. Nevertheless, three things emerge from Gottfried's critical account of the Tristan tradition. First, the only clear historiographic reference in the prologue is to the books that Thomas read, and however much this historical information may have been subjected to literary treatment, there remains a connexion between the *senemaere* and history, however attenuated. We are brought back to our original proposition that Gottfried presents the story of Tristan and Isolde as founded on, but not reducible to, history. Second, the fact that Gottfried should discuss his sources at such length is an indication of how important it is to him that the audience should know about the extensive work he has done in the archives, as though they must be assured of the historical foundations of the *senemaere*.<sup>23</sup> Third, there is scope for authorial interpretation of archive material. Gottfried presents his version of the story, taken from the book, as 'waz . . . min lesen do waere'; does that mean he will follow his source faithfully, or is the emphasis on the possessive pronoun: *my* reading, *my* interpretation of what I found there?<sup>24</sup>

## MEMORIA

History is an act of retrospection or recollection; it is also a discursive form communicating information about the past to the present. The word that unites these two aspects of the discipline is *memoria*, which since classical times denoted the faculty or act of memory as well as the form in which remembrance of the past is preserved for posterity, a monument, record or document.<sup>25</sup> This double meaning of the term is illustrated by Isidore of Seville, whose definition of history may be taken as an expansion of the semantic possibilities concentrated in the classical formula *memoria rerum gestarum*.

Haec disciplina ad Grammaticam pertinet, quia quidquid dignum memoria est litteris mandatur. Historiae autem ideo monumenta dicuntur, eo quod memoriam tribuant rerum gestarum.<sup>26</sup>

History, as an intellectual discipline, concerns itself with whatever is worthy of memory; here *memoria* signifies an act of intellection, the recollection of the past by the historian or — for Isidore is not specific — by the reader of works of history. Histories, on the other hand, the individual writings in which such recollection is fixed, provide a record ('memoriam tribuant') of anterior events.

The first word of Gottfried's poem is 'gedachte', from *gedenken*, 'to remember'. The prologue begins (and here I prefer the reading of most of the manuscripts to Ranke's edition):

Gedaechte man ir ze guote niht,  
von den der werlde guot geschiht,  
so waerez allez also niht,  
swaz guotes in der werlde geschiht. (1–4)<sup>27</sup>

Remembrance is evidently a desired attitude, for otherwise whatever good things happen in the world would be as nothing. It is a *topos* in historiography to contrast *memoria* with its opposite *oblivium*: the historian records the past lest it should be forgotten.<sup>28</sup> With Gottfried, however, it is not so clear who ought to be remembering, or what the object of recollection is. Perhaps Gottfried means that it behoves him as an author to record people or things that have benefited the world: Tristan and Isolde or, more likely, their story, which later on in the prologue is presented to the 'edele herzen' with the commendation 'ez ist in sere guot gelesen' (172). Perhaps, in anticipation of the end of the prologue, where literary reception is formulated as a kind of sacred communion between the living and the dead, he means that his public should listen to or read the story in a spirit of pious commemoration, and perhaps he is even insinuating that they should hold dear the memory of him, Gottfried, in recognition of the good he has done them (he describes the efforts of other authors at telling the Tristan story as undertaken 'mir unde der werlt ze guote' (142) and thus deserving of appreciation).<sup>29</sup> I see no reason why he should not mean all of these senses at once. In so far as Gottfried's words intend the recollection by author and public of the story of Tristan and Isolde, literary production and reception alike would be a matter of *gedenken*, of historical consciousness. But the *senemaere* through which the lovers are commemorated does not necessarily represent them as they were in historical reality. By the time Gottfried and his public come to remember them, Tristan, Isolde, and their fate have already passed into and been modified and shaped by the literary tradition of the beneficial love story. The historians' recollection of the past has been subtly transformed into the recollection of literary representations of people who lived in the past.

Towards the end of the prologue Gottfried returns to the theme of commemoration:

von den diz senemaere seit . . .  
 al eine und sin si lange tot,  
 ir süezer name der lebet iedoch . . .  
 wan swa man noch hoeret lesen  
 ir triuwe, ir triuwen reinekeit,  
 ir herzeliep, ir herzeleit,  
 deist aller edelen herzen brot.  
 hie mite so lebet ir beider tot. (211–34)

Long dead though the lovers are, they have been saved from oblivion by the literary tradition, which preserves their *name*, meaning not just their names, but also their renown, the *fama* celebrated by historians and kept alive by their writings.<sup>30</sup> There is a further echo of a historiographic *topos* in Gottfried's wish that the lovers' death should live for ever ('lange und iemer leben'), for the good of the world (224–25); the historians strive to secure for their subject-matter *memoria aeterna* or *perpetua*.<sup>31</sup> Most important of the *topoi* associated with the concept of *memoria* is the claim that what the historian writes down is *dignum memoria*, worthy of commemoration, for this criterion determines what material should be included in a history-book.<sup>32</sup> The preliminary connexion made by Gottfried between the act of remembrance and its object defined as 'swaz guotes in der werlde geschiht' already evokes the notion; later on in the prologue he says of his protagonists:

von den diz senemaere seit,  
 und haeten die durch liebe leit,  
 durch herzewunne senedez clagen  
 in einem herzen niht getragen,  
 son waere ir name und ir geschiht  
 so manegem edelen herzen niht  
 ze saelden noch ze liebe komen. (211–17)

Tristan and Isolde exemplify an ideal amatory practice, and owe their continued celebration in narrative to this fact; their name and story would never have endured were they not worth recollecting. No doubt the quasi-liturgical tone of Gottfried's language in the prologue derives at least in part from his conviction that the story of Tristan and Isolde is a tale truly worth the telling.

Gottfried begins his prologue with the idea of remembrance and in the course of the argument cites *topoi* associated with the concept of *memoria* in history. But he divorces the concept and its topical armature from their legitimate historiographic object, *res gestae*. The entire prologue does not contain any formulation that might be interpreted as a vernacular equivalent or allusion to the Latin term. Gottfried's *gedenken* is brought to bear instead on people or things 'von den der werlde guot geschiht', an indeterminate category so far as its status as historical reality is concerned. Since Tristan and Isolde, people who for Gottfried once existed, are included in this category, the act of remembering must have a

historical dimension, but the identification of the good with the *senemaere* transforms this historical *gedenken* into a literary process. It is therefore permissible to deduce a historiographic intention from Gottfried's unmistakable appropriation of the historians' *memoria*.<sup>33</sup> One need only look at the prologue to the third part of Wace's *Roman de Rou*, thought to have been composed in the early 1170s, in order to see how great the difference is between Gottfried and an unambiguously historiographic programme. Wace begins, like Gottfried, with the theme of remembrance:

Pur remembrer les ancesurs  
 les fez e les diz e les murs . . .  
 deit l'um les livres e les gestes  
 e les estoires lire a festes. (I, 161; lines 1–6)

Unlike Gottfried, Wace spells out the nature of his commemorative project: *memoria rerum gestarum*. Indeed, the entire prologue is an extended commendation of history and the work performed by 'les bons clers ki ecristrent/e les gestes as livres mistrent' (104–05). Without written history and the clerics who are its custodians, the past would be forgotten:

Si l'escripture ne fust faite  
 e puis par clers litte e retraite,  
 mult fussent choses ubliees  
 ki de viez tens sunt trespassees. (7–10)

This is the *topos* 'commemoration saves the past from oblivion' employed in its full historiographical force; not only the former names of places, but Thebes, Babylon, Troy, Nineveh, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Caesar: all would be forgotten without history (11–130). There follows the commonplace that the historian secures *memoria aeterna* for his themes:

Bien entend e cunuis e sai  
 que tuit murrunt e clerc e lai,  
 e que mult ad curte duree  
 enpres la mort lur renumee,  
 si par clerc nen est mis en livre  
 ne poet par el durer ne vivre. (137–42)

The similarities to Gottfried's description of the literary afterlife of Tristan and Isolde are striking: the objects of narration outlive death, because their *fama* ('name', 'renumee') is preserved by literature for ever ('lange und iemer leben', 'durer (n)e vivre'). The difference is that Wace uses this *topos*, and all the others, within the framework of what is essentially the Isidorean definition of history as the recollection and the written transmission of the past; Gottfried on the other hand employs the same commonplaces without an explicit historiographic intention, in the context of narrating a *senemaere*.



HISTORY IN THE POETICS OF THE *SENEMAERE*

The past constitutes a point of departure for Gottfried, whose concern is to narrate a *senemaere*, not to reconstruct history. Over and above the pieces of information directly attributed by him to the *istorje* and the *geste*, it appears that Tristan and Isolde, as well as the other protagonists of the story (if these are indeed the 'lantherren' about whose lives Thomas is said to be so well informed), belong for Gottfried to historical reality, as does the lovers' tragic passion, without which there would be no story: in the prologue Gottfried reasons that if the pair had not actually suffered in love as they did, then their name and their story would not have survived for such a long time (211–17). But no tale is constituted merely by the names of its principal characters or even by its dominant theme; the characters must interact in, and the theme must be developed into a narrative sequence. At this point, it becomes uncertain whether Gottfried considers history to have a hold on the direction taken by his retelling of a traditional theme, for he never implies that entire episodes actually took place as recounted. The love story and its alleged basis in history remain irreducibly distinct, never quite merging.

It would be tempting to conclude that Gottfried is playing fast and loose with history, inventing sources and pretending that his characters lived long ago because otherwise his audience would not accept the truth of what is really a fictional story. In this case, history would perform the function of smokescreen, the ruse of a cunning author who must pay lip-service to the historiographic tradition and thereby forestall his rigorous critics. Such an interpretation is, I think, unsatisfactory, on three counts. First, it obliges us to impute insincerity to Gottfried when we have no clear indication that he does not really believe in the historical existence of Tristan and Isolde. Second, it too readily assumes that the Middle Ages were monolithic in their rejection of poetic figment, when, in fact, the romances of Chrétien or Hartmann suggest a sophisticated appreciation of literary fiction among certain audiences at least. Third, it relegates history to the periphery of Gottfried's poetics, when on the contrary it seems that a form of historical consciousness is at the very centre of his undertaking. One of the keynotes in the prologue is that literary production and reception alike are a matter of commemoration, *gedenken*. Even if Gottfried has diverted the *memoria* of the historians into the non-historiographic project of the *senemaere*, it is still the case that the literary process is initiated by a turn to the past, when Tristan and Isolde are supposed to have lived. That would mean that history, whether it is an imaginary construction or not, functions as the necessary precondition of Gottfried's literary enterprise. This suggests that we should interpret the asymptotic relationship between history and the love story not as evasive disingenuousness on Gottfried's part, but — so I have implied throughout this chapter — as the sign of a poetics in which history provides the indispensable

raw material for a process whose output, a love story, does not belong among the genres of historiography. There would be no need to see the two things, history and the love story, as incompatible: since such stories are the imaginary or experimental transformation of the initial data retrieved from the archive of the past, the good narrator of love stories must also be a conscientious archivist. That, to my mind, is what the archival topics in *Tristan* are intended to express. Thus Thomas, the 'aventure meister', is praised above all other storytellers for diligently studying 'aller der lantherren leben'; thus Gottfried, whose ultimate aim is to serve his public of *edele herzen* with a *senemaere*, presents himself as the careful reader of an *istorje* and a *geste*.

An interim characterization of Gottfried's poetics is to describe it as the use of history without historiographic intentions. In the following chapters, I shall try to refine this working definition and, by examining the models that possibly underlie it, set it in a literary historical context.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Phyllis: *Heroides*, II; Canacea: *Heroides*, III; Biblis, *Metamorphoses*, IX; Dido is also in *Heroides*, VII. See Peter Ganz, 'Tristan, Isolde und Ovid: Zu Gottfrieds "Tristan" Z. 17182ff.', in *Mediaevalia litteraria: Festschrift für Helmut de Boor zum 80. Geburtstag*, edited by U. Hennig and H. Kolb (Munich, 1971), pp. 397–412.
2. The distinction between character and story is not always made by Carl Lofmark, *The Authority of the Source in Middle High German Narrative Poetry*: 'Gottfried, too, sees the heroes of romance as real people who lived long ago' (on lines 12320–25); 'Heinrich von Freiberg plainly speaks of Parzival, Iwein, Gawain and others as historical figures. Courtly society might not believe all they had heard about such characters, but neither did their stories belong to the realm of fiction. The genre to which they belonged was history' (pp. 38–39).
3. *Accessus Ovidii Epistolarum*, in *Accessus ad auctores*, edited by R. B. C. Huygens (1970 edition), pp. 31–33 (p. 31).
4. According to the material collected by Hugo Suolahti, Gottfried's *Tristan* contains the earliest attestation for MHG *istorje*, and the only one for *geste*: 'Der französische Einfluss auf die deutsche Sprache im dreizehnten Jahrhundert', 2 parts, *MSNH*, 8 (1929), 1–310, and 10 (1933), 1–485 (part I, pp. 96, 106–07). See also Joachim Knappe, 'Historie' in *Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit: Begriffs- und Gattungsuntersuchungen im interdisziplinären Kontext*, *Saecula Spiritalia*, 10 (Baden-Baden, 1984), pp. 111–15.
5. On Gottfried's source references in general, see Albert Blumenröder, 'Die Quellenberufung in der mittelhochdeutschen Dichtung', pp. 19–20, 49–50; Ilse Clausen, 'Der Erzähler in Gottfrieds *Tristan*' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Kiel, 1970), pp. 27–33; Uwe Pörksen, *Der Erzähler im mittelhochdeutschen Epos*, pp. 61–75.
6. Ferdinand Lot, 'Gormond et Isembard: Recherches sur les fondements historiques de cette épopée', *Romania*, 27 (1898), 35–43, and *Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas*, edited by Joseph Bédier, SATF, 2 vols (Paris, 1902–05), I, 72–77.
7. Apart from Gottfried, the only other source from which we can reconstruct Thomas's account of Gormund is the Old Norse saga, which relates that the tribute England pays to Ireland had previously been rendered to Rome (*Tristrams Saga ok Isondar*, edited by Eugen Kölbing, (Heilbronn, 1878), p. 30); the Middle English *Sir Tristrem* provides no background to the tribute.
8. Ernst Erich Metzner, 'Wandalen im angelsächsischen Bereich? Gormundus Rex Africanorum und die Gens Hestingorum', *Beiträge* (Tübingen series), 95 (1973), 246–60.
9. I.12–II.4. Also in the *Roman de Brut*, lines 779–1410.
10. Knappe, p. 115, writes of Gottfried's designation of his sources by the Latin 'Gattungsname historia': 'Wenn er ihn verwendet, spricht er seinen Quellen damit besondere Dignität zu'.
11. See, for instance, Gustav Ehrismann, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*, II, 2, i: *Blütezeit* (Munich, 1927), p. 302: 'Im Prolog 131–166 nennt G. seinen

- Gewährsmann: Viele haben die Geschichte von Tristan erzählt, aber nur wenige haben sie richtig erzählt, in der Weise wie *Thomas v. Britanje*, der sie in britischen Chroniken gelesen hat'.
12. There is some controversy among scholars about the appropriate translation of the verb *lesen*, which occurs six times in Gottfried's account of his story's relationship to tradition (132, 134, 147, 152, 165, 167 — in the last occurrence as gerund, 'min lesen'). According to the *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 1, cols 1007b–1008a, the MHG verb can mean 'to read', 'to recite' and thus 'to tell, narrate'. In lines 152, 165, and 167 the context makes it clear that *lesen* must mean 'to read' or 'reading', while in the remaining occurrences the translation 'to tell' makes better sense. This is the solution adopted by the *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch* and by some of the editors of Gottfried (see p. 123, for full bibliographical details): Peter Ganz, nn. to lines 132, 152, 165 (thus revising Bechstein, who insisted that line 132 should be translated 'to read'), Gottfried Weber, p. 549, fn. 10, and Rüdiger Krohn, in the parallel translation to his text. In his translation of Gottfried into modern English, A. T. Hatto also follows this pattern, though with the exception of rendering the verb in line 134 as 'to read' (p. 43). Against this consensus, Werner Schröder, 'Die von Tristande hant gelesen: Quellenhinweise und Quellenkritik im "Tristan" Gottfrieds von Straßburg', *ZfdA*, 104 (1975), 307–13, argues that *lesen* should be translated as 'to read' throughout the passage. He points out that the *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch* does not explain why, if *lesen* has its NHG meaning in lines 152, 165, and 167, it should not also have it in the preceding occurrences; he also claims that Gottfried does not criticize his rivals for being bad narrators, on the contrary, 'si sprachen wol' (140), and that when he maintains 'daz si niht rehte haben gelesen' (147), he means that they did not trouble to read reliable sources. To the first of Schröder's arguments I would object that in lines 132, 134, 147 the context is surely one of telling, not reading, stories (consider 'bemaeren' in line 125, 'sage' in line 137, 'sprachen', 'gesprochen', lines 140, 149, all words expressing narration rather than archive study). His second argument rests on the assumption that Gottfried distinguishes between *sprechen* as denoting the act of telling and *lesen* as meaning the research that goes into a story; that Gottfried makes no such distinction is demonstrated by his usage in the lines 'daz si niht rehte haben gelesen,/daz ist, als ich iu sage, gewesen:/sin sprachen in der rihte niht' (147–49), where good sense surely requires *lesen* and *sprechen* to mean the same thing.
  13. See Tony Hunt, 'The Rhetorical Background to the Arthurian Prologue', in *Arthurian Romance: Seven Essays*, edited by D. D. R. Owen (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 3, and also Lambertus Okken, *Kommentar zum Tristan-Roman Gottfrieds von Strassburg*, 1, 19: 'Wie ein Normal-Historiker seiner Zeit will der Dichter gearbeitet haben, und wie ein Anbieter, der seinen Kunden die Konkurrenz verleiden möchte, gebärdet er sich im Vorwort'.
  14. For instance, in the following examples collected by Ulrich Mölk, *Französische Literaturästhetik: nos iv (Aiol), v (Destruction de Rome), ix (Anseis de Carthage), xxii (Antioche)*.
  15. See Georges Duby, 'Remarques sur la littérature générale en France aux XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> siècles', in *Hommes et structures du Moyen Âge: Recueil d'articles* (Paris, 1973), pp. 287–98; for the Empire see Hans Patze, 'Adel und Stifterchronik: Frühformen territorialer Geschichtsschreibung im hochmittelalterlichen Reich', *BfdL*, 100 (1964), 8–81 and 101 (1965), 67–128. Thomas himself says that others who tell the story of Tristan are wrong, because they do not follow a certain Breri 'Ky solt les gestes e les cuntus/De tuz les reis, de tuz les cuntus/Ki orent esté en Bretaingne' (*Les Fragments du Roman de Tristan: Poème du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, edited by Bartina H. Wind, TLF, 92 (Geneva and Paris, 1960): Douce Fragment, lines 849–51), and it is possible that these remarks provided the model for Gottfried's lines 'und an britunschen buochen las/aller der lantherren leben'; see Bédier, II, 38, and Schröder, p. 315.
  16. Christoph Huber goes too far in his reading of lines 151–54 in my opinion when he concludes: 'So sind Tristan und Isolde Helden, die gelebt haben, und ihre Autoren Geschichtsschreiber' (*Gottfried von Straßburg, "Tristan und Isolde": Eine Einführung*, p. 36).
  17. Gerd-Dietmar Peschel, *Prolog-Programm und Fragment-Schluß in GOTFRITs Tristanroman*, Erlanger Studien, 9 (Erlangen, 1976), p. 82.
  18. In *Sir Tristrem*, edited by George P. McNeill, Scottish Text Society (Edinburgh and London, 1886), line 74 refers to the hero's father as 'þe child of ermonie'; according to *Tristrams Saga ok Ísöndar* (ed. Kölbing), p. 27, Kanelangres (as Tristan's father is called) comes from 'Bretland', in which country there is a city named 'Ermenia'.
  19. D. H. Green, 'Oral Poetry and Written Composition', p. 211. Hatto suggests that Gottfried 'added a "p" to avoid confusion with Armenia, i.e. Armenia in Asia Minor, well known from the crusades' (translation of Gottfried, p. 357n.).
  20. Blumenröder, p. 49; Helmüt de Boor, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. II: *Die höfische Literatur: Vorbereitung, Blüte, Ausklang 1170–1250* (Munich, 1953), II, 129; Kurt Ruh, *Höfische Epik des deutschen Mittelalters*, II, 208–09.

21. Ruh, *Höfische Epik*, II, 208: 'Daß Gottfried nicht nur in französischen, sondern auch in lateinischen Büchern nach seinem Stoffe suchte, darf nicht überraschen, wenn man sich vergegenwärtigt, daß bedeutende epische Stoffe lateinisch tradiert waren, so Troja- und Alexanderroman, König Arthur in Geoffreys von Monmouth "Historia Regum Britanniae" . . . oder dessen "Vita Merlini".'
22. If 'britunsch' designates geographical provenance, then the books that come from Britain or Brittany might be in either French or Latin; on the other hand, when Gottfried uses *britunsch* again in line 3627, it is plain from the context that he means 'the Breton language'. Ottmar Carls surely strains the notion of stylistic variation when he maintains that *britunsch*, *walsch*, and *latin* are 'Wortvariationen' of the same thing ('Die Auffassung der Wahrheit im "Tristan" Gottfrieds von Straßburg', p. 18).
23. An eighth-century fragment *De historia* observes: 'verae res sunt, si rerum acturam vetustas et obscuritas diligenter exploretur'; quoted by Samuel Jaffe, 'Gottfried von Strassburg and the Rhetoric of History', in *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric*, edited by James J. Murphy (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1978), p. 316, fn. 40.
24. Walter Haug, *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter*, p. 208: 'Wie man immer dieses literarische Spiel beurteilen mag, Gottfried schafft sich damit ebenfalls genügend Freiraum für die eigene Version.'
25. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, VIII, cols 665–84.
26. *Etymologiae*, I.41.2. The formula *memoria rerum gestarum* is used to describe the pursuit of history in, for instance, Sallust's prologue to his *Bellum Iugurthinum*, edited by J. C. Rolfe (London, 1921), IV.1 and 6.
27. In Ranke's edition the first two lines read 'Gedaechte mans ze guote niht/von dem der werlde guot geschicht', with a masculine or neuter singular pronoun as object of 'gedaechte'. None of the MSS has this reading: in line 1, MHWBNRSP have 'ir' ('der' E), and in line 2 all the MSS have the plural 'den', with the exception of HS ('dem') and M, which omits the line altogether (see the apparatus in the edition by Karl Marold, revised by Werner Schröder (Berlin, 1977)). Ranke evidently preferred HS for line 2 and consequently was led to emend 'ir' in line 1 to the enclitic singular '-s', for which change the justification must have been that the word 'ir' in M appears to be a correction of an original 'des'. (See the apparatus in Ranke's edition of selections from Gottfried, and also Peschel, pp. 26–28, whose re-examination of the MSS reveals that 'ir' in M might equally well be a correction of original 'der', which would be an additional reason for rejecting Ranke's emendation.) The editions of Karl Marold and Reinhold Bechstein, *Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters*, 7–8, fourth edition, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1923), and the revision of the latter by Peter Ganz, *Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters*, Neue Folge, 4, 2 vols (Wiesbaden, 1978), adopt the reading with the plural pronoun.
28. See Gertrud Simon, 'Untersuchungen zur Topik der Widmungsbriefe mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreiber bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts', part II, p. 98, fn. 20.
29. Further possibilities are considered by Peschel, pp. 26–27.
30. The connexion between recollection, renown, and oblivion is exemplified in the preface to the early twelfth-century *Chronicae Polorum*, quoted by Simon, part I, p. 82: 'Numquam enim fama vel militia Romanorum vel Gallorum sic celeberrima per mundum haberetur, nisi scriptorum testimoniis memoriae posterum et imitationi servaretur'.
31. Expressed for instance in the twelfth-century *Annales* of Vincent of Prague, cited by Simon, part I, p. 82, fn. 162, and part II, p. 99, fn. 28: 'Multorum autem fortium gesta virorum ex venerabili scriptorum memoria perpetuum durare, tamquam nuper sint facta, est certissimum'; 'excellantiae itaque vestre gesta regalia scriptis digna . . . ut eterna potiantur memoria, scriptis mandare dignum duximus'.
32. Simon, part I, p. 78; Marie Schulz, *Die Lehre von der historischen Methode bei den Geschichtsschreibern des Mittelalters*, pp. 69–74.
33. Compare Jaffe, pp. 301–18, who presents Gottfried unproblematically as a would-be historian and argues that his exordial technique belongs to a historiographic tradition whose great model is the prologues of Sallust.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### POETA ET HISTORIOGRAPHUS: THE EXAMPLE OF LUCAN

Among the Latin writers most read and studied in the Middle Ages was Lucan. From Carolingian times onwards he had a secure place in the canon of school authors; the large number of manuscripts of the *Pharsalia*, many of which contain marginal glosses, reflects how widely he was read. His work was much excerpted and quoted and was frequently exploited as a treasure-house of historical *exempla*; its influence even extended beyond the world of Latin letters to the vernacular epic.<sup>1</sup>

The *Pharsalia*, or *Bellum civile* as Lucan's epic is more properly called, is a literary account of the civil war between Pompey and Caesar, a theme taken from Roman history, which Lucan has at many points reconstructed with painstaking accuracy, although in the final instance he sees his role as that of poet who need not be bound by historical fact; he calls that man 'Invidus . . . Qui vates ad vera vocat'.<sup>2</sup> Modern scholars have emphasized how Lucan's poetry transcends — but does not negate — the history of the civil war in order to produce a tragic vision of the loss of Republican liberty, a vision of history that has the status of 'fiction based on reality'.<sup>3</sup> The hybrid quality of the *Pharsalia* was also recognized by some of its medieval readers. Conrad of Hirsau, in his *Dialogus super auctores*, an elementary guide to literature for schoolboys written during the first half of the twelfth century, presents Lucan as a 'poeta' who is nevertheless 'verax in historiae veritate'; later in the same century Arnulf of Orleans, a teacher of literature at the famous arts school in that city and author of a commentary on the *Pharsalia*, says of Lucan 'non est iste poeta purus, sed poeta et historiographus'.<sup>4</sup>

Lucan, who manages to be both poet and historian without the one role annulling the other, is a model for the historical writing of Otto of Freising in the twelfth century. In the preface to the *Gesta Frederici*, a chronicle of the deeds of Barbarossa, he justifies digression from the 'plana hystorica dictio' by appealing to the examples of Virgil and Lucan, who mixed 'res gestae' with 'res fabulosae';<sup>5</sup> his *Chronica* is a universal history written, as he puts it, 'in modum

tragediae'.<sup>6</sup> Recently, Fritz Peter Knapp has described the entry of oral tradition into the world of the *litterati* that takes place with the writing down of the *Nibelungenlied* in terms of an assimilation to this same model of poeticized, tragic history: the end of the Burgundians, like the destruction of the Roman republic, is lamented as a catastrophe of world-historical dimensions.<sup>7</sup> Might the example of Lucan, the author of an epic based on, but not reducible to history, not also be relevant to the poetics of another contemporary *litteratus* writing in the vernacular: Gottfried, the author of a tragic, commemorative *senemaere* for which, I argued in the last chapter, history is the precondition?

