Introduction

Wolfram von Eschenbach

As holds for most medieval poets, most of what we know – or believe we know – of Wolfram derives from what he says in his works. *Parzival*, in particular, would seem to yield a great deal of information about him, but the problem in constructing even the barest outline of a biography is that Wolfram confronts us with perhaps the earliest example in German of an unreliable narrator, whose many facets contradict one another. He delights in ambiguities, his projection of a narrative persona being just one of many games that Wolfram plays with – and on – his audience. No historical record mentions him, so we may assume he was not of high rank. He claims to be a knight, but knighthood knew many degrees of wealth and poverty, and it is at the lower end of this spectrum that Wolfram, by his own admission, belongs. Poor knights, dependent upon patrons for their livelihood, were the authors of many of the key works of the Middle High German (MHG) 'classical' period.

Eschenbach ('ash-brook') was, and still is, a common name for villages and hamlets over wide stretches of Franconia and Bavaria; we can therefore by no means be certain as to Wolfram's place of birth. Scholarship has concentrated upon a narrow range of possible sites, and since the nineteenth century a tourist industry has built up around Ober-Eschenbach, south-east of Ansbach, which renamed itself Wolframs-Eschenbach in 1917. Despite the memorial slab dating from the fourteenth century in the church, whose spire is modelled upon the portrait of Wolfram in the Manesse Codex, an undistinguished statue dating from 1861, and an audio-visual museum, Wolframs-Eschenbach's credentials remain somewhat suspect, charming as the small town is. Wolfram describes himself as a Bavarian (*Parzival* 121,7), and Wolframs-Eschenbach did not become part of Bavaria until the nineteenth century. The evidence for a dynasty of Eschenbachs there dates from 1268, half a century after Wolfram's death, and must therefore be viewed with a degree of scepticism.

The Manesse Codex (the 'Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift') prefaces the lyrics it attributes to Wolfram with the earliest portrait we possess of him, but this compilation (probably put together in Zurich) dates from the early fourteenth century. The armour it assigns to Wolfram is strongly suggestive of an acquaintance with the Red Knight in *Parzival*, and the coat of arms may be nothing more than the fruit of the illustrator's imagination. Heraldic research has proved inconclusive.

Wolfram's Patrons

Wolfram supplies us with few indications of the patrons for whom he worked. In *Parzival*, in the *Titurel* fragments, and in *Willehalm* he refers to the court of Hermann I, Landgrave of Thuringia from 1190 to his death in 1217, and in *Willehalm* Wolfram states explicitly that Hermann made him acquainted with the book's subject. This is the most concrete indication of patronage that we possess. A number of other contemporary noblemen and noblewomen in Franconia and Bavaria are mentioned in *Parzival*. These include the Margravine of Haidstein, east of Cham in the Bavarian Nordgau, which was ruled by the margraves until 1204, and the Count of Wertheim, who is named as Poppo in the Munich *Parzival* manuscript (cgm. 19); Poppo I is attested until 1211, when he was succeeded by his son Poppo II. It may be that these served as patrons on a temporary basis, that there was, perhaps, collective patronage, but firm evidence is lacking. It seems probable that as Wolfram's reputation established itself, he had a greater claim on patronage and a more stable way of life than during the composition of *Parzival*, or at least its early stages, and that when he came to write *Willehalm* he had a more permanent footing in the Thuringian court. Wolfram draws heavily in *Parzival* upon the *Eneide*, a translation of an Old French version of Virgil's *Æneid* by Heinrich von Veldeke, whose influence Wolfram frequently acknowledges. Hermann of Thuringia was Veldeke's patron, calling him to Thuringia around 1185. Wolfram in all probability consulted a manuscript – perhaps more than one – of Veldeke's *Eneide*. The Thuringian court – or courts, for medieval courts were mobile sites – would be an obvious point of access. In strophe 82a of *Titurel* Wolfram alludes to Hermann's death and praises his generosity, as he does in *Willehalm*.

At the end of Book VII of *Parzival*, and at the very end of the work, Wolfram suggests that female patronage was his inspiration. It was the norm for the poet to acknowledge female inspiration for love-songs, but for a narrative poet in Germany to acknowledge female patronage in this period is rare. It may be the case that this is merely a jocose exercise on Wolfram's part. Wolfram's humour should never be underestimated, particularly when reference is made to the female gender. In *Parzival* he refers, in a humorous vein, to his wife, unwilling to trust her to the jostling which was the norm at the Arthurian court, and in *Willehalm* he refers to a daughter. We have no external evidence for any aspect of his private life or economic circumstances, although other authors confirm that he was a layman. If we were to take these suggestions of female patronage literally, they might suggest extra-marital relations, which in turn find parallels in literature, for example in Wolfram's own favoured genre of the dawn-song, but it is scarcely possible here to distinguish between literary topos, autobiographical statement, and joke.

Other approaches to locating Wolfram and the composition of *Parzival* have taken the many allusions to geographical locations as their starting point. The geography of *Parzival* is complex and wide-ranging, stretching indeed to the heavens, and we cannot be certain of the precise extent of Wolfram's knowledge of the places he mentions. He inherits the Celtic geography of the Arthurian romance, but would seem to add more French locations, along with Italian sites, and a nexus of sites in Styria, which today are to be found in Slovenia and Austria; the Oriental geography provides an addi-

tional dimension. A number of sites he alludes to are, however, to be found in Bavaria and Franconia. The jousting rink of Abenberg, the doughnuts of Trüdingen (Hohentrüdingen, or Wassertrüdingen), the squabbling market-women of Dollnstein, Reisbach an der Vils with its generous steward – all these point to local knowledge, though we cannot know for certain whether that knowledge was at first hand. These places are all in Bavaria, as defined by the modern map, but are far apart in practical terms today, as anyone who tries to reach them on foot or by public transport knows, and in the thirteenth century, with deforestation in its incipient stages, the journeys between them must have been greatly more arduous. This might suggest the progress of a wandering minstrel, dependent on different courts in succession. The obvious comparison is with Walther von der Vogelweide, who, like Wolfram, refers to the patronage of Hermann of Thuringia; Walther's criticism of Hermann's court is referred to in *Parzival*. Walther's lyrics name no less than nine patrons. Wolfram's career may have followed a similar pattern, until he – perhaps – settled in Thuringia.

The Erfurt Connections

Two allusions to contemporary events are crucial for the dating of the composition of *Parzival*. In Book XI there is a reference to the sacking of Constantinople by the crusaders in the spring of 1204: 'When Greece so stood that treasure was found there, its Emperor's hand there could not have paid for it.' The dating of *Parzival*, and, because of Wolfram's references to his predecessors and contemporaries, of all the core texts of the MHG period, hinges upon the mention of a vineyard at Erfurt in Book VII, which compares the effects of the siege of Bearosche with the trampling of the vineyard by horses' hooves. This is thought to relate to the besieging of Erfurt in 1203, halfway through the decade of civil war between the Welf and Hohenstaufen factions that devastated Germany between 1198 and 1208. The war was triggered off by the death of the Hohenstaufen Emperor Henry VI in 1197, leaving the succession to the German monarchy and the concomitant election to Holy Roman Emperor in dispute. Henry's son, Frederick II, was too young to accede; Philip of Swabia, Henry VI's younger brother, initally acted as regent, then became king in his own right. The Welf faction put forward as a candidate Otto IV of Brunswick and Poitou, brought up in England and France, the favourite nephew of Richard the Lionheart. The war ended with the assassination of Philip of Swabia in 1208. These events must have coloured the writing of *Parzival*, which took place, we may assume, over much of that decade; perhaps Arthur's reluctance to wage war in Book VI, and the anti-war position that is adopted by the mature Parzival, who as Lord of the Grail advocates war only in self-defence – both motifs not found in Chrétien – represent Wolfram's reaction to what was a bloody and turbulent time. Wolfram himself, though proud of being of 'the shield's lineage', expresses reluctance to fight, and emphasises that his second hero, Gawan, is always reluctant to fight without good reason. In *Willehalm* Wolfram goes a stage further, arguing, against the prevailing crusading ethos, that bloodshed between Christian and heathen ought to be avoided.

