

THE FUNCTION OF THE EPIC IN LATIN CULTURE: THE *WALTHARIUS* AND CAROLINGIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARRIAGE

John O. Ward

When Virgil wrote his *Aeneid* he was, according to Brooks Otis, 'giving new breath and life to a form some 700 years obsolete'¹. The present paper surveys the history of the Latin epic in the 1200 years after Virgil's death, and finds the 'obsolete form' still living, and, indeed, enjoying, from the ninth century onwards, a considerable revival, a revival

¹ Otis 1964 p. 4. The present paper is the full version of a talk given at the Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture workshop *The Epic in History*, Sydney June 1-2, 1990. [Subsequent criticisms by others to whom the paper was shown, and certain additions, are indicated in square brackets. I have made certain silent corrections to accommodate small confusions/errors kindly pointed out by these critics. A much revised version was published in Boyle 1993 pp.261-93 (cf. Boyle's summary pp.14-15), and some material rejected for that printing has been incorporated here. Of the original paper, Frances Muecke (Latin, Sydney) wrote 'the paper is doing various things. It establishes a framework for looking at ancient epic and argues for a degree of continuity in method between ancient and medieval epic on generic and stylistic grounds, and then focusses on an interpretation of the *Waltharius* which relates its concerns to a particular and influential group and their ideas. I would like to see the ancient epic section recast according to a different interpretation of the *Aeneid* which would make a better connection with the second section, i.e., an ideological interpretation of the *Aeneid*' (20-6-91, letter). I am much indebted to Frances Muecke for her informed, intelligent and sensitive critique. My original paper was meant to provide some mention of the Latin epic in a conference that otherwise omitted this large and important topic. Naturally, in those areas where my principal understanding and the reference material I had on hand go back in large part to my own undergraduate days in the Classics Department at Melbourne University, and their aftermath, I could, in the time available, provide only some material for discussion. Much of this was excised in the Boyle version (where I took account of the criticisms levelled), but I have thought it worth while to present here the original form of the talk (with the criticisms made of it added in parentheses) so that the coverage of the volume might approach more nearly the original scope of the workshop].

that reached a climax with the so-called and much discussed 'Renaissance of the Twelfth Century'². How do we explain this phenomenon? Was it a pale, atavistic, anachronistic reflection of the 'unexampled metamorphosis ... accomplished' by Virgil, this 'quite new thing in literature'³, or was it linked with some vital threads in the neo-Latin culture of the central middle ages in western Europe? Was 'epic' the tired product of antiquarian schools in the after-glow of Graeco-Roman culture or a mode of expression that enabled contemporaries to illuminate some of the major problems of their day for a cultivated audience of persons closely involved with the management of current social and political problems? I hope to confirm in what follows the impression that 'epic' remained a vital and frequently practised form of expression for the centuries that followed the fall of the Roman Empire, a form of expression suited to the exploration of the largest and most perplexing of contemporary problems. My major illustration will be the late Carolingian poem known as the *Waltharius*, and the links that I believe exist between the composition of this poem and the problems late Carolingian bishops were encountering in connection with the new marital legislation and attitudes of the Carolingian church. In brief, I propose that the author of this poem was consciously reshaping older Germanic material to suit new clerical tastes and attitudes. His purpose was partly poetic, to express older Germanic heroic themes in Virgilian hexameters⁴, that is, to reduce Germanic legend to a pleasurable and entertaining form suited to the new Latin reading classes of the Carolingian Empire, and partly utilitarian, to provide the leading clergy of the day with a form of this legendary material that would suitably underline a view of the relationship between aristocratic men and women that the upper clergy wished to impart - for quite practical reasons - to their lay contemporaries. My elaboration of these ideas will break into two parts. The first deals with the tradition of epic inherited by the middle ages, and, in brief, what they did with it; the second will concentrate on an exploration of the relationship between the *Waltharius* and the problems the upper clergy were faced with in later Carolingian times.

The Epic Inheritance

Ironically perhaps, in view of the oral origins of the genre⁵, most of the epics with which the historian has to deal have come to his/her attention

² See Ward 1990.

³ Otis 1964 p.4.

⁴ [Could you say somewhere how differently the *Waltharius* reads, although so much of it evinces traces of Virgilian influence?" (Frances Muecke)].

⁵Foley 1988, Swanton 1977.

because they were at some past time written down. Recording, as Bowra long ago noted, in almost every case deforms the original, unless that original has become so polished and refined by ages of reciting as to sustain recording without much loss or deformity⁶. The epics with which the present paper is to deal are, happily, exempt from this problem and its consequences. Less useful as an index to popular or folk culture/mentality than the kinds of epics which Bowra treats, the epics that fall within the purview of the present paper are yet a closer indication of the thinking and literary practice of the emerging literate elite whose influence was to become so marked in western civilization from at least the time of the Greeks onwards. Having been composed as written documents in the first place - though oral recitations were probably intended in many cases as a mode of audience consumption - the epics with which the present paper deals set up and conform to their own compositional patterns. Deriving much, or little, as the case may be, from whatever epic pattern happened to influence their author, they are yet not to be measured, necessarily, either in function, content or style, with that antecedent epic pattern: behind their composition lies, in most cases, some link with the literary or political world in which their authors lived and wrote; this link is the subject of the present paper, and central to a proper understanding of it, is the fact of controversy. Whether between Christian and pagan ethical norms, between imitation and innovation, between the goals and standards of *moderni* and *antiqui* or between rivals working in a common field, controversy and conflict has frequently surrounded the history of epic writing: despite the feelings of some modern critics, epic seems never to have flourished as a purely school exercise, unrelated to larger contemporary issues and controversies, safely locked away in institutions and practices that could stand still in time, theme, style or content.

The relationship between the literary form of the epic and themes of importance to contemporaries, had, in fact, become a problematic one long before the middle ages inherited the genre. Indeed, the very canonic status which the Homeric epics had attained by the time of Pisistratus of Athens posed major problems for creative contemporaries: imitation (and hence, perhaps, inferior status) or innovation (with all the problems of acceptability associated with departure from the canon). Even the briefest survey of the modern secondary literature on the subject makes clear that despite this dilemma antiquity produced numerous post-Homeric epics, whether, to use Brooks Otis' classification⁷, panegyric/historical (for example, on the life of Alexander the Great), regional/historical (on, for

⁶ Bowra 1952 p.42.

⁷ Otis 1964 p.16.

example, the Persian or Messenian Wars), or Antimachean/Apollonian (mythical)⁸. Most of these are now lost⁹ and - according to Brooks Otis - they should not blind us to the fact that epic was born and bred in the heroic age, and progressively lacked real roots in the evolving societies that followed the Homeric period: the epic was to be superseded by the 'age of personal and choral lyric', then by the age of tragedy, then by the age of comedy and then by that of the prose forms¹⁰.