If I mention Otto, the *Nibelungenlied* and Gottfried together, it is not to suggest that they are a homogeneous group of tragic historians in the mould of Lucan. They have their different starting-points and intentions. Otto's purpose is to place poetry at the service of historical cognition; according to him, Lucan's fictional digressions are intended to disclose 'intima quedam phylosophiae secreta', the deep meaning of history in other words.<sup>8</sup> The vernacular works do not have the same philosophical pretensions, and one would not want to press any parallel between *Tristan* and the *Nibelungenlied* too far; both may narrate a tragic history, but in Gottfried it is the history of two lovers that is central, not the fate of an entire people. But what unites all these authors is that in one way or another they could be said to be experimenting with history, and that Lucan, who around 1200 is the canonical example for any *litteratus* who attempts this, may be adduced as the authoritative background against which such an experiment is conducted. The aim of this chapter will be to show how Lucan's poeticization of *res gestae*, as his medieval interpreters understood it, can shed light on Gottfried's non-historiographic use of history.

It is unlikely that Gottfried, that '*clericus par excellence*',<sup>9</sup> would not have read the *Pharsalia* at school, and it is therefore probable that he was familiar with grammar teachers' discussions of Lucan's anomalous standing as *poeta et historiographus*. However, the framework in which I propose to discuss the relationship between Gottfried and Lucan is not that of model and imitation. Direct imitation of Lucan by Gottfried is in any case out of the question; the latter author's task is, after all, to tell the story of Tristan and Isolde, and that leaves him little scope for making material borrowings from a writer whose theme is the civil war in Rome.<sup>10</sup> Nor would it be exactly right to say that the medieval tradition of commentary on Lucan provided Gottfried with a theory of 'fiction based on reality' that he applied in his own work. Theory and application are inappropriate terms, for two reasons. Firstly, sources such as *accessus* and *scholia*, where most of the discussion of the *Pharsalia* is to be found, are not concerned with making pure theoretical statements: these documents are not *artes poeticae*, full of precepts for the would-be writer, but pedagogical aids, offering preliminary guidance to the student of literature, and their poetics is accordingly rudimentary, geared to the pragmatic business of describing the

most striking peculiarities of each of the various curriculum authors.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the sources that describe Lucan as poet and historian neither apply a general theory of a mixed epic genre in order to explain him, nor do they develop such a theory from his example. The designation *poeta et historiographus* lies more in the way of an ad hoc classification aimed at getting schoolboys to grasp the point that, compared to other curriculum authors, Lucan is a difficult case to accommodate within the system of genres; it seems, moreover, that there never was a theory of a mixed epic genre, combining fiction and history, independent of the canonical anomaly that is Lucan.<sup>12</sup> My dominant reason, however, for rejecting the pairs model and imitation, or theory and application, is that a discussion of Gottfried and Lucan needs to include a third term: the vernacular tradition. In Chapter Two we traced the emergence in vernacular literature of an experimental or fictional mode of narrative alongside the archival and historiographic tradition; independently of Latin and Lucan, the vernacular had created its own opportunities for conducting an experiment with history. The vernacular gives Gottfried his material and a set of poetic options; he, working in the vernacular, situates himself within its distinctive horizons. All the poets of the literary excursus — Gottfried's tradition — write and sing in German, not Latin. It is therefore necessary to give up the model of dependency and its associated line of questioning (does Gottfried try to be like Lucan?) in favour of an interactive model that situates Gottfried in dialogue with Latin and the vernacular and asks how certain Latin traditions available to an educated writer are appropriated in a vernacular context.

In defining Lucan as a canonical anomaly the grammarians are obliged to discuss the difference between fiction and history as well as the interrelation of the two terms in a single text. They therefore provide categories that could have helped Gottfried respond to the problems posed by narrating in a tradition where there is a choice between archival and experimental poetics. We must take a fairly close look at the medieval reception of the *Pharsalia* in order to form a clear idea of what these categories and their interrelation are.

#### PATTERNS IN THE MEDIEVAL RECEPTION OF THE *PHARSALIA*

The confrontation of the terms *poeta* and *historiographus* had been topical in Lucan criticism ever since the first publication of the *Pharsalia* in A.D. 62 or 63. Certain of Lucan's contemporaries evidently considered him unworthy of the title of *poeta* because according to them he had done no more than write a history of the civil war in verse.<sup>13</sup> These critics found fault with Lucan because he had dispensed with the intervention of the gods in human affairs that characterizes epics such as the *Aeneid* and had failed to dress up the bare facts of history in mythological trappings; these criticisms, which depend on a very narrow conception of what epic entails, 'can be summed up by saying that Lucan's fault

was that he was not Virgil'.<sup>14</sup> This condemnation of Lucan as a mere historian — for condemnation it was — endured down the following centuries with remarkable persistence, presumably kept alive by the teaching of classical authors in the schools; Servius in his commentary on the *Aeneid* declares that 'Lucanus . . . in numero poetarum esse non meruit, quia videtur historiam composuisse, non poema', and from there the verdict makes its way into the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville, who reproduces it almost verbatim: 'Lucanus . . . in numero poetarum non ponitur, quia videtur historias composuisse, non poema'.<sup>15</sup> Servius and Isidore enjoyed considerable influence in the Middle Ages, and were it not for that, it is likely that the controversy surrounding Lucan would have been long forgotten;<sup>16</sup> as it is, the authoritative verdicts of these two commentators, whose impersonal tone ('Lucanus videtur, non ponitur') suggests that they are themselves reproducing an item of fossilized school knowledge, were able to provoke a live response among medieval *grammatici* who, when they resolved the old question *an Lucanus sit poeta?* in the manner of Arnulf or Conrad, showed themselves to be more sensitive to Lucan's qualities than either antiquity or the Renaissance.<sup>17</sup>

There are medieval sources that regurgitate the traditional verdict: Lucan is a historian, not a poet. The *Commenta Bernensia*, a tenth-century collection of glosses to the *Pharsalia*, state that 'Lucanus dicitur a plerisque non esse in numero poetarum, quia omnino historiam sequitur, quod poeticae arte non convenit';<sup>18</sup> a hundred years or so later, Anselm of Laon, whose *Glosae super Lucanum* are preserved in a twelfth-century manuscript, repeats the judgment, invoking the etymology of the word *poesis* in support: 'Notandum etiam, quod iste non proprie dicitur poeta, cum poesis dicitur fictio'.<sup>19</sup> Since poetry is by definition invention, Lucan, who narrates historical events, cannot be a poet. The tone of distance in 'Lucanus dicitur a pleris' or 'non proprie dicitur' suggests that the commentators were not in wholehearted agreement with these judgments but were simply rendering due respect to the traditional verdict made authoritative by Servius and Isidore; indeed both the *Commenta Bernensia* and Anselm are prepared to consider Lucan as a poet in his actual practice, explaining many aspects of his technique with reference to poetic, not historiographic, norms. Thus the *Commenta Bernensia* excuse as 'poetica licentia' Lucan's substitution of the South wind for the North wind in the line 'Propulit ut classem velis cedentibus Auster' (III, 1), or the idea expressed in 'Dat poenas maioris aquae' (IV, 143) that a river might be punished (Usener, pp. 90, 126), while Anselm immediately qualifies his dictum with an acknowledgment that Lucan does indeed invent on occasion ('in descriptionibus locorum fingit, inde vocatus est poeta'), and in the *Glosae* makes repeated use of phrases such as 'solent poetae' in order to explain diverse aspects of Lucan's practice: the structure of the prologue, the reference to past events as though they belong to the future, the technique of making one book run smoothly into the next, the occasional



inclusion of a fable for the sake of delight.<sup>20</sup> This position, according to which Lucan is a historian *de jure* and a poet *de facto*, may be termed 'Isidorean': although Isidore is one of the chief sponsors of the view that Lucan is a historian, his verdict is purely formal, for elsewhere in the *Etymologiae* when he wants to illustrate a point with a quotation from Lucan, he will often introduce it with the words 'de quo poeta' or 'poeta meminit'.<sup>21</sup>

An anonymous *Accessus Lucani* preserved in the twelfth-century Tegernsee collection of introductions to Latin school authors reverses the traditional judgment that Lucan is a historian and not a poet.<sup>22</sup> In words that sound as though they are meant as a riposte to Anselm, this commentator declares 'notandum quoque, quod iste proprie dicitur poeta' and, under the rubric 'qualitas operis', attempts to apply Suetonius's definition of epic poetry as 'divinarum rerum et heroicarum humanarumque comprehensio' to Lucan:

metrum istud est heroycum, quia constat ex humanis divinisque personis continens vera cum fictis. . . Ex humanis constat personis, scilicet ex Iulio Cesare et Pompeio; aliquando etiam de divinis in hoc agitur, continet et vera quaedam ad phisicam et quaedam ad historiam cum falsis et fabulosis.<sup>23</sup>

Servius, in the *accessus* to his *Aeneid* commentary, describes what he calls the 'qualitas carminis' of Virgil's epic like this:

metrum heroicum et actus mixtus, ubi et poeta loquitur et alios inducit loquentes. est autem heroicum quod constat ex divinis humanisque personis, continens vera cum fictis. (*In Vergilii carmina*, I, 4)

It is clear that the Tegernsee *accessus* has copied Servius, but not as clumsily as Franz Quadlbauer believes when he remarks: 'Man sieht, wie gläubig man die Alten ausschreibt! Die personae divinae sind brav für Lucan übernommen, obwohl er in den *Pharsalia* auf den Götterapparat verzichtet'.<sup>24</sup> Although Lucan did indeed do without the active involvement of the gods in human affairs and was therefore considered by some of his contemporaries not to be a poet, the *Pharsalia* still contains enough in the way of mythological allusion, magic, dreams and divination to satisfy medieval expectations of poetic figment.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the author of the Tegernsee *accessus* has tried to adapt the Servian formula to the peculiarities of the *Pharsalia*, isolating Lucan's treatment of Roman history and 'phisica', natural history, as constitutive of the true, that is non-poetic, element in the work.<sup>26</sup> In its overall structure, the *Accessus Lucani* is not modelled on Servius, nor indeed are the other *accessus* in the Tegernsee collection, with one exception.<sup>27</sup> All this suggests not blind copying, but deliberate selection in pursuit of a polemical end, quoting Servius against Servius in order to reclassify Lucan as a poet by — however crudely — 'Virgilianizing' him.

This reversal of the traditional verdict remains within and indeed affirms the inherited logic of critical debate on Lucan ('if Lucan is not a poet, then he is a

historian' or the converse); when, however, the Tegernsee *accessus* points out that the *Pharsalia* contains a mixture of historical and natural historical truth on the one hand and poetic figment, 'falsa et fabulosa', on the other, it has in effect abandoned the traditional way of thinking about Lucan in terms of strict alternatives and made of him a *poeta et historiographus*, even though this is not expressed on the level of nomenclature. Likewise, Conrad of Hirsau calls Lucan a poet, yet singles out for praise not only eminently poetic attributes such as his sublime style and the beauty of his diction, but also his truthfulness as a historian.<sup>28</sup> For Conrad, the term *poeta* can accommodate all this; towards the beginning of the *Dialogus*, where he is explaining basic literary critical vocabulary to his pupil, he declares 'Porro poeta factor vel formator dicitur, eo quod pro veris falsa dicat vel falsis interdum vera commisceat'; whether the name of poet is intended to have the same scope in the *Accessus Lucani* is a moot point.<sup>29</sup>

More than any of the other commentators we have been looking at, Arnulf of Orleans recognizes and reflects on the fact that the *Pharsalia* is an anomaly when compared to the works of other school authors, and that its generic classification presents certain difficulties. In the *accessus* to his Lucan commentary, he sets up a distinction between pure poets on the one hand and the complex case of Lucan on the other:

Sicut Iuvenalis purus est satiricus, Terencius purus comedius, Horacius in odis purus lyricus, non est iste poeta purus, sed poeta et historiographus. Nam historiam suam prosequitur et nichil fingit, unde poeta non simpliciter dicitur, sed poeta et historiographus. Nam si aliquid fictitii inducit, non ex sua parte sed ex aliorum hoc inducit, apponit vel ut perhibent, vel ut dicunt, vel ut memorant. (*Glosule*, p. 4)

It is to Arnulf that we owe the name for Lucan's anomalous complexity or impurity: 'poeta et historiographus'. Each of these roles is correlated with fiction: where invention is absent ('nichil fingit'), we have Lucan the historian, and where it is present ('aliquid fictitii inducit' — we shall return shortly to discuss the meaning of this), the poet.

In the commentary proper Arnulf refers several times to Lucan's allusive technique, his avoidance of positive statement, as a specifically poetic trait, as when, for instance, he gives three possible explanations of the movement of the tides 'more philosophi, sed nullam solvit aut affirmat more poete', or when he touches on the myth of Phaethon's sisters, supposedly metamorphosed into the poplars growing along the banks of the River Po ('non affirmat verum esse ut historiographus sed tangit ut poeta'), or again when he describes how Taurus had to extend his hoof so that Ethiopia would be covered by a sign of the Zodiac, so remote is that country ('poetice dictum est, ne opponatur').<sup>30</sup> This principle of poetic agnosticism in matters usually demanding scientific rigour is given its explicit formulation by a commentator of Lucan in the eleventh century: 'proprium est poetarum, ut non unam sectam solummodo, sed diversorum opiniones suo carmini inserant'.<sup>31</sup>

## FICTION AND THE SUPERNATURAL: THE 'POETA-VATES' COMPLEX

The complexity of Lucan's poetics has left its mark on all the medieval commentaries we have examined, including the ones that operate with simple, mutually exclusive definitions: even the most traditionalist group, represented by the *Commenta Bernensia* and Anselm of Laon, acknowledges Lucan's poetic qualities de facto. Governing all the permutations of the terms *poeta* and *historiographus* is the notion of *factio*: its absence is the sign of the historian, its presence indicates the poet. The historians themselves share this way of drawing distinctions; Theoderic of Fleury comments that 'Lucanus novimus ob hoc poetae nomen non promeruisse quod absque fictione, quae convenit poetis, veritatem prosecutus est Punicae historiae'; the anonymous author of a twelfth-century adaptation into Latin hexameters of Dares Phrygius's *Historia de excidio Troiae* complains that 'historiam Troye figmenta poetica turbant', but reassures his readers: 'Non ego sum, quoniam nil fingo, poeta vocandus'.<sup>32</sup> The following sections are devoted to the concept of *factio*, on which the distinction between poet and historian turns.

The *Accessus Lucani* isolates pagan mythology and superstition as the specifically fictional component of the mixture of 'vera cum fictis' that makes up the *Pharsalia*. Arnulf appears to mean the same thing when in his *accessus* he says that Lucan is a poet to the extent that he introduces an element of fiction ('aliquid fictitii') into his otherwise historical narrative, an element that, moreover, he has not invented himself ('non ex sua parte') but has taken from others ('ex aliorum parte'). It is worth emphasizing this, because it means that the poet does not have to be personally responsible for his inventions in order for them to count as such: the quality of the writing, rather than the fact that it cannot be attributed to any source, defines it as fictional. According to Arnulf, Lucan indicates his indebtedness to others in such passages with the phrases 'ut perhibent', 'ut dicunt', 'ut memorant'. Such marked passages might be, for instance, Lucan's mention of an augur who is supposed to have foretold the significance of the battle at Pharsalia, 'Euganeo, si vera fides memorantibus, augur/Colle sedens' (vii, 192–93), or the episode of the arrival of Cato and his men at the temple of Jupiter Ammon, reputed by some to be an oracular seat, which Cato however, true to his stoic principles, declines to consult:

Ventum erat ad templum, Libycis quod gentibus unum  
 Inculti Garamantes habent. Stat sortiger illic  
 Iuppiter, ut memorant. (ix, 511–13)

Both of these examples have prophecy as their theme, and if it is these and similar passages that Arnulf has in mind when he refers to the element of invention in Lucan's work, then what he calls 'aliquid fictitii' is more or less the same thing as what the *Accessus Lucani* terms 'falsa et fabulosa'.<sup>33</sup>

The identification of fiction with themes of pagan mythology and divination is consistent with the idea of the poet as divinely inspired visionary, an idea that goes back as far as Plato.<sup>34</sup> An important source for this doctrine in the Middle Ages is, once again, Isidore. According to him, poetry began as ceremonial speech in honour of the gods, and even after its scope had widened considerably, to embrace lyric, tragedy, comedy and satire, this origin in cult and ritual was not altogether obscured; along with all the other genres of poetry listed by Isidore, there remained one that was concerned with the gods and whose authors are called 'theologici'.<sup>35</sup> The intimacy between poet and divinity is also expressed by another name, that of *vates*: not only does the poet sing of the gods, he is a prophet inspired by them. Isidore explains the etymology of this appellation, common in Latin:

proinde poetae Latine vates olim, scripta eorum vaticinia dicebantur, quod vi quadam et quasi vesania in scribendo commoverentur . . . Etiam per furorem divini eodem erant nomine, quia et ipsi quoque pleraque versibus efferebant. (*Etymologiae*, viii.7.3)

Given this primeval connexion between poetry and religion, it is understandable that medieval teachers of literature should single out the mythological references in Lucan as evidence of his poetic quality. The notion of the poet's divine inspiration is invoked by both Anselm and Arnulf in their glosses on the opening lines of the *Pharsalia* 'Bella per Emathios plus quam civilia campos, / Iusque datum sceleri canimus'. Anselm explains that Lucan uses the plural form of the verb 'quia poetae non dicuntur loqui suo spiritu sed divino' or, in the words of Arnulf, 'quia poete non ore proprio tantum loquuntur sed de spiritus revelacione'.<sup>36</sup>

Mythology, magic, dreams, and divination, all these manifestations of superstition and the supernatural, which make up what I call the *poeta-vates* complex and go a long way in Lucan towards compensating for the active intervention of the gods missed by certain of his contemporaries, are by no means redundant ornament in the *Pharsalia*. On the contrary, they form the interpretative mantle of history, infusing meaning and structure into the fabric of events (Morford, pp. 59–60, 70). To give just one example, the words supposedly uttered by the augur before the battle at Pharsalia 'Venit summa dies, geritur res maxima' (vii, 195) impart hierarchy and therefore sense to the linear narration of successive occurrences, leaving no doubt that this battle is the decisive climax about which the destiny of Rome turns; on that day, Lucan laments, a whole world died, and liberty was overthrown along with Pompey (vii, 617, 638–46; see Marti, 'Tragic History', p. 202). Set against this portrayal of catastrophe, the question of whether there really was an augur present to speak these prophetic words becomes of secondary importance.

In *Tristan* too there is a comparable element of what might be described in the language of the *Accessus Lucani* as 'divinae personae', 'ficta', 'falsa et fabulosa', or

what Arnulf would consider to be the introduction of a fictional component into the account of historical events. In the literary excursus, Gottfried refers to the 'gotinne Minne' who dwells on 'Zytheron' (4808–10); Mount Cithaeron is one of the traditional seats of the Muses, who are also mentioned by Gottfried in this passage along with an entire host of mythological figures: Apollo on Mount Helicon (4865, 4871), the Sirens (4872), Orpheus (4790), Vulcan (4932), Cassandra (4950), and the fountain of Pegasus (4731), the last named being an allusion to the streams Aganippe and Hippocrene, which according to Greek mythology sprang forth from under Pegasus's hoof on Mount Helicon and conferred poetic inspiration on whoever drank their waters. The goddess Minne is mentioned again as the tutelary deity of the cave of lovers (16722–23; 17222–23), and the Sirens make another appearance when Gottfried likens the effect of Isolde's music-making to them (8087–89, 8108–11). In addition to these figures drawn from classical mythology, there are the representatives of an indigenous tradition: the fairies who endowed the poet Bliigger von Steinach with his genius (4700–04) and whose land is called Avalon (15808), also the home of the magical dog Petitcreiu, who was presented by a goddess to Duke Gilan (15806–10).

From a modern scholarly point of view, Gottfried's allusions to classical mythology are not strictly accurate; he confuses Mount Cithaeron with Cythera in Crete, in classical times one of the principal centres of the cult of Aphrodite, and equates Muses with Sirens ('Apolle und die Camenen,/der oren niun Sirenen'; 4871–72). It is also striking how fluid the boundary is between classical and indigenous, pagan and Christian elements. The Muses are not only conflated with the Sirens, but with the angelic choirs as well (Gottfried hopes that his prayer for inspiration will be heard in the 'himelkoeren' (4906) of Mount Helicon), and the distinction between goddess and fairy is blurred: it is not clear whether the 'gottinne' (15809) who gave Petitcreiu to Gilan is also one of the fairies from Avalon; Cassandra's skill and wisdom are said to be 'von den goten gefeinet' (4960). The goddess Minne, related to Venus or Aphrodite through the reference to Cithaeron-Cythera, is nevertheless not completely identified with the classical divinity; in the guise of 'viuraerinne' (930), 'gewaltaerinne' (961), 'lagaerin' (11711), 'verwaerinne' (11908) ('verwerraerinne' in MSS FWBNES), 'süenaerinne' (17535), she appears as the personified representation of aspects of passion, and in the episode of the lovers' cave she presides over a figurative landscape of amorous vices and virtues.<sup>37</sup>

It is not easy to determine how much of this syncretistic pantheon is Gottfried's own addition to what he already found in Thomas, what other sources he might have drawn on, or to what extent he is personally responsible for the mixture of various mythological traditions.<sup>38</sup> But what interests us more is the fabulous, and therefore fictitious, quality of these phenomena, irrespective of whether Gottfried has introduced them 'ex sua parte', as Arnulf would say, or

'ex parte aliorum'. (Analogous to Lucan's signals of the type 'ut memorant' are Gottfried's source references in 'der geist ze himele, als ichz las, / von den goten gefeinet was' (4959–60) or 'ein hundelin . . . daz was gefeinet, horte ich sagen' (15805–06).) Besides these numinous creatures, the story also contains a considerable element of magic and divination, which Gottfried, who otherwise professes to have no time for the conjuring tricks employed by the 'vindaere wilder maere' (4665), is obliged by tradition to include; had he omitted this ingredient, the story would have been substantially different. In Gottfried's version the element of magic gravitates around the figure of the elder Isolde. She is portrayed as a sort of white witch whose powers of clairvoyance ('ir tougenliche liste') reveal to her in a dream that it was Tristan, and not the cowardly steward, that killed the dragon (9298–305), and whose knowledge of plants and their properties enables her to heal otherwise incurable wounds, such as the one inflicted by Morold's poisoned sword (6942–53), and, last not least, to prepare the love-potion (11432–44).<sup>39</sup>

The potion is the medium connecting the historical 'humanae personae' Tristan and Isolde with the 'divina persona' Minne:

Nu daz diu maget unde der man,  
Isot unde Tristan,  
den tranc getrunken beide, sa  
waz ouch der werlde unmuoze da,  
Minne, aller herzen lagaerin (11707–11).