Given the great number of topical allusions in *Parzival*, it might seem extraordinary that the Erfurt lines are the only obvious allusion to the war. It may be that Wolfram was being tactful, not wishing to side with either faction, in which case his

The Little Bustard
reproduced from Stanley Cramp, *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980)

politics mirrored those of Hermann I of Thuringia, a prominent turncoat in a convoluted war that spawned not a few. Philip of Swabia gave Hermann fiefdoms in Thuringia, and Hermann signed the letter of protest of the princes of Germany against the Papal Legate, but subsequently he stepped over into the Welf camp. Erfurt was then attacked by Philip's forces, and opened its gates to him. Hermann had to be rescued by Ottokar of Bohemia, a supporter of Otto IV, whose forces in turn besieged Erfurt. Initially protected by Erfurt's walls, Philip was forced to flee to Swabia. It is in the nature of chronicles that they do not mention vineyards. Erfurt's walls remained intact, proof against siege. The present Erfurt vineyard is within the old walls of the city, close by St Peter, one of its two twelfth-century churches. It was only in 1991, after the upheavals of 1989/1990, that it again began to produce wine on a small scale, one of the most northerly of Germany's vineyards. The medieval position of the vineyard may have been different. Scholarship has, moreover, wavered about how long it would take a medieval vineyard to recover from political upheavals; 1204 or later is perhaps a more likely date for the composition of Book VII than 1203, but much, no doubt, depended upon the weather. What is significant is that Wolfram recalls an event of great importance to Hermann of Thuringia, his potential or actual patron.

Wolfram's descriptions of thick woodland and undergrowth may derive from his knowledge of the Thuringian Forest. The Erfurt connections do not, however, end here, for Wolfram would also appear to be acquainted with the local fauna. One of the most striking images in Book III likens the impatient Parzival, eager to engage in battle and to win his knight's armour, to a bustard: 'the well-born boy halted there, stamping his feet like a bustard'. Two kinds of bustard might have been in Wolfram's mind here. The Great Bustard (*otis tarda*), still an occasional visitor to Germany (and Britain), is most remarkable, apart from its size, for its extraordinary courtship display, in which it inverts itself, puffing out its plumage. There is, however, no suggestion of impatience in this display. The Little Bustard (*tetrax tetrax*) is another migrant which occasionally visits Britain, but now breeds mostly in Spain and France. In a display thought to be intended to deter rivals in courtship, it beats its feet on the

The Wolfram in Erfurt Cathedral (photograph: Cyril Edwards)

ground 7–10 times in the space of 2.5 seconds. From the eighteenth century onwards, when records begin, to the early twentieth century, its chief breeding ground in Germany was in the area around Erfurt.

Another, more tenuous link between Wolfram and Erfurt is to be found in the cathedral, which dates from the mid-twelfth century. A bronze candle-holder, a life-size statue of a bearded man, thought to date from 1160/1170, is known after its inscription as the 'Wolfram', presumably named after the patron for whom it was carved. It is too early in date to be an image of the author of *Parzival*, but the name Wolfram is not a common one in medieval Germany, and Christian names tended to be hereditary. It is not inconceivable that the 'Wolfram' is an image of an ancestor of Wolfram von Eschenbach (although this, like the location of Wolframs-Eschenbach, is at variance with Wolfram's assertion that he is a Bavarian).

A further connection with Thuringia derives from the opening lines of Wolfram's narrative, after the prologue. Wolfram commences his story with a discussion of the problems of primogeniture, as it obtained in Anjou, and alludes to it being familiar in 'one part' (*ein ort*) of Germany. The principle of divided inheritance which led to schisms in the Carolingian Empire was gradually, in the late twelfth and thirteenth

centuries, giving way to primogeniture in Germany, particularly in the upper echelons of society. The situation in Thuringia reflects the shift towards primogeniture. In the Chronicle of the Landgraves of Thuringia, the 'Ludowinger', as modern historians have come to call them, trace their descent back to Charlemagne.[1] On four occasions the heirs are specifically described as *primogenitus*. The first identifiable Ludowinger was Ludwig the Bearded; he was succeeded by his eldest son, Count Ludwig the Leaper (d. 1123), who was the father of the first landgrave, Ludwig I, another eldest son. Ludwig I was succeeded by his eldest son, Ludwig II, in 1140; he in turn was succeeded by his eldest son, Ludwig III, who died in 1190. His successor, his brother Hermann I, was succeeded by the eldest of his four sons, Ludwig IV. When Ludwig IV died in 1228, he was succeeded by his four-year-old son, Hermann II, with Heinrich Raspe IV, his uncle, acting as regent. Wolfram assumes knowledge of this system of inheritance on the part of his German audience; such an assumption would certainly have found resonance in the Thuringian court. Moreover, Wolfram's emphasis on the plight of younger brothers would have meant a great deal to Hermann I, who became landgrave on the death of his childless elder brother. The Hohenstaufen Emperor Heinrich VI had attempted unsuccesfully to seize Thuringia on this occasion, arguing that only sons could inherit, but Hermann had insisted on the hereditary nature of his fief.[2]

Wolfram's Œuvre and its Preservation

The structure of this book of translations is modelled upon that of the Munich *Parzival* manuscript (generally known by the sigla G). Dating from the mid-thirteenth century, this is a rarity among medieval German manuscripts in that it is entirely dedicated to one author. It preserves *Parzival*, the *Titurel* fragments and, on its end-page, two of Wolfram's lyrics in a slightly later hand. For the sake of completeness, the remainder of Wolfram's slender lyric corpus has been added here, together with the *Titurel* fragments reconstructed by Karl Bartsch on the basis of the *Jüngerer Titurel*, a late thirteenth-century reworking and enlargement of the Grail story on a massive scale by an author called Albrecht, which was long held to be Wolfram's own work.[3] The one text not included is *Willehalm*, Wolfram's adaptation of *La Bataille d'Aliscans*, an Old French *chanson de geste*. In contrast to this genre's customary crusading ideology, epitomised by the *Chanson de Roland* (translated into MHG in the twelfth century as the *Rolandslied*), *Willehalm* pleads for a rapprochement between Moslems and Christians through the pivotal figure of Gyburc, who converts from Islam on marrying the hero, William of Orange. She argues eloquently that Chris-

1 *Historia de Landgraviis Thuringiae*, in: *Rerum Germanicarum Scriptores*, edited by Johannes Pistorius, 3 vols (Regensburg, 1726), I, 1307ff. Cf. Hermann Johann Friedrich Schulze, *Das Recht der Erstgeburt in den deutschen Fürstenhäusern und seine Bedeutung für die deutsche Staatsentwicklung* (Leipzig: Avenarius & Mendelssohn, 1851), pp. 135–136.

2 Cf. Jürgen Petersohn, 'Die Ludowinger. – Selbstverständnis und Memoria eines hochmittelalterlichen Reichsfürstengeschlechts', *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 129 (1993), 1–39 (p. 21).

3 To what extent authentic strophes of Wolfram's *Titurel* are preserved in the later work remains a matter of dispute. It was only in the early nineteenth century that a clear distinction was drawn between the two works, Karl Lachmann subsequently dismissing the *Jüngerer Titurel* as 'insufferably foolish'.

tians and Moslems are both 'God's handiwork'. *Willehalm* has twice been translated into English prose: by Charles Passage (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1977), and by Marion Gibbs and Sydney M. Johnson (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1984).

The transmission of *Parzival* attests to its great popularity. Sixteen complete manuscripts survive, alongside some seventy fragments,[4] and a print dating from 1477. No other Arthurian romance proved as popular in medieval Germany. The *Titurel* fragments survive in three manuscripts, as well as in Albrecht's *Jüngerer Titurel*. The Munich *Parzival* manuscript is the earliest to preserve any of Wolfram's lyrics. The rest survive in two of the anthology manuscripts of the fourteenth century, the Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift, also known as the Manesse Codex (C), and the Weingartner Liederhandschrift (B). To give the reader an impression of the original language, Wolfram's lyrics are given in MHG with English translations below.

Genres and Forms

Parzival is written in the customary form of the courtly romance, the rhyming couplet. Generally, the lines have three or four trochaic feet, but Wolfram treats the metre freely, and the number of unstressed syllables varies greatly. Five-feet lines are not uncommon, sometimes serving to emphasise the content, or to mark finality, as at the end of Book XIII:

> *mugt ir wol ê hân vernomn:*
> *an den rehten stam diz mære ist komn.*
>
> [. . . you may well have heard before. This tale has returned to the tree's true trunk.]