A.R.Burn, referring to the end of the Homeric/cyclic epic, asserts¹¹ that the reduction of a poetic form to writing inhibited further work in the form: 'this process combines with the rapid development of Greek social, economic and political life, introducing continually new problems, to produce the effects, so conspicuous in the history of Greek literature, of the successive development of the different types of major poetry, and then of prose, to a classical perfection, followed by comparative sterility as in an over-cropped field'. As early as the Hellenistic age Callimachus¹² and Theocritus¹³ both rejected epic and 'alone seem to have understood the possibilities of poetry in the Hellenistic age'¹⁴. The 'new poets' of the late Roman republic, of whom the most outstanding example was Catullus, and subsequent poets such as Propertius, rejected epic and worked in the Callimachean tradition of personal poetry and, at least in the case of Catullus, the short epic or epyllion¹⁵.

Estimates of responsibility for creating the 'revolution' in late republican Roman poetry, however, vary. For Brooks Otis, though epics continued to be written in the period - patron-driven and Ennian in inspiration - Virgil's was the revolution: he 'did what no one else had done before him and no one was able to do after him'¹⁶. 'His achievement was as heroic and unusual as that of his own Aeneas'¹⁷. He was 'the first and

⁸ Antimachus of Colophon c.400 B.C. wrote a *Thebaid*; Apollonius of Rhodes, a native of Alexandria, c.295-215 B.C. wrote the celebrated *Argonautica*.

⁹ Paradoxically, the 'unbroken line of both historical and Antimachean epic' of which Brooks Otis speaks (p.31) in regard to Virgil's day, has not survived in our manuscripts: subsequent generations, by a narrow margin, seem to have endorsed the neoteric movement, with its antipathy to 'long, pretentious and facile [epic] poetry' (Otis 1964 p.31): the *neoterici* have at least survived, if slenderly, in our manuscripts.

¹⁰ Otis 1964 p.3.

¹¹ 1960 p.161.

¹² Born c.310 B.C. in Cyrene.

¹³ Born in Syracuse and flourished c.270 B.C.

¹⁴ Otis 1964 pp.8-9.

¹⁵ Otis 1964 p.32; cf. Newman 1986 p.31 for the alleged inappropriateness of the term. Quinn 1979 uses it, e.g. p.83. [Boyle 1993 ch.1 provides an essential introduction to 'Roman Song' and David Konstan (Boyle 1993 ch.4) deals authoritatively with 'Neoteric epic: Catullus 64'].

¹⁶ Otis 1964 p.2.

¹⁷ Otis 1964 p.40.

only poet truly to recreate the heroic-age epic in an urban civilization'¹⁸. The *Aeneid* was a work of renewal, novelty, innovation¹⁹.

John K. Newman puts forward a similar, if somewhat less revolutionary appraisal of the Roman Homer: 'Virgil was in the first place a product of his own time'; his *Aeneid* was not unique: it stood in a succession 'of undeniable epics which have owed a debt both to the *Hecale* (of Callimachus) and his other poetry'²⁰. Both Virgil and Apollonius Rhodius, however, made their own contribution towards a crucial rapprochement between the epic tradition and the Callimachean critique; indeed, the Roman Empire and its medieval successor states inherited a blend that mixed Callimachus, Apollonius, Virgil, Horace (*Ars Poetica*) and Aristotle (*Poetics* II.6) with the notion of refined poetic art, and with the tradition of epic²¹. The message of Aristotle's *Poetics* was, in Newman's view, the revolution²²: 'Virgil's epoch-making discovery was that it was possible to use Alexandrian methods to compose a large-scale, heroic poem without sacrificing art to public purpose'²³. 'Virgil's epic was Callimachean'²⁴.

¹⁸ Otis 1964 p.2.

¹⁹ Otis 1964 p.41. [See now Boyle 1993 ch.5, and note p.104: Virgil 'died in 19 BCE leaving his epic 'unfinished'. Had the instructions contained in his will been carried out, Roman epic, indeed Roman literature both prose and verse, would have evolved quite differently. Ovid's experimentations, Lucan's dismemberment of the genre and its Flavian reconstitution only make sense as creative responses to Virgil, whose profound reformulation of the ground-rules for epic verse influenced everything that followed'. Boyle's comments on my paper (letter 2/8/1991) are relevant here: 'your attitude to the *Aeneid* ... needs rethinking. Even Otis, if he were alive, would modify his views, and, indeed, had already done so to some extent in the 1970's. Read my chapters on the *Aeneid* in *The Chaonian Dove: studies in the 'Eclogues', 'Georgics' and 'Aeneid' of Virgil*. ... The material on the relationship between the *Aeneid* and the epic tradition needs ... rethinking. ... You should know that no one treats anything Newman says with respect; Callimachus' attitude to epic is far more complex than Newman thinks. His (material) on the classical epic is to be treated with as much caution as his underestimation of medieval epic. Your opening quotation from Otis represents an outdated attitude which belittles the achievements (considerable) of Apollonius Rhodius in Greek epic and the early Roman epicists, such as Livius, Naevius and especially Ennius (cf. Boyle 1993 chs 1-3, which 'will help, I hope, in reestablishing the importance of early Roman epic'). Read too Sander Goldberg in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 1989 pp.247ff, as well as Gratwick in the *Cambridge History of Latin Literature*'. Frances Muecke writes 'G.B Conte's book on 'Genre', his essay on the *Aeneid* 'Ideologia e forma del contenuto' gives a better theoretical framework for your purposes than Newman'; see Conte G.B.(1986) whose work has been consequently incorporated into the Boyle revision of the present paper].

²⁰ Newman 1986 pp 32, 104.

²¹ Newman 1986 p.103.

²² Newman 1986 p.47.

²³ Newman 1986 p.197. See also Quinn 1963 p.203: 'Vergil, in fact, transfers to epic the evocative economy of Hellenistic epigram and Horatian ode'.

²⁴ Newman 1986 p.199. A. J. Boyle (in a paper delivered to the Department of Latin, Sydney University, 1990) has also argued that Virgil took much from neoteric epyllion and refused to write an epic on Caesar [Boyle 1993 p.4], which might have been less amenable to neoteric norms. [See now Boyle 1993 ch.5].

For Kenneth Quinn, however, the personal poetry of Catullus represented the real revolution: 'To an educated Roman in the year 70 B.C., the old epic-tragic tradition must have seemed not only the main stream of poetic tradition, but the only one worth taking seriously'²⁵. Twenty years after writing these words, Quinn was nevertheless prepared to admit that the *Aeneid* was unique²⁶ 'in the extent of its challenge to Homer'.