Both of these supernatural powers will shape the lovers' destiny, Minne as tutelary goddess of Tristan, his 'erbevogetin' (11765), who had already brought his parents Riwalin and Blanscheflur under her dominion, and the love-potion as

diu waernde swaere,  
diu endelose herzenot,  
von der si beide lagen tot. (11674–76)

With these prophetic words the entire narrative to follow is placed under the sign of tragedy. In the preceding chapter we saw how, in the prologue, Gottfried implies that the passion of the lovers is historical fact (see above, pp. 54–57). Whether he also regarded the love-potion in the same way or not, by making it into an augury of the lovers' death he takes it into the realm of *res fictae* or *fabulosae*, opening up perspectives of meaning that the *res factae* do not possess in themselves, just as Lucan's flights of invention mould the multifarious acts of war into a tragic history. Of Gottfried it might equally well be said as it has been remarked of Lucan that 'the events which in real life happen at random and move without arrangement were shaped by him, and he stamped upon them the order and the patterns of poetry' (Marti, 'Tragic History', p. 203).

The potion is a hybrid: on the one hand a 'tranc von minnen', a real drug with specific pharmaceutical indications (11435–42), on the other, as 'waernde

swaere' and 'endelose herzenot/von der si beide lagen tot', an abstract prefiguration of consuming, fatal passion. This double aspect of the potion, material and intellectual, combines two stages in the development of the motif in the Tristan legend: a primitive stage, such as we find in Beroul and Eilhart, where the material agency of the potion as magical, love-inducing drug is to the fore; then, beginning with Thomas's modernization of the old story, a superstratum of figurative meanings, which absorb the motif into an increasingly cerebral, casuistic treatment of the theme of love.<sup>40</sup> Gottfried's intellectualization of the potion does not, however, negate its efficacy as the material cause of passion (Tristan and Isolde still fall in love because they drink it), nor is the philtre reduced to a symbol, as was maintained by Emil Nickel: 'Mehr und mehr wird aus dem Trank, der Liebe im Wortsinn wirkte, ein Trank, der nurmehr symbolisch Liebe bedeutet'.<sup>41</sup> The potion, in Gottfried's figurative interpretation of it, is less a symbol of love than a portent of suffering and death; the glosses 'waernde swaere' and 'endelose herzenot' do not so much reveal an intrinsic meaning as foretell what the consequences of drinking the philtre will be. They transform a fixed and material fact — the 'tranc von minnen' causes love — into a meaning that is open and experimental. The prediction of 'waernde swaere' and 'endelose herzenot' is not a pharmaceutical indication, but an interpretation of the potion's effect which can only be borne out by the narrative, which therefore has to be experienced, gone through, by the reader, before the prophetic potential of these words is fulfilled. The glossing of the potion is not a disclosure of timeless symbolic essence, but an experiment with the signifying possibilities of a magical object whose meaning is a function of aesthetic experience and the unfolding of the narrative in time.

## FICTION AND DICTION: THE POET AS COLOURIST

Anselm of Laon, who considers that Lucan is not a poet in the proper sense of the word, because he does not invent, nevertheless acknowledges the existence of a fictional element in the *Pharsalia*, which would entitle its author to the name of poet after all. Anselm focuses on a different aspect of invention from Arnulf and the Tegernsee *accessus*: 'iste non proprie dicitur poeta, cum poesis dicitur fictio, sed tamen in topographiis, i. in descriptionibus locorum fingit, inde vocatus est poeta; nam in describendo mutat ipsos portus' (Weber, p. 3). *Topographia* or *descriptio loci* is a recognized rhetorical *figura sententiae*, one that is especially useful as a technique of amplification. Strictly speaking, this figure pertains only to the description of real places, and should be distinguished from *topothesia*, the description of fictitious places, but the term *topographia* is often used loosely to cover both definitions, as when Matthew of Vendôme illustrates the device with a description of an invented *locus amoenus*, and indeed *topothesia* can stand for any inaccuracy or licence in matters of geography, as it does when Servius points out

that Virgil's description of Carthage in Africa actually corresponds to the real place of the same name in Spain.<sup>42</sup> An example of Lucan's licence in these matters is his confusion of Argos and Mycenae, the real home of Thyestes, in 'Astra Thyestae/Intulit et subitis damnavit noctibus Argos' (vii, 451–52), which error moves one eleventh-century scholiast to remark 'Mycenas dicere debuit; sed sciendum est mutavisse illum nomen ex vicino sicut frequentissime apud poetas invenimus'.<sup>43</sup>

Gottfried can also take liberties with geography; in the preceding section we noted his confusion, purposeful or otherwise, of Cithaeron and Cythera, but he also locates Arundel on the continent (18688), while the hero's fatherland, which must have been called something like 'Ermenie' in Thomas, appears in his version as 'Parmenie' (see above, pp. 51–52). The most extended topographical passage in the work is the description of the lovers' cave and the ideal landscape round about it.<sup>44</sup> Here, the distinction between *topographia* and *topothesia* becomes blurred, for the cave, it turns out, is both real and imaginary.

The description of the cave opens with the reference to Corineus (see above, p. 48), which establishes the site's antiquity and makes it clear that we are dealing with a real place located in Cornwall; appropriately the *topographia* continues with an enumeration of the cave's physical properties: it is round, wide, high, straight and smooth, its floor is of green marble, in its middle stands a crystal bed, dedicated to the goddess Minne, there are windows, and a door of bronze (16703–29). Next, Gottfried describes the ideal landscape that surrounds the site and narrates the arrival of the lovers and the perfect life they lead there; having done this, he returns to the cave, but this time to disclose its meaning:

Nun sol iuch niht verdriezen,  
irn lat iu daz entsliezen,  
durch welher slahte meine  
diu fossiure in dem steine  
betihtet waere, als si was. (16923–27)

There follows a figurative exegesis, in which each of the physical characteristics of the cave previously listed in Gottfried's *topographia* is said by him to signify some quality or virtue that pertains to love: thus the roundness of the cave stands for love's simplicity, its breadth for love's power, its whiteness and smoothness for the purity of love, and so on (16928–17099). This unlocking of the abstract and universal significance contained in a real, historically and geographically specific place has the status of allegory, in the definition given by Bernard Silvestris ('oratio sub historica narratione verum et ab exteriori diversum involvens intellectum').<sup>45</sup> Gottfried ends his exposition of the cave's figurative meaning with the words 'diz weiz ich wol, wan ich was da' (17100). This assertion is followed by an autobiographical account of Gottfried's own journey to the cave, in which he recounts how he found and penetrated love's sanctum, contemplated its various features, danced on its marble floor (which stands for



steadfastness) and even made his way right up to the bed, on which, however, he never lay (17101–35). Thanks to the preceding allegory, Gottfried is able to translate personal information into figurative code, and the reader can decode this cipher again, to obtain a declaration of inexperience on the part of the author who, although he professes to know about love and its component qualities, has never tasted it in its absolute purity and honesty, the virtues represented by the crystal bed (16983–84). What is startling about this operation of figurative encoding and decoding is that it reverses the normal direction of allegory from the particular to the universal, for in this instance it cannot really be said that the circumstances of a single individual are elevated to a level of transcendent significance through their projection onto the timeless canvas of allegory; rather allegory is being used as a device for making a confession about personal fortunes in love, so that the reader who follows the figurative process through to the end is led away from love as a constellation of abstract ideas to statements concerning the knowledge and experience of an individual lover.

Equally startling is the manner in which Gottfried concludes his autobiographical digression:

ich han diu fossiure erkant  
 seit minen einlif jaren ie  
 und enkam ze Curnewale nie. (17136–38)

With this statement, an oscillation is introduced between real and imaginary geography, for if Gottfried can claim to have visited the cave without ever setting foot in Cornwall, this must mean that the cave, which up till now had been assumed to exist in reality, is also a place of the poet's imagination. *Topographia* becomes *topothesia*. Moreover, this oscillation renders ambivalent Gottfried's allegory, since an exegesis based on what now turns out to be a fictitious *descriptio loci* must be, following the definition of Bernard Silvestris, an integument (see above, p. 35). But more important in my view than the question of whether Gottfried's figurative interpretation of the cave is allegory or integument is the fact that the entire passage should end by focusing not on the significance unlocked from the stones and minerals out of which the cave is constructed, but on the way in which one particular subject experiences that place and its meaning. The final emphasis is not on the object of 'erkennen', but on the duration of the process ('seit minen einlif jaren ie') and its imaginary nature ('und enkam zu Curnewale nie').

The isolation by Anselm of the one figure of *topographia* as proof of Lucan's inventiveness is a symptom of an underlying feeling that all figurative language is a form of fiction and therefore appropriate to poetry. The same glossator who noted Lucan's poetic substitution of 'Argos' for 'Mycenae' says of his use of the figure *prosopopoeia* in 'Aequora senserunt motus' (VIII, 197) that 'per poeticam phantasiam dat sensum inanimatae rei'.<sup>46</sup> Conrad of Hirsau, for whom Lucan is

scrupulously truthful in matters of history, nevertheless celebrates him as a poet, whose hallmarks are above all else his high style and polished diction, his 'grandiloquus modus in stilo' and his 'pulcra verborum et sententiarum ordinatio'.<sup>47</sup> Quadlbauer points out that this last phrase echoes the grammarians' concept of correct sentence structure, as in Priscian's definition 'Oratio est ordinatio dictionum congrua sententiam perfectam demonstrans', but Conrad's emphasis on 'pulcra ordinatio' (rather than 'congrua ordinatio') in addition suggests that what he admires in Lucan's language is its rhetorical accomplishment, its display of ornament and colour.<sup>48</sup> Indeed the *Commenta Bernensia*, and the commentaries of Anselm and Arnulf all devote considerable effort to explaining Lucan's use of figures and tropes.<sup>49</sup>

The name given by rhetoricians to the embellishments of style, in oratory as in poetry, is *color*. In the *artes poeticae* of the Middle Ages, the term is used extensively to denote both ornament in general and tropes and figures of thought and diction in particular.<sup>50</sup> Among medieval historians, there is a corresponding tendency to eschew the *colores rhetorici*, the cultivation of which, it is feared, might get in the way of the immeasurably more important task of telling the truth and even lead the author to become entangled in falsehood; it is not uncommon for the prolegomena to historiographic writings to contain an apology for the author's unpolished language, the *rusticitas* of his diction.<sup>51</sup> Lupus of Ferrières (c. 805–62), for instance, asks his readers to be so kind as to overlook any roughness of language that may result from his omission to latinize vernacular names of places and persons:

Id autem a periti benevolentia lectoris optinuerim ut, sicubi Latini sermonis lenitas hominum locorumve nominibus Germanicae linguae vernaculis asperatur modice ferat ac meminerit non carmen me scribere ubi poetica licentia nonnumquam mutilantur atque ad sonoritatem Romani diriguntur eloquii vel penitus immutantur, sed historiam que se obscurari colorum obliquitatibus rennuit.<sup>52</sup>

The concept of 'colorum obliquitates', which in Lupus's view are all very well in poetry but not in history, where they would obscure the truth, is derived ultimately from the *Divinae Institutiones* of Lactantius, a work dated to the early years of the fourth century. Lactantius maintains that it is wrong to consider the pagan myths as outright falsehood, because such a view is insensitive to the specific mode of operation of poetry. According to him, the poets do not invent, but encode real events in figurative language instead, cloaking them in a disguise which the trained reader nevertheless knows how to penetrate. The gods of myth and legend were really men, whom the poets wished to adorn, and the apparently fantastic events connected with them are in fact real occurrences, translated into the language of trope and figure. By way of illustration, Lactantius explains that the eagle that supposedly raped Ganymede is 'poeticus color', 'aquila' standing metonymically for a legion of soldiers, whose ensign is

an eagle, or perhaps for a ship with an eagle as figurehead.<sup>53</sup> He sums up the nature of myth:

Non ergo ipsas res finxerunt poetae; quod si facerent, essent vanissimi: sed rebus gestis addiderunt quemdam colorem. Non enim obtrectantes illa dicebant, sed ornare cupientes. Hinc homines decipiuntur: maxime quod, dum haec omnia ficta esse arbitrantur a poetis, colunt quod ignorant. Nesciunt enim, qui sit poeticae licentiae modus; quousque progredi fingendo liceat: cum officium poetae sit in eo, ut ea, quae gesta sunt vere, in alias species obliquis figurationibus cum decore aliquo conversa traducat . . . Nihil igitur a poetis in totum fictum est: aliquid fortasse traductum, et obliqua figuratione obscuratum, quo veritas involuta tegetur. (cols 171–72)

For Lactantius, the pagan myths both are and are not fiction: with regard to their origins in real events, they are not invented; but they are fictitious insofar as the poets employ figurative diction in order to add colour to these events, embellishing and thereby obscuring them beyond recognition, so that it becomes the task of the discerning reader to straighten out the oblique relationship between language and reality and to restore the truth in its pristine transparency. This exclusive identification of fiction with ornamental language is clear from the very beginning of Lactantius's discussion of myths and their truth-value:

At enim poetae ista finxerunt. Errat quisquis hoc putat. Illi enim de hominibus loquebantur; sed ut eos ornarent, quorum memoriam laudibus celebrabant, deos esse dixerunt. Itaque illa potius ficta sunt, quae tamquam de diis, non illa quae tamquam de hominibus locuti sunt. (cols 169–70)

The equation of fiction with diction, of the poet's office with the complete transformation of reality into figurative cipher, is taken on board by Isidore, who quotes the Lactantian definition of poetic invention as the reason why Lucan is not to be numbered among the poets:

Officium autem poetae in eo est ut ea, quae vere gesta sunt, in alias species obliquis figurationibus cum decore aliquo conversa transducant. Unde et Lucanus . . . (*Etymologiae*, viii.7.10)

Servius too, who is Isidore's authority for the verdict on Lucan, follows this line of reasoning. The occasion for his famous pronouncement concerning that poet is a gloss to the words of Aeneas about how Venus has been his guide: 'bis denis Phrygium conscendi navibus aequor, / matre dea monstrante viam, data fata secutus' (I, 381–82). Servius demonstrates that what Virgil really meant was that his hero was shown the way by the morning star, the 'stella Veneris', but that he could not state this directly because the law of poetry demands that he should not touch on matters of historical fact except 'per transitum', by way of a change; a series of further relevant examples from the *Aeneid* is then given, leaving the reader in no doubt that he must decode 'mater dea' as a reference to the morning star. At the end of his brief exposition of how Virgil converts reality into figurative codes, Servius adds that Lucan cannot be a poet because he

does not treat the raw material provided by history in this transformative manner.<sup>54</sup>

Just as Lucan's handling of supernatural machinery had led to his being denied the title of poet in his own day, but accorded it in the Middle Ages, so too his use of the colours of rhetoric was regarded by some as proof that he was a historian, while for others it was an indicator of his poetical quality. That the same criterion can be invoked in support of both positions is attributable to a change, or differences, in the perceived function of poetic language. In the Lactantian view, which is the one adopted by Servius and by Isidore, the poet is expected to bring about a complete transformation of reality by means of 'obliquae figurationes' and 'decor'; it follows that Lucan, whose historical references are largely intact and transparent, can never be considered a poet, even if he does intersperse rhetorical colour among the facts of history, as Isidore himself acknowledges.<sup>55</sup> The example of Lupus of Ferrières, however, reveals that there was another way of thinking about poetic language and its function, which was perhaps the result of a reinterpretation of Lactantius. Explaining why he is not going to alter the vernacular form of proper names in order to accommodate them to the sounds of Latin, he asks his readers to bear in mind that it would not befit him, a historian, to employ any of the 'colorum obliquitates' in which the poets delight. In this context, the notion of 'colorum obliquitates' can hardly have the meaning it would have possessed in Lactantius or Isidore, since the phonetic modification of words to suit a foreign language hardly amounts to a linguistic conversion of reality so complete that it would utterly obscure the truth. For Lupus the scope of poetic diction lies not in the wholesale transformation of reality, but in its decoration; it involves, in the words of Peter von Moos 'nicht ein imaginäres Abweichen von der Geschichtswirklichkeit . . . sondern ein "écart" von der gewöhnlichen Sprache' (pp. 117–18). The slightest alteration of a placename, even if it did not make for obscurity, would presumably be for Lupus an instance of *topothesia*. According to this view, in which figurative language functions simply as an adornment, without necessarily disguising the facts beyond recognition, the mere presence of figures and tropes in an otherwise historical narrative such as the *Pharsalia* would be enough to qualify its author as a poet.

Gottfried's diction is so richly embellished with *colores rhetorici* that Stanislaw Sawicki remarks: 'Es wäre wohl kaum der Mühe wert, alle die "colores verborum et sententiarum" (schemata lexeos et dianoeas), welche den sog. leichten Schmuck bilden, zu besprechen, um zu beweisen, daß Gottfried fast alle gekannt und sich ihrer bedient hat'.<sup>56</sup> Gottfried's rhetorical expertise is by no means confined to the *ornatus facilis* and its characteristic figures, as the impressive array of examples presented by Sawicki shows; he knows how to use *figurae sententiarum*, such as *descriptio*, *expolitio*, or *similitudo*, for the purpose of amplification, and his resources of eloquence include even the tropes, the hallmark of

so-called difficult ornament.<sup>57</sup> What is more, his knowledge in these matters extends to the use of the appropriate technical vocabulary, and in a way suggesting that, for him, figurative language is a definitive feature of poetic invention. In praise of Hartmann von Aue he says:

ahi, wie der diu maere  
beid uzen und innen  
mit worten und mit sinnen  
durchverwet und durchzieret!  
wie er mit rede figieret  
der aventiure meine! (4622–27)

The parallel construction of these two exclamatory sentences implies that *durchverwen* and *durchzieren*, to which correspond Latin *colorare* and *ornare*, are the same thing as *figieren*, which verb is actually derived from *figere*, confused with *figere*.<sup>58</sup> Gottfried thus connects diction and fiction. The meaning of the reference to the outward and inward colouring of speech is more controversial. The form of words bears a marked resemblance to the introductory advice given by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, whose *Poetria nova* was probably written around 1200, on the proper way to use the ornaments of style: ‘Sit brevis aut longa, se semper sermo coloret / Intus et exterius’.<sup>59</sup> According to Sawicki (p. 57), both Geoffrey and Gottfried mean the technical and highly specific distinction between *figurae sententiarum* (inward ornament) and *figurae verborum* (external colour). This interpretation of these lines from the *Poetria nova* has been disputed by Christoph Huber, who argues that in what are intended as words of preliminary guidance, Geoffrey is not as yet concerned with making distinctions on the level of detail, and that his recommendation is to be taken in a more general way, as meaning that a poet should attend not only to the outward form of language, the *verba*, but also to its inward content, the *res* or *sententiae*, for only when the two are in harmony does effective communication become possible. This is therefore, according to Huber, the underlying sense of Gottfried’s notion of ‘uzen unde innen durchverwen’.<sup>60</sup> Convincing as this is as a reading of Geoffrey, it seems to me that Gottfried, who differs from Geoffrey in that he speaks of colouring and adorning ‘mit worten und mit sinnen’, does give the formula a more narrowly technical interpretation as well and does also intend the distinction between the two types of rhetorical figure or *color*. Since the *figurae verborum* and the *figurae sententiarum* respectively influence the form and the content of language, the technical distinction between the two is always implicit in any statement concerning the form and content of poetic diction in general; in this way the narrow interpretation of the formula ‘intus et exterius colorare’ proceeds from the broad one without contradicting it.<sup>61</sup>

Hartmann von Aue, Bligger von Steinach, Heinrich von Veldeke, the three narrative poets to whom Gottfried refers by name in the literary excursus, are together known as ‘verwaere’ (4691), dyers or colourists, in marked contrast to

the minnesingers or 'nahtegalen' (4751), whom Gottfried praises for their musical qualities and not for the rhetorical or poetic excellence of their diction. In the case of Bliigger and Heinrich, Gottfried puts their talent for poetry down to supernatural inspiration: Bliigger owes his genius to the fairies, while Heinrich has drunk from the spring of Pegasus (4699–704; 4730–32). The two aspects of fiction we have been examining, the supernatural and the use of poetic diction, come together in these divinely inspired writers, who are both *vates* and *coloratores*. The supernatural manifests itself as poetic diction even more directly in the case of the 'gotinne Minne'. This 'divina persona', described by Gottfried as a 'verwaerinne' (11908), sets about her work in the same way as Hartmann, colouring both without and within. As soon as Tristan and Isolde drink the love potion, Minne takes possession of their hearts (11707–15), but she does not stop at that:

Minne die verwaerinne  
 dien duhtes niht da mite genuoc,  
 daz mans in edelen herzen truoc  
 verholne unde tougen,  
 sin wolte under ougen  
 ouch offenbaeren ir gewalt. (11908–13)

For the dyer Minne, the bodies of the lovers are as language for the poet, to be coloured inside and outside, and in such a way as to bring the two sides into accord. Thus the changing complexion of Tristan and Isolde accurately reflects the turmoil going on inside them:

so wart ir lich geliche var  
 dem herzen unde dem sinne . . .  
 ir varwe schein unlange in ein:  
 si wechselten genote  
 bleich wider rote;  
 si wurden rot unde bleich,  
 als ez diu Minne in understreich. (11906–20)

Tristan and Isolde, the supposedly historical personages who lived and died hundreds of years ago (222, 12323–24), are here subjected to the transformations of fiction.

The interpenetration of rhetoric and the supernatural occurs again in Gottfried's account of Tristan's baptism, where figurative language is allied to prophecy. Immediately before the rite is to be performed, Rual and Floraete consult each other in private about what they are to call their foster-child. Casting his mind back over the recent past, Rual chooses the name Tristan because, he explains to his wife, it is appropriate to the sorrowful circumstances that have attended the orphan's life ever since its parents were first united in love (1974–99). Then Gottfried takes over. He gives the derivation of 'Tristan' from 'triste' and emphasizes again how fitting a name it is, adding to Rual's motivation for it a new, prophetic dimension: not only is the name Tristan an

expressive summation of its bearer's career up to the time of his baptism, it also betokens his entire future, which is going to be overshadowed by heartfelt grief and will end tragically in the most bitter of deaths (1999–2022). The explanation of the name by Gottfried summarizes the story so far, foretells future events, and interprets everything in terms of dominant themes in the work, love and sorrow, life and death. For both Rual and Gottfried the name is suited to the person denominated, but whereas Rual is guided in his choice of an appropriate name for the child by a retrospective examination of Tristan's 'dinc', the circumstances of his life up till the moment of his baptism (1986, 1988, 1990), Gottfried directs his gaze to the future, and proceeds from the name to the course of Tristan's life to come. Rual uses signs historically, Gottfried prophetically and poetically.

Behind the naming of Tristan lies the etymological postulate of a motivated connexion between signifier and signified; the name will reflect the nature of its bearer. For Rual and Gottfried alike it is important that the name should be adequate to the person; Rual ponders carefully 'waz namen ime gebaere / nach sinen dingen waere' (1984–86), and Gottfried insists that 'der name was ime gevallesam / und alle wis gebaere' (2004–05).<sup>62</sup> However, whereas for Rual the consonance of signifier and signified is established by historical reference and is already obvious at the time of naming, for Gottfried the agreement between the name and what it denominates is experimental and open, and can only be proved once the narrative has run its complete course. Rual works from history to arrive at an adequate name which, as the encapsulated essence of Tristan's story up to the present, is bounded in its reference: the name stands for its bearer's past, which is the proof of its appositeness. Gottfried works in the opposite direction, from the name to Tristan's story, past and future. Gottfried is here employing a technical device of rhetoric, the so-called *argumentum a nomine*, one of the *loci* proper to the figure of thought *descriptio personae* and by means of which, in the definition given by Matthew of Vendôme, 'per interpretationem nominis de persona aliquid boni vel mali persuadetur'.<sup>63</sup> What is special about Gottfried's use of the *argumentum a nomine* is that he frees the signifier from its bounded reference and makes its adequacy dependent on aesthetic experience. In his hands, the name 'Tristan' becomes an interpretation and a prophecy, not denoting the hero's career, past or future, but generating meanings about it. The name is not a symbol and Gottfried is not uncovering some fixed essence for which it stands; rather he is experimenting with the name's signifying potential, the 'vis nominis',<sup>64</sup> in order to produce interpretations and predictions that are provisional and conditional upon aesthetic experience, for their appositeness will not emerge unless and until the reader will have read the narrative for himself:

der name was ime gevallesam  
und alle wis gebaere;

daz kiesen an dem maere . . .  
 diz maere, der daz ie gelas,  
 der erkennet sich wol, daz der nam  
 dem lebene was gehellesam:  
 er was reht also er hiez ein man  
 und hiez reht also er was: Tristan. (2004–22)

Aesthetic experience is the indispensable counterpart to Gottfried's experiment with the name; only by duplicating that experiment in the act of going through the text can the reader appreciate the consonance of name and character. Gottfried's motivation of the historical signifier 'Tristan' does not operate by appealing to some law of symbolism in order to disclose to the reader what the name encloses; it engages the reader in an experimental and experiential probing of the name's signifying potential. Moreover, this engendering of meaning is not a once-and-for-all revelation, but is a function of the time it takes to go through the text: whoever has read the story (the prefix *ge-* in 'gelas' indicates perfective aspect) will come to understand.