The division into sixteen 'books' derives from the poem's first editor, Karl Lachmann, who based it on the use of majuscule initials in manuscript D (St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, 587), which dates from the middle of the thirteenth century. The division works well, not least in that it assigns pivotal importance to the central Book IX. Up to and including Book X the books begin with a prologue-like introduction; Book VIII has a staggered prologue, constantly warning of the dangers that are to befall Gawan. Books XI–XIII, the final Gawan books, are less clearly demarcated at their outset.

A further sub-division is into sections of thirty lines. From Book V onwards, Wolfram seems to have composed in thirty-line units, which come to a clear syntactic halt. These may well have corresponded to the ruled lines of the parchment page before him. Such divisions are lacking in Books I and II. It has been thought that the first two books were composed later, but the lack of thirty-line sections indicates otherwise.

Titurel has an entirely different form, which was indeed generically unique. Undoubtedly, the poem owes its genesis to Wolfram's interest in the figure of Sigune, who is accorded much greater importance in *Parzival* than in his source, Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* or *Le Conte du Graal*, and to his desire to develop the tragic theme of

4 The whereabouts of some fragments noted in early scholarship is uncertain.

the interrelationship between love and service. From the beginning it strikes an elegiac note, and this is emphasised by its long lines and falling cadences. The strophic form is unique in the courtly romance; it bears a resemblance to that of the MHG heroic epic, the *Nibelungenlied*. In the rigid form of Lachmann's edition, the first line has eight feet, the second ten, the third six, and the fourth ten, with cæsuras subdividing the first, second and fourth lines. Here is the first strophe of *Titurel* in Lachmann's edition:

> **D**o sich der starke Tyturel mohte gerüeren,
> er getorste wol sich selben unt die sîne in sturme gefüeren:
> sît sprach er in alter 'ich lerne
> daz ich schaft muoz lâzen: des phlac ich etwenne schône und gerne.
>
> [While strong Titurel could still bestir himself, he ventured willingly into the attack, leading his men with him. Afterwards, in old age, he said: 'I learn that I must relinquish the shaft. Once I wielded it well and willingly.]

Subsequent editors have questioned how far Lachmann's metre is borne out by the manuscripts. The long lines lead to a less convoluted syntax than sometimes obtains in *Parzival*. The Vienna manuscript of the *Jüngerer Titurel* (Cod. Vindob. 2675) preserves a melody on its front page, which suggests that the later work was sung; whether this also applied to Wolfram's work is uncertain.[5]

The lyrics subdivide into two genres. The first five are variations on the dawn-song (MHG *tageliet*; a genre influenced by the Old Provençal *alba*). In the dawn-song, conventionally, the knight spends the night with his beloved in her castle, but has to depart at daybreak before the court becomes aware of his presence. Wolfram is the first poet to make the watchman who wakes the lovers a major character in the MHG dawn-song. The five *tageliet* ring changes on personnel and structure, four characters being symmetrically interwoven: the female beloved, the knight-lover, the watchman and the narrator. The symmetry is mirrored in the metrical structure of the lyrics. The narrative appeal of the dawn-song and the genre's overt eroticism were, no doubt, the two elements that drew Wolfram to the *alba*. The fifth lyric, two strophes placed in the mouth of the watchman, is a rejection of the artificial conventions of the genre, apparently advocating marital love in preference to the extra-marital relationship normal in the *alba*.

The four lyrics that follow are more conventional lyrics of courtly, or 'lofty' love (*hôhe minne*), in which the male lover enjoys – or, rather, endures – an unfulfilled relationship with a lady, who may be of higher rank. Each song, however, contains some of the startling imagery which is typical of Wolfram's narrative works.

Formally, the lyrics are all variations on the tripartite structure which the MHG *minnesinger* inherited from the Old Provençal *troubadours* and the Old French *trouvères*, the *canzona*. The AAB structure, still to be found in blues and folksong, is the basis; a bipartite *Aufgesang*, consisting of two metrically identical parts (known as *Stollen*), leads into an *Abgesang* with a different metrical pattern, as in Song VII:

5 The two fragments were sung and recorded in 1989 by Reinhold Wiedenmann, accompanied by Osvaldo Parisi on the lute (Koch/Schwann 3–1832–2).

Ursprinc bluomen, loub ûzdringen A
und der luft des meigen urbort vogel ir alten dôn.
Eteswenne ich kan niuwez singen, A
sô der rîfe liget, guot wîp, noch allez ân dînen lôn.
Die waltsinger und ir sanc B
nâch halbem sumers teile in niemannes ôre enklanc.

[**L**eaping-forth of flowers, foliage burgeoning A
and the air of May yield birds their old melody.
At times I am capable of new song A
even when the hoar-frost lies, good lady, without any reward from you.
The wood-singers and their song, B
after half the summer's portion, have not sounded in anyone's ear.]

No melodies to Wolfram's lyrics have survived. With the exception of the staveless neumes in the manuscript of the *Carmina Burana* (*c.* 1230), few German melodies predating the fourteenth century have been preserved. We know from Wolfram's own testimony, however, that he sang. Textual and pictorial evidence (for example, the illustrations to the Manesse Codex) suggest that the MHG lyric was accompanied by string and wind instruments. The structure of Wolfram's dawn-songs points to the possibility of duets; the existence of female singers is well attested.

While the dating of individual works remains problematic, it is possible to postulate a relative chronology. *Willehalm* draws heavily upon *Parzival*, suggesting a shared pleasure in knowledge of the earlier work on the part of the audience and author, in much the same way that *Parzival* presupposes an intimate and affectionate knowledge of the works of Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* and Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneide*. *Titurel* must also have followed *Parzival*, and if strophe 82a is authentic, the fragments were composed after the death of Hermann of Thuringia in 1217. It seems safe to assume that Wolfram embarked upon the *Willehalm* after he had completed *Parzival*, in the third decade of the thirteenth century. The ending of *Willehalm* suggests incompleteness, and it led to a continuation by Ulrich von Türheim. It seems probable that Wolfram died before he had completed the work. The love-lyrics are by their very nature undatable.

Literacy and Literary Interrelations

Another facet of Wolfram's unreliability as narrator relates to his attitude to literacy. In the 'Self-Defence', the excursion between Books II and III of *Parzival*, Wolfram asserts that he is illiterate: 'I don't know a single letter of the alphabet' (*ine kan decheinen buochstap*). The wording of this assertion is taken from line 15 in the Vulgate version of the 71st psalm: *quoniam non cognovi litteraturam*, which in turn derives from a contentious Hebrew phrase, perhaps originally a gloss expressing a scribe's inadequacy. In the Middle Ages this confession becomes part of an exegetical tradition expressing the humility of the Christian writer.[6] It has a close parallel in the prologue

6 For the medieval exegesis of this line see Friedrich Ohly, 'Wolframs Gebet an den Heiligen Geist im Eingang des Willehalm', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, 91 (1961/62), 1–37.

to Wolfram's *Willehalm*: 'I have remained without skill with regard to all that is written in books. I am only learned in that if I possess art, it is intellect that gives me it.' Ironically, Wolfram's assertions of illiteracy are founded in theological learning, and it seems probable that Wolfram's audience would have greeted them with a smile.

The two assertions have, however two essentially different functions. In *Willehalm*, Wolfram is humbly asking for God's grace to help praise his hero, 'a knight who never forgot You'. In the 'Self-Defence', the confession of illiteracy is part of a macho stance against learning, in which Wolfram asserts that he is above all a knight: 'the shield's office is my lineage. If my courage is ever stinted, if any woman then loves me for the sake of my song, then I think her weak of wit . . . If women didn't think it flattery, I would advance further unfamiliar words to you by this tale – I would continue telling you this adventure. If anyone desires this of me, let him not put it down to any book. I don't know a single letter of the alphabet.'

This assertion of illiteracy occurs at that very moment when Wolfram's plot is about to abandon the subject matter of the first two books, which are, as far as we can tell, mostly of his own invention, and embark upon books which are, in terms of plot, largely dependent upon his source, Chrétien de Troyes' *Conte del Gral*. Wolfram, knowing that his plot is about to become derivative, asserts his independence, and it is significant that conspicuous features of Wolfram's style, such as his obscure syntax, his employment of personification and of the double genitive, become much more prominent from this point on. Once Wolfram is dependent in terms of plot, his originality in style blossoms.