However we explain the Virgilian formula, it appealed to history: in all probability more manuscripts of the *Aeneid* have survived than for any other classical literary text²⁷. New composition in epic continued in both medieval and Renaissance times with the Virgilian influence as a sub-text²⁸, despite the difficulties associated with epic composition along lines that would not offend the principles implicit in the example and theory of Aristotle or Callimachus and those Latin writers whose embodiment of this 'theory' would have been available to their medieval successors. For Aristotle 'epic poetry agrees so far with tragic as it is an imitation of great characters and actions by means of words'²⁹, but not great actions *described as history*³⁰ (for versified history is still history); rather actions *selected* from the mass that *could* be described³¹, and treated philosophically and artistically, so as to relate to 'what might be' rather than 'what has been'³². Newman thus saves Lucan from the epic scrap-heap by stressing his conception of the epic-writer as not *poeta* but *vates* : Lucan's purpose, indeed, is *vatic, satiric*³³, and, if to a lesser extent than for Ovid in his succession of *epyllia*, the *Metamorphosis, carnivalistic*³⁴.

These latter purposes are essential and prevent epic from becoming stultified by canonising 'the serious, ecclesiastical, feudal and political cult

²⁵ Quinn 1959 p.7.

²⁶ Quinn 1979 pp.81-82.

²⁷ For the *nachleben* of Virgil see Schaller 1987 p.99, Newman 1986 ch.VI, *Lectures* esp. pp.31ff, and Bernard 1986. Manuscripts to the end of the twelfth century are expertly catalogued in B Munk Olsen *L'Étude des auteurs classiques Latins aux XIe et XIIe siècles* II (Paris 1985). A complete (? 1017 MSS) list of medieval manuscripts is given by Giancarlo Alessio in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, Rome, 1987, III pp 432-43.

²⁸ This is perhaps best illustrated by the excellent work - not yet fully published - being done by Drs D.M.Stone (Sydney) and Peter Godman (Tübingen) on the *Mathematicus* of Bernardus Silvestris.

²⁹ Aristotle *Poetics* I,9 trans T.Twining in *Aristotle's Poetics and Rhetoric, Demetrius On Style, Longinus on the Sublime: essays in classical criticism*, intr. T.A.Moxon London 1955.

³⁰ *Poetics* II,6.

³¹ *Poetics* II,5.

³² *Poetics* II,6.

³³ Quinn 1979 p.84.

³⁴ Newman 1986 pp.212-15. [Boyle writes in a letter to me 2/8/91 'Be careful,too, what you say about Flavian epic, even Silius, and Claudian. See the essays in my (ed) *The Imperial Muse: Flavian Epicist to Claudian* (Melbourne 1990) and in *The Roman Poets of the Early Empire* ed myself and J.P.Sullivan (Penguin 1991). ... All this is being reevaluated, much of it being read 'seriously' for the first time, it appears'. See now Boyle 1993 chs 6-12].

forms and ceremonials³⁵: obscenity, burlesque, the grotesque all aim to destructure the set, the formal, the official, to destabilize power and hegemonic relations, to reduce all to common anarchy. The importance of carnivalistic/satiric elements in epic is simply that, so placed, such grotesque elements more seriously confront the classic, the serious, the canon: confined to their own small forms they can be set aside (as serious twelfth-century poets set aside goliardic verse³⁶), but sewn into epic they take on and confront in the fullest sense the official world, for it is the official world that creates heroic *formulae* and the power structures that institutionalize their heroism.

The problem for epic after Lucan was - according to Newman - first, to avoid relapsing into the conventional cyclic stereotype of the sort pilloried earlier by Callimachus and Aristotle and later by Juvenal³⁷, and, secondly, to avoid mere Alexandrian cleverness. The epic poet needed to retain 'his role (as) vatic moralist', 'to repeat Virgil's dazzling success in combining Alexandrian refinement with Roman breadth'³⁸. Only Silius Italicus (25-101 A.D.), with his 17-book *Punica*, fails the test: he lacks 'deep thought inspiring the poet's notion of his task'³⁹. He was a wealthy amateur, failed the vatic test and had no claim to fame other than an admiration for Lucan and Virgil, and enough intelligence and industry (the word is Pliny's) to crank out his 'near miss epic'.

Newman concludes the first 243 pages of his book with the assertion that 'if the first-century epics are "silver", it is because they represent the gradual failing and fading of the vatic ideal, a dialogue with Horace and Virgil which becomes more and more muffled': vision quails before technique⁴⁰. The second half of Newman's book thus takes up the epic with Dante and Petrarch, skipping the Latin middle ages as if, by implication, they too partook of a 'failing, fading, muffled' vision of the classical epic. This neglect is canonic: most modern writers reveal a similar lack of interest⁴¹, and a short exploration of the lacuna, to which the following paragraphs are dedicated, is revealing.

³⁵ Bakhtin 1984 p.5.

³⁶ See Southern 1956 p.210; Raby II pp.323 and cf. 339-41; Hilka-Schumann I.1 p.54 (#33).

³⁷ Cf. Juvenal *Satires* I.1-2 *vexatus totiens rauci Thesedei Cordi* (a parody of epic recitation).

³⁸ Newman 1986 p.226.

³⁹ Newman 1986 p.232.

⁴⁰ Newman 1986 p.243.

⁴¹ Page Dubois 1982, for example, jumps from Virgil to Dante; Peter Dronke 1970 makes no reference to epic. Nimis 1987 too skips the middle ages, as does Murrin 1980. For Martindale 1986, despite the fact that 'Milton's poetry, like that of most of his contemporaries, derives from two primary sources, the classics and the Christian tradition' we have only chapters on Homer, Virgil, Ovid and Lucan; Lamberton 1989 naturally allocates only a small section to the Latin tradition (basically pp.249-97, dealing, in the main, with Calcidius, Augustine, Praetextatus [of whom nothing survives], Macrobius, 'Bernard Silvester', William of Conches and Dante), though the middle ages as such does not come into the 'thesis' ('that this oldest surviving European tradition of interpretive

Two threads seem to underpin any neglect of the medieval fascination with the epic form on the part of modern scholars. The first is the view that allegorization of the classical epic in the middle ages replaced original epic composition, and the second is the view that concern with the technicalities of reproducing classical epic language blinded medieval writers to the real nature of what they were learning to imitate. The first thread is well represented by Andrew Fichter in his *Poets Historical: dynastic epic in the Renaissance*; for the second, we shall find it convenient to have recourse to Newman again. In what follows, I first state each 'thread' and then comment on it in turn.