In the first book of the *Pharsalia*, Caesar is on the point of crossing the Rubicon when he has a vision of Rome personified, who bids him go no further if he would respect the law; standing on the river's bank, Caesar utters an invocation to the gods, justifying his warlike course of action (I, 183–203). So far as we are able to tell, there is no historical authority for these words of Caesar's; Lucan has invented them, using the figure of thought known in the technical language of rhetoric as *sermocinatio* (Lausberg, paras 820–25). What is most striking about this fictitious prayer is that the tutelary divinities of Rome invoked by Caesar, Jupiter Tonans, the penates of the house of Iulus and the fires of Vesta, are, as Pierre Grimal has pointed out, all institutions of the imperial state religion inaugurated by the Julio-Claudian dynasty *after* the demise of the republic; this anachronism on Lucan's part, argues Grimal, is a deliberate anticipation of the new order of state that will be the consequence of Caesar's act of war, beginning with the crossing of the Rubicon; 'on voit comment l'invention poétique, loin de fausser l'histoire, la rend intelligible, y dessine correspondances et figures'.<sup>65</sup> History, mythology and figurative language, the three elements prominent in medieval anatomies of the *Pharsalia*, are brought to bear upon one another by Lucan in such a way as to bring out what, in all the contingent acts of war, is ultimately at stake in history.

Lucan's poeticized narrative of the civil war is connected by Grimal with Aristotle's definition of *poiēsis*; the discovery of a structure and a meaning in the *res gestae* lends them verisimilitude, universality, exemplarity.<sup>66</sup> Lucan's inventions enable him to be, in the words of Michael von Albrecht, 'wahrer als die Geschichte'.<sup>67</sup> This *poiēsis*, revealing the shape of history and its lessons, is intended to enhance historical cognition. In *Tristan* too, I believe, history,



mythology and figurative diction come together in significant interaction, but with a different purpose. Gottfried's poeticization of the historical substance of the story is not aimed at pointing up any higher, more philosophical truth than the narrated events might contain, their hidden architectonics, as it were. The meanings Gottfried engenders with the help of fictional devices do not lead towards historical cognition, but away from it, to a truth that exists only in aesthetic experience and is therefore imaginary. This is quite unlike the meanings produced by allegory or integument, for such truths pre-exist the interpretative operations through which they are disclosed and, once they have been laid bare, exist independently of these discovery procedures. For Gottfried, the significance of the story is an effect of the act of going through the text. It is the experimental significance of romance.

At the end of the preceding chapter I characterized Gottfried's poetics provisionally as a non-historiographic use of history. Now I should like to make that working definition more precise: Gottfried poeticizes history in order to make it signify in the experimental manner of a romance. In the next chapter, I shall be examining the part played in this experimental transformation of history by a concept of verisimilitude that — unlike the one critics have discerned in Lucan — is not Aristotelean.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. For the medieval reception of Lucan see Walter Fischli, *Studien zum Fortleben der Pharsalia* (Lucerne, 1951); Werner Fechter, *Lateinische Dichtkunst und deutsches Mittelalter*, pp. 12–21. On Lucan as curriculum author see the entry under his name in the index to Günther Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter*, p. 144; for the manuscript tradition see the article 'Lucan' by R. J. Tarrant in *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics*, edited by L. D. Reynolds (Oxford, 1983), pp. 215–18. Some impression of the many and largely ignored medieval manuscripts later than the tenth century may be formed from Renato Badali, 'I codici romani di Lucano', *BPEC*, 21 (1973), 3–47, 22 (1974), 3–48 and 23 (1975), 15–89; of the 74 MSS of Lucan now in Rome, some 24 date from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. See also Eva Matthews Sanford, 'The Manuscripts of Lucan: *accessus* and *marginalia*', *Speculum*, 9 (1934), 278–95 and her 'Quotations from Lucan in Mediaeval Latin Authors', *AJP*, 55 (1934), 1–19; Margaret Jennings, 'Lucan's Mediaeval Popularity: The Exemplum Tradition', *RCCM*, 16 (1974), 215–33. Jessie Crosland, 'Lucan in the Middle Ages, with Special Reference to the Old French Epic', *MLR*, 25 (1930), 32–51, is a discussion of Lucan's influence on the *chanson de geste*.
2. *Belli civilis libri decem*, edited by A. E. Housman (Oxford, 1926), ix, 359–60. Further references to this edition are given in the text.
3. Berthe M. Marti, 'Tragic History and Lucan's *Pharsalia*', in *Classical Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies in Honor of Berthold Louis Ullman*, edited by Charles Henderson, Jr, 2 vols (Rome, 1964), I, 165–204 (p. 203). See also Pierre Grimal, 'Le poète et l'histoire', in *Lucain*, edited by M. Durray, *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique*, 15 (Geneva, 1970), pp. 51–118.
4. Conrad of Orleans, in *Accessus ad auctores*, edited by R. C. B. Huygens (1970 edition), p. 110; Arnulf of Orleans, *Glosule super Lucanum*, edited by Berthe M. Marti, *Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome*, 18 (Rome, 1958), p. 4. On medieval discussions of Lucan as poet and historian see Marti, 'Literary Criticism in the Mediaeval Commentaries on Lucan', *TAPA*, 72 (1941), 245–54, and Peter von Moos, 'Poeta und historicus im Mittelalter: Zum Mimesis-Problem am Beispiel einiger Urteile über Lucan', *Beiträge* (Tübingen series), 98 (1976), 93–130.
5. Otto of Freising, *Gesta Friderici I imperatoris*, p. 12: 'Nec si a plana hystorica dictione ad evagandum oportunitate nacta ad altiora velut philosophica acumina attolatur oratio, preter

rem ejusmodi estimabuntur, dum et id ipsum Romani imperii prerogativae non sit extraneum rebus simplicioribus altiora interponere. Nam et Lucanus, Virgilius caeteripue Urbis scriptores non solum res gestas, sed etiam fabulosas, sive more pastorum vel colonorum summissius vel principum dominorumque orbis altius narrando, stilum tamen frequenter ad intima quaedam philosophiae secreta sustulerunt.'

6. *Chronica, sive historia de duabus civitatibus*, edited by A. Hofmeister, MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum (Hanover and Leipzig, 1912), p. 3.
7. 'Tragoedia und Planctus: Der Eintritt des *Nibelungenliedes* in die Welt der litterati', in *Nibelungenlied und Klage: Sage und Geschichte, Struktur und Gattung: Passauer Nibelungengespräche 1985*, edited by F. P. Knapp (Heidelberg, 1987), pp. 152–70. The borrowing by the author of the *Nibelungenlied* of motifs and *topoi* from the *Pharsalia* is discussed by Fechter, pp. 131–33.
8. *Gesta Friderici*, p. 12; the relevant passage is quoted in note 5 above.
9. Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur: Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, p. 684.
10. I cannot find any trace of borrowing by Gottfried from Lucan in passages where imitation might have been possible, such as the description of storms or battle scenes, or in the depiction of Rual's steadfastness of character, for which Lucan's portrayal of the younger Cato as a model of Stoic virtue could readily have provided a model. Franz Josef Worstbrock, 'Ein Lucanzitat bei Abaelard und Gotfrid', *Beiträge* (Tübingen Series), 98 (1976), 351–56, demonstrates that Gottfried's harsh words about the 'vindaere wilder maere . . . die bernt uns mit dem stocke schate' (4665–73) are ultimately derived from Lucan's characterization of Pompey 'trunco, non frondibus efficit umbram' (I, 140), but doubts whether he has drawn on Lucan directly for this metaphor; Abelaard, Matthew of Vendôme and Eberhard the German all use it as well, and in the same context as Gottfried, namely the denigration of their intellectual and literary rivals, so that it is conceivable that the expression had already become a commonplace of literary critical vocabulary by the time of Gottfried.
11. Edwin A. Quain, 'The Medieval *accessus ad auctores*', pp. 216–28; Berthe M. Marti, 'Literary Criticism', p. 245.
12. In England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when there was a vogue for epic poems that recounted the civil wars between either the houses of York and Lancaster or King and Parliament, the 'Historical Poets', as the authors of such epics styled themselves, had no theoretical justification for their practice other than the example of Lucan, whose name they continually invoke; see Helmut Papajewski, '*An Lucanus sit poeta*', *DVLG*, 40 (1966), 485–508.
13. The most famous Neronian sources for the controversy are Petronius, *Satyricon*, 118 and Martial's epigram xiv, 194.
14. M. P. O. Morford, *The Poet Lucan: Studies in Rhetorical Epic* (Oxford, 1967), p. 85. See also Eva Matthews Sanford, 'Lucan and His Roman Critics', *Classical Philology*, 26 (1931), 233–57, and Michael von Albrecht, 'Der Dichter Lucan und die epische Tradition', in *Lucain*, edited by M. Durry, *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique*, 15 (Geneva, 1970), pp. 265–308.
15. Servius, *In Vergilii carmina commentarii*, edited by Georg Thilo and Hermann Hagen, vols I and II, *Aeneidos librorum commentarii* (Leipzig, 1923), I, 129; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, viii.7.10; Sanford, 'Lucan and His Roman Critics', pp. 236–37; von Moos, pp. 102–03.
16. Sanford, 'Lucan and His Roman Critics', p. 240; von Moos, p. 102.
17. For the critical fortunes of Lucan in the Renaissance see Papajewski, and also Klaus Heitmann, 'Das Verhältnis von Dichtung und Geschichtsschreibung in älterer Theorie', *AJK*, 52 (1970), 244–79, especially pp. 261–62.
18. *Scholia in Lucani Bellum civile*, edited by Hermann Usener, vol. I, *Commenta Bernensia* (Leipzig, 1869), pp. 8–9.
19. *Marci Annaei Lucani Pharsalia*, edited by Karl Friedrich Weber, vol. III, *Scholastae* (Leipzig, 1831), p. 3. This is a partial edition of Anselm's commentary as preserved in Berolinensis 1016 lat. fol. 34; see the description of the manuscript by Valentin Rose, *Verzeichniss der lateinischen Handschriften*, II, 3, Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin, 13 (Berlin, 1905), pp. 1304–08, who also gives a transcription of those passages from Anselm's *accessus* that Weber omitted.
20. Weber, p. 3: 'Solent poetae tria ponere; solent enim proponere et invocare et narrare. Quod iste facit'; p. 11: 'Ita loquitur de praeteritis quasi futura essent; item solent loqui poetae', with reference to I, 38; pp. 108, 250: 'Ut solent facere poetae, continuat istum librum ad superiorem'; 'Consuetudo poetarum est, ut finem praecedentis libri initio sequentis iungant quibusdam particulis', referring to II, 1 and IV, 1; p. 150: 'Et sicut poetae solent delectare quandoque, addit laudes ipsius Eridani. Tangit illam fabulam . . .', on II, 410.
21. II.66.3, XII.4.16, 30–32, XVI.26.14, XX.10.1. On the Isidorean formalism of the *Commenta Bernensia* and Anselm see Marti, 'Literary Criticism', pp. 246–49, and von Moos, pp. 102–03.
22. Munich, clm. 19475, edited by Huygens in his edition of the *Accessus ad auctores*, Collection Latomus, 15 (Brussels, 1954), pp. 34–38, from which I quote. There is another redaction of this

- Accessus Lucani* in a twelfth-century manuscript from Benediktbeuern, clm. 4593, where it precedes a glossed text of the *Pharsalia*; this version, which is briefer in its discussion of the points that are of interest to me, forms the basis of Huygen's 1970 re-edition of the *Accessus ad auctores*, pp. 39–44.
23. Huygens (1954 edition), pp. 37–38; Suetonius, *De Poetis*, in *Praeter Caesarum libros reliquiae*, edited by August Reifferscheid (Leipzig, 1860), p. 17.
  24. Quadlbauer, *Die antike Theorie der genera dicendi im lateinischen Mittelalter*, SB der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, 241, 2 (Vienna, 1962), p. 28, fn. 37.
  25. Von Moos, pp. 106–07; see also the chapters on 'Divination and Magic' and 'Lucan's Dreams' in Morford, pp. 59–84. For Hartmann von Aue, Lucan is the source of information about witches and prophetesses; Morgan le Fay is compared to the Sibyl and 'Ericôtô . . . von der uns Lûcânus zalt' (*Erec*, edited by Albert Leitzmann, lines 5216–17).
  26. Isidore, for instance, relies heavily on Lucan for information in his chapter 'De Serpentibus', *Etymologiae*, XII.4. His chapter on astronomy also makes occasional use of the *Pharsalia* (III.41, 66.3, 71.29).
  27. Servius's *accessus* is organized under the following heads or *circumstantiae*: 'poetae vita, titulus operis, qualitas carminis, scribentis intentio, numerus librorum, ordo librorum' (p. 1). The *Accessus Lucani* inquires into 'materia', 'intentio', 'qualitas operis', 'utilitas', and 'pars philosophiae', as well as giving details of the poet's life (pp. 34–38). The only *accessus* in the Tegernsee collection that adopts the Servian schema is the one to Sedulius (p. 23 in Huygens's 1954 edition, pp. 28–29 in his revised edition of 1970); the others are based, with occasional variations, on the four constants of *materia, utilitas, intentio* and *pars philosophiae*. On the different schemas in use in medieval *accessus ad auctores* see Paul Klopsch, *Einführung in die Dichtungslehren des lateinischen Mittelalters*, pp. 48–55.
  28. Huygens (1970 edition), p. 110: 'Lucanus poeta, gemina illustris virtute, primo quidem in milicia, deinde in otio studiorum disciplina, ex antea probitate curialem et grandiloquum modum in stilo tenuit, verax in historiae veritate, validissimi ingenii, poematis ratione, strennitate animi et miliciae iam depositae, pulcra verborum et sententiarum ordinatione'. By stylistic 'probitas' Conrad must mean the correlation of the three styles, high, middle and low, with the three social estates of courtier, burgher and peasant; see Quadlbauer, p. 116.
  29. Huygens (1970 edition), p. 75. Von Moos goes so far as to maintain that the inclusion of both truth and fiction under the single term *poeta* or *factor* was general in the Middle Ages, forming a complementary theory to the straightforward equation of fiction with falsehood (pp. 118–20).
  30. pp. 55, 128, 178, referring in turn to *Pharsalia* I, 412; II, 410; III, 253.
  31. Weber, p. 481 (gloss to VI, 608). The MS, Berolinensis 1012, lat. fol. 35, is of German provenance and contains scholia to Lucan (description in Rose, pp. 1300–03). Marti dates it to the thirteenth century ('Literary Criticism', p. 245).
  32. Theoderic of Fleury, *Historia illationis Sancti Benedicti*, quoted by von Moos, p. 104, fn. 21; *Historia Troyana Daretis Frigii*, quoted *ibid.*, p. 110. See also Marie Schulz, *Die Lehre von der historischen Methode bei den Geschichtschreibern des Mittelalters*, pp. 139–43.
  33. On the attention paid by Arnulf to aspects of mythology in Lucan, see Marti in the introduction to her edition, p. xlix. Von Moos interprets the sense of 'aliquid fictitii' in an entirely different way: 'Der Fictio-Begriff wird schon hier eingeeengt auf die Verwendung einer poetischen Sprache' (p. 117, fn. 23).
  34. Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, pp. 469–70.
  35. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VIII.7.1–2, 4–9; Isidore's authority for the religious origin of all poetry is Suetonius, *De Poetis*.
  36. Weber, p. 5, *Glosule*, p. 7; Marti, 'Literary Criticism', p. 250, von Moos, p. 111.
  37. In this paragraph I am indebted to the excellent account of Gottfried's mythological apparatus by Gerhard Schindele, *Tristan: Metamorphose und Tradition*, Studien zur Poetik und Geschichte der Literatur, 12 (Stuttgart, 1971), pp. 64–70, who emphasizes that the Middle Ages did not treat the classical heritage with the scholarly rigour of Renaissance humanism, and that what appear by our standards to be mistakes are in fact evidence of a live reception of pagan mythology, adapting it to suit new purposes; thus the confusion of Cithaeron and Cythera, the seat of the Muses and the sanctuary of Aphrodite, is intended to symbolize the unity of love and music (p. 65), and Gottfried's error in calling Helen of Troy the daughter of Aurora (8266), rather than of Leda, is consistent with his development of the metaphor of dawn and sunrise, which expresses the relationship between the elder and the younger Isolde (p. 47).
  38. Wilhelm Hoffa, 'Antike Elemente bei Gottfried von Straßburg', distinguishes between classical allusions that must already have been in the French source and those, such as the ones in the literary excursus, that are presumably Gottfried's additions from his personal learning and

- reading, of Ovid in particular. Schindele, pp. 65–67, quotes parallels from other medieval authors for many examples of Gottfried's apparently faulty mythological knowledge.
39. In the so-called primitive version of the Tristan legend, that of Beroul and Eilhart, a single Isolde retained many of the traits of the fairy of Celtic myth, who combined the roles of miraculous healer and supernatural lover; the 'courtly' version, represented by Thomas and Gottfried, has separated these two functions and distributed them between *two* Isoldes, mother and daughter. This change, which assists the drive towards a more rational motivation for events and an increasingly more conceptual treatment of the theme of love, destroys the original thematic coherence of magic, love and the physician's art. See Schindele, pp. 30–32, 40–46, 56.
  40. Beroul, *The Romance of Tristan*, edited by A. Ewert, 2 vols (Oxford, 1967–70), lines 2133–46; Eilhart von Oberg, *Tristrant*, edited by Franz Lichtenstein, Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Culturgeschichte der germanischen Völker, 19 (Strassburg, 1877), lines 2279–2300; Thomas, *Les Fragments du Roman de Tristan*, edited by Bartina H. Wind, Douce Fragment, lines 1223–26 (p. 134). See Schindele, pp. 56–64.
  41. Nickel, *Studien zum Liebesproblem bei Gottfried von Straßburg*, Königsberger Deutsche Forschungen, 1 (Königsberg, 1927), p. 4; compare Friedrich Ranke, *Tristan und Isold*, Bücher des Mittelalters, 3 (Munich, 1925), p. 204: 'Das Motiv vom Liebestrank selber . . . entwickelt Gottfried vom mechanischen Erklärungsprinzip, vom Trank, der Liebe wirkt, einen Schritt weiter zum Symbol hin, zum Trank, der Liebe bedeutet'. Against the view put forward by Nickel and Ranke that Tristan and Isolde fall in love without the potion causing it, see Hans Furstner, 'Der Beginn der Liebe bei Tristan und Isolde in Gottfrieds Epos' *Neophilologus*, 41 (1957), 25–38; the most recent discussion of this celebrated issue is Christoph Huber, *Gottfried von Straßburg, 'Tristan und Isolde': Eine Einführung*, pp. 66–77.
  42. Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, para. 819; Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars versificatoria*, edited by Edmond Faral, in *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle*, pp. 147–49; Servius, *In Vergilii carmina*, I, 65–66: 'topothesia est, id est fictus secundum poeticam licentiam locus. ne autem videatur penitus a veritate discedere, Hispaniensis Carthaginis portum descripsit', about *Aeneid*, I, 159.
  43. Berolinensis 1012, in Weber, p. 554. Marti attributes this gloss to the *Commenta Bernensia* ('Literary Criticism', p. 251), so does von Moos (p. 118, fn. 55). Lucan does not make the mistake otherwise: 'qualem fugiente per ortus / Sole Thyesteae noctem ducere Mycenae' (I, 543–44). Another instance of topographical inaccuracy in the *Pharsalia* is the confusion of Phocis in Greece with Phocaea in Asia, the origin of the colonists who first settled at Marseilles (III, 340; v, 53).
  44. See in particular the two essays by Rainer Gruenter, 'Bauformen der Waldleben-Episode in Gottfrieds Tristan und Isold', in *Gestaltprobleme der Dichtung: Günther Müller zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, edited by R. Alewyn, H.-E. Hass, C. Heselhaus (Bonn, 1957), pp. 21–48, and 'Das *wunnecliche tal*', *Euphorion*, 55 (1961), 341–404; also Frederic C. Tubach, 'The "locus amoenus" in the Tristan of Gottfried von Straszburg', *Neophilologus*, 43 (1959), 37–42, and Ingrid Hahn, *Raum und Landschaft in Gottfrieds Tristan: Ein Beitrag zur Werkdeutung*, Medium Aevum Philologische Studien, 3 (Munich, 1963), pp. 31–34, 119–42.
  45. See above, p. 35. The seminal study of the allegory of the cave is Friedrich Ranke, 'Die Allegorie der Minnegrotte in Gottfrieds Tristan', *Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft, geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse*, 2 (Berlin, 1925).
  46. Berolinensis 1012; Weber, p. 612. *Prosopopoeia*, which usually refers to the creation of fictitious persons, such as Lucan's personification of Rome (I, 186–92), can also include the attribution of human speech or sensations to inanimate beings; see Lausberg, paras 826–29.
  47. See note 28 above for the full citation of Conrad.
  48. Quadlbauer, pp. 47–49, 60–62. *Pulcher* is an epithet used frequently of the high rhetorical style.
  49. Marti, 'Literary Criticism', pp. 248–49, and in the introduction to her edition of Arnulf, pp. xxxix–xli.
  50. For instance, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, edited by Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, pp. 220–45.
  51. Schulz, pp. 84–98; Gertrud Simon, 'Untersuchungen zur Topik der Widmungsbriefe mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreiber bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts', part II, pp. 73–82. Both of these scholars emphasize that there were also historians who were keen to cultivate a refined diction, which they considered would ennoble their material.
  52. Quoted by Schulz, pp. 87–88, 141. See also von Moos, p. 118, fn. 55.
  53. Lactantius, *Opera omnia*, edited by J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia latina*, 6 (Paris, 1844), col. 170: 'Rapiusse dicitur in aquila Catamitum: poeticus color est. Sed aut per legionem rapuit, cuius insigne aquila est; aut navis, in qua est impositus, tutelam habuit in aquila figuratam'.
  54. Servius, *In Vergilii carmina*, I, 129: 'hoc loco per transitum tangit historiam, quam per legem artis poeticae aperte non potest ponere. nam Varro in secundo divinarum dicit ex quo de Troia

- est egressus Aeneas, Veneris eum per diem cotidie stellam vidisse, donec ad agrum Laurentem veniret, in quo eam non vidit ulterius: qua re terras cognovit esse fatales: unde Vergilius hoc loco "matre dea monstrante viam" et eripe, nate, fugam, item nusquam abero et descendo ac ducente deo et iamque iugis summae surgebat lucifer Idae. quam stellam Veneris esse ipse Vergilius ostendit qualis ubi Oceani perfuscus Lucifer unda, quem Venus ante alios astrorum diligit ignes. quod autem diximus eum poetica arte prohiberi, ne aperte ponat historiam, certum est. Lucanus namque ideo in numero poetarum esse non meruit, quia videtur historiam composuisse, non poema'. Servius refers to *Aeneid* II, 619–20 ('eripe, nate, fugam finemque impone labori. / nusquam abero'), II, 632 ('descendo ac ducente deo'), II, 801–02 ('iamque iugis summae'), VIII, 589–90 ('qualis ubi Oceani').
55. He illustrates the tropes *parabola* and *similitudo* with examples from Lucan (*Etymologiae*, I.37.33, 35).
  56. Sawicki, *Gottfried von Straßburg und die Poetik des Mittelalters*, p. 131.
  57. pp. 71–114 (amplification), 116–31 (tropes), 131–49 (figures of thought and diction).
  58. See the note by Peter Ganz to line 4624 in his edition of *Tristan*, I, 169. He refers to the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, vol. VI, col. 770, on the confusion of *figere* and *figere* in Latin, and gives another instance of MHG *figieren*, meaning 'to form, shape, create': 'swaz man damit formieret. / gezirkelt ald figieret' (*Reinfrid von Braunschweig*, lines 20791–92). Compare Conrad of Hirsau's formula 'factor vel formator' (Huygens, 1970 edition, p. 75). Okken, *Kommentar zum Tristan-Roman Gottfrieds von Strassburg*, I, 232, thinks however that the MHG is probably derived from OF *figurer*, 'to represent'. The usual form of this verb in MHG is however *figurieren*; see the *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, III, 309.
  59. Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, p. 220.
  60. Huber, 'Wort-Ding-Entsprechungen', pp. 284–90; Geoffrey continues his advice on inward and outward coloration: 'Verbi prius inspice mentem / Et demum faciem, cuius ne crede color: / Se nisi conformet color intus exteriori, / Sordet ibi ratio . . . in his quae dixeris esto / Argus et argutis oculis circumspice verba / In re proposita' (Faral, p. 220).
  61. This point is conceded by Huber, 'Wort-Ding-Entsprechungen', pp. 287 fn. 56, 290.
  62. See Huber, 'Wort-Ding-Entsprechungen', pp. 269–76, who also shows that the words used by Gottfried in order to express the consonance of signifier and signified are in fact technical terms of etymology: to 'gehellesam' and 'gevallesam' correspond Latin *consonans* and *conueniens*.
  63. Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, p. 136.
  64. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, I.29.1: 'Etymologia est origo vocabulorum, cum vis verbi vel nominis per interpretationem colligitur'.
  65. Grimal, 'Le Poète et l'histoire', pp. 56–59 (p. 59).
  66. Grimal, pp. 54–55. On Aristotle, see above, pp. 34–35. See also von Moos, pp. 118–25, who argues that medieval readers such as Otto von Freising and John of Salisbury valued the same qualities in Lucan, even though Aristotle's theory of *poiésis* was unknown to them.
  67. Remark made in the discussion following Grimal (see 'Le Poète et l'histoire', p. 115), referring to the invented episode of Caesar's destruction of the holy grove at Marseilles (III, 399–452).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE LAW OF VERISIMILITUDE

#### ANSELM OF LAON ON VERISIMILITUDE

In the apodictic tone appropriate to the statement of a universally valid law, Anselm of Laon pronounces in his Lucan commentary that ‘omnis scriptor verisimiliter debet scribere’, ‘omnis, qui narrat, verisimiliter saltim debet narrare’.<sup>1</sup> If verisimilitude is a requirement binding on every writer, regardless of genre, then it follows that for Anselm the difference between history and poetry, to which the commentators of Lucan devote considerable attention, is subordinated to the overriding obligation to narrate in a plausible fashion.<sup>2</sup>

Anselm’s position, which would set verisimilitude higher than factual truth, is derived from rhetorical doctrine. In the system of classical eloquence *verisimilitudo* is one of the three *virtutes narrationis*;<sup>3</sup> in the words of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: ‘Tres res convenit habere narrationem: ut brevis, ut dilucida, ut verisimilis sit’.<sup>4</sup> The requirement to narrate plausibly flowed originally from the practical context of forensic or deliberative oratory, where the need to convince judges or other auditors of the rightness of one’s cause was paramount; according to Cicero, verisimilitude is a virtue pertaining to that type of *narratio* ‘quae causae continet expositionem’ (*De inventione*, 1.20.28). The decline in imperial Rome of the institutions where this kind of eloquence was applied, and the concomitant attraction of rhetoric into the ambit of poetry, obscured the original reasons for this connexion between plausibility and persuasion, and made it possible for verisimilitude to be elevated to a law binding on all literature, as it is in Anselm.<sup>5</sup>

The requirement of verisimilitude is satisfied when narrative corresponds to conventional ways of making sense of the world. A narrative is credible, says Cicero, ‘si res ad eorum qui agent naturam et ad vulgi morem et ad eorum qui audient opinionem accommodabitur’.<sup>6</sup> The orator must see to it that the narrated events stand in an adequate causal, temporal and spatial relationship to each other; he must pay due regard to the character, motives and abilities of the persons involved, and must ensure that the representation of time and space is not such as would render the action implausible.<sup>7</sup> The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* in

particular is adamant that these precepts must be observed even in the narration of true events: 'Si vera res erit, nihilominus haec omnia conservanda sunt, nam saepe veritas, nisi haec servata sint, fidem non potest facere' (1.9.16). If even real facts are not always plausible in themselves, but require rhetorical treatment in order to make them so, it follows that the verisimilar narrative is not a simulacrum of reality, but a representation of the world structured in accordance with prevailing cultural conventions, the 'mos vulgi' and the 'opinio auditorum'. Even the injunction that the orator should respect the 'natura agentium' does not mean that he must necessarily depict people as they are in reality; rather it means that the representation of the characters should be tailored to fit the actions that are to be ascribed to them. Thus, says Quintilian, a person accused of theft must be represented as covetous, an adulterer must appear lecherous, a murderer impetuous, and so on.<sup>8</sup> Character is perceived through cultural stereotypes.