Wolfram's assertion of illiteracy shows his determination to distance himself from his MHG predecessors, Hartmann von Aue and Heinrich von Veldeke, and, in all probability, from his contemporary, Gottfried von Straßburg.[7] Veldeke asserts that he read his subject matter in 'French books, into which it had been written from the Latin'. Hartmann similarly ackowledges his indebtedness to book-learning in the prologues to his *Iwein*, adapted from Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, and his courtly legend, *Der arme Heinrich*, which begins: 'A knight was so learned that he read all that he found written in books.' Gottfried von Straßburg, in the prologue to his *Tristan*, acknowledges his debt to Thomas of Britain, but emphasises how he conducted his own research: 'I began to search intensively for the correct and true version in books of both kinds, French and Latin'. Wolfram's polemic in the 'Self-Defence' is clearly in opposition to this tradition of dependance upon written sources. Above all, Wolfram wishes to assert his macho personality, his own individuality as a knight – although he contradicts this again by the occasional protestation of his own cowardice. Even within *Parzival*, however, Wolfram contradicts himself once more by his references to written sources: the – probably entirely fictitious – writer Kyot the Provençal, the elsewhere unattested heathen scholar Flegetanis, and Chrétien de Troyes, his source for much of his plot.

The term intertextuality might have been coined to describe *Parzival*, so rich is the

7 For a broader discussion of this topic, see Dennis H. Green, 'Oral poetry and written composition (An aspect of the feud between Gottfried and Wolfram)', in: Dennis Howard Green and Leslie Peter Johnson, *Approaches to Wolfram von Eschenbach. Five Essays*, Mikrokosmos: Beitrage zur Literaturwissenschaft und Bedeutungsforschung, 5 (Berne: Peter Lang, 1978), pp. 163–272.

poem in allusions to the works of Wolfram's predecessors and contemporaries. There are two constant points of reference: Veldeke's *Eneide*, completed *c.* 1185 under the patronage of Hermann of Thuringia, and Hartmann's *Erec*, the first German Arthurian romance, probably also written in the 1180s. Wolfram's allusions presume knowledge of these texts on the part of his audience; it may be that they were known to them from recitals. Wolfram also shows and presumes knowledge of Hartmann's *Iwein*, and of the lyrics of Walther von der Vogelweide and other Minnesänger, and of the *Nibelungenlied* (*c.* 1200) and other epics concerned with the heroic figure of Dietrich von Bern. He draws upon the Straßburg *Alexander* (*c.* 1170), the encyclopaedic work known as the *Lucidarius* (*c.* 1190), the *Tristrant* of Eilhart von Oberg (*c.* 1170?), and possibly the *Tristan* of Gottfried von Straßburg, and the *Kaiserchronik* (*c.* 1150). The richness of these allusions is exemplified at the beginning of Book XII, when Gawan's predicament is compared with that of various previous heroes of Arthurian romance, only some of whom have been identified. The literary allusions tend to come in patches, as when in Book VIII the unheroic behaviour of the cowardly Liddamus is compared with that of Turnus and Tranzes in the *Eneide*, and then with characters from the *Nibelungenlied* and other Dietrich epics. Wolfram's use of the Straßburg *Alexander* is similarly restricted to Books IX and XV. All this is suggestive of access to manuscripts, rather than an oral tradition.

The library – or libraries – of manuscripts to which Wolfram had access must also have contained works in Old French, possibly Old Provençal, Latin, and Arabic (probably in Latin transmission). Wolfram shows knowledge of Chrétien de Troyes' romances other than *Perceval* – the *Lancelot* (or *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*) and *Cligés*. Wolfram's intimate knowledge of the Vulgate Bible is evident throughout the poem, but particularly in Book IX. From Marbod of Rennes' *De Lapidibus* (*c.* 1090) he obtained the names of precious stones. A major source for many proper names and exotic lore was the *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* or *Polyhistor* of Caius Julius Solinus. Solinus, a third-century geographer, derived much of his lore from Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis*, but Solinus was the standard geographical work in Carolingian libraries. Wolfram's access to Arabic learning is evident from his description of the planets in Book XV. Fuelled by Wolfram's claim to be illiterate, the suggestion has often been made that the learning evinced in *Parzival* derives from an unidentified cleric, but this merely serves to shift the burden of scholarship and genius. That a single cleric should command such diverse areas of expertise and have imparted them to Wolfram at will seems highly improbable. This translator, emerging with shaking head from Oxford's libraries, has often wondered whether Wolfram had access to an even bigger library than Oxford has to offer.

Wolfram, Chrétien and the Grail

Wolfram only mentions Chrétien de Troyes once, at the beginning of the last thirty-line section of *Parzival*, and in characteristically misleading fashion. He claims that Kyot the Provençal told the true tales of the Grail, while Chrétien may have done the story an injustice. The figure of Kyot is introduced in Book VIII, and in Book IX there follows a more detailed account of the complex way in which Wolfram claims that the story of the Grail reached him, through Kyot, who found it in Toledo, and

Kyot's main source, the half-heathen Flegetanis. There have been attempts to identify Kyot with the poet Guiot de Provins, a French writer dating from *c.* 1200, but the consensus is that Wolfram's Kyot is entirely fictional and that the elaborate account of sources in Book IX is merely a cloak to hide Wolfram's originality. It is certainly the case that the main outline of the plot derives from Chrétien de Troyes. *Perceval* or *Le Conte du Graal* was Chrétien's last work, begun in the 1180s. It breaks off in mid-sentence after some 9,200 lines, much as Eric Rohmer's film, *Perceval le Gallois* (1973), comes to a halt somewhat abruptly after following Chrétien's narrative faithfully for 113 minutes. Chrétien's story ends with the arrival of the squire sent by Gawain to Arthur's court, corresponding to lines 644,12ff in Wolfram's narrative (Book XIII). Thus most of Book XIII, and Books XIV to XVI have no equivalent in Chrétien, nor is there any equivalent to the Gahmuret narratives (Books I and II). Wolfram's text amounts to 24,810 lines. The Old French continuations of *Perceval*, composed in the late twelfth century, have little in common with Wolfram's poem.

Few lines of Chrétien's poem are translated literally by Wolfram. In *Le Conte du Graal* there are very few images, while in *Parzival* there are, literally, thousands, nor does Chrétien employ other stylistic devices such as personification in Wolfram's manner. Chrétien's narrator is largely self-effacing, and does not indulge in the jokes, often at the expense of his characters, which are typical of Wolfram.

The basic lines of Chrétien's plot are followed, but here, too, there are many changes. There is no equivalent of the figure of Liaze in Chrétien, for example, no Clinschor, no Feirefiz, indeed no Oriental world at all. The character corresponding to Sigune, Perceval's (here anonymous) cousin, makes only one appearance. Sigune typifies the way in which Wolfram assigns characters names and develops them. Her four appearances in *Parzival* act as a barometer of the hero's fortunes. In Book III she reveals Parzival's identity to him; in Book V she denounces him for his failure to ask the Grail question; in Book IX she treats him in more conciliatory fashion and points him in the direction of the Grail; finally, in Book XVI the Grail King Parzival finds her dead in her cell and demonstrates his maturity and compassion by having her buried alongside Schionatulander. Nor did Wolfram's interest cease there, for he makes her the heroine of the *Titurel*.

Book IX may serve as a final example of Wolfram's free treatment of his source. In Chrétien's narrative the equivalent of Book IX is a mere three hundred lines, compared with some 2,070 lines in Wolfram. The Kyot and Flegetanis story is, of course, absent. Perceval's rejection of God is less explicit, less outright than in Wolfram; we are told only that Perceval has not entered a church. The hermit's sermon differs greatly; in Chrétien's poem there is none of the emphasis on original sin and the role of kinship that we find in Trevrizent's exposition. Nor is there any hint of the relationship between the Grail and the fallen or neutral angels. The Grail in Chrétien is a vessel, not a stone, and there are two Grail questions, not one. The Cundrie figure rebukes Perceval for not asking why the blood flowed from the spear and who was served from (or by) the Grail. In Wolfram's *Parzival* the hero is rebuked by Trevrizent for not asking about the nature of Anfortas's distress, but when Parzival does ultimately come to ask the question he words it differently: 'Uncle, what troubles you?', addressing Anfortas with the familiar 'du' form, rather than the formal 'ir' form employed by Trevrizent when he explains Parzival's failure to him. The personalising of the question makes it clear that it is not the precise wording that matters in

Wolfram's poem, but the attitude of compassion, of loyalty (*triuwe*) that lies behind it. Moreover, the rewording emphasises the central and symbolic role of kinship. Parzival had sinned against kinship by killing Ither; God had shown him mercy by not permitting him to kill his half-brother Feirefiz. Now, at the end of the poem, he demonstrates his humility and loyalty in the treatment of his uncle and his cousin. In this, the greatest of the Grail romances, the Grail itself ultimately becomes a side issue.