Dealing as he does with attempts to continue - or complete - the specifically Virgilian epic tradition, Fichter jumps from Augustine⁴² to Torquato Tasso and Ariosto: 'there is little in the nature of Fulgentius' *Exposition of the Content of Virgil* or Bernard Silvestris' commentary on the first six books of Virgil's *Aeneid* to suggest the impulse to construct epic narrative that flourishes in the Renaissance'⁴³. Indeed, 'the preoccupations of the commentators are not congenial to the production of epic literature': under the guise of 'decoding' the *integumentum* 'the commentator seems willing to leave behind him much of what is essential to an epic, its literal and historical dimensions, its attachment to a particular time, place and culture'⁴⁴: it is, says Fichter, the purpose of the dynastic poems of the Renaissance to restore these circumstances, to overturn the Neoplatonic, allegorical tendency 'to discredit the sensible world in the eyes of the reader and thereby to turn his mind toward the realm of invisible things where reality and goodness reside'. The very popularity of Virgil, in medieval times therefore, seems to have worked against the production of epic poetry; in favour of the allegorization of such poetry perhaps, but not the production of it.

For Newman, the *bête noir* in producing this medieval aversion to epic was the doctrine of the *tria genera dicendi*, and, in particular, the formulaic reproduction of the grand style, in which the *Aeneid* was thought

criticism (i.e. the Neoplatonists' reading of Homer) was in part responsible for the birth of developed allegorical literature in late antiquity, and that it formed the background for the next great contribution to the epic tradition, the *Divina Commedia*, p. 298). Blessington 1979, of course, deals only with Homer and Virgil, and Clark 1973 deals with the ancient epic, late Roman epic and the vernacular epics of the French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese medieval and Renaissance periods, but *not* the medieval Latin epic. Spence 1988 does deal with the medieval period, but hardly usefully for the epic: Virgil and Augustine are followed by the troubadour lyric.

⁴² *Confessions* I,2

⁴³ Fichter 1982 p.17

⁴⁴ Fichter 1982 p.19. On the allegorizing of Virgil in the middle ages see Fichter p.17 n.2, Baswell 1985, Jones in Bernard 1986 pp.107ff and Jones 1977, Schreiber 1979, etc. For the notion of *integumentum* see Jeauneau 1973 pp.125ff and Wetherbee 1972 index s.v. For medieval allegory in general see Murrin 1980, Gellrich 1984, Jackson 1985 ch.10, Whitman 1987, etc.

to have been written, by the twelfth- and thirteenth-century writers of the *artes poetriae*. The prescriptions of the latter, indeed, robbed epic-writing of exactly the qualities that had saved it in the case of Statius ('the Tchaikovsky among the first-century epic poets'⁴⁵): 'the lyrical and painterly aspect of his verse', 'Alexandrian lyricism'⁴⁶: 'this fateful misunderstanding' - that the *Aeneid* was written uniformly in one style - 'meant that the reader was now rendered deaf to the colloquialisms that Virgil, following Callimachus and Apollonius, had introduced there'⁴⁷. 'The whole Alexandrian ironic revival of the Homeric epic by the Roman was therefore ignored. The notion of tradition was replaced by that of annihilation'⁴⁸, from which Dante alone rescued it.

To summarise, it seems that all medieval epic must be written off as (a) failing the 'vatic' test, (b) failing the 'art' test (failing to appreciate the Alexandrine/Aristotelian critique of conventional epic by insisting on uniform adherence to the grand style and thereby indulging in what Aristotle castigated as mere 'versified history') and because (c) the very nature of epic was contrary to the main emphasis of Christian culture (the allegorical negation of epic circumstance).

To deal properly with these allegations would require more space than is available here. Nevertheless a few caveats should be entered. In the first place, it is certainly not true that the allegorical imperative so often encountered by modern observers of medieval literary theory⁴⁹ dissuaded medieval writers from the composition of circumstantial epic, or reflected a mentality that was adverse to such epic composition. Rather, the allegorical impulse extended and deepened the medieval interest in epic: it led to adventurous new attempts to render existing epics meaningful and it led, in its own right, to the composition of wholly new types of epic, for example, the biblical epic of Avitus of Vienne⁵⁰ or of Sedulius⁵¹, or the cosmographical epic of the twelfth century⁵². In fact, to

⁴⁵ Newman 1986 p.232

⁴⁶ Newman 1986 pp.232, 238

⁴⁷ Newman 1986 p.247. [See Boyle 1993 p.6]

⁴⁸ Newman 1986 p.253. [Cf also Auerbach 1965 pp.195, 199 on the atrophy of the rhetorical 'high style' in the middle ages. I owe the suggestion that Newman was influenced by Auerbach to Frances Muecke].

⁴⁹ Lewis 1958, Minnis and Scott 1988: index s.v. 'allegory', Curtius 1963: index s.v. 'allegory'.

⁵⁰ Roberts 1983, Nodes 1985.

⁵¹ Springer 1988 who describes Sedulius' *Paschale Carmen* (AD 425-50) as a Vergilian biblical epic that 'was required reading in schools throughout the middle ages and a source of inspiration for Latin and vernacular biblical epics well into the seventeenth century' (p.1). Sedulius was, in fact, only one of a number of Christian poets in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries who, after the *Edict of Toleration* experimented with Latin hexametric verse as a medium for biblical narratives. See Roberts 1985 and Springer pp.5-7. Virgil and the *Aeneid* were a powerful influence on these poets, partly because of the 'practice popular in the early church of quoting from pagan poets like Virgil to make apologetic points or to illuminate scripture passages' (Springer p.13), and partly, of course,

dismiss late antique and medieval Latin epic in the way that Newman and Fichter suggest, is to render null the work of numerous writers, from Claudian (c.400 A.D.) 'the only true pupil and heir [of/to Lucan, Statius and Juvenal] in three centuries', one who revived the tradition of Latin historical epic, dead since the first century A.D. and whose mastery of the verbal resources of first-century epic is unparalleled⁵³, to Alan of Lille, whose link with Claudian is more than accidental: his celebrated epic *Anticlaudianus de anterufino* parodies the *In Rufinum* of Claudian⁵⁴. Just as the latter is a poem ascribing to its subject all the vices, so Alan's poem describes how the virtues adorn nature's perfect man. Indeed, 'the twelfth century...offered an environment more hospitable to the philosopher poet than that environment would be again during the Middle Ages'⁵⁵.