The real world, which often seems arbitrary, unintelligible and incredible, must therefore be shaped and explained, infused with causality and consistency, if it is to be made decipherable and convincing. This rhetorical position, with its disdain for raw facts, contrasts starkly with the historiographical, which, in spite of its occasional acknowledgment of the rule of verisimilitude, considers the telling of the unadorned factual truth to be the highest obligation.<sup>9</sup> The *verisimilitudo* aspired to by the rhetoricians is also different from Aristotle's concept of verisimilitude, even though at first glance it may appear to be the same. For Aristotle, poetry is representation, which, following a principle of likelihood (*to eikos*), is able to transcend the particular (*ta kath' ekaston*) and attain universally valid meanings (*ta katholou*). It is this universality that sets poetry apart from and above history (*Poetics*, 1451b). Common to Aristotle and the rhetoricians, then, is the idea that reality requires shaping by the poet or orator, and that this shaping is guided by a principle of verisimilitude. The difference is over the nature of this verisimilitude. Aristotle associates the concept with universality, philosophical truth, and exemplarity; *to eikos* is a category that transcends time and place (1451b, 1461b; see above, pp. 34–35). The rhetoricians, by contrast, are not interested in elucidating absolute and timeless truths, but in persuading an audience of a particular thing (which may in fact not be true) on a particular occasion; as a model of *credibilitas* Quintilian cites Cicero's speech in defence of Milo, noting approvingly that with his eloquence 'iudicem fefellerit'.<sup>10</sup> The *verisimilitudo* cultivated by the rhetoricians is an image of truthfulness that is entirely the product of cultural convention, the orator's discourse, and the effects of his eloquence on the audience. All these variables are bounded by time and place. Precisely because this image of truthfulness is engendered as the listeners measure their experience of the orator's discourse against their experience of the world, we may term it experimental.

The infusion of causality into historical events, so that their narration will have shape and meaning, is the function ascribed by Anselm to the concept of verisimilitude when he introduces it into his Lucan commentary. He notes that once Lucan has concluded his prologue he does not, as he ought, begin the narrative, but first dwells for a while on the origins of the civil war:

Facta propositione et invocatione deberet statim narrare, ut res gesta est; sed prius ostendit quae fuerunt causae huius tanti belli . . . Omnis narratio debet esse vera vel verisimilis. Cum vera esse videtur proponit tales causas, quae possent illos promovere ad bellum et ad discordiam. (Weber, pp. 17–18)

In setting forth the causes of war, Lucan has occasion to describe the characters and motives of Pompey and Caesar, the leaders of the rival factions.<sup>11</sup> Since the rhetoricians' precepts for *narratio verisimilis* place great emphasis on the credible portrayal of character and circumstance, it is natural that *figurae sententiae* such as *descriptio personae*, *topographia* and *evidentia* — by which is meant the vivid and detailed depiction of an object, so that the listener feels that he is seeing it with his own eyes (Lausberg, paras 810–19) — should come into their own in the creation of a plausible narrative. Indeed, almost all of the subsequent occasions on which Anselm invokes the law of verisimilitude are concerned with Lucan's use of such rhetorical figures in order to make contentions seem plausible that otherwise would be dismissed as extravagant or improbable. Thus, the character of Curio, his talent and legal knowledge, are described in order to explain why, corrupt though he was, he had so much influence in Rome (*Pharsalia*, iv, 814–15); the vivid depiction of the raging storm — an instance of *evidentia* — explains why Caesar, normally a fearless character, should for once be afraid for his safety (v, 597–677); the portrayal of Erictho as a celebrated witch makes it understandable that even somebody as well versed in magic and divination as Pompeius should want to consult her (vi, 508–68).<sup>12</sup> The same holds for Lucan's descriptions of places: the Rubicon is described by him 'quia omnis scriptor verisimiliter debet scribere' (I, 185, 213–22); the topography of the rivers Genusus and Hapsos in Epirus is said by Anselm to explain why the hostile armies of Caesar and Pompey did not join battle immediately (v, 461–67); the attention paid by Lucan to the vast scale of Caesar's work of circumvallation makes the feat itself seem credible, as well as explaining why the forces of Pompey were able to move camp without even knowing of their confinement (vi, 29–63); the digression into the geography of Thessaly, and how its marshes drained to leave plains, establishes that human habitation is possible even in that mountainous and inhospitable region (vi, 334–80).<sup>13</sup>

From the last chapter it will be recalled that although Anselm considers Lucan to be a historian, for the traditional reasons, he admits that Lucan could nevertheless be called a poet on account of the liberties he takes with geographical description; it was argued further that Anselm's isolation of Lucan's handling of *topographia* was merely symptomatic of an underlying attitude that



identifies all figurative diction with poetic fiction (see above, pp. 64–65, 71–73). We see, then, that in analysing Lucan's employment of rhetorical devices in terms of the contribution they make to the greater intelligibility and credibility of the story, Anselm in effect locates the law of verisimilitude as active at the junction of poetry and history. The process we traced in the *Pharsalia* of exploiting the resources of poetic fiction in order to render intelligible the raw and sometimes random facts of history, a process that certain modern critics wish to connect with Aristotelean notions of *poiēsis* (see above, pp. 80–81), is, in Anselm's understanding of it, dictated and regulated by a rhetorical principle: the requirement, binding on every author, to produce a *narratio verisimilis*.

Gottfried's analogous practice of using poetic devices in order to open up perspectives of meaning on the allegedly historical core of the story of Tristan and Isolde could, it seems to me, equally well be explained as the result of an orientation to this rhetorically inspired law of verisimilitude. A brief examination of Gottfried's use of three figures will give some idea of how, by means of fictional devices, he manages to achieve the consistency in the representation of character and circumstance that we recognize as the hallmark of *narratio verisimilis* or *probabilis*. The three I have chosen for purposes of demonstration are *descriptio personae*, *evidentia* and *digressio*. (The latter, really a *pars orationis* in the classical system of eloquence, appears to have been interpreted as a figure of amplification in the Middle Ages.)<sup>14</sup>

In his description of Riwalin, Gottfried lays great emphasis on his *übermuot*, the overweening self-confidence typical of youth, and identifies this dominant personality trait as the cause of his future downfall (262–318). This procedure has been shown by Stanislaw Sawicki to be an example of a specialized technique of *descriptio personae* known by Matthew of Vendôme as *descriptio tempestiva*, which prescribes that a character should be portrayed in such a way as to make credible the subsequent actions in which he or she will be involved; the example given by Matthew is of Callisto, who must be described in all her beauty so that it will appear natural ('ut verisimile sit') that Jupiter should fall in love with her.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Sawicki considers that in elaborating Riwalin's fatal *übermuot* as the key to an understanding of this character's short and turbulent career Gottfried has gone beyond Thomas significantly.<sup>16</sup> Although it is instructive to have our attention drawn to the link between Matthew's precept and Gottfried's practice, what is missing from Sawicki's account is an awareness that *descriptio tempestiva* is merely a technical device intended to assist the writer in realizing a broader rhetorical principle, namely that a verisimilar narrative is one in which, as Quintilian puts it, 'personas convenientes iis, quae facta credi volumus, constituerimus'.<sup>17</sup>

The function of *evidentia* in Gottfried's narrative has been treated by Winfried Christ, who argues that the concrete, extensive detail associated with this figure creates an impression of documentary realism, which in turn heightens the

plausibility of the story. Among the passages of vivid description discussed by Christ are: the narration of Rual's arrival at Tintagel, where the reactions of Mark and his court to the newcomer are progressively described until Rual tells his story and reveals his true identity (3859–4332); the episode of Marjodo's nocturnal discovery of the lovers, in which everything is recounted from his point of view, following the sequence of his thoughts and actions (15511–619); narration from the perspective of the character in the scene of Isolde's gradual realization that the name 'Tantris' is an anagram of 'Tristan' (10088–122); the exhaustive detail in Tristan's demonstration of hunting skills to the Cornishmen (2788–3080, 3169–89). All these passages dwell in the present, allowing the reader to follow the unfolding of events at their pace of occurrence, as though he were experiencing them as an eyewitness, and so contribute to the verisimilitude of the story.<sup>18</sup> To these instances of *evidentia* one might add Gottfried's vivid portrayal of the sea storm that assails the Norwegian merchants: its intensity is reflected in the fear they show and in concrete details such as ships' pitching and tossing and the sailors' inability to walk on deck (2412–39). The emphasis on how the characters are affected by the storm provides adequate motivation for their actions, for the violence of the elements leads the Norsemen to realize that they have sinned by kidnapping Tristan, and they resolve to release him (2440–73).<sup>19</sup>

The connexion between amplificatory digression and verisimilitude is well illustrated by Gottfried's finely observed remarks on the corrosive effect on love of doubt and suspicion (13749–852). The excursus is characterized by a movement from the particular to the general and back again. It begins with the depiction of the situation of an individual character: Marke's obsessive doubts and suspicions about his wife and his nephew (13749–76). Then Gottfried interrupts the impersonal narrative to address his audience directly with the question 'waz mag ouch liebe naher gan/dan zwivel unde arcwan?' (13777–78). This gives rise to generalized reflexion on how destructive it is for a lover to fall prey to doubts (13781–90). Such behaviour is 'ein harte unwiser muot . . . ein michel tumphait', maintains Gottfried, but it is also the norm, 'wan daz ez al diu werlt tuot' (13791–93). However, Gottfried continues, even worse than suspicion is certainty, and the lover who sees his worst doubts confirmed would then prefer the state of doubt to the unhappy truth (13797–812). This choice between two evils — it is better to endure uncertainty in love than to know the unpleasant facts (13817–20) — remains purely speculative, though, for nobody could ever make it in reality, according to Gottfried's reasoning. It is, he says, impossible for anyone in love not to be suspicious (13821–24), and it is also love's habitual practice — 'site' (13829) — not to leave go of doubts and suspicions until their truth is confirmed (13829–42). The lover who was not impelled by this destructive will to knowledge would cease to be a lover, and Marke is no exception to the rule:

dem selben sinnelosen site  
dem gieng ouch Marke vaste mite:  
er wante spate unde vruo  
allen sinen sin dar zuo,  
daz er den zwivel unde den wan  
gerne haete hin getan  
und daz er mit der warheit  
uf sin herzecliches leit  
vil gerne komen waere. (13843–51)

With these words, Gottfried returns to the narrative. The difference from the position at the outset is that, in the course of the digression, Marke's individuality and unique circumstances have been reduced to a typical case, with the result that his behaviour gains intelligibility and plausibility because it has been shown to accord with what one would expect everyone else, 'al diu werlt', to do in the same situation.<sup>20</sup> The same procedure of abstraction from a particular instance in order to explain it may be observed in other excursuses of Gottfried's into the mentality of lovers, such as the one on *zorn ane haz* as an efficacious means of strengthening the bonds of love (13031–75), or the commentary on how the eyes cannot help but express what the heart feels (16464–98). Here too, human actions as narrated in all their individual variety (Tristan and Isolde's squabbles, their longing glances) become comprehensible as the exemplification of certain fundamental principles that govern behaviour; having set out the rules, all Gottfried has to do is add 'alsus treip Tristan unde Isot', 'als taten die gelieben ie' (13074, 16483), for their conduct to become instantly verisimilar.<sup>21</sup>

Winfried Christ considers that Gottfried's work consists in the rhetorical transformation of the Tristan legend, with the intention of producing a narrative that will be convincing to its public; for him, the truth to which Gottfried lays claim with his romance is the truth of rhetoric, verisimilitude.<sup>22</sup> What Christ neglects, however, are specific developments in the vernacular narrative tradition that condition Gottfried's espousal of the oratorical virtue of *verisimilitudo*. Without reference to the literary historical context, Gottfried's poetics of verisimilitude will appear abstract and ahistorical, as though it were nothing more than the automatic consequence of the application of rhetorical art, defined as 'dicere ad persuadendum accommodat'.<sup>23</sup> We have repeatedly emphasized the co-existence in vernacular literature around 1200 of two narrative modes: the archival and the experimental. It is this vernacular context that sets the parameters for Gottfried's poetics, which we have characterized as an experiment with history. In this poetics the law of verisimilitude, before which the difference between history and fiction is unimportant, provided that the narrative is plausible, comes into its own as a means of bringing the two modes together in a regulated fashion. Poetic device expands and explains the material provided by history, making it accessible to experience and thereby plausible.

## THE LAW OF VERISIMILITUDE IN THOMAS AND GOTTFRIED

If an orientation to the rhetorical virtue of verisimilitude is implicit in Gottfried's deployment of figurative devices, there is also a passage where he makes his allegiance to this narrative principle explicit. And here he clearly has an antecedent in Thomas, to whom accordingly we turn first.

The passage in question in the French romance is the celebrated one in which Thomas criticizes other narrators of the Tristan story for not following the authoritative version of Breri.<sup>24</sup> It is the likely source of the section of Gottfried's prologue that is devoted to 'die von Tristande hant gelesen', given the close verbal correspondences between the French and German:

Nel dient pas sulun Breri  
 Ky solt les gestes e les cuntés  
 De tuz les reis, de tuz les cuntés  
 Ki orent esté en Bretaingne; (Douce, 848–51)  
 sin sprachen in der rihte niht  
 als Thomas von Britanje giht,  
 der aventiure meister was  
 und an britunschen buochen las  
 aller der lantherren leben. (149–53).<sup>25</sup>

The two passages also reveal parallels in their manner of argument. Both authors reject existing versions of the Tristan legend in favour of the one given by a named authority. Both connect, but do not completely identify, the reliability of their preferred source with historical scholarship: Breri is described as having knowledge of the history of Brittany, which does not necessarily mean that what he wrote or told was also history, and a similar uncertainty surrounds the way in which Thomas is said by Gottfried to have made use of historical material. Both Gottfried and Thomas avoid making any express statement of dependence on their authority.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike Gottfried, however, Thomas's essay in source criticism does not form part of a prologue (it is possible that Thomas might have begun his romance with general remarks on the sources he had used; see Bédier, 1, 1), but is occasioned by a difference over a specific narrative detail: the divergence between those who have it that Tristran sent Guvernal to fetch Yseut in order to cure him of his lethal wound, and Thomas, who maintains that the messenger was Kaherdin (Douce, 859–62).<sup>27</sup> (Gottfried's *Tristan* breaks off before reaching this point in the story, so that we cannot tell whether he too would have commented on this dispute.) Thomas's resolution of the controversy is prefaced by a general appreciation of the whole tradition, which he professes to know well in all its variety:

Asez sai que chescun en dit  
 E ço que il unt mis en escrit,

Mes sulun ço que j'ai oï,  
Nel dient pas sulun Breri . . . (Douce, 845–48)

Then the argument takes a remarkable twist. Thomas does not, as one might expect, declare that he is going to follow Breri; neither here nor anywhere else in the surviving fragments of his Tristan romance does he clarify his relationship to Breri, whom he indeed never mentions again. Instead, he passes straight over to the problem in hand, whether it was Guvernal or Kaherdin who made the urgent voyage to England. The matter is settled not by invoking the authority of Breri, but by appealing to a concept of what is verisimilar and plausible in narrative. Thomas's name for this concept is *raisun*:

Enveiad Tristran Guvernal  
En Engleterre pur Ysolt.  
Thomas iço granter ne volt,  
E si volt par raisun mustrer  
Qu'iço ne put pas esteer. (Douce, 860–64)

The reason why Guvernal cannot have been the messenger is, continues Thomas, that he was so well known in England that he would have been identified immediately, and would therefore be of no use on a mission where secrecy is of the essence (Douce, 865–70). He then formulates his doubts about Guvernal's suitability in the form of a direct question to the audience:

E coment pust il dunc venir  
Sun servise a la curt offrir  
Al rei, as baruns, as serjanz,  
Cum fust estrange marchanz,  
Que hum issi coneüz  
N'i fud mult tost aparceüz?  
Ne sai coment il se gardast,  
Ne coment Ysolt amenast. (Douce, 871–78)

Thomas's question is an invitation to his public to join him in a *Gedankenexperiment*. They are encouraged to picture in their mind's eye a possible world in which Guvernal is the messenger and to imagine how, given the circumstances, he could have carried out his mission successfully. Thomas has tried out this possibility in his head and has come to the conclusion that it cannot be made to work in a way that would not strain all notions of plausibility and credibility in narrative. The inference is that the audience will reach the same conclusions and agree that the author is right to insist that Kaherdin was the messenger. The correct version is arrived at by testing out alternative fictional experiences to see which one appears most plausible in the light of what we know about the characters and their circumstances and how we would expect them to fare in the real world. This experimental and consensual form of truth, which is established by measuring fictional experience against empirical experience, and which Thomas calls *raisun*, is what the rhetoricians call *verisimilitudo*.

Those who disagree with Thomas ‘sunt del cunte forsveié/E de la verur esluingné’ (Douce, 879–80). The argument appears to have changed suddenly, from one in which the variant account is dismissed because it lacks verisimilitude, to one that discounts what others say because it is not true. Thomas oscillates between a rhetorical and — if by *verur* he means factual truth — a historiographical test for which version of the story is to be accepted. Possibly this oscillation between *raisun* and *verur* may be put down to a failure on Thomas’s part to reconcile the two modes of truth, the experimental and the factual. From this passage alone, which is the only evidence we possess, we cannot determine exactly how he viewed the relationship between *raisun* and *verur*, if he ever reflected on it at all. On the other hand, the inconsistency may be only apparent. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (1.9.16), it will be recalled (see above, p. 87), states that even with historical facts one must take care to narrate them in a plausible fashion because these facts are often not convincing in themselves (‘nam saepe veritas fidem non potest facere’). The word to note is ‘saepe’: there may be occasions when the unadorned truth *is* convincing. Although rhetorical truth and factual truth are two completely different things, this does not prevent their coinciding from time to time; the point the author of the *Rhetorica* is trying to make is that the orator should never assume that there will always be a coincidence between the two modes of truth, which are fundamentally separate. Perhaps Thomas is seeking to represent his version of events as one of those rare examples of the occasional agreement between verisimilitude and historical truth. If this interpretation is right, Thomas’s argument would be that the version of events proposed by him is preferable in the first place because it is plausible and consistently motivated, and in the second place because it also happens to be factually true in this particular case. This reading, which assumes a hierarchy of instances (verisimilitude is higher than historical truth), is borne out by the rest of the passage, in which Thomas returns to the notion of *raisun* as supreme arbiter in the dispute. If others do not agree with him, he has no desire to quarrel with them: ‘Tengent le lur e jo le men:/La raisun s’i pruvera ben!’ (Douce, 883–84).<sup>28</sup>

Although it is very likely that this passage from Thomas provided the model for Gottfried’s own critical estimation of the tradition, the prologue to *Tristan* does not contain any term equivalent to Thomas’s *raisun* or Latin *verisimilitudo*. For an explicit statement of the principle, we have to wait until Gottfried reaches a specific point in the story at which he too will diverge from what his predecessors have said: the narration of how the Cornish barons plot to bring about Tristan’s downfall by persuading the king to marry. Gottfried objects to the way others tell the story on two counts: firstly, he does not believe, as these narrators have it, that a swallow flew from Cornwall to Ireland and back again, bringing with it a woman’s hair (8601–15); secondly, he does not agree with the version according to which Tristan and his companions set out in search of the

bride without knowing whom they should be seeking or where (8616–28). Gottfried does not mention any names; those who tell the story in this way are kept anonymous: ‘si lesent an Tristande’, ‘swer saget’ (8601, 8617). Because the version related by Eilhart von Oberge contains the motifs that Gottfried rejects, it has been assumed that Gottfried’s criticism is directed at Eilhart, or at a Tristan romance closely resembling his. Eilhart recounts how the Cornish barons, jealous of the favours shown by Marke to his nephew Tristrant, hope to diminish the latter’s influence at court by persuading the king to marry, even though he has already expressed his wish never to do so and to be succeeded by his nephew. While Marke is pondering how he can best persuade his barons to drop their demand, two swallows chase into the hall, bearing a woman’s hair. Marke sees his opportunity: he announces that he will marry no other woman than the one to whom this hair belongs, thinking that she will never be found. Tristrant and his retinue set out in search of the bride, with no specific destination in view, except that Tristrant gives orders to avoid Ireland, the home of his mortal enemies. After a month at sea, a storm carries their ship close to Ireland, home of Isalde, whose hair it was that the swallows brought to Cornwall (Eilhart, lines 1337–1501).

In Eilhart’s account, the choice of bride and the means of obtaining her are removed from human calculation and control and are decided instead by random forces. But it is not to this causation by aleatory factors that Gottfried objects — his own narrative world is full of sequences set in train by an initial incident that occurs ‘von aventiure’;<sup>29</sup> his polemic against the swallow and the voyage with no destination pertains rather to these motifs’ lack of verisimilitude. The denunciation of the first of these is framed as a rhetorical question, which, like the question Thomas had asked about Gubernal’s suitability as a messenger, invites the public to participate in a *Gedankenexperiment*, by which the plausibility of the swallow episode will be tested according to the criterion of Ciceronian *verisimilitudo*:

genistet ie kein swalwe me  
mit solhem ungemache,  
so vil so si busache  
bi ir in dem lande vant,  
daz über mer in vremediu lant  
nach ir bugeraete streich? (8608–13)

Cicero, it will be remembered, states that a verisimilar narrative is one that fits the nature of the actors in it, the habits of ordinary people, and the beliefs of the audience (see above, p. 86). Nobody believes that it lies within the nature of a swallow to fly such great distances in search of nesting material, and the story therefore falls down: ‘weiz got, hie spellet sich der leich./hie lispet daz maere’ (8614–15). Told in such a way, the narrative would become a *spel*, a fabulous or mendacious tale, and it would lisp, or speak incoherently.<sup>30</sup> If it is Eilhart whom

Gottfried is attacking here, he has been misrepresented: the episode as it is told by him involves two swallows, not one, and there is never the merest suggestion that they flew to Ireland to gather nesting material. The motif, which in Eilhart's romance functions as a symbol of the impenetrable force of fate, is subjected by Gottfried to a relentless rationalization, bringing it down to the level of consensual perceptions of everyday reality, and so making it appear ridiculous.<sup>31</sup> The same assumption of rational motivation underlies Gottfried's polemic against the story that Tristan and his companions set out in search of an unknown bride of unknown whereabouts; he condemns it for being absurd, 'alwaere' (8616). It is not to be expected that people should behave in such a way:

ja waerens alle samet gewesen,  
 der künic, ders uz sande,  
 sin rat von dem lande,  
 die boten gouche unde soten,  
 waerens also gewesen boten. (8624–28)

Cicero (*De inventione*, I.21.29) and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (I.9.16) teach that a narrative will be plausible if, among other things, the orator pays heed to the 'personarum dignitates', by which they mean that a person's behaviour must be seen to accord with his rank. Gottfried's argument is that if the story is told in the manner criticized by him, then the actions of the king, his advisers and his messengers will be out of keeping with their standing and will become an object of ridicule.