The Moralisation of Chivalry

Wolfram's *Parzival* marks the culmination of a literary process which may be summarised as the moralisation of chivalry. Here a look backwards is helpful. The image of Arthur that emerges from the Old Welsh and early Latin sources has nothing to do with chivalry; he appears to have been a Welsh (or 'British') warleader of the early sixth century who successfully resisted Germanic invasions after the Roman Empire had made its retreat from Britain. Key figures of the later Arthurian romances, Guinevere, Bedevere and Kay, are recorded in the early Welsh sources, and Arthur's court plays a role, but it is a heroic rather than a chivalric court.

A turning point comes towards the end of the eleventh century. In the lives of the Welsh saints the heroic stature of Arthur is challenged by the Christian ethos.[8] The *Life of Saint Cadoc*, written *c.* 1090 by Lifris of Llancarfan, tells a radically different tale from the fragments of heroic poetry and allusions in early historical works that have survived. Cadoc was a missionary and martyr, by tradition the founder of the monastery of Nant Carfan (later Llancarfan), west of Cardiff. He is portrayed as a contemporary and adversary of the 'historical' Arthur. The prologue to the *Vita* by Lifris tells of King Gwynlliw, who falls in love with Gwladys, daughter of Brychan. When his suit is rejected by Brychan, Gwynlliw's army abducts her. They are pursued by Brychan and his men to a hill called Bochriwcarn. 'But when Gwynlliw had arrived at the boundary of his dominions, being bodily safe with the aforesaid young lady, and sorrowful from fighting with his enemies, a great slaughter having taken place, lo, three brave heroes, Arthur, with his two knights, namely, Kai and Bedwir, were sitting upon the top of the aforesaid hill and playing with dice.

When they saw the king with the young lady coming near them, Arthur was immediately seized with love towards the lady, and full of bad thoughts, said to his companions, 'Know ye that I am vehemently inflamed with love towards the lady, whom the soldier carries off, riding.' But they, forbidding him, said, 'Far be from thee to commit such wickedness; for we have been accustomed to assist the destitute and the distressed, wherefore let us go forward, and quickly render our assistance that this contest may be terminated.'[9]

8 For a fuller account see *The Arthur of the Welsh. The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, edited by Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman and Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991).

9 W.J. Rees, *Lives of the Cambro British Saints, of the fifth and immediate succeeding centuries, from ancient Welsh and Latin MSS. in the British Museum and elsewhere, with English translations and explanatory notes* (Llandovery: William Rees, 1853).

The prologue to the *Life of Saint Cadoc* raises two issues which reverberate through the Arthurian romances of the Middle Ages. Firstly, its author suggests that Arthur and his knights have already established a reputation as rescuers of 'the destitute and the distressed', in particular of damsels in distress. Secondly, however, Arthur exposes himself as a weak and emotionally volatile king, who ends up morally in the wrong.

The explosive growth of Arthurian literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is indebted to two principal authors, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chrétien de Troyes. Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain* (*Historia Regum Britanniae*), written in the 1130s, places Arthur as a historical king in a linear narrative for the first time. Geoffrey drew upon older oral and literary sources, and no doubt to a great extent on his own imagination. Uther Pendragon, Merlin, Guinevere, Mordred and Gawain, son of Loth of Norway, take on firm contours in Geoffrey's narrative, along with Bedevere and Kay, but there is little sign as yet of chivalry. Arthur develops from a war-leader into a king with imperial aspirations. In the Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, *Cligés*, *Lancelot*, *Yvain* and *Perceval*, which were written between *c.* 1160 and *c.* 1190, Arthur steps back from central stage, becoming a weak king, a *roi fainéant*, as he is, for the most part, in Wolfram's *Parzival*. The focus is, instead, upon his knights, the knights of the Round Table. Chivalry and courtly love are the central themes, reflecting what were undoubtedly contemporary moral issues. Erec, Yvain and Perceval are seen to undergo a process of moral growth, progressing from youthful error, obsession with their own prowess or with love, to a more altruistic view of their role in society. The values of the Arthurian court are challenged and ironised, as the knight-heroes go through their learning process. Hartmann's German adaptations of Chrétien, *Erec* and *Iwein*, dwell upon and intensify the moral issues raised by Chrétien, so that Arthur's court, praised initially as the embodiment of chivalry, comes increasingly under question. The question of the moral justification of chivalry is also raised in Hartmann's two 'courtly legends', *Der arme Heinrich* and *Gregorius*, probably written in the first decade of the thirteenth century.

In *Parzival* Wolfram seizes upon and develops the *entrelacement*, the interwoven structure of two plot-lines that he found in Chrétien, to explore his central theme, which might be worded: Why should a knight fight? Gawan is reluctant to enter battle unless it is absolutely necessary, unless his honour, or the demands of love require it. In this he is already one step ahead of the typical Arthurian knight. Gawan's religious faith informs his actions, and is unquestioning. Parzival is by nature more aggressive, although he is also shown from the beginning to possess *triuwe*, 'loyalty' – a concept that embraces kindness and compassion – which he has inherited from his mother, Herzeloyde. Parzival has to learn that fighting is not the be-all and end-all of existence, and should not be undertaken without altruistic intent. A new, more considered attitude to fighting is shown by Parzival after the turning-point of the romance, his confession to Trevrizent in Book IX. Yet Parzival remains combative, if not unthinkingly so, and the outcome of his final three battles, against Gawan, Gramoflanz and Feirefiz, reflects the workings of Divine Grace more evidently than Parzival's ethical growth. This is typical of the way in which battles serve as symbolic markers to chart spiritual progress in the Arthurian romance. The study of psychological states in Book IX is the exception rather than the rule in romance.

At the beginning of Book VI Arthur shows a pacific tendency. He and his company

are nearing Munsalvæsche, and Arthur counsels his knights against battle, advice which is ignored by Kay and Segramors. This motif is absent in Chrétien's *Perceval* and clearly shows the direction in which Wolfram wishes to move. Wolfram is contrasting the values of the Arthurian world, with their often unthinking attitude to combat, with the values of a new order, the Grail company, a people with a direct link to God. Even here, though, some differentiation is necessary; the Grail company may implicitly stand a grade higher, in the gradualistic world of *Parzival*, than the knights of the Round Table, but its individual members still fall some way short of perfection. The arrogant templar who attacks Parzival at the beginning of Book IX, for example, is clearly no ideal figure. Anfortas admits to his youthful folly in pursuit of love, which brought about his symbolically located wound. It is Parzival himself who provides the model for how a sinner may atone for error and move towards greater compassion and humility.

Parzival, Gawan and the Theme of Love

Eros occurs in many variations in Wolfram's œuvre, from rape and seduction to courtly love – the love unseen between Gramoflanz and Itonje, the unconsummated love of Sigune and Schionatulander. To begin with the darker aspects of sexuality, the first knights that Parzival meets, at the beginning of Book III, provide a nice contrast with the scene from the *Life of Cadoc*. Karnahkarnanz and his men are in pursuit of Meljahkanz, whose reputation as rapist and abductor had been established in Chrétien's Arthurian romances. Meljahkanz recurs in Book VII, still unpunished. The second rapist in *Parzival*, Urjans, is obliged to eat from the same trough as Arthur's hounds (Book X), but survives to outwit Gawan and steal his charger, and while Orgeluse promises to deal more effectively with him than Arthur had, we do not hear the end of the story. For a rapist to go unpunished would not have been unusual in the chaotic Germany of the early thirteenth century. The turncoat Count William of Jülich, for example, was a noted abductor and rapist of nuns, and died in the arms of one of his many mistresses; Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus Miraculorum* (*c.* 1235) assigns him a special place in hell.