There is, in fact, no particular reason why Fichter's claim that the 'epic way of seeing', which fed the imaginations of the poets of the Renaissance, should not also have fed the imaginations of the medieval poets. The epic way of seeing involved a perception of the larger design, an ability 'to experience movement (not) as aimless wandering through an uncharted labyrinth (but) to understand that the journey has been directed all along', a viewing of the past 'as if it were a future, a future to which (the poet historical) and his heroes are granted access only in extraordinary moments of prophetic vision during which the scroll of fate is unrolled and the divine plan is for an instant revealed'⁵⁶. For the lesson of the ancient epic was that history alone could not provide the key to the larger design: it revealed an aimless and barbaric pattern redeemed only by personal sacrifice and faith in a secular vision of an apocalyptic new order beyond the ravages of time and circumstance⁵⁷. The medieval allegorical imperative, in fact, was peculiarly adapted to the epic vision, in so far as

because of the place Virgil had come to occupy in the pagan educational curriculum. The *Carmen* is described as a new kind of Christian *Aeneid*, a *Christiad* in fact: the biblical versifiers were doing what Fichter implies any reader of Augustine interested in the ancient epic literary form might have felt challenged to do. 'Sedulius's poem (says Springer p.95) is rather (for want of a better term), a biblical epic, an early example of a new literary form which combines inextricably formal and material elements from the epic and the biblical traditions, whose own tradition finds fullest expression in the middle ages and the Renaissance'. Cf. also Wilson 1970 ch.3.

⁵²On which see Whitman 1987 chs 5-6, Curtius 1963: ch. 6, Wetherbee 1972, Minnis and Scott 1988: ch. 4.

⁵³Cameron in Binns 1974 pp.146-47; Cameron 1970 ch.4 describes Claudian's invective against Rufinus. See now Peter Connor in Boyle 1993 ch. 12].

⁵⁴See Chance 1983 for one view of epic creativity in Alan's *Anticlaudianus*, and Marshall 1979 for a view of the contemporary context for epic composition in Alan's day.

⁵⁵Lynch 1988 p.23.

⁵⁶Fichter 1982 pp.9, 7,1.

⁵⁷See Quinn 1969 pp.172-74, Fichter 1982 p.35. On the 'intertwining of the historical and personal' in the *Aeneid* see Muecke 1983 p.153.

the latter was a matter of seeing the grand design behind the obscuring cloud of particularity and circumstance.

Claudian's contemporary Prudentius, was a crucial figure in the epic's transition from the pagan Roman to the Christian European cultural environment, though both authors share a characteristic that ties them to their Roman past: their literary and, specifically, their rhetorical education, undertaken for vocational reasons, carried them to success in the Roman court and bureaucracy of the time. We are reminded of Silius Italicus⁵⁸ who combined the talents of a courtroom orator-cum-court-informer with imperial preferment, to end his days in a life of leisured antiquarian ease. This is a pattern transferred into the Christian middle ages, but, inevitably, with some changes of emphasis: a Latin education was certainly an essential prerequisite for advancement in the medieval clerical order, but the medieval Christian value system and the absence of an official Christian dedication to verbal *colores* in themselves meant that the differences between the Roman and the medieval pattern perhaps outweigh the similarities.

Prudentius' *Psychomachia* brings into focus some important features of the medieval epic; indeed, a recent critic describes it as 'revolutionary in its impact'⁵⁹: it is *vatic* in the sense that it expresses a notion of Christian salvationism; it contains grotesque or *carnivalistic* elements proper to the epic tradition; it is *satiric*, that is, critical of the *mores* of its time. It is of epyllion length (915 lines), similar to the *Mathematicus* of Bernard Silvester, and, like this latter text, has the Virgilian model in mind⁶⁰. It is also celebratory, in that it expresses a sense of pride and triumph inherent in the social, ideological and vocational position of its author⁶¹. The celebratory element is clearer still in such works as Avitus (bishop of Vienne's biblical epic *De spiritalis historiae gestis* (c.470 A.D.))⁶², as, indeed, in the longer historical and epic poems that crown the Carolingian Renaissance and usher in the Ottonian period⁶³. The latter are continued by a spate of eleventh- and twelfth-century Latin epic philosophical, biblical, cosmic, didactic and historical poems⁶⁴. The celebratory element

⁵⁸ Duff 1964 pp.361-62.

⁵⁹ Smith 1976 p.6. [Boyle writes to me (letter 2/8/991) 'on Prudentius you should be aware of the excellent book by my colleague at University of Southern California, Martha Malamud: *A Poetics of Transformation: Prudentius and Classical Mythology* (Cornell 1989). See too now Levine 1991].

⁶⁰ Stone 1988, Godman 1990.

⁶¹ Edden in Binns 1974 p.175, Smith 1976 p.4.

⁶² Raby I pp.69ff, Roberts 1983, Nodes 1985.

⁶³ Raby I pp.259-85, Godman 1985 pp.72ff, Waquet 1964, Faral 1964 etc.

⁶⁴ Raby I pp.356-60, 395-99, 405-08, II pp.7-22, 34-83, 84-102, 106-14, 118-21, 126-41, 150-51, 154-62, 164-68, and cf. modern editions of Embrico of Mainz *Vita Mahumeti* (Cambier 1962); the *Ruodlieb* (Kratz 1977 pp.137-149 with literature there cited and Kratz 1984; Bate 1978 pp.56-57, nn to lines 136, 215, 229, 273); Pertz 1978 (Gottfried 'invents' his own verse form - two hexametric lines

is, perhaps, uppermost in the medieval Latin epic, though vatic/satiric elements are not absent from such texts as the *Anticlaudianus*, and an entire sub-genre developed to satisfy and express the satiric urge⁶⁵. Carnivalistic elements are largely excluded⁶⁶ since most writing emanated from and celebrated the first of Bakhtin's two worlds: 'the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal and political cult forms and ceremonials'⁶⁷.

To even run through the subject-matter of this immense mass of verse would require volumes⁶⁸ and to explain it as a literary phenomenon would require a monograph. To set it aside as 'the product of the schools' is to mistake fact for explanation. Certain aspects of the period in question need to be kept in mind: until the middle of the twelfth century, the only language of literacy was Latin. As in Roman antiquity, all bureaucratic and governmental preferment depended upon, indeed presupposed, a measure of fluency in written and, to a lesser extent, spoken⁶⁹ Latin. As has been seen in the cases of Claudian, Prudentius, and Silius Italicus, precocious Latin literacy was a favoured mode of social ascent for ambitious provincials and the less well born or connected in society⁷⁰. Despite the complaints of the twelfth-century goliardic poets⁷¹, command of Latin literacy, rhetorical skills and a sprinkling of lore handed down only in Latin (often occultic) was a favoured road to influence at court for many⁷²: indeed, the goliardic laments concerning the futility of classical Latin literacy are as much proof of the competitive nature of this phenomenon as they are arguments against its existence.