The narrative principle that Thomas calls *raisun* is expressed by Gottfried *e contrario* by the words *spellen*, *lispen*, *alwaere*, which designate a mode of storytelling that infringes the law of verisimilitude. Like Thomas, Gottfried does not invoke the authority of a reliable source in order to dismiss what he sees as errors: it is not the truth of these events that is principally at issue, it is their plausibility. Nevertheless, as with Thomas, there is an indication that, on a subordinate level of the argument, Gottfried considers the version he criticizes to be false as well. A *spel* — Gottfried's derogatory term for the tale of the swallow and the hair — can be an untrue story,<sup>32</sup> and of the author who insists on the motif of the voyage with no destination Gottfried says: 'waz rach er an den buochen,/der diz hiez schriben unde lesen?' (8622–23). What kind of books Gottfried has in mind is not clear, but one undertone in this statement might be that whoever tells the story in this way deviates from the authoritative and factual version enshrined in written historical records.<sup>33</sup>

Gottfried's own version of how a marriage is arranged for Marke avoids the need to include any implausible episodes by using resources already present in the story to motivate the course of events. Not only do his barons want the king to marry, they want him to marry a specific person. The choice of Isolde is determined, in the first instance, by the barons' hostility to Tristan. They decide on her, as Gottfried puts it, 'niwan durch Tristandes tot' (8453); how this is so



becomes transparent as soon as they propose that Tristan should be the one to arrange the marriage, for this will deliver him into the hands of his mortal enemies in Ireland (8524–44). The barons' proposal is also motivated from Marke's perspective: Isolde's beauty and accomplishments are already known to him from Tristan's eulogy of her, and he is ready to acquiesce to his courtiers because he thinks that the scheme stands no chance of success and that he will be able to remain celibate and be succeeded by his nephew (8506–22). Then there are the political considerations that the barons put to Marke, however hypocritically: the marriage is desirable because it would end the enmity between Cornwall and Ireland and would eventually bring Ireland under Cornish sovereignty (8489–504). The choice of Isolde as a bride for Marke is thus not a bolt from the blue, but the plausible outcome of human aims and calculations. And since the name and whereabouts of the bride are known from the outset, the motif of the voyage with no destination automatically becomes redundant: Tristan and his retinue head straight for Ireland.

The difference between Eilhart and Gottfried turns on the observation of the law of verisimilitude in the motivation of the story of how a bride was found for Marke. Both authors begin this episode with the same constellation of character and motive: on the one hand the king and the affection and favour he shows his nephew, and on the other the courtiers who are jealous of this special relationship (Eilhart, 1337–43; Gottfried, 5152–61, 8358–64). But whereas Eilhart allows the subsequent action to be determined by external and aleatory forces, Gottfried exploits the potential contained within the initial clash of motives and ambitions in order to represent the episode as a court intrigue where every move, even if it is not always predictable, appears plausible in terms of what we already know about the characters involved.<sup>34</sup> Thus even Tristan's willingness to go to Ireland, which might seem surprising in the light of the dangers such a voyage holds in store for him, is of a piece with earlier instances of his reckless behaviour in the face of apparently impossible odds, such as his keenness to fight Morold and his decision to try to have his wound cured by the elder Isolde. The attention Gottfried pays to the depiction of character and motive helps bring about the intelligibility and consistency of representation that define the rhetorical virtue of *narratio verisimilis*.<sup>35</sup>

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. *Marci Annaei Lucani Pharsalia*, edited by Karl Friedrich Weber, III, 39, 323.
2. Berthe M. Marti, 'Literary Criticism in the Mediaeval Commentaries on Lucan', pp. 251–52.
3. See Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, paras 294–334.
4. Edited by H. Caplan (London, 1954), I.9.14. The terms *probabilis* and *credibilis* are also used; see Lausberg, para. 322 (p. 180).
5. On the assimilation of rhetoric to poetics, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, p. 75.
6. Cicero, *De inventione*, I.21.29. Compare the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, I.9.16: 'Veri similis narratio erit si ut mos, ut opinio, ut natura postulat dicemus.'

7. *De inventione*, i.21.29; *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, i.9.16; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, iv.2.52.
8. *Institutio oratoria*, iv.2.52: 'Credibilis autem erit narratio . . . si personas convenientes iis, quae facta credi volemus, constituerimus, ut furti reum cupidum, adulterii libidinosum, homicidii temerarium, vel his contraria, si defendemus.'
9. Marie Schulz, *Die Lehre von der historischen Methode bei den Geschichtschreibern des Mittelalters*, pp. 121–24. She considers that historians who do mention the requirement of verisimilitude are mechanically repeating rhetorical precepts which actually had no application in historiography.
10. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, iv.2.59. The reference is to *Pro Milone*, x.28.
11. Lucan, *Belli civilis libri decem*, i, 120–57. Further references will be given in the text.
12. Weber, p. 323: 'Omnis qui narrat, verisimiliter saltem debet narrare. Quia dixit illum solum tantam Romae habuisse potestatem, ostendit esse non mirum, si hoc fecit, cum nullus tantae indolis esset Romae, neque qui tantum de legibus sciret'; p. 403: 'Quia dixerat Caesarem tam strenuum esse et nullo modo timere, non videretur verisimile, ut unquam timeret; et ut hoc verisimile videretur, immoratus est tantum in illa tempestate'; p. 477: 'Ideo hanc digressionem fecit, quia non esset verisimile, ut tantus homo et tam valens in magica arte veniret ad eam quaerere de futuris, nisi praecelleret ceteras in hac arte'. On sea storms and *evidentia*, see Lausberg, para. 810 (p. 401).
13. Weber, p. 39: 'Superius vocavit Rubiconem parvum, et postea tumidum; et quia omnis scriptor verisimiliter debet scribere, ideo describit Rubiconem; et dicit naturaliter eum parvum, ubi dicit eum parvo fonte cadere, et serpere per imas valles'; p. 383: 'Genusus et Apsus sunt fluvii, quos describit ideo, quia non videretur verisimile, ut, cum ita prope essent tam graves inimici, quin statim concurrerent. Et dicit istos esse in medio; et ne circuire possent, dicit quod prope erant montes, unde urgebantur. Et cito intrant mare'; pp. 424–25. 'Et potuit mutare castra, cum tantum spatii esset ibi, quod et nascebantur flumina ibi et fatigabantur. Quod verisimile est; non enim poterat venire Caesar una die, nisi usque ad medietatem . . . Et ut videretur verisimile, dicit quod tot fuerunt, quod possunt iungere Seston Abydo, scilicet Phryxum pontum implere de terra'; p. 450: 'Et quia ex omni parte erant montes ideo agri diu oppressi sunt a paludibus . . . Nisi enim hoc scriberet, non videretur verisimile, ut ibi etiam habitatio esset'.
14. Edmond Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, pp. 74–175.
15. Stanislaw Sawicki, *Gottfried von Straßburg und die Poetik des Mittelalters*, pp. 75–78. Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars versificatoria*, i.38–40: 'Si agatur de amoris efficacia, quomodo scilicet Jupiter Parasis amore exarsit, praelibanda est puellae descriptio et assignanda puellaris pulchritudinis elegantia, ut, auditio speculo pulchritudinis, verisimile sit et quasi conjecturale auditori Jovis medullas tot et tantis insudasse deliciis'; also i.73 (referring to *Pharsalia*, ii, 388–90): 'Ut vera dicantur vel veri similia . . . Sicut Lucanus qui Curionem talem describit quod voluntatem civilis belli facile possit intimare' (Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, pp. 118–19, 135).
16. Sawicki, p. 78. His estimation of Thomas's handling of the description is based on the evidence of the Old Norse saga.
17. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, iv.2.52. See above, p. 87.
18. Winfried Christ, *Rhetorik und Roman*, pp. 284–88.
19. Ingrid Hahn, *Raum und Landschaft in Gottfrieds Tristan*, p. 17, remarks that Gottfried's description of the storm contains fewer concrete details than the Old Norse saga, concentrating instead on how the characters react to the tempest.
20. Compare the interpretation of this excursus by Christ, pp. 55–63. He also emphasizes the movement of the argument from the particular to the general, but then stresses what I see as the speculative content of the digression – Gottfried's demonstration of the preferability of doubt to certainty – in order to conclude that Gottfried's disquisition 'entwickelt keine an der Welterfahrung des Publikums oder der Gesamtdarstellung der Figuren verifizierbare Psychologie' (p. 61). Naturally the claim that a lover will find suspicion a lesser evil than certain knowledge can never be verified because, as we saw, Gottfried's reasoning means that no lover will ever find himself in a position to make the choice; on the other hand, by explaining Marke's behaviour with reference to the norms of 'al diu werlt' and the 'site' of love, Gottfried is surely making a strong appeal to collectively held opinions as the basis for understanding and judgment.
21. The monograph of Lore Peiffer, *Zur Funktion der Exkurse im 'Tristan' Gottfrieds von Straßburg*, GAG, 31 (Göppingen, 1971), also investigates Gottfried's excursuses as a technique that allows the narrator to comment on aspects of the plot; but she sees in this practice an opportunity for Gottfried to set out his personal view of love, rather than an attempt to contribute to narrative verisimilitude.
22. See in particular the section entitled 'Die Wahrheit der Rhetorik', Christ, pp. 330–40.
23. Cicero, *De oratore*, edited by E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham (London, 1942), i.31.138. See also Lausberg, para. 33.

24. *Les Fragments du Roman de Tristan*, edited by Bartina H. Wind, Douce Fragment, lines 835–84. Further references to this edition will be given in the text.
25. See Joseph Bédier, *Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas*, II, 38, and Werner Schröder, 'Die von *Tristande hant gelesen*: Quellenhinweise und Quellenkritik im "Tristan" Gottfrieds von Straßburg', p. 315.
26. On Gottfried's prologue see above, pp. 49–53.
27. Neither of the surviving 'primitive' versions has it that the messenger was Gurnal; Beroul breaks off before reaching this episode, and in Eilhart the mission is undertaken by Tristrant's 'Wirt' (*Tristrant*, lines 9256–72).
28. Jean Frappier regards the terms *raisun* and *verur* as synonymous, tentatively connecting them with Aristotelean verisimilitude ('Sur le mot "raison" dans le *Tristan* de Thomas d'Angleterre', in *Linguistic and Literary Studies in Honor of Helmut A. Hatzfeld*, edited by A. Crisafulli (Washington, 1964), pp. 168–71).
29. See Walter Haug, 'Aventiure in Gottfrieds von Straßburg *Tristan*', in *Festschrift für Hans Eggers zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Herbert Backes, *Beiträge*, 94, Sonderheft (Tübingen, 1972), pp. 88–125.
30. The *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch* glosses *sich spellen* as 'zum spel werden', *spel* as 'erzählung, märchen, lügenhafte und unnütze rede' (II, II, 490–92); for *lispēn* see I, 1010.
31. Gerhard Schindele, *Tristan: Metamorphose und Tradition*, pp. 21–26; Christ, p. 297.
32. Compare, for instance, Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, edited by K. A. Hahn (Frankfurt, 1845), line 8521: 'ez ist ein wârheit, niht ein spel', and *Priester Johannes*, in Friedrich Zamcke, 'Der Priester Johannes', *Abhandlungen der philologisch-historischen Classe der königlichen sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, 7 (Leipzig, 1879), p. 958 'habt ez niht für ein spel,/ez ist genomen von der wârheit' (lines 72–73); for further attestations see the *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, II, II, 491.
33. See D. H. Green, 'Oral Poetry and Written Composition. (An Aspect of the Feud between Gottfried and Wolfram)', pp. 170, 220. An alternative interpretation of line 8622, translating *rechen* not as 'sich rächen' but as 'mit den Händen zusammenkratzen', has been proposed by Gottfried Weber, in his edition of *Tristan* (Darmstadt, 1967): 'Was hat der aus den Büchern (Quellen, Vorlagen) zusammengekratzt, der dies aufschreiben und lesen ließ?' (p. 656).
34. See Rainer Gruenter, 'Der Favorit: Das Motiv der höfischen Intrige in Gotfrids *Tristan und Isold*', *Euphorion*, 58 (1964), 113–28.
35. Attention to consistent and rational motivation of each episode in the narrative was identified by Friedrich Ranke as one of the cardinal characteristics of Thomas's courtly adaptation of the *Tristan* legend that Gottfried built on further; see *Tristan und Isold*, *Bücher des Mittelalters*, 3, pp. 130–31, 133–35, 179–87.

## CHAPTER SIX

### VERISIMILITUDE AND THE ARGUMENTUM

#### ARGUMENTUM: A NARRATIVE GENRE

In rhetorical theory the concept of verisimilitude, apart from being a virtue required of narrative in general, is associated with one type of narrative in particular, the *argumentum*. The rhetoricians of antiquity had devised a highly stratified classification of the different species of *narratio*, in which the *argumentum* occupies a well defined, although subordinate, place.<sup>1</sup> Cicero, in *De inventione*, and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* distinguish three basic *genera narrationis*, the first two of which, an account of the facts of the case under consideration, or one involving a digression from the facts, are properly rhetorical, in that they are regularly used by the orator in forensic and deliberative contexts, while the third, which interests us, is said to fall outside the domain of public affairs, and concerns the student of eloquence only in so far as its cultivation will provide him with good practice for the first two types.<sup>2</sup> The third genre is thus really part of the *praeexercitamina* or *progymnasmata*, the system of preliminary exercises for training the orator, which were sometimes considered to belong to grammar rather than rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> This third class is divided into two, according to whether it has as its theme persons or affairs (*personae* or *negotia*), and the second of these sub-classes is ramified still further, into *fabula*, *historia*, and *argumentum*. These are explained in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* as follows:

Fabula est quae neque veras neque veri similes continet res, ut eae sunt quae tragoediis traditae sunt. Historia est gesta res, sed ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota. Argumentum est ficta res quae tamen fieri potuit, velut argumenta comoediarum. (1.8.13)

Together these three kinds of narrative form a generic sub-system in which *historia* and *fabula* represent the extreme poles of fact and fiction, with *argumentum* occupying a place in between. Because it is a fictional genre, *argumentum* is distinct from history and more closely related to fable; but because it must be invented in a plausible way, it is also marked off from fable and resembles the factual narration that is characteristic of history. The position of *argumentum* in

this triad is thus determined by its two definitive characteristics, fiction and verisimilitude. Quintilian is explicit: 'argumentum, quod falsum sed vero simile' (*Institutio oratoria*, II.4.2).

From the association made between *fabula* and tragedy and *argumentum* and comedy it is apparent that these are types of literary, not rhetorical, narration. Cicero goes further than the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and actually illustrates each genre by a literary quotation.<sup>4</sup> Literature was traditionally assigned to the province of grammar, defined by Quintilian (I.4.2) as 'recte loquendi scientia et poetarum enarratio', and so the literary application of these narrative types would be another reason, besides their status as *praeexercitamina*, to exclude them from the purview of rhetoric and give them to grammar. Yet the terms *fabula*, *historia*, *argumentum* do not seem ever to have been at home with the grammarians, who do not normally divide literature into these categories, tending instead to use a classification based on the degree of directness of representation. Thus they distinguish between the *genus activum*, narratives in which only the characters speak, the *genus enarrativum*, where the poet alone speaks, and the *genus commune*, in which both characters and poet speak (see Curtius, pp. 439–40). In grammatical treatises, the triad of *fabula*, *historia*, *argumentum*, or a system of classification akin to it, is comparatively rare: it is found in the *Praeexercitamina* of Priscian and in the first book (*De grammatica*) of Isidore's *Etymologiae*.<sup>5</sup>

Within the overall system of rhetoric *fabula*, *historia*, and *argumentum* have little significance. They occupy a very low position in the hierarchy of narrative genres and, because of their literary quality, have no direct application in any of the contexts with which oratory is concerned. Even so, this sub-system (by which I mean not just the terms, but the values that define their relationship to each other) endured into the Middle Ages unimpaired. The classical sources of rhetorical doctrine continued to be studied, and the triad of *fabula*, *historia*, and *argumentum* is repeated by later authors, such as Martianus Capella in the fifth century and John of Garland in the thirteenth.<sup>6</sup> But it was perhaps Isidore's *Etymologiae* that, more than any other authority, shaped the medieval understanding of the three genres; in particular I think it can be shown that later modifications to the classical theory of *argumentum* flow from ambiguities, or even insufficiencies, in Isidore's treatment of it.

*Fabula* and *historia* — but not *argumentum* — are discussed at some length by Isidore at the end of the first book of the *Etymologiae*, which is devoted to grammar. He explains each of the two terms by its etymological derivation (*fabula* is said to come from *fari*, 'to speak', 'quia non sunt res factae sed tantum loquendo factae', *historia* from the Greek *apo tou historein*, meaning 'to see', because 'apud veteres enim nemo conscribebat historiam, nisi is qui interfuisset'), enumerates the various different kinds of fable and history, gives some account of their function and utility, and names the most famous writers of each

genre (*Etymologiae*, I.40.1–44.4). Then, at the end of his exposition of history, Isidore adds a sentence which is plainly taken from the classical rhetoricians:

Item inter historiam et argumentum et fabulam interesse. Nam historiae sunt res verae quae factae sunt; argumenta sunt quae etsi facta non sunt, fieri tamen possunt; fabulae vero sunt quae nec factae sunt nec fieri possunt, quia contra naturam sunt. (I.44.5)

The introduction of the third term, *argumentum*, appears as something of an afterthought. Isidore had clearly not intended to treat it at all, for in the list of the thirty 'divisiones grammaticae artis', which he had given earlier in the book and constitutes his agenda for discussion, the term *argumentum* does not appear, but *fabula* and *historia* do (I.5.4). It is as though, having set out with the intention of describing and contrasting *fabula* and *historia* only, Isidore could not help but be reminded of the rhetorical context where these terms occur together, which he then cites even though it goes beyond what he had originally proposed to discuss.<sup>7</sup> The effect is to create a certain unevenness in his presentation: in theory, it is suggested, there are actually three genres, which together form a closed system, but in practice Isidore talks about only two of them. The subsequent reception of his doctrine is best understood as an attempt to correct the uncertainties that result from this unevenness.

In the last quarter of the eleventh century Bernard, a teacher at the cathedral school of Utrecht, wrote a commentary on the eclogue of Theodulus. It begins with an introduction, or *accessus* to that poet, which is also a general compendium of poetological vocabulary, for Bernard uses every opportunity to elucidate terminology even if it is not strictly pertinent to the task in hand. His mode of exposition is etymological, based for the most part on Isidore.<sup>8</sup> Among the several genres discussed by Bernard when he comes to *qualitas carminis* are *fabula*, *historia*, and *argumentum*. Bernard defines them as follows:

Fabula igitur est quod neque gestum est neque geri potuit, dicta a fando quid in dictis tantum, non in factis constet . . . Historia autem est res gesta sed a memoria hominum remota, tracta apud ystorin id est videre: solos enim fieri rem videntes olim scribere licebat . . . Argumentum vero est quodammodo res ficta, quae tamen fieri potest, ut in comediis; est enim aliquid quod diffinit Tullius dubiae rei fidem faciens. (Huygens, p. 63)

It is noticeable that Bernard does not give an etymological explanation of *argumentum*. This reflects the differing amounts of information provided about each of the three terms by Isidore. With *fabula* and *historia*, which Isidore had treated in detail, Bernard has plenty to go on, and his exposition is in fact a condensed version of the relevant sections of the *Etymologiae*.<sup>9</sup> But with *argumentum*, which, as we saw, Isidore mentions only briefly and as an afterthought, he is offered far less guidance — not even an etymology. He compensates for this lack of information in his source by bringing in all the rhetorical theory he can possibly associate with the term. The first half of his definition of *argumentum*, 'res ficta, quae tamen fieri potest', is the familiar one; the second half

however has nothing to do with *argumentum* as a *genus narrationis*, but alludes to the same term's use in an altogether different rhetorical context, that of the *argumentatio*. This is a part of the oration quite separate from the *narratio*, and its function is to win over the audience to the orator's point of view by means of reasoned argument. The individual methods of proof that the speaker has at his disposal are known as *probationes* or *argumenta*, and the areas of experience on which he may draw for his arguments are called *loci* or *topoi* (see Lausberg, paras 348–430). As Cicero, the source for the second half of Bernard's definition of *argumentum*, puts it in his treatise on topics: 'licet definire locum esse argumenti sedem, argumentum autem rationem quae rei dubiae faciat fidem' (*Topica*, II, 8). Here the word *argumentum* is used in the sense of *probatio*, and it has nothing to do with narrative genres. That Bernard should have brought together two quite distinct usages of the same term in rhetorical theory is not just, to my mind, evidence of his compilatory method of work, it also reveals his awareness of the sketchy nature of Isidore's exposition, which he tries to round out in this way.<sup>10</sup>

Conrad of Hirsau, who knew Bernard's commentary and used it for his *Dialogus super auctores*,<sup>11</sup> responds to the same problem in a different way: he tries to eliminate *argumentum* from the system of genres altogether, leaving behind Isidore's original twofold schema of fable and history. The three terms are mentioned by Conrad and defined rather laconically in the introductory part of the dialogue, in which he introduces his pupil to elementary critical vocabulary:

Historia est res visa, res gesta: historin enim grece, latine visio dicitur, unde historiografus rei visae scriptor dicitur. (Huygens (1970), p. 75)

Fabula est quod neque gestum est nec geri potuit. (p. 76)

Argumentum est dubiae rei fidem faciens, sicut ait Tullius. (p. 77)

Conrad does not mention that *argumentum* is also a narrative genre characterized by verisimilitude. By taking up only the second part of Bernard's definition, which refers to argument in the sense of *probatio*, Conrad in effect refuses to acknowledge that there is a kind of narrative located between fable and history, fictional but nevertheless with the force of truth. This accords with his rigoristic condemnation of all secular, fictional literature as mendacious; in a dispute with his pupil over whether there may be some truth in the fables of Aesop, he maintains, in terms that go far beyond the specific point at issue:

Aliud enim sunt poemata et in his vulgaria proverbialia nihil ponderis habentia, utpote quasi sonus levis transeuntia, aliud divina eloquia, quae fundata et aeterna sunt spiritali intelligentia . . . Sunt igitur in literatura seculari verborum quidem signa aliquid significantia, sed spiritali intelligentiae minime compendientia nec ad veritatis rationem expressiva.<sup>12</sup>

The classical system of *fabula*, *argumentum*, and *historia* contains two binary oppositions. The first is that of fictional (*fabula*, *argumentum*) versus non-fictional

narratives (*historia*). The second is between those genres whose representation in some way approximates to perceived reality (*historia, argumentum*) and those that are implausibly fantastic (*fabula*). What Conrad has done is to focus on only one of these oppositions, the first, and squeeze out the middle genre of *argumentum*.

The Middle Ages, to summarize the discussion so far, had inherited a theoretical knowledge of *argumentum* from two sources. From the classical rhetoricians it could learn of a type of narrative situated between history and fable, between pure fact and pure fiction, and whose defining characteristic is verisimilitude. It could also learn about *argumentum* from the grammatical tradition emanating from Isidore, where however the theory of the narrative genre becomes contaminated with the other sense of *argumentum* in rhetoric, that of *probatio*. The conflation of the two usages is not as careless as it may seem; since the distinctive feature of *argumentum* is a style of narration that revolves around concepts of plausibility and possibility ('quod fieri potest'), it follows that the various *probationes* prescribed by theory can be of help to the narrator in achieving a logically consistent, and thus credible, narrative.

The literary scope of *argumentum* was traditionally restricted to the plots of the comedians.<sup>13</sup> But it is not hard to see how the theory of a genre located between history and fable and based on a principle of verisimilitude might find a practical outlet in Gottfried's Tristan romance, the poetics of which, I have been suggesting, uses a concept of verisimilitude in response to problems created by the author's literary historical situation, that of being between the vernacular traditions of archival historiography and experimental romance.

### TRISTAN'S COMBAT WITH MOROLD

It is well known that Gottfried narrates the hero's duel with Morold as though it were a battle of armies, in deliberate deviation from the received tradition (6866–905, 6978–7008, 7061). What has never, to my knowledge, been observed is that Gottfried presents his version of the episode as an *argumentum*, in both senses of the term: as a fictitious story that nevertheless is plausible, and as a *dubia res* standing in need of proof.