The two rapists in *Parzival* are paralleled by two false accusations of rape, in a characteristic example of Wolfram's use of numerical symbolism. These accusations are levelled against Parzival for his treatment of Jeschute (Book III), which indeed comes much closer to rape in Wolfram's version than in Chrétien, and Gawan, for his interrupted liaison with Antikonie (Book VIII). This is one of many motifs which underpin the *entrelacement* of the two heroes' adventures, and which are emphasised by the use of keywords. Both heroes undergo a state of doubt (*zwîvel*), that perilous condition which is the subject of the opening lines of the poem. In the case of Parzival, *zwîvel* describes his despair of God's grace, the sin of *desperatio*, when he renounces allegiance to God; for Gawan, with his unwavering belief in God, *zwîvel* denotes the state of vacillation he finds himself in when he cannot decide between supporting the cause of Lyppaut or continuing on his road towards the combat which is his personal destiny (Book VII). Both heroes are accused of being a goose, a fool, Parzival by the unnamed squire at Munsalvæsche when he fails to ask the Grail question (Book V), Gawan by Orgeluse when he persists in offering her service (Book X).

The motif of questioning is another link, cemented by the keyword 'question' (*vrâgen*). Parzival, taking the advice of Gurnemanz too literally in his naïveté, is slow to ask questions at Pelrapeire, and then more disastrously so at Munsalvæsche. Gawan is always ready to ask questions and persistent in doing so, as when he cross-questions the verbose, Osric-like squire before Bearosche (Book VII), and seeks to determine the nature of the adventure in Terre Marveil from Bene and Plippalinot (Book XI). Ultimately, the questions put by the parallel heroes result in their freeing their kinsfolk from distress at the two castles of Munsalvæsche and Schastel Marveil, kinship again proving a central theme.

At the end of Book VI, Parzival advises Gawan to put his trust in women rather than God, advice that is recalled by Gawan when Obilot beseeches him for help in Book VII. It is in their relations with women that the two heroes most clearly emerge as parallel figures. Wolfram underlines the interlinking structure by conferring upon both his heroes three love-relationships of different kinds. Parzival's first relationship is with Jeschute (Book III). Taking his mother's advice literally, Parzival leaps onto Jeschute's couch, embraces her and takes from her her ring and girdle. This encounter is of a purely physical kind. Parzival's second relationship is with Liaze, the daughter of Gurnemanz, whom he wishes to marry – a motif absent in Chrétien. The relationship remains on a purely theoretical plane; in order to win her he must perform chivalric deeds in her service. His restless desire to further himself, inherited from his father, takes him away from Graharz.

Instead, Parzival comes to serve Liaze's cousin, Condwiramurs, kinship again serving as a structural link. Where Condwiramurs is concerned, love-service and its reward, the theoretical and the physical aspects of love, are combined in a fulfilled relationship. Parzival again feels the need to leave his young wife to seek further battle, adventure, fulfilment, but his thoughts are always with her, we are told. In this respect Parzival outdoes his father, and is ultimately reunited with Condwiramurs.

In Book VI, in which the parallel fortunes of the two heroes are established, Gawan sees that Parzival is lost in thought, faced with the drops of blood in the snow, and interprets the situation on the basis of his own emotional experience, being 'well versed in such calamities'. This implies that Gawan has already experienced love-relationships, including one occasion, in a now lost romance, when he had pierced his hand with a knife. It would be wrong to conclude, however, that Gawan does not undergo a development. The first relationship on which Gawan embarks in *Parzival* is the purely theoretical dalliance with the child Obilot (Book VII), love-service without erotic reward. Wolfram seizes the opportunity to parody courtly love, making Obilot well versed in the vocabulary of love-service. Parody of a different kind follows in Book VIII, Gawan inspired by the sight of Antikonie to fight manfully with a chess-set as a weapon. It is made abundantly clear before this burlesque battle that the relationship between Gawan and Antikonie is very much of a physical nature. In Gawan's final relationship, culminating in marriage to Orgeluse, love-service and sexual fulfilment are combined. Gawan becomes the mouthpiece for Wolfram's philosophy of love: 'Who can have love unearned? If I may say as much to you, such a man carries it off amid sin. If a man hastens after worthy love, service is necessary, both before and after' (Book X).

The physical and theoretical amours of Parzival and Gawan are thus placed in a chiastic interrelationship, Liaze corresponding to Obilot, Jeschute to Antikonie; the

parallel between Orgeluse and Condwiramurs is emphasised by Wolfram's explicit comparison of their beauty.

Heredity and kinship play their role in the theme of love in *Parzival*, as they do in the moralisation of chivalry. Parzival's father, Gahmuret, is praised by Wolfram for his *kiusche*, his 'chastity'. *kiusche* in *Parzival* generally signifies fidelity within a single marriage. Gahmuret has, however, three love-relationships. Gahmuret's first relationship, presumably on a theoretical level, is with Ampflise, the Queen of France, apparently an older woman who instructs him in the tenets of chivalry – a common motif in both the courtly romance and the love-lyric. In Book II she asserts her claims on him through her three princely squires, but is rejected. Gahmuret's first fully-fledged relationship is with the heathen queen Belacane in Book I, and the outcome is far from satisfactory. Gahmuret, leaving her in search of further adventures, tells her he would have married her but for their difference in religion, but Belacane, for her part, would gladly have converted to Christianity – like Gyburc in Wolfram's later work, *Willehalm*. She is not given the chance, and the reader is left in some sympathy with the deserted queen.

Gahmuret's final love-relationship is with Herzeloyde, the mother of Parzival. The relationship is more or less forced upon him by his winning the tournament at Kanvoleiz, of which her hand is the prize. Wolfram invokes, in a purple passage, the coming of spring and Gahmuret's fairy lineage to motivate his falling in love with Herzeloyde. Yet, as with his relationship with Belacane, his restless aspiration (*linge*), his desire for further fame, leads him to desert her for the service of the Baruch.

The three relationships of Gahmuret, Parzival and Gawan are capped by those of Gahmuret's first-born son, Feirefiz, of whom Wolfram tells us that women 'were as dear to him as life itself'. Feirefiz's first three relationships, with Secundille, Clauditte and Olimpia, are barely touched upon; we are told that there had been many others. All these fade into insignificance when he beholds Repanse de Schoye, the Grail bearer and his aunt. To emphasise the parallels, Wolfram again invokes the beauty of Condwiramurs, who 'now very nearly found a rival'. There follows Feirefiz's burlesque conversion, so reminiscent for the English reader of that of Rex Mottram in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, and to ease Repanse de Schoye's mind on her marriage to her nephew, Feirefiz's patroness, Secundille, is conveniently killed off. Yet the marriage of Feirefiz and Repanse de Schoye has more than a merely comic function.

East and West

Wolfram's expansion of his source in the first two books of *Parzival* is multifunctional. Like his arch-rival, Gottfried von Straßburg, who prefaced his version of *Tristan* with the tale of Riwalin and Blanschefur, Wolfram wished to give his hero more of a parental background than Chrétien's Perceval had enjoyed. From his father Parzival inherits valour (*manheit*), and from his mother, Herzeloyde, loyalty (*triuwe*). This hereditary characterisation echoes the function of the introduction in the contemporary Old Icelandic sagas. Book I, however, has a further dimension. It introduces into the already complex geography of the Arthurian romance a new world, the fabulously wealthy, pagan world of the Orient. This world would have been familiar

to some extent to Wolfram's contemporaries through the genre of the *chanson de geste*, the *Chanson de Roland* having been translated into German early in the twelfth century. Yet the prevailing attitude to the Orient in the *chanson de geste* is hostile, as it was in the crusading lyrics composed by contemporaries of Wolfram such as Hartmann von Aue and Walther von der Vogelweide. In *Parzival* the attitude to the heathen world is much more sympathetic.

Gahmuret's stated ambition, as he departs from Anjou, is to serve the 'highest hand', which he interprets as the most powerful man on earth, and so he enters into and ultimately dies in the service of the Baruch, the Caliph of Baghdad. It will be for his second son, Parzival, to recognise that the 'Highest Hand' is in fact that of God. The concept of a Christian knight choosing to serve a pagan ruler must have struck Wolfram's audience as unusual, not to say outlandish. Wolfram does not, however, ignore the problems of the racial and religious divide.