Given these circumstances, the exercise of epic and related skills was as much a reflection of the ubiquity of demand for court panegyric as of literary fashion and an urge for cultural status. The composition of such literature reflects, too, the phenomenon of the 'over-trained courtier-bishop' discussed recently by C.Stephen Jaeger⁷³. The thirteenth century was to reduce and streamline the kinds and standards of Latin literacy necessary for court and bureaucratic preferment, as it was to regularise and routinise that very preferment itself. The spread of vernacular literacy also worked to problematize and diffuse the circumstances that produced

followed by one pentameter!]. Holder-Egger 1889; Monachi 1887; Morton and Muntz; Howlett *Chronicles* (for the *Draco Normannicus* of Stephen of Rouen) etc.

⁶⁵ The goliardic poetic form. See Morris 1972 pp.121ff and Thomson 1978.

⁶⁶ See Levine 1989.

⁶⁷ Bakhtin, as cited above.

⁶⁸ For example, those of Raby!

⁶⁹ Cf. Guibert of Nogent *Memoirs* III.4, trans. Benton 1970 p.154.

⁷⁰ See Ward 1979.

⁷¹ Ward 1979; Murray 1990 pp.71ff; Morris as cited above.

⁷² Peters 1978 ch.2; Ward 1988 pp.75ff.

⁷³ Jaeger 1985. [See also Scaglione 1991].

the remarkable efflorescence of Latin epic writing in the preceding centuries⁷⁴.

The second caveat that should be entered here to the picture of the evolution of the epic between antiquity and the Renaissance presented by Newman, Fichter and others⁷⁵ concerns the role played by late antique and early medieval critical theorists of poetry and the later writers of the medieval *artes poetriae*. The burden of Newman's complaint here is that the critical theorists invented a straightjacket which tied the *Aeneid* to the grand style (allocating the *Georgics* to the middle style and the *Eclogues* to the humble style), thus missing exactly the combination of Alexandrine intimacy and Homeric grandeur that permitted Virgil's success. The authors of the *artes poetriae* set this symmetry between style and subject-matter in concrete. It is certainly true that commentators on the *Aeneid* and the pseudo-Ciceronian *Ad Herennium* repeat the equation between *seria/magna/altitiqua vocabula* and epics such as the *Aeneid*⁷⁶, but, equally, they admit that mixing of the *genera dicendi* is possible, that is, lofty words can be found in comedy and the bucolic genre, humble words in tragedy⁷⁷. It must also be pointed out that the brief caricature of the doctrines of the *artes poetriae* presented by Newman does not really do justice to the contents and ambitions of those treatises. The aim of the *artes poetriae* that came into existence from the late twelfth-century onwards, was certainly *not* to inculcate any rigid equation between styles and subject-matter, even if some of their remarks may have helped to reinforce such an equation in their schools. The treatise writers are not, in fact, centrally concerned with consistency of style across large scale works such as epics; they do not treat 'the organisation of the poem as a whole, the system of relations, correspondences, antitheses, and balancing of various elements which serves to illuminate or intensify the meaning and effect both of the individual elements themselves and of the total poetic framework of which they each form a part'⁷⁸. 'What they teach is more suitable for short pieces, declamatory in nature and ornamental. Such pieces, the *praexercitamina* or *progymnasmata*, are typical classroom exercises⁷⁹ for which there are numerous examples'. The so-called 'Tendenz zur kleinen Einheit' of the *artes poetriae* 'focusses the pupil's and master's attention on the actual elements and procedures necessary for mastery in verse and prose compositions as the scholastic

⁷⁴ Wetherbee 1972 ch 7.

⁷⁵ As discussed above.

⁷⁶ Quadlbauer 1962 pp.11, 85, 173ff, Newman 1986 pp.247ff.

⁷⁷ Quadlbauer 1962 p.173, Auerbach 1965 pp.34,39.

⁷⁸ Fenik 1959 p.1.

⁷⁹ See Faral 1958 p.154 (II§12) *ad informationem puerilis disciplinae*.

middle ages understood that art⁸⁰. This focus is made clear by Matthew of Vendôme's general remark that 'verse is metrical *oratio* proceeding succinctly and *clausulatim* with a charming marriage of words and illustrated with various well-turned opinions (*flosculus sententiarum picturata*), not a heaping up (*aggregatio*), but an elegant joining of things said (*junctura dictionum*), (an elegant) expression of (the) properties (of each thing), (a) timely epithet for each thing⁸¹, all *ne prolixitas orationis et lectioni odium et lectori imponat fastidium*⁸². The contents of Matthew's treatise makes the point clearer. His first book deals with the *modum describendi*, line by line, to achieve 'poetic' i.e. 'epic' effect, along the lines of that achieved in the authors cited (which include Prudentius, Ovid, Virgil, Statius, Lucan, Claudian). The fact that Matthew does *not* have in mind extended epic discourse as found in a text like the *Aeneid* taken as a whole, is made clear by his preference for elegaic illustration rather than hexametric⁸³. Book II is devoted to the 'triple elegance of versifying': *verba polita*⁸⁴/*dicendi color*/*interior fatus* ('polished words / figurative expression / inner sentiment'⁸⁵). The book covers the construction of adequate verses proceeding by way of the use of various classes (by 'word-endings') of adjectives, verbs and the like. Nevertheless, as if aware of the possible outcome of the concentration on small units of expression, Matthew cautions *against* too great an abandonment of the diction of the classical poets for the music of medieval rhymed and rhythmic verse⁸⁶. Book III treats *de qualitate/modo dicendi*, the application of *schemata*, *tropi* and *colores* to achieve correct poetic 'effect' or 'feel'.

It is clear, in fact, that by the end of the twelfth century *villas...urbes ac oppida studiis fervere grammaticae* - to use the words of Guibert of Nogent earlier in the century⁸⁷. The urge and ability to imitate the admired classical models of Latin style, and to go beyond them into the jingling melodic field of, say, goliardic and leonine verse forms, was reaching larger and larger numbers of literate persons. This phenomenon

⁸⁰ Quadlbauer p.71 and Douglas Kelly (from the typescript for a forthcoming fascicule on the *artes poetriae* for the series *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental*). [now published, Kelly 1991].

⁸¹ Faral 1958 p.110 (§1). The text in question is Matthew's *Ars versificatoria*, or 'Art of Versification' and there is an English translation by Galyon 1980. All references below are to this text, unless specified otherwise.

⁸² Faral p.149 (§112).

⁸³ II§40 but see II§3, where the description of nature is hexametric.

⁸⁴ §9 p.153.

⁸⁵ Galyon 1980 p.65.

⁸⁶ II§§42-46.