Gottfried begins by stating the nature of the fight according to general opinion and the authoritative source:

Nu hoere ich al die werlde jehen  
und stat ouch an dem maere,  
daz diz ein einwic waere,  
und ist ir aller jehede dar an,  
hien waeren niuwan zwene man. (6866–70)

This is how the story is preserved in the archive. Gottfried isolates himself from archival tradition, though, making it clear that his own view is without precedent:



ich prüevez aber an dirre zit,  
 daz ez ein offener strit  
 von zwein ganzen rotten was;  
 swie ich doch daz nie gelas  
 an Tristandes maere,  
 ich machez doch warbaere. (6871–76)

The version proposed by Gottfried is thus a *ficta res* and, because it contradicts the perception of ‘al die werlde’, a *dubia res*. It is therefore a proper object of argumentative treatment in every sense. The key terms are *warbaere machen* and *prüeven*, ‘to show to be plausible’<sup>14</sup> and ‘to prove’. They correspond exactly to the workings of *argumentum* in its hybrid definition as a narrative genre that presents a fictional story as though it could have happened in reality and as a proof that can make an otherwise dubious case seem credible.

The assertion that the judicial duel was in fact a full-scale battle of armies not only diverges from written tradition, it also appears to contradict the law of verisimilitude, since on Gottfried’s admission it goes against the postulates of *natura*, *mos*, and *opinio*. Or, to use Thomas’s terms, this version appears to have neither *verur* nor *raisun* on its side (see above, pp. 93–94). Gottfried nevertheless claims plausibility for his account, which I think can be brought within the ambit of rhetorical *verisimilitudo*. This verisimilitude is an image or effect of truthfulness that arises when the audience is able to convert the arguments of the orator into experimental categories and on that basis accepts them as authentic. There is more to this process than a simple checking of textual statements to see whether they correspond to perceived reality, for if this were so we should be neglecting the active contribution made by the orator’s discourse to producing an effect of truth. The recognition of the persuasive force of words is the very foundation of rhetoric. The text or discourse is capable of modifying the audience’s perceptions of reality because, no less than the everyday world, it forms part of their empirical experience; if the audience can live out textual propositions in a manner that is accessible to conventional reason, then these will be accepted as plausible. Now, with his account of the fight with Morold, Gottfried has deliberately made things difficult for himself by introducing a discrepancy between everyday experience of the world, which leads the audience to believe that a combat between two men is exactly that, and textual proposition, which has it that the two men are in fact two armies. His task is to demonstrate the plausibility of this extravagant statement by offering a textual experience of it that will ring true for his public. This he accomplishes by means of a virtuoso *argumentum*.

Gottfried turns first to Morold, introducing an *argumentum a persona*, a rhetorical means of proving an assertion about a character by referring to some personal attribute of his or hers (see Lausberg, para. 376). In this case, Gottfried refers to Morold’s *habitus corporis*:<sup>15</sup> tradition, as embodied in the true source

(‘diu warheit’) has it that this warrior had the strength of four men; by a metonymic displacement from the quality of strength to those who possess it, Gottfried claims that Morold is therefore a force of four men (6877–80). Tristan is made into an army by giving him three additional companions in ‘got’, ‘reht’, and ‘willeger muot’ (6882–88). In this case, the mode of reasoning proceeds from Gottfried’s interpretation of the nature of the combat, and so might be considered as an *argumentum a re*:<sup>16</sup> the principles for which Tristan stands (God and Justice), and his character in battle (Determination), are represented as active combatants. Tristan’s adjutants belong to the class of supernatural and allegorically significant beings, *divinae* and *fictae personae*, which we identified earlier on as one of the defining characteristics of medieval fiction (see above, pp. 67–71). Their introduction into the account of the duel as contained in ‘Tristandes maere’ and ‘diu warheit’ — by which last designation Gottfried is perhaps suggesting that this is the historical version — opens up new perspectives of meaning on the facts preserved in the archive: an encounter between two men is made intelligible to the public as a conflict of principle, God and Justice against the brute force represented by Morold.

Having substantiated his claim that the duel really involved eight men organized in two detachments, Gottfried looks to his public for agreement:

E duhte iuch, daz diz maere  
gar ungevüege waere,  
daz uf zwein orsen zwei her  
iemer möhten komen ze wer:  
nu habt irz vür war vernomen. (6893–97)

Gottfried’s rhetorical proofs have turned this ‘ficta res’ (whose dubious status is emphasized again by the fanciful notion of two armies riding into battle on only two chargers) into one ‘*quae tamen fieri potest*’. From the point of view of the audience, their judgment has been modified by the experience (‘vernemen’) of the arguments, which establishes the case as credible (‘vür war’). In these lines it is not difficult to detect a self-congratulatory pride on Gottfried’s part in the power of his rhetoric to bring about a change in the *communis opinio*: what previously (‘e’) would have been dismissed as extravagant and illogical (‘ungevüege’) is now (‘nu’) accepted as plausible. And, as if to show that he may now count on the new consensus his argument has created, for the remainder of the episode Gottfried refers to the two opponents as ‘geselleschaft’ (6903, 6985, 7007), ‘rotte’ (6985, 6998), ‘schar’ (7003), ‘her’ (7061).

Gottfried’s treatment of the combat between Tristan and Morold has occasionally been described as allegory.<sup>17</sup> It is true that Tristan’s allies ‘reht’ and ‘willeger muot’ are abstract qualities of the sort one finds personified in allegorical poetry (compare figures such as ‘Raison’, ‘Bel Acuel’, ‘Richece’, ‘Oiseuse’ in the *Roman de la Rose*, for example), yet I think that the designation ‘allegory’ is inappropriate in this instance, especially if one adopts the strict

definition of Bernard Silvestris: 'Est autem allegoria oratio sub historica narratione verum et ab exteriori diversum involvens intellectum.'<sup>18</sup> In the Morold episode Gottfried does not narrate a historical event whose inner significance he then goes on to reveal in an exegetical commentary (as in his 'entsliezen' (16924) of the significance of the cave of lovers). Rather, what we witness here is a supplementation of the archival version of the narrative by the experimental construction of fictional figures, along with their meaning:

die viere und jene viere  
uz den gebilde ich schiere  
zwo ganze rotte oder ahte man,  
als übel als ich doch bilden kan. (6889–92)

To the author's *bilden* corresponds the audience's *vernemen*; together the two terms describe a process in which a meaning is engendered experimentally ('Let's see what I can make'), a process that has nothing to do with any mode, allegorical, integumental, parabolic or otherwise, that aims at the disclosure of a pre-existent truth hidden inside the already narrated history.<sup>19</sup>

Winfried Christ has drawn attention to Gottfried's 'logische Kultur des Argumentierens' in connexion with the ratiocinative strategies he deploys in the excursus on doubt and suspicion in love (*Rhetorik und Roman*, p. 61, fn. 193). He has also interpreted the Morold passage along similar lines to my reading of it: Gottfried's desire to make his case appear convincing shows him to be promoting a concept of narrative truth that has the status not of fact, but of verisimilitude, in that its credibility for an audience is dependent not on an authoritative source, but on the narrator's powers of logical demonstration: 'die Wahrheit liegt . . . in dem, was die logische Vorstellungskraft des Dichters . . . zwingend erwiesen hat' (p. 304). Christ states that 'der vorgestellte Wahrheitsanspruch ist ein rednerischer' and quotes Wolfgang Monecke on the identical narrative practice of Konrad von Würzburg: 'Erzählen heißt also, eine Geschichte *mit rede bewaeren*, sie als wahr dartzun durch den Vortrag, erprobend, demonstrierend, erweisend berichten.'<sup>20</sup> What is missing from Christ's illuminating account of this passage is the attempt to identify precise theoretical sources of Gottfried's narrative technique. The verisimilar representation of the duel as a conflict of two armies is not just generally rhetorical, it is specifically based on an understanding of *argumentum* in which the two originally unrelated definitions of the term have been conflated in practice: the whole narrative is, by Gottfried's own admission, a figment of the poetic imagination, and yet the reader will accept it as plausible because its premises (that each combatant is in fact an army) have been proved in a process of inductive reasoning whose steps he can follow. Through a daring *argumentum* the archival account of Tristan's combat with Morold has been converted into an experimental one.

Walter Haug insists that the fictional poetics of the Arthurian romance has nothing to do with verisimilitude:

Das Mittelalterlich-Fiktionale, wie es sich im arthurischen Roman konkretisiert, beruht gerade nicht auf der Idee des Wahrscheinlichen, diese neue Fiktionalität kommt vielmehr über das freie Spiel mit dem Unwahrscheinlichen zu sich selbst. (*Literaturtheorie*, p. 106)

This is true so long as verisimilitude is identified with the Aristotelian concept of *to eikos*, which is intimately associated with notions of philosophical truth, necessity, exemplarity and universality (see above, pp. 34–35, 80–81). Aristotle's *Poetics* was in any case hardly read in the Middle Ages and it would therefore be an anachronism to connect the Arthurian romance with a theory of verisimilitude that only became current again with the rediscovery of the *Poetics* by the Renaissance. However, in this chapter and the preceding one I have tried to trace the existence, in rhetorical tradition, of a concept of *verisimilitudo* that was both available to the Middle Ages and, moreover, tended towards experimentality. The truth of this rhetorical *verisimilitudo* is the truth of the demonstrably and experimentally plausible, of what can be represented and experienced as credible. And, as Gottfried shows in the Morold episode with his ingenious conversion of the 'ungevüege' into the 'warbaere', this plausible truth can accommodate even the implausible and fantastic.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. See Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, paras 290–92.
2. Cicero, *De inventione*, i.19.27: 'Narrationum genera tria sunt: unum genus est in quo ipsa causa et omnis ratio controversiae continetur; alterum, in quo digressio aliqua extra causam . . . interponitur. Tertium genus est remotum a civilibus causis quod delectationis causa non inutili cum exercitatione dicitur et scribitur'; *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, i.8.12: 'Narrationum tria sunt genera. Unum est cum exponimus rem gestam . . . Alterum genus est narrationis, quod intercurrit nonnumquam . . . Tertium genus est id quod a causa civili remotum est, in quo tamen exerceri convenit, quo commodius illas superiores narrationes in causis tractare possimus'.
3. Lausberg, para. 1106; Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, p. 440.
4. *De inventione*, i.19.27. *Fabula* is illustrated by the line 'Angues ingentes alites, iuncti iugo', from the tragedian Pacuvius; *historia* by the quotation 'Appius indixit Carthaginiensibus bellum', from Ennius; *argumentum* by a verse from Terence, 'Nam is postquam excessit ex ephēbis' (for detailed references see the note in Hubbell's edition).
5. For Isidore, see below, pp. 101–02. Priscian distinguishes four 'species narrationis': 'civilis', by which he means oratorical narratives, 'fabularis', 'historica', and 'fictilis'. This last category appears to correspond to the rhetoricians' *argumentum*, although Priscian says it is 'ad tragoedias sive comoedias ficta' (*Praeexercitamina ex Hermogene versa*, in *Rhetores latini minores*, edited by Karl Halm, (Leipzig, 1863), p. 552).
6. Martinius Capella, *De arte rhetorica*, in Halm, p. 486; John of Garland, *Parisiensis poetria de arte prosaica metrica et rithmica*, edited by Traugott Lawler, Yale Studies in English, 182 (New Haven, 1974), p. 100 (v, 314–32).
7. Peter von Moos, on the other hand, sees a consistency throughout Isidore's treatment of the genres, to which these last sentences conform; 'Poeta et historicus im Mittelalter', p. 108, fn. 35.
8. There is no modern edition of the entire text of Bernard's commentary; the introduction has been edited by R. B. C. Huygens, *Accessus ad auctores* (1970 edition). On Bernard's method, see Paul Klopsch, *Einführung in die Dichtungslehren des lateinischen Mittelalters*, pp. 55–62.
9. Bernard takes from Isidore the two classes of fable, 'esopica', and 'libistica' (he also has a third, 'mixta'), and the three sub-genres of historiography, 'cottidiana' ('diurnum' or 'ephemerida' in

- Isidore's nomenclature), 'kalendaria', and 'annua' (here too Bernard adds a further class, 'cronica'); he also follows Isidore in describing the purpose of fable as being either to give pleasure or to provide moral instruction. Compare Huygens, p. 63, and *Etymologiae*, I.40.2–3, 6; I.44.
10. Compare Klopsch, p. 58. There is an analogue to Bernard's combinatory definition in the scholia to Terence: 'argumentum ratio rei dubiae faciens fidem; interdum res ficta, quae tamen sic fieri potuit' (*Scholia Terentiana*, edited by Friedrich Schlee (Leipzig, 1893), pp. 167–68; according to the editor, this particular commentary is later than the eleventh century). It is possible that Bernard was prompted to conflate the two meanings of *argumentum* into one definition by what he found in Isidore, the second book of whose *Etymologiae* (on rhetoric) contains a section on topics, defined as 'disciplina inveniendorum argumentorum', and which contains a catalogue of different kinds of rhetorical argument (II.30). But, contrary to the opinion of Curtius, pp. 448–49, there is no suggestion that Isidore himself saw any connexion between this sort of argument and the narrative genre he had mentioned earlier.
  11. See Huygens's preface to his 1955 edition of the *Dialogus*, pp. 7–12. References are to the text of Conrad in Huygens's 1970 edition of the *Accessus ad auctores*.
  12. p. 89. For a full analysis of the dispute between Conrad and his pupil, see Klopsch, pp. 62–63, and Fritz Peter Knapp, 'Historische Wahrheit und poetische Lüge', pp. 612–13.
  13. See Joachim Suchomski, '*Delectatio*' und '*utilitas*': Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis mittelalterlicher komischer Literatur, Bibliotheca Germanica, 18 (Berne and Munich, 1975), pp. 85–89.
  14. *Warbaere*, derived from *war*, appears to be a neologism of Gottfried's; this passage is the only attestation for the word given by the *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, which glosses it as 'der wahrheit gemäß' (III, 520). Peter Ganz, in an explanatory footnote to the line (6880 in his edition), translates *warbaere* as 'wahrscheinlich'.
  15. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, v.10.26: 'habitus corporis, ducitur enim frequenter in argumentum species libidinis, robur petulantiae, his contraria in diversum'.
  16. 'Die *argumenta a re* zeigen eine reiche Mannigfaltigkeit, ja eine die selbständige Neuschöpfung herausfordernde System-Offenheit . . . Eine Systematisierung der *loci* muß ebenfalls ein Versuch bleiben' (Lausberg, para. 377 (p. 206)).
  17. For instance, Blake Lee Spahr, 'Tristan versus Morolt: Allegory against Reality?', in *Helen Adolf Festschrift*, edited by S. Z. Buehne, J. L. Hodge, and L. B. Pinto (New York, 1968), pp. 72–85. Spahr considers that in Gottfried's account of the combat the real forces of Morolt are ranged against the allegorical army of Tristan, and interprets the entire episode as an allegory of the triumph of justice over injustice.
  18. See above, p. 35, and note 85 to Chapter Two, where the full quotation is given. For Bernard, 'historica narratio' is synonymous with biblical narrative, although others broadened the scope of the term. See Fritz Peter Knapp, 'Historische Wahrheit und poetische Lüge', pp. 613–16.
  19. On these modes see the literature under note 87 to Chapter Two, and also Hans Robert Jauss, 'Entstehung und Strukturwandel der allegorischen Dichtung', in *Grundriß der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, edited by H. R. Jauss, VI, part 1 (Heidelberg, 1968), 146–244; Christel Meier, 'Überlegungen zum gegenwärtigen Stand der Allegorie-Forschung: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Mischformen', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 10 (1976), 1–69.
  20. Christ, p. 304. The citation is from Wolfgang Monecke, *Studien zur epischen Technik Konrads von Würzburg: Das Erzählprinzip der 'wildekeit'*, Germanistische Abhandlungen, 24 (Stuttgart, 1968), p. 105.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### TRISTAN AS NARRATOR

Gottfried's handling of the Morold episode not only comments on the facts of the combat, it modifies the substance of tradition. As well as reinterpreting the traditional account of Tristan's encounter with Morold, the fictional and experimental argument transforms it from a duel into a veritable conflict of armies. The argument is 'vür war', so credibly presented that it replaces the original archival 'warheit'. In a similar way, Tristan transforms his historical identity (or what he takes to be his historical identity) when he assumes various disguises. It is characteristic of Gottfried's hero that he is always inventing stories about who he is and where he comes from. To the pilgrims he encounters shortly after he has been abandoned in Cornwall by the Norwegian merchants he pretends to be a native of that country who has lost his way while hunting (2694–721); to the king's hunting party he presents himself as a merchant's son from Parmenie (3096–123); in Ireland he says he is a merchant by the name of 'Tantris' (7559–606, 8796–869, 9517–44), and with Gandin he assumes the disguise of an Irish harpist (13297–305).<sup>1</sup> All of these stories project fictional identities, which nevertheless are 'vür war vernomen' by the hero's interlocutors and form the basis of his dealings with them. There is however one most important difference between the stories Tristan tells about himself in Ireland and to Gandin and the ones he had invented earlier on in Cornwall: in Ireland, and with Gandin, there is an obvious reason why Tristan should tell lies — he needs to disguise his true identity from his enemies and adversaries; in Cornwall, on the other hand, the motive behind his storytelling is far from clear.

The gratuitous nature of Tristan's tall stories has caused some scholars considerable embarrassment and dismay:

Das Bezeichnende ist, daß bei Tristan kein einziges Mal auch nur der Schein eines Gewissenskonfliktes entsteht: Frisch und fröhlich wird immer sogleich zur Lüge gegriffen. Als z.B. der ausgesetzte und verirrt Tristan den beiden Pilgern begegnet und sie als 'guote liute' erkennt, die ihn nicht in Bedrängnis bringen werden, als also jeder Anlaß gegeben wäre, diesen Pilgern mit offenem Vertrauen entgegenzutreten, da besinnt sich Tristan keinen Augenblick, ihnen statt der Wahrheit ein kluges Lügenmärchen zu erzählen.<sup>2</sup>

The theory of *argumentum*, of the 'res ficta quae tamen fieri potest' can, I believe, throw some light on these problematic stories within the story.

Tristan's first narrative is triggered off by a question from the pilgrims: 'vil liebez kint, wannen bist du / oder wer hat dich da her braht?' (2690–91). He reflects for a moment before answering:

Tristan der was vil wol bedaht  
und sinnesam von sinen tagen,  
er begunde in vremediu maere sagen. (2692–94)

He relates that he is a native of these parts and was to have ridden out hunting in the forest that very day; however, without knowing quite how, he became separated from his party and lost his way. His horse bolted and so he made his way on foot along the path that has led him to his present location, which he does not recognize. He asks the pilgrims where they are headed; they reply that they are going to Tintagel and willingly let him come along with them (2695–730).

There are four points to notice about these 'vremediu maere'. First, the story is fabrication, consisting of *res fictae*, from start to finish.<sup>3</sup> Second, there is no obvious reason why Tristan should not tell the truth about himself. He has nothing to fear from the pilgrims: although on first catching sight of them he is afraid that they might capture him (2659), once he has observed them more closely he concludes 'diz mugen wol guote liute sin; / ine darf kein angest von in haben' (2668–69). His circumspection and reflexion are thus oddly inappropriate to the situation. Third, the story nevertheless explains plausibly to the pilgrims how he, whose attire and manners reveal him to be a courtier (2672–77, 2739–50), comes to be wandering alone in a forest. Although the narrative is invented, it pays attention to reality. Fourth, the story is effective, in that the pilgrims offer to accompany Tristan to Tintagel and so fulfil his desire to be returned to the security of human society, a desire he had evinced when, not long before this scene, he implored God to bring him back to civilization and proposed to climb a hill in order to survey the surrounding land for signs of habitation (2493–99, 2522–32).

The last two points, the plausibility and expediency of Tristan's storytelling, have been emphasized by Gisela Hollandt. The 'vremediu maere' are said by her to represent Tristan's calculated response to the needs of the moment, which are to satisfy his interlocutors' curiosity by giving some account of himself, and to find shelter in human society; she goes so far as to explain the hero's behaviour in terms of these two features: 'Alle Auskünfte, die er den Wallfahrern gibt, dienen einzig dem Zweck, zur nächsten Wohnstätte zu gelangen. Infolgedessen ist es gleichgültig, was er erfindet, vorausgesetzt, daß es seinem Ziele dient.'<sup>4</sup> This is really a description of what Tristan does with the pilgrims, not an explanation, because it begs the question why he should go to the trouble of making up a

story at all, when he could easily achieve his aim by telling the truth.<sup>5</sup> There is something excessive about his behaviour, for the circumstances do not require him to use his inventiveness and ingenuity as he does. Neither the hero's situation nor his character can account for his behaviour adequately: attempts to explain his predilection for inventing stories about himself as a manifestation of his personality as a *homo ludens* fail to convince, because ultimately they rest on the tautology that Tristan tells lies because he is a liar.<sup>6</sup>

The difficulty encountered by critics is, then, that the episode of Tristan and the pilgrims provides no clue about why the hero should invent a story about himself. A fresh perspective on the problem has been suggested by Winfried Christ, who also observes how verisimilar Tristan's stories are and draws a parallel between this and Gottfried's own narrative technique:

Tristan ist wie sein Schöpfer Gottfried nicht Annalist, sondern ein 'vindaere' von 'aventiuren', und wie bei diesem ist Wahrheit nicht identisch mit positiver Historizität, sondern mit sowohl plausiblem wie bedeutungsvollem Sprechen. Was Tristan gegenüber den Pilgern . . . unternommen hat, scheint also recht genau die Situation des Adapteurs Gottfried abzubilden, nämlich nicht eine Geschichte Wort für Wort, so wie sie vorliegt, nachzuerzählen, sondern auf ihr aufbauend 'sinnesam' und 'sinnecliche' eine Textur zu entwerfen, die sowohl glaubwürdig ist als auch neue Bedeutungen setzt . . . Vor allem in diesem genauen Sinn des 'aventiure'-Erzählens wird man von Tristan dem Künstler . . . sprechen dürfen, in dem die Situation des Dichters und etwas von der Poetik seines Erzählens gespiegelt erscheint. (*Rhetorik und Roman*, p. 325)

In effect, Christ locates the motivation for Tristan's behaviour outside the logic of the narrated scene, seeking to explain it as a reflexion of the relationship between Gottfried, his work, and his audience. From this point of view, Tristan's ingenuity and circumspection, which seemed excessive and inappropriate to his situation, fall into place: it is really the narrator Gottfried who, through his character Tristan, and at an early stage in the romance, is having his narrative poetics enacted. Where however Christ characterizes the narrative technique of both Gottfried and Tristan as 'plausibles, bedeutungsvolles Sprechen', I would make a specific connexion between their practice and the rhetorical theory of *argumentum*, for fictional and real narrator alike are concerned with representing a 'res ficta quae tamen fieri potest'. I would also want to take Christ's suggestive line of interpretation further and read the scene of Tristan and the pilgrims as a demonstration that is intended above all to give Gottfried's own audience an understanding of their role in the argumentative mode of narration.<sup>7</sup>

A comparison with the same episode as recounted by *Tristrams saga* reveals how Gottfried is at pains to ensure that the hero's tale is plausible. In the saga, Tristram tells the same story about having lost his hunting companions, but when the pilgrims announce that they are on the road to Tintagel, he declares that he has urgent business in that city and powerful friends there, who will give them all a hospitable reception when they arrive.<sup>8</sup> It is, as Felix Piquet remarks,



'un récit abondant en étrangetés'; it is strange that Tristram should suddenly have pressing business in town when he is supposed to be spending the day out hunting, and it is rash of him to make a promise he cannot be sure of keeping and which, if he does not fulfil it, will expose him as a liar.<sup>9</sup> If the saga reproduces Tristan's story as it stood in Thomas, Gottfried's source, then the force of Gottfried's adaptation is clear: it omits all the elements that would imperil the success of Tristan's fictional story as a *verisimile argumentum*.<sup>10</sup>

If Tristan resembles Gottfried as narrator, might it not also be possible to draw a parallel between the behaviour of the pilgrims, Tristan's fictional audience, and the role Gottfried envisages for his real public? What strikes us first, however, is not so much a parallel as an important difference between the two audiences in respect of how well informed they are. Tristan, unlike his counterpart in the saga, is careful to give an account that his interlocutors can neither verify nor falsify and, indeed, is so plausibly narrated that they have no choice but to believe him. Gottfried's audience, on the other hand, has heard the whole story of the hero's birth and childhood and is in a position to recognize that Tristan is not telling the truth about himself. But the point of this, it seems to me, is not that Gottfried's readers or listeners should allow themselves to feel superior to the pilgrims, who are taken in by Tristan's ingenious narration; there is not even a suggestion that these pious men are intended as figures of fun. Rather, if they compare the pilgrims' situation with their own, they will recognize that, when it comes to determining the truth of any discourse, they rely on the same experimental method as the audience within the narrative. The pilgrims evaluate Tristan's story against what they are able to observe about him and find that his account rings true; Gottfried's audience measures the hero's 'vremediu maere' against what it has already heard about him from Gottfried and finds his story false. The conclusions diverge, but the process by which they are reached is in each case the same: the measuring of each new experience, textual or empirical, against previous such experience. Even if Gottfried's audience can see that Tristan's story is false, it is bound to acknowledge that it is nevertheless a plausible story and, because of this, one that has real effects. The episode of the pilgrims is, it seems to me, an object-lesson in how, in a narrative mode based on verisimilitude, the only reality that matters is virtuality, the reality that consists not in fact, but in the effect of a discourse. The audience recognizes that its experience of the story is the place where meaning is made.