Belacane falls in love with Gahmuret; she is a judge of Western beauty, having 'seen many a fair-skinned heathen before'. Gahmuret, reflecting on his parting from Belacane, says: 'many an ignorant man believes it was her blackness drove me away – that I would look on rather than the sun!' Gahmuret deserts her ostensibly because of the gap between their faiths, though Belacane's love knows no such boundaries. The willingness to convert to Christianity which she expresses on receipt of Gahmuret's letter forms a parallel to the conversion of Feirefiz. Books I and XVI are thus linked to form a framework for the work as a whole. The problem of the colour barrier is raised again when the boy Loherangrin first meets his uncle Feirefiz: 'He being black and white, the boy did not want to kiss him. Even today, fear is reported of noble children.'

In India (or Tribalibot), Feirefiz commands that Christian doctrine be proclaimed, and the offspring of the union of Feirefiz and Repanse de Schoye is Prester John, the legendary king of India. Thus the marriage has the function of uniting Christian and heathen, and spreading the Christian message. This anticipates the central theme of Wolfram's final work, *Willehalm*, in which the eponymous hero is initially intent on the slaughter of the pagans. Through the teaching and inspiration of his wife, Gyburg, he develops a more conciliatory and humane mentality. No other poet of his time had such an open – and warm hearted – attitude to the problems of religion and race.

Style and Syntax

Wolfram's style inspired many imitators. It was, if anything, more admired than his content. 'No layman's mouth ever spoke better' was the verdict of his contemporary Wirnt von Grafenberg. Yet it also found a hostile critic. In the same decade in which Wolfram composed *Parzival*, Gottfried von Straßburg wrote the greatest version of the romance of Tristan and Isolde. There is a lot to suggest that they composed piecemeal, aware of each other's authorship. When Wolfram, for example, says of the youthful Parzival that 'no Curvenal had reared him', it seems probable that he is alluding to the upbringing of the hero of Gottfried's *Tristan*. The *Tristan* is remarkable for its literary excursus, an analysis of the contemporary literary scene, encompassing both lyric and narrative poets. Gottfried begins with Hartmann von Aue, whom he praises for his lucidity and symbolism. He proceeds from Hartmann to an unnamed author who is 'the hare's companion', reminding the reader of the 'startled hare' in Wolfram's

prologue to *Parzival*. Then Gottfried lavishes praise upon Bligger von Steinach, nothing of whose narrative œuvre has survived. Next Gottfried singles Heinrich von Veldeke out for praise, as 'the first branch in the German tongue'.

In the literary excursus there is one author who is conspicuously absent. Gottfried does not name Wolfram, nor Wolfram Gottfried, but in the middle of Gottfried's praise of Hartmann's clarity, there occurs a seemingly unprovoked attack upon an unnamed author: 'he, now, who is the hare's companion, and desires to be present upon the word-heath, high-leaping and wide-hunting with dice-words, aspiring to the laurel wreathlet without following'. Gottfried's words are uncharacteristically obscure here, and the unique compounds and syntax he employs are reminiscent of Wolfram's own style. It seems probable that he is indulging in parody. His critique continues, again attacking an anonymous target, this time in the plural: 'inventors of wild tales, wildmen of tales, who lie in ambush with chains and deceive dim minds, who know how to make gold out of inferior matter for children and how to pour forth pearls of dust from the pouch'. Here the attack is upon obscurity of both substance and style, and the allusions to Wolfram's prologue to *Parzival*, that essay in obscurity, are unmistakable.

That Gottfried is indeed referring to Wolfram in his literary excursus is confirmed by a derivative analysis of the literary scene written nearer to the middle of the thirteenth century, in the *Alexander* of Rudolf von Ems. Rudolf begins his analysis of narrative art with imagery borrowed from Gottfried. Heinrich von Veldeke is praised first as the trunk, then Hartmann von Aue as the first flowering branch. The third branch in Rudolf's eyes is Gottfried himself, the author on whom he lavishes most praise. Between Hartmann and Gottfried, however, there comes the second branch: 'the second branch was trained onto it, robust, twisted in many ways, wild, good and cunning, ornamented by strange sayings. It was grafted onto the trunk by Sir Wolfram von Eschenbach. With wild adventures he was well capable of steering his art, so that his adventure promoted our entertainment.'

Rudolf's criticism, far from being negative, acknowledges that Wolfram's style is radically different in intention and character from that of Hartmann, for whom lucidity is all, and Gottfried, Hartmann's natural heir. Wolfram is the boldest and most innovative of his contemporaries, but also the most obscure. If Wolfram's meaning were immediately apparent, he would forfeit his greatness. In many ways Wolfram's style anticipates in its opacity the language of the German mystics of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. One of these, from the anonymous circle surrounding David von Augsburg, wrote: 'Whoever reads or hears this should act like the squirrel: it chews the husk of the nut until it comes to the kernel; thus one must chew the words with the teeth of intelligence until one enters the enjoyment of the Divine Mystery. Whoever wants to eat the honey must take it out of the comb, and thus one must draw the divine sweetness and the divine, honeysweet grace forth from the words.' Wolfram would certainly have appreciated the dictum of the most poetic of the mystics, Mechthild von Magdeburg: 'all who desire to understand this book must read it nine times'. Wolfram's audience, as is clear from the manuscript reception, much enjoyed the tussle with meaning that is central to the reading experience, and he found many imitators. Among these were the anonymous authors of the *Lohengrin* and of the *Göttweiger Trojanerkrieg*, Wirnt von Gravenberg in his *Wigalois*, and Albrecht, the author of the *Jüngerer Titurel*.

The problem that Wolfram's style presents to the translator is: how far he can go? Juan de Segovia, a fourteenth-century Spanish translator of the Koran into Latin, decided to avoid the use of verbs with the dative case and deponent verbs, because such constructions were lacking in his Arabic original. Clearly there has to be a compromise between an endeavour to capture the flavour of the author's style and what is possible in contemporary English. Here it is instructive to observe that two previous translators of *Parzival* into English say strikingly similar things in their introductions. Helen Mustard and Charles Passage state: 'The ellipses we have not reproduced, for fear of merely confusing the reader.'[10] Arthur Hatto remarks that 'the reader must imagine Wolfram to be in one sense rougher and less tidy than he appears in these pages'.[11] This translation, in the interest of trying to convey something of Wolfram's stylistic originality, will give the reader a rougher ride than some of its predecessors.

The richness of Wolfram's imagery is unparalleled in medieval German narrative. It draws upon many spheres of life: recurrent fields are the mercantile imagery of profit and loss, weights and measures, the favourite pastimes of falconry and gaming, and wildlife. Mixed metaphors, despite the strictures of the schools of rhetoric, are regarded by Wolfram as integral to his poetry.

From the very first line, where the heart is neighbour to doubt, personification is central to Wolfram's style. Abstract qualities, such as courage or loyalty are personified, but so also are the sun, which in Plippalinot the ferryman's words, 'knows how to stand so low', or, lower still, Gawan's new boots, which 'indulged in no great narrowness'. This literary device is lacking in Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*, as are the similes and metaphors in which Wolfram's text abounds.

A more difficult aspect of Wolfram's style for the modern reader to accept is his syntax, which indulges in frequent parenthesis and periphrasis. This translation attempts to convey something of the texture of Wolfram's syntax by remaining closer to his word order than previous translations into English have done. There are many points in the text when Wolfram's sentences defy grammatical logic, and sometimes lose their way altogether. Wolfram is quite aware of this, as his comparison with the 'startled hare' in the prologue indicates; in *Willehalm* he states: 'my German is . . . so crooked'. Let us look at some examples: after the reader has battled through the dense imagery of the prologue and learned that Wolfram is not an author who suffers fools gladly – 'this flying image is far too fleet for fools' – he encounters the opening sentence of the narrative. He has been told that the hero of the tale is to be 'laggardly wise', but nothing will have prepared him for the jerky, sluggish syntax with which the tale begins: 'They still practise the custom, as they did then, where Gallic law rules and then ruled – the practice obtains on one part of German soil – you have heard this without needing me to tell you: whoever ruled over those lands gave order, incurring no disgrace thereby – this is undeniably true – that the eldest brother should have his father's entire inheritance.' Contrast this with the lucidity of the most celebrated opening sentence in English literature: 'It is a truth universally acknowl-

[10] Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, translated by Helen Meredith Mustard and Charles E. Passage (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. liii.

[11] Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, trans. by A.T. Hatto, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 12.

edged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.' Both Jane Austen and Wolfram are addressing the status quo, and perhaps both are adopting an ironical attitude to it. On a second reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, if no earlier, the reader realises that the opening truism reflects the views of Mrs Bennet and her younger daughters, and that the sentence is deeply embedded in irony. Wolfram's generalisation is more problematic, both in form and meaning. The use of parenthesis and the direct address of his audience, both integral elements of his style, must have a special purpose here, for even by Wolfram's standards these lines are challengingly obscure. In addressing the issue of primogeniture, which was rare in the Germany of the early thirteenth century, he is probably alluding to the peculiar circumstances obtaining in Thuringia, and the parentheses are serving the function of establishing a rapport with an audience conversant with the contemporary legal and social situation. He is not so far removed from Jane Austen, after all.

Syntax can also bring about what might be called the 'hand-held camera' effect, emphasising visual detail at the expense of normal word order. In Book XIII, for example, Gawan and Arnive observe the arrival of Arthur's army at Joflanze: 'Tents and many banners Arnive and Gawan saw being borne onto the plain – amongst them all only one shield whose arms had a device Arnive could recognise.' In MHG syntax, as in Modern German, the accusative may be placed first for emphasis. Here the initial position of the 'tents and many banners' lets us follow the immediate visual impact of Arthur's cavalcade, so that we are only secondarily informed that Arnive and Gawan are the observers.

In the first encounter between Condwiramurs and Parzival, the jerky syntax has an almost stream of consciousness effect, singularly appropriate for the tentative thoughts of the young princess: 'The queen's first thoughts were: "I think this man despises me because my body is wasted away. No, it's a ruse on his part – he's a guest, I'm the hostess – the first speech ought to be mine. He must have looked kindly upon me, since we come to be sitting here. He has shown courtesy to me – my words have been all too long spared – let there be no more silence here!" ' Here, as elsewhere, this translation supplies dashes to indicate the parenthesis, whereas Lachmann's edition employs colons.

Particularly in the later books of *Parzival*, Wolfram frequently employs the device of *apo koinu*, where two clauses are linked by the same subject: 'Gawan at that moment saw in the pillar riding a knight and a lady could he there both see.' Peter Knecht's translation into Modern German boldly attempts to reproduce this device, but it seems beyond the possibilities of contemporary English. The frequent switches of tense from past to present, sometimes but by no means always brought about by rhyme-compulsion, have an approximate equivalent in the English use of the Historic Present, so they have been retained, as has the frequent use of litotes and euphemism. When Orgeluse says to Gawan: 'In iron-clad arms I have seldom grown warm', she obviously means 'never'.

Another of Wolfram's stylistic traits is his predilection for the preposed genitive, or double genitive, or even triple genitive. The 'Saxon' preposed genitive, 'the man's hat', is quite common in MHG, but the more condensed grammatical formulations are very rare outside Wolfram and his imitators. Kenning-like constructions like *herzen ougen regen*, 'heart's eyes' rain' should not, however, prove beyond the reader's mind's grasp. A parallel is to be found in Elizabeth Bowen's last novel, *Eva Trout*

(1969): 'A last-summer's child's bottomless bucket, upturned, could have been jettisoned by expeditionaries from some other planet.' Such genitive constructions are deliberately economic, helping knit a dense poetic fabric.

Gottfried von Straßburg criticises his anonymous antagonist for his use of 'dice-words' (*bickelwort*). This probably refers not merely to Wolfram's preference for gambling imagery, but also to his constant creation of neologisms, nonce-words. Generally, this translation has attempted to render these by using unusual English words, sometimes risking a neologism for a neologism. For instance, as the prologue turns to the hero, Wolfram describes Parzival as *trœclîche wîs*, 'laggardly wise', and *mæreshalp noch ungeborn*, 'storywise, yet unborn'. *trœclîche* is a rare word, first attested here; *mæreshalp* is unique to Wolfram.

Sometimes this translation – like all its predecessors – cheats, ducking the problems posed by Wolfram's obscurantism. The intention, however, is to supply a translation which is so close to the original that the student may read it in conjunction with the MHG, while the translator retains the hope that it may be possible for the non-specialist not merely to enjoy the thread of the narrative, but also to sample something of the zest of Wolfram's style.

Editions, Commentaries and Translations

This translation of *Parzival* is based upon the sixth edition by Karl Lachmann (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1926). Manuscript variants have been consulted and sometimes preferred. The editions by Karl Bartsch (4th edn revised by Marta Marti, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1927–32) and Albert Leitzmann (7th edn revised by Wilhelm Deinert, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1961) have also been consulted, particularly with regard to sentence-division and punctuation. The notes are based in large part on the commentaries by Bartsch/Marti, Ernst Martin (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1903), and Eberhard Nellmann (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994). Recent commentaries on individual books of *Parzival* proved useful, including: Holger Noltze, *Gahmurets Orientfahrt. Kommentar zum ersten Buch von Wolframs 'Parzival' (4,27–58,26)*, Würzburger Beiträge zur deutschen Philologie, 13 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995); David N.Yeandle, *Commentary on the Soltane and Jeschute Episodes in Book III of Wolfram von Eschenbach's PARZIVAL (116,5–138,8)* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1985); Birgit Eichholz, *Kommentar zur Sigune- und Ither-Szene im 3. Buch von Wolframs 'Parzival' (138,9–161,8)* Helfant Studien, 3 (Stuttgart: Helfant-Edition, 1987); Simon Julian Gilmour, *daz sint noch ungelogeniu wort. A Literary and Linguistic Commentary on the Gurnemanz Episode in Book III of Wolfram's Parzival (161,9–179,12)* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2000); Christa-Maria Kordt, *Parzival in Munsalvaesche. Kommentar zu Buch V,1 von Wolframs Parzival (224,1–248,30)* (Herne: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1997); Susanna Backes, *Von Munsalvaesche zum Artushof. Stellenkommentar zum fünften Buch von Wolframs Parzival (249,1–279,30)* (Herne: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1999); Gisela Zimmermann, *Kommentar zum VII. Buch von Wolfram von Eschenbachs 'Parzival'*, GAG 133 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1974).

Parzival was first translated into English verse by Jessie L. Weston (London: David Nutt, 2 vols, 1894). Margaret Richey translated extracts into prose (*The Story of Parzival and the Graal*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1935), and into verse (*Studies of Wolfram von*

Eschenbach, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957). A partial verse translation was made by Edwin H. Zeydel and Bayard Quincy Morgan (*The Parzival of Wolfram von Eschenbach*, University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures, No. 5, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1951). The most useful of the many translations into Modern German proved to be that of Peter Knecht (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998). I am heavily indebted to the prose translations into English by Mustard and Passage, and Arthur T. Hatto.

For the *Titurel* Lachmann's sixth edition again served as a base. I have also drawn upon the editions by Marion E. Gibbs and Sidney M. Johnson (New York & London: Garland, 1988), and Helmut Brackert and Stephan Fuchs-Jolie (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002). Often this translation draws more closely on the manuscripts than Lachmann's text; these are available in the facsimile edition by Joachim Heinzle (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1973). Heinzle's *Stellenkommentar zu Wolframs Titurel* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1972) proved invaluable, as did the translation and commentary in the Brackert and Fuchs-Jolie volume, and the commentaries by Bartsch/Marti and Martin. The edition and translation by Wolfgang Mohr (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1978) was also consulted. A partial verse translation was attempted by Margaret Richey under the title *Schionatulander and Sigune* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960). The prose translations into English by Charles Passage (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1984), and by Gibbs and Johnson have been drawn upon freely.

The edition taken as the basis for the lyrics is that of *Des Minnesangs Frühling*, 38th edition revised by Hugo Moser and Helmut Tervooren (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 1988). Other editions and commentaries consulted were *Deutsche Liederdichter des 13. Jahrunderts*, edited by Carl von Kraus, 2nd edition revised by Gisela Kornrumpf, 2 vols (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1978), and Peter Wapnewski, *Die Lyrik Wolframs von Eschenbach. Edition, Kommentar, Interpretation* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1972). Wapnewski's edition includes facsimiles and transcriptions of the manuscripts. As with the *Titurel*, in some few instances the MHG texts are based on a re-reading of the manuscripts, and I am indebted to the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich for permission to study the Munich *Parzival* manuscript.