⁸⁷ *Gesta Dei (Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Occidentaux, IV, Paris 1879)* p.118. [Grammar, of course, included a critical and creative reading of the (classical) *auctores*. See John of Salisbury's *Metalogikon* (1159 A.D.) bk.1 esp. 1.24 (McGarry 1962 pp.65-71).

spawned, in the last quarter of the century, a series of lecturers' manuals designed both to command the market place and at the same time to prune away the worst excesses of this fervour, confirming the status of the classical models. Matthew mentions more than once the *scolastico exercitio*⁸⁸, the *scolastico versificandi exercitio*⁸⁹ and the usage of the *moderni* versus the *antiqui*⁹⁰. His discussion of antique practice⁹¹ suggests the practical, utilitarian nature of modern usage: to work routinely within a discourse whereby the better features of a wide-range of classical and late classical Latin writings can be reproduced for minor panegyric, declamatory or epistolary moments.

Matthew's attempt at a comprehensive *ratio* for what he taught is obscure, but available⁹². In three places he refers to his *tria quae redolent in carmine* (= *tripartitam versificatoriae facultatis elegantiam*)⁹³: *verba polita* [Ai], *dicendi color* [Aii], *interior favus* [Aiii]. Elsewhere we find reference to another threefold scheme: *versus contrahit elegantiam ex venustate interioris sententiae* [Bi]⁹⁴, *ex superficiali ornatu verborum* [Bii]⁹⁵, *ex modo dicendi* [Biii]⁹⁶. How do these two series relate to each other? Fairly obviously thus (replacing some ablatives with nominatives): *interior favus* / *venustas interioris sententiae* (Aiii = Bi), *dicendi color* / *modus dicendi* (Aii = Biii), *verba polita* / *superficialis ornatus verborum* (Ai = Bii). In III§52 Matthew takes up the criticism that his *tria quae redolent in carmine* all deal *de ornatu metri* and agrees that they do, *sed tripartito*, that is, within another(!) threefold system. Matthew argues⁹⁷ that *in causa tractandi* ([A] in the attached diagram, that is, in the treatise on the poetic art, that is, in the exposition of theory) it may suffice to say that each of the parts (Ai-iii, Bi-iii), concerns 'elegance in poetry' (*de ornatu metricae modulationis*), and that therefore they display a certain identity (*identitas*); however, *in modo tractatus* ([B] in the attached diagram), that is, in the production of the finished poetic item, or, when it comes to the mode/ *modus* of the treatise/discussion/literary product,

88 IV§1.

89 IV§16.

90 IV§§4-5.

91 IV§5, Faral p.181.

92 Compare Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Nims 1967 pp.16-18.

93 II§1 and 9, III§1; 'the threefold elegance of versification, for there are three types of elegance which please in poetry' Galyon 1980 p.65. In the analysis that follows the enumeration in square brackets is my own, for easier comprehension and discussion. See the attached diagram.

94 II§10.

95 II§11.

96 III *de qualitate sive de modo dicendi*: 'that is to say that elegance in verse comes either from the beauty of its ideas, the exterior decoration of the words, or the quality of its speech' Galyon 1980 p.65, Faral p.153, *Ars versificatoria* II.9.

97 His meaning is insufficiently clear and Galyon's translation is sufficiently vague as to require the following attempt at an exposition.

Diagram to illustrate Mathew of Vendôme *Ars Versificatoria*

A

Organization of the treatise,
in causa tractandi

B

in poeticae facultatis exercitio, i.e. in modo tractatus

I	Aiii - Bi	= <i>sententiae</i>	(ā) <i>imaginatio sensus</i> (or)	<i>sententiae conceptio</i>
II	Ai-Bii	= <i>verba</i>	(β) <i>sermo (interpres intellectus)</i> (or)	<i>verborum excogitatio</i>
III	Aii-Biii	= <i>qualitas dicendi</i>	(f) <i>ordinatio in qualitate tractatus</i> (or)	<i>qualitas materiae sive tractatus dispositio</i>

variety (*varietas*) must be observed in the form/functioning of the three types of *ornatus*⁹⁸ (of inner meaning, of words, of quality of expression). One cannot, says Matthew, apply just any system, arrangement, *ratio* to these three parts. Just as in the above distinction into the three types of *ornatus*, there is an order of precedence (first inner meaning, then words, then quality of expression), so there is an order to be observed in the actual practice of the poetic capacity (*facultas*, facility, ability): '*similiter in poeticae facultatis exercitio praecedit imaginatio sensus, sequitur sermo interpretis intellectus, deinde ordinatio in qualitate tractatus. Prior est sententiae conceptio, sequitur verborum excogitatio, subiungitur qualitas scilicet materiae, sive tractatus dispositio*'⁹⁹. Now it is quite clear that Matthew's treatise has so far virtually ignored I (in the attached diagram, i.e. Aiii, Bi, *sententiae*), and B (i.e. *in modo tractatus*), since what he is dealing with is a treatise on II (i.e. *verba*, Ai/Bii) and III (i.e. *qualitas dicendi*, Aii/Biii), that is, in fact, his books II and III¹⁰⁰. Presumably, *imaginatio sensus* or *sententiae conceptio* (â on the attached diagram) would have dealt with larger matters of theme and design appropriate to the epic poet.

Matthew, in other words, is operating in accordance with a self-confessed limitation: he makes no reference to the *tria genera dicendi* ('the three levels of style')¹⁰¹, nor does he make any attempt to discuss Virgilian epic, for which his contemporaries would have had recourse to Servius, Bernard Silvester and similar authors¹⁰². It is not, in fact, the *artes poetriae* that inculcated the theory of the *tria genera dicendi*, or that determine the medieval view of the epic. The *artes poetriae* had other and ancillary aims; they are rule-of-thumb treatises, concentrating on a mode of classifying speech types and on the employment of figures of speech; they analyse and inculcate reproduction of an existing phenomenon or discourse: let the student so trained do what he then will with the skills

⁹⁸a key word in classical as in medieval rhetorical theory, viewing the finished literary product the way a fashion designer might consider the final impression made by a model, wearing the finished garment and adorned with all appropriate cosmetics, jewellery, accessories etc.

⁹⁹*Ars versificatoria* III.52, Faral p.180, translated by Galyon 1980 p.99 as: 'so in the exercise of the poetic faculty the conceptual realisation of meaning comes first, then language, the interpreter of understanding, follows, then the orderly arrangement of the treatment. Thus the conception of the meaning comes first, next comes the working out of the language, then the ordering of the treatment or the disposition of the material'. Cf â, ß, and _ in the attached diagram.

¹⁰⁰Book IV, *de executione materiae*, raises the author's sights only slightly; Geoffrey of Vinsauf was to raise them a little higher still. [Frances Muecke, letter to Diane Speed (editor of *Parergon*, to whom a copy of the original of the present paper was sent, with a view to publication there) 20/6/91 comments: 'The section on the role of the *artes poetriae* in the evolution of epic might seem excisable, but I think it is important in the context of the overall argument'].

¹⁰¹Pseudo-Cicero (Cornificius?) *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.8.11 *et seqq.* and see the notes pp.287ff in the edition by G. Calboli (Bologna 1993).

¹⁰²See Minnis/ Scott 1988.

and techniques they have imparted. It is perhaps for this reason that there exist, for the twelfth century, so many worked up major poems in the genres to which this paper is addressed: the *artes poetriae* seldom conveyed precise advice on selection of genre, style, theme, or on their larger working up: it was left to adventurous authors - an Alan of Lille, a Bernard Silvester, perhaps - to show what could be done with the language skills the authors of the *artes poetriae* imparted.

On the evidence, then, it does not seem to me that either the teaching of the *artes poetriae* or the theory of the *tria genera dicendi* had much influence in the direction Newman supposes. Medieval ideas of epic were fed by numerous sources and reflect more the environment and purpose which affected textual production in general during the middle ages, rather than the impact of any particular technical training; the latter affected the ways by which the authors of epics chose to secure certain word or image effects at close range, in accordance with the privileged Graeco-Roman discourse model (as analysed and recreated in the medieval schools¹⁰³). In his *Alexandreis*, for example, Walter of Chatillon chose an ancient theme rather than one of his own creation or one that involved a great deal of adaptation or experimentation. Such a choice was largely his own and if he needed guidance in making it he would have turned to Horace's *Ars Poetica* rather than to the medieval manuals written by his contemporaries. Between the prose version of Quintus Curtius¹⁰⁴ and the general resource provided by Virgil's treatment of Aeneas' adventures, and Lucan's treatment of Caesar's, Walter inserted his own work, which provided him with an opportunity of indulging his skill in the kind of speeches and descriptions that Matthew and those like him taught. Nevertheless, and here again he was operating somewhat beyond the range of the manuals, he chose to stress certain aspects of what he thought arose out of a consideration of the Alexander story: virtue, kingship, good government, royal chastity in the face of temptation, the transience of human achievement; at the end he chose a combination of pagan apotheosis, Christian exhortation at the pettiness of mere human endeavour, and craven address to his patron. In this latter emphasis he differed considerably from his major source: Quintus Curtius allows his account to linger on after Alexander's death and the hero's last words deal not with plans to extend his empire to the heavens but with practical problems of rulership and ethnic integration on earth.

¹⁰³ Cf. Curtius 1963 chs 4,5,8 etc. but note the strictures of Dronke 1970 ch. 1, and Godman 1990a.

¹⁰⁴ Zumpt 1852, Yardley 1984 and see Bachelier 1917. [For the *Alexandreis* see Kratz 1980, Telfryn Pritchard 1986, Townsend 1992 (who usefully calls Kratz's idiosyncratic approach into question)].

It would be mistake, therefore, to confuse the part with the whole and to deduce from the way medieval writers handled the phrase, the metaphor or the conceit, their handling of the whole. How particular the latter can be to their own cultural environment is perhaps best indicated in a more extensive analysis, and here we have an early and in some ways quite precocious example to hand, the celebrated *Waltharius*, a Christian Latin (monastic) poem, probably written in the Carolingian Empire during the ninth century, in Swabia/Bavaria¹⁰⁵.

The *Waltharius*

The *Waltharius* deals with legendary episodes remembered from the fourth century A.D. conflict between the Huns and the Burgundians. Some of these episodes survive in vernacular fragments, versions, and even a later Latin chronicle¹⁰⁶, but the *Waltharius* is the only complete, systematic presentation that we have. It is also the earliest, apart, perhaps from the Anglo-Saxon *Waldere* fragments¹⁰⁷. The relationship between the *Waldere* fragments and the Latin poem has been explored by Marion Learned¹⁰⁸ who concludes that the *Waltharius* is a tenth century adaptation of an Alemannic alliterative poem 'either contemporary with that of the *Waldere*, or slightly later'¹⁰⁹. The author of the *Waltharius* alone preserves 'a strictly consistent grouping of historical events and characters' and provides 'the most consistent treatment' of 'the hero's career'¹¹⁰. Nevertheless, he 'chose for his Latin poem the central episodes of his original (chief among which was the combat), and omitted such as did not harmonise with his conception of epic treatment'. His main purpose seems to have been skillful translation into epic form rather than literary creation¹¹¹.

Subsequent discussion has added little that is certain to this picture¹¹² and there seems no point here in attempting further speculation.

¹⁰⁵ For the story see Raby I pp.262-69. Also: Manitius I pp.611-614.

¹⁰⁶ Magoun/Smyser 1950 and Learned 1970.

¹⁰⁷ Carroll 1952: 123ff, 170ff; Gordon 1957: 65-66; Ker 1957: 86-87; Learned 1970: 179ff; Magoun and Smyser: ch.I; Norman 1969.

¹⁰⁸ Learned 1970 pp.180-81

¹⁰⁹ Andersson 1976 p.132; Carroll 1952 pp.128ff, 167ff, and 1953 and Jones 1959 deal with the differences between the *Waltharius* and the original (epic and ballad) forms of the Walther legend.

¹¹⁰ Learned pp.178-79.

¹¹¹ Learned p.181

¹¹² Streckler 1951, Bostock 1955, Zeydel 1959, Langosch 1967 pp.364ff and 1973, Salmon 1967, Katscher 1973, Kratz 1977, 1980 and 1984. [See also now Boyle 1993 p.289; Talbot 1954: 152-53, 174-77; Levison 1966: 81; Eichstätt is as close to Lorsch as to St.Gall, where many locate the author of the *Waltharius*. The surviving MSS of the *Waltharius* are today predominantly German, with Bavaria as a focus, and, although most are dated from the 11th to the 15th century, one, fragmentary, MS (Hamburg) is dated to the last quarter of the tenth century (Zeydel, cited Vynckier 1987: 185; see

It is perhaps more useful, and, indeed necessary, given the fact that Learned's estimate is now practically a century old, to examine what is actually involved in this act of 'translation' of a Germanic folk/vernacular poem or series of poems into Latin epic. Can it be dismissed as simply an act of 'translation...rather than literary creation'? Is it *possible* to 'translate' from one such medium to another *without* some act of literary creation? Or are our standards somewhat lower than those shared by critics in 1892? It seems worthwhile to take these questions a little further, and the remainder of the present paper will attempt to do so.

Certainly the theme of the *Waltharius* is heroic, and is announced as certainly