Walter Haug argues that authors of Arthurian romances had difficulty in formulating explicitly the principles of their fictional poetics. The vernacular languages had not yet developed the theoretical vocabulary to express these principles, and the existing Latin terminology was inadequate, since the experimental fiction of romance was an independent creation of vernacular literature that had nothing in common with learned fictional modes such as allegory and intendment. Authors such as Chrétien, Hartmann and Wolfram resorted

instead to adumbrating their new poetics by using Latin terms in a context that made clear how the terminology fell short of what they, the authors, were attempting to do: Chrétien alludes to integumental theory and its premise that the fictional text cloaks a true meaning when he pairs terms such *conte* and *conjointure* (*Erec*) and *matiere* and *san* (*Lancelot*); Hartmann in the prologue to *Iwein* mentions the *lere* to be had from the story and so evokes the *prodesse* of didactic tradition; Wolfram's simile of the bow in *Parzival* takes up a metaphor of biblical exegesis (*Literaturtheorie*, pp. 103–05, 125–26, 167). It seems to me that, faced with the same difficulties, Gottfried could be trying to demonstrate his 'argumentative' poetics by having it enacted within the narrative representation. And indeed, what more appropriate way can there be of explaining this new, experimental mode to an audience than by treating them to a textual experience of it?

Tristan's story about how he became separated from his party becomes narrative reality in the very next episode, in which he and the pilgrims cross paths with King Marke's huntsmen (2759–72). Far from being proof that Tristan was telling the truth, unconsciously, about himself (Jupé, p. 67), the effect of this, to my mind, is to render ambiguous the status of Gottfried's own narrative. How is the audience to know whether Gottfried is following his source (in fact he is, but only the reader who can compare him with Thomas will recognize that)<sup>11</sup> or simply incorporating Tristan's fictional account into his own narrative? The distinction between the history told by the narrator and the fable invented by the character is lost, as both levels of narration merge into an identical verisimilitude. Gottfried insists that he is announcing the approach of Marke's huntsmen 'als uns daz ware maere saget' (2763). Here I think he is enjoying a joke: so plausibly has Tristan narrated his 'vremediū maere' that they are a virtual 'warez maere' which he, Gottfried, might as well use himself. As Tristan continues to reinvent his identity for Marke's courtiers, we enter deeper into a narrative world whose reality is constituted by verisimilitude.

The huntsmen are curious to know who the foreigner, who teaches them new and sophisticated arts of the chase, is and where he comes from (3084–89). Tristan anticipates a direct question and prepares to tell another story about himself:

diz nam in sine trahte  
 der sinnesame Tristan.  
 vil sinnecliche er aber began  
 sin aventiure vinden.  
 sin rede diun was kinden  
 niht gelich noch sus noch so. (3090–95)

'Vinden' calls to mind the rhetorical term *inventio*, defined by the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (1.2.3) as 'excogitatio rerum verarum aut veri similibium, quae causam probabilem reddunt'. Again Tristan's story is fictional, and once more the

resourcefulness and cunning that he puts into his narration are out of keeping with his character and his circumstances: his tale is far in excess of what one might expect of the average fourteen-year-old and, since he has already won the admiration of the Cornishmen, who feel privileged to have made his acquaintance, there is little reason for him to be so guarded with them.

It is plain that Tristan cannot repeat the story he had told the pilgrims if he wants to be believed. Accordingly, he invents another tale to suit his new audience. He tells them that he comes from Parmenie, where his father is a merchant who saw to it that he received a good education. The visits of foreign traders kindled in him a longing to see the world, until he ran away from home and sailed with merchants to Cornwall (3097–123). This narrative covers all the points about which the Cornishmen might be curious, and gives a plausible explanation of them. Unlike the first of Tristan's stories, it is not completely invented: it is true that Tristan comes from Parmenie; his father, admittedly no merchant, did devote great care to his son's education; and he was indeed brought to Cornwall by merchants, though not of his own free will, as he represents. His account is a fictional elaboration of his history, taking elements from reality and setting them in a new context. Both Bernard of Utrecht and Conrad of Hirsau allow that the poet's vocation may consist in making a mixture of true and false: 'poetae sunt qui falsa immiscent veris: poetes enim fictor vel formator sonare videtur', 'poeta fictor vel formator dicitur, eo quod vel pro veris falsa dicat vel falsis interdum vera commisceat' (Huygens (1970), pp. 59, 75). There is thus some theoretical recognition of a kind of poetry that, like Tristan's 'aventure', is an imaginative reworking of history.

Like Gottfried with his argumentative transformation of the archival account of the fight with Morold (see above, pp. 104–07), Tristan has succeeded in refashioning his inherited identity into a new, experimental one, which is accepted by his audience because to them it sounds 'vür war'. Tristan is aware of how the truth-value of his story depends on its reception; he concludes it with the words 'nu habet ir al min dinc vernomen. / ine weiz, wiez iu gevalle' (3122–23). If the story is felicitous, and corresponds to the public's expectations of verisimilitude, it will be as good as the truth.<sup>12</sup> As if to emphasize that the virtual truth of a fiction is realized in its reception, Gottfried devotes great attention to the huntsmen's reactions to the story. Tristan's representation of the circumstances of his leaving Parmenie surrounds him with an aura of venturesomeness, which endears him to his listeners:

'a trut kint' sprachens alle  
 'ez was an dir ein edeler muot.  
 unkünde ist manegem herzen guot  
 und leret maneger hande tugent.' (3124–27)

The Cornishmen evidently believe the story: they react with words of wonderment and praise for the country where there are merchants who show so

much concern for the education of their sons (3128–33), and a little later they repeat the same narrative to King Marke (3277–82). Despite the occasional hint of skepticism, nobody at the Cornish court calls Tristan's assumed identity into question (3283–88, 3599–600). It is as a merchant's son that he rises, with great rapidity, to high position at court; first he is appointed master huntsman (3370), and finally he becomes an intimate companion, or 'trut gesinde', of the king (3725, 3743). The status Tristan attains is very real; the account of the early stages of his career at Marke's court is thus an illustration of how the hero deals effectively with reality on the basis of a fictitious identity.

The truth catches up with Tristan, however, when his foster-father Rual arrives in Cornwall and reveals to king and court who the merchant's son from Parmenie really is. To Marke's question 'wer ist Tristan?' (4170) Rual replies with a lachrymary account of Tristan's life 'gar von ende her' (4263), from Riwalin's first arrival in Cornwall to his own travels in search of his abducted foster-son (4172–261). This is a very different kind of story from the ones Tristan had been telling; its truth-value is a function not of its plausibility (indeed to the court Rual's tale must appear more extravagant than anything Tristan has hitherto invented), but of its historicity, which is guaranteed by a token, the ring that Rual produces and once belonged to Blanscheflur. Marke immediately recognizes the ring as the one he had inherited from his father and given to her; he now has no doubt that Rual is telling the truth and Tristan is his sister's son (4284–98). Rual's revelation of the truth calls a halt to Tristan's playing with fictitious identities, for the time being at least; his identity fixed, he loses the freedom to manage his relations with the rest of society on a basis of his making. In the next phase of his career, which begins with his investiture as knight, he is seen discharging the duties that attend his true station in life: he avenges his father and settles his affairs in Parmenie. The play with identity only resumes when he has a new audience, in Ireland.

Rual's story is a revelation not only to the court, but also to Tristan himself, who discovers that what he had believed to be his true identity, namely that he was Rual's son, is a fiction. He has lost 'vater unde vaterwan' (4231, 4371), has learned of the death of Riwalin, his real father, and been robbed of the illusion that his father was Rual. Now, at the latest, it should be clear that truth and falsehood are not appropriate terms to apply to Tristan's previous story-telling, since he could never have told the truth even if he had wanted to; he had only the choice between one verisimilar account or another. What he had thought of as the truth about himself was in fact a fiction, made plausible by Rual's careful efforts to ensure that he and his wife were seen to be observing all the rites and duties of parenthood, from Floraete's simulated confinement, labour and churching to the baptism, nurture and education of their foster-son. In this way all the world, including Tristan, believes that things are as they have been made to appear (1894–2148). As we witness the shedding of Tristan's illusions, we are

also reminded of the finiteness of human perception, a theme that was already present in the scene with the pilgrims, when Gottfried's audience had the opportunity of comparing its situation with the pilgrims' and recognizing that there can be no absolute guarantee that what one is hearing (or telling) is the truth, because knowledge is limited by experience. Rual is in the privileged position of having experienced it all, and in this respect he is like the narrator who knows the world he has created. Indeed, Gottfried stresses the resemblance between Rual and himself when he remarks that Rual tells the tale 'als ich iu e seite' (4245). But Gottfried's narrative world, which Rual knows, is not an entirely historical world reconstructed from the archive; it is an experimental and argumentative treatment of history, and the historicity of Rual's account is a function of its identity with this narrative world. Viewed solely from the perspective of its relationship to Tristan's stories, Rual's tale appears as the truth that dispels fiction, but from the perspective of its relationship to Gottfried's story, it is just another argument which differs from all the other accounts of Tristan's identity we have been treated to only in so far as it is the one that coincides with the master-argument of the author.

Marke and his court are evidently unconcerned about the difference between truth and falsehood. Tristan is not even rebuked for having lied to them. On the contrary, the prevailing mood is that 'all's well that ends well' (4358–59). Rual points out to his foster-son that he will enjoy more than adequate compensation for his loss of 'vater unde vaterwan':

ja bistu von der künfte min  
werder, dan du wandest sin,  
und bist ir geret iemer me  
und hast doch zwene veter als e,  
hie minen herren unde mich. (4381–85)

Indeed, the position at court to which Tristan had advanced as the son of the obscure merchant from Parmenie is not undone, but enhanced, as now in addition he will reap the benefits of being the king's nephew: Marke assumes his new responsibilities as uncle by declaring he will place his land, people and property at Tristan's disposal; shortly afterwards, when Tristan has been dubbed a knight, he announces that he is to be his heir (4446–88; 5152–61). By its actions, the court allows both versions of Tristan's identity, the true and the fictitious, to stand. Tristan's new position, made possible by Rual's revelation of the truth, is not a radical break with, but rather a culmination of, the brilliant career that had begun under false pretences. Fiction and truth evidently rank as equals in the creation of social relationships.

In a recent study of the poetics of Old French lyric and narrative Sylvia Huot describes what I have been calling archival narrative poetics in terms of a lineage

of texts: 'The conventional romance narrator of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries mediates between his audience and a real or posited preexistent text or texts, usually identified in books and often in Latin.'<sup>13</sup> The story's present teller is merely the latest in an entire line of narrators who have handed it down through successive generations of books. Furthermore, as Huot points out, many of the narratives are themselves stories of succession, not of books, but of the heroes whose genealogies are traced backwards and forwards in time. This genealogical consistency also runs through manuscript compilations of several narratives:

To the succession of writers such as that leading from Homer, Dictys and Dares through Benoît de Sainte-Maure to the scribe Jehan Madot, there corresponds a succession of heroes such as that leading from Priam, Hector and Aeneas through Brutus and the Roman Caesars to the houses of medieval Europe. Textual and historical continuity — the history of civilization itself — are striking themes of many romance anthologies. (Huot, p. 85)

In medieval German narrative writing this correspondence between the lineage of the book on the one hand and the lineage of the hero on the other is forcefully illustrated by Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneasroman*. The narrative closes with an exhaustive genealogy of Aeneas, listing all his descendants, the kings and emperors of Rome, down to the time of Augustus, which Veldeke sees as the turning-point in human history because it was during this reign that God's incarnation took place.<sup>14</sup> This section is immediately followed by the epilogue, in which Veldeke identifies himself as the author of this epic, which he read in French books (he presumably means the *Roman d'Eneas*) which in their turn are based on the *Aeneid*. The truth of his story depends on the truth of his sources, which, following the tradition of archival topics, he claims to have followed scrupulously.<sup>15</sup> What is most striking about this passage is the ease with which Veldeke can move from enumerating the royal and imperial line inaugurated by Aeneas to setting out the textual lineage of the story, which leads from Virgil, through the *Roman d'Eneas*, to the present German book.

With Gottfried we witness a turn away from the textual and genealogical continuity of which Huot speaks and which Veldeke so neatly exemplifies. Our analysis of archival topics in *Tristan* showed that it was impossible to trace an unbroken line of descent from the *istorje* and the *geste*, the sources Gottfried claims to have used, to his own *senemaere*, or from the unnamed book he mentions in the prologue to his personal 'lesen von disem senemaere' (see above, pp. 49–53). As far as the lineage of the hero is concerned, one of the most striking things about *Tristan* is that he is constantly breaking away from his origins and along with it the fixed identity and social position that are conferred by being the scion of a noble house. He refuses the role of Rual's son: once in Cornwall he shows no desire to return to Parmenie, preferring to invent a new identity for himself and stay at Marke's court. He is also reluctant to play the

part of Riwalin's son for any length of time: no sooner has he returned to Parmenie and avenged his father's death than he assembles his people and announces to them that he is leaving his hereditary possessions in the hands of Rual and his sons, while he will follow his uncle's wish and return to Cornwall (5746–811). Yet for all that he displays no particularly strong attachment to his position as king's heir and nephew: he is quite ready to renounce his rights in order to avoid the jealousy and hatred of Marke's barons (8379–85, 8426–32). Tristan is a hero who denies ties of kinship, who moves from land to land without putting down roots, often under the guise of merchant and minstrel, professions that symbolize this very rootlessness; on his first trip to Ireland he professes to be a 'höfscher spilman' turned merchant venturer (7560–73), and on the second, when he again pretends to be a merchant, he describes the hazardousness of his lifestyle to the queen thus:

nu ist ez uns also gewant:  
wir müezen dicke vremediū lant  
heinlichen unde buwen  
und enwizzen wem getruwen. (9527–30)

Tristan ends his days in exile, indeed throughout his career is characterized by Gottfried as 'der ellende' (2483, 2487, 2862, 2921 ('der ellende gast'), 3254, 8215, 8876, 18752).<sup>16</sup> He leaves no heir, for his relationships with women are childless.

Tristan does not continue his line biologically; he perpetuates himself instead in his art. Near the point at which Gottfried's narrative breaks off, during the hero's exile in Arundel, he is depicted as he passes the time composing lays and melodies, which have been popular ('wol geminnet') ever since (19196–99). One of his compositions is singled out for special attention:

er vant ouch zuo der selben zit  
den edelen leich Tristanden,  
den man in allen landen  
so lieben und so werden hat,  
die wile und disiu werlt gestat. (19200–04)

Tristan's *memoria aeterna* or *perpetua* is ensured not by the continuity of his lineage down to the present day, nor by his commemoration in historiography (the provenance of these *topoi*; see above, p. 55), but by what he has invented ('vinden') about himself. It is interesting that Tristan's self-testimony is not a written memorial which, preserved in some archive, will be used by later authors as the source of their retellings of the story; as a musical composition the lay is essentially something that lives by its continuing realization and appreciation in performance. And it is precisely as a performer that Tristan, the composer of this lay, had led his own life. Ingrid Hahn uses explicitly theatrical terms to describe the typical relationship of Tristan to other characters in Gottfried's romance:

Sein Verhältnis zu den Personen seiner höfischen Umwelt ist vielmehr das von Akteur und Zuschauern. Von Anfang bis Ende der Dichtung, vom Schachspiel mit den Norwegern (2270–95) bis zu dem Gesangsvortrag am Hof zu Karke (19205–21), steht Tristan immer wieder im Mittelpunkt einer solchen bewundernden Zuschauerschar.<sup>17</sup>

The lay of Tristan, repeatedly realized and renewed in performance, is the fitting signature of a hero who throughout his life re-invents his identity for each new audience he encounters. After the self-inventions in Cornwall, which we have discussed at some length, come the stories he tells in Ireland as the minstrel-cum-merchant Tantris (7559–606, 8796–869, 9517–44); his final exile, recounted in the fragments of Thomas, is punctuated by his visits to Isolde, disguised first as a pilgrim, then a leper, then a penitent.<sup>18</sup>

Tristan with his identity, Gottfried with his narrative: what they have in common is that they adapt what they have inherited from the past to the horizons of the present and there invent new identities, new meanings. Tristan's inherited identity — and this comes to include images of himself he has previously projected — constitutes an archive or repertoire of material with which he experiments. Thus the 'aventure' he narrates to the huntsmen makes use of the historical facts that he is a native of Parmenie and his father took care of his education; his disguise in Ireland as a courtly minstrel whose music beguiles all who hear it builds on a role he has already played at Marke's court (3547–645; 7513–23). Tristan's identity is always experimental, a function of the time and place of his performance, for he is as he perceives circumstances allow him to be and as his audience experiences him. Likewise Gottfried is the narrator who is 'zitic ze lebene' (42), conscious of living in the present, and 'gewerldet' (44), existing in and for the world of his contemporaries; for their sake he has undertaken to tell the story of Tristan and Isolde (45–46), calling it up from the archive and renewing it, experimentally and argumentatively, for the audience of 'edele herzen' in whose world above all he wishes to be 'gewerldet' (65). As with Tristan's lay so with Gottfried's romance it is in the ever-contemporary horizons of its reception that the story becomes 'süeze und iemer niuwe' (219). Tristan and Isolde, long dead though they are for Gottfried and his audience (222), are perpetuated in a literary afterlife that is not to be confused with the continuity of the textual transmission of their story; rather this afterlife is the result of the story's continuing to have meaning in the consciousness of successive generations of readers and listeners. This is what Gottfried wishes to ensure through his poetics, which is aimed at opening the archival matter of Tristan and Isolde to experimental significance, and it is this process of the old story's coming to life again with each new experience of its narration that I think he is trying to capture with his eucharistic metaphor in the prologue. As long as their story, which is bread — life-giving sustenance — for the noble hearts, continues to be heard and told, Tristan and Isolde live:



wan swa man noch hoeret lesen  
 ir triuwe, ir triuwen reinekeit,  
 ir herzeliep, ir herzeleit,  
 deist aller edelen herzen brot.  
 hie mite so lebet ir beider tot.  
 wir lesen ir leben, wir lesen ir tot  
 und ist uns daz süeze also brot.  
 ir leben, ir tot sint unser brot.  
 sus lebet ir leben, sus lebet ir tot.  
 sus lebet si noch und sint doch tot  
 und ist ir tot der lebenden brot. (230–40)

## NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. See Siegfried Grosse, 'Vremdiu maere: Tristans Herkunftsberichte', *WW*, 20 (1970), 289–302.
2. Georg Keferstein, 'Die Entwertung der höfischen Gesellschaft im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg', *GRM*, 24 (1936), 421–40 (p. 437). His judgment is typical of the moral repugnance expressed by earlier scholars of Gottfried at the hero's use of cunning and ruse; see Rosemary Picozzi, *A History of Tristan Scholarship*, Kanadische Studien zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur, 5 (Berne and Frankfurt, 1971), pp. 82–88, and Reiner Dietz, *Der 'Tristan' Gottfrieds von Straßburg: Probleme der Forschung (1902–1970)*, *GAG*, 136 (Göppingen, 1974), pp. 139–51.
3. Tristan's statement 'von disem lande ich bürtic bin' (2696) is considered by Wolfgang Jupé to be the truth: 'Damit sagt er, wenn auch unbewußt, die Wahrheit, er ist tatsächlich aus diesem Lande gebürtig. Demzufolge treffen auch die anderen Verse auf ihn zu' (*Die 'List' im Tristanroman Gottfrieds von Straßburg: Intellektualität und Liebe oder die Suche nach dem Wesen der individuellen Existenz* (Heidelberg, 1976), p. 64). This would mean interpreting *gebürtic* broadly, 'having close ties through birth', and not in the narrow sense of actually being born in a certain place (it is true that Tristan's mother came from Cornwall and that he was conceived there); even so, it does not follow that because one thing a person says happens to be true, everything else must be as well.
4. Gisela Hollandt, *Die Hauptgestalten in Gottfrieds Tristan: Wesenszüge — Handlungsfunktion — Motiv der List*, *PhStQ*, 30 (Berlin, 1966), pp. 84–86 (p. 85).
5. Grosse, p. 294; Jupé, p. 64.
6. George T. Gillespie ('Why Does Tristan Lie? A Study of Deception in Gottfried's *Tristan*, with Some Reference to *Felix Krull* and Other Writings of Thomas Mann', *Trivium*, 12 (1977), 75–91) seeks to answer the question with an appeal to Huizinga's concept of the play instinct in man (see p. 88 in particular). This describes Tristan's behaviour, it does not explain it.
7. Christ does remark once that 'Der höfische Roman hat sich darum zwischen den Kategorien der "historia" und der "fabula" auf der Ebene des "argumentum" angesiedelt' (p. 327), but does not really exploit this insight to the full: the only source he mentions for the theory of *argumentum* is the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and he does not draw connexions between the theory and specific aspects of Gottfried's narrative practice in individual scenes.
8. *Tristrams saga ok Isondar*, edited by Eugen Kölbing, p. 21 (chapter 20): "'Vinir", kvað hann, "ek em af þessu landi ok félagá minna leitandi, ok em ek öngan þeirra finnandi. Vér várum hér ídag at veiðum ok hafa þeir fylgt dýrunum, en ek em einn eptir, ok munu þeir brátt hér koma á þenna veg, sem vér heiman förum. Nu segit mér, hvert þér stefnit ok hvar þér vilit niðr koma, ok munum vér svá fylgjast at mínum vilja!" Þeir svöruðu: "Í Tintajölborg vildum vér herbergjast." Þá mælti Tristram: "Ek hefi ok þangat skylt erindi ok þar fyrir öruggan vina styrk; er vér komum þar at kveldi, vér skulum með guðs vilja finna ríka ok góð hýðili er oss munu gæra nógan góðvilja'.
9. Piquet, *L'Originalité de Gottfried de Strasbourg dans son poème de Tristan et Isolde: Étude de littérature comparée*, *Travaux et Mémoires de l'Université de Lille, Nouvelle Série*, 1, 5 (Lille, 1905), p. 101.
10. Joseph Bédier uses the version of the saga as it stands in his reconstruction of Thomas's original (*Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas*, 1, 42); Piquet remarks of the result of Gottfried's alterations that 'ici tout s'enchaîne, tout est logique et vraisemblable' (p. 103).
11. *Tristrams saga*, p. 21; *Sir Tristrem*, lines 445–51; Bédier, 1, 43.
12. Christ, pp. 324–25. Compare Wolfram's words addressed to his audience: 'ich ensagez iu niht nâch wâne: / gebietet ir, sô ist ez wâr' (*Parzival*, 59, 27–28).

13. Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Cornell, 1987), p. 84.
14. *Eneide*, lines 13321–428. See above, pp. 19–20.
15. Lines 13491–528. The editors (Schieb and Frings) consider the intervening lines 13429–90 inauthentic and follow MS G in placing them after line 13528; see their introduction, p. cv.
16. See Ingrid Hahn, *Raum und Landschaft in Gottfrieds Tristan*, pp. 86–118, for an illuminating discussion of the contrast between ‘die Seßhaften’, such as Marke, who lead settled lives on land, and ‘der ellende gast’ Tristan, whose wandering existence is intimately connected with the sea; also Wolfgang Mohr, “‘Tristan und Isold’ als Künstlerroman”, *Euphorion*, 53 (1959), 153–74 (p. 155).
17. Hahn, *Raum und Landschaft*, p. 84; the classic discussion of Tristan as performer is Mohr, “‘Tristan und Isold’ als Künstlerroman”. Gottfried’s interest in the artist’s relationship with his audience was registered by earlier scholarship; Werner Schwartzkopff for instance remarks on ‘das bei kaum einer wichtigen Szene G.’s fehlende Publikum’ (*Rede und Redeszene in der deutschen Erzählung bis Wolfram von Eschenbach*, Palaestra, 74 (Berlin, 1909), p. 66).
18. *Les Fragments du Roman de Tristan*, first Strassburg fragment (compare *Tristrams saga*, p. 100), Douce Fragment, lines 501–723, 789–834.

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This study of Gottfried von Strassburg discusses the narrative technique of his romance of *Tristan* (c. 1210) against the double background of Latin rhetoric and poetics on the one hand and the developing written vernacular tradition on the other. It argues that Gottfried's poetics represents the attempt to mediate between opposing tendencies in vernacular narrative, the one historiographic and archival, the other fictional and experimental; the *Tristan* romance is the fictional treatment of a traditional story whose foundations Gottfried considers to be historical. Central to this experiment with history is a concept of verisimilitude that is developed in rhetoric and especially in grammarians' commentaries on Lucan, who in the Middle Ages was the canonical example of the 'poeta et historiographus'. Verisimilitude, the 'res ficta quae tamen fieri potest', occupies an intermediate position between the 'res factae' of history and the 'res fictae' of poetry; it is on this middle ground that Gottfried situates his narrative.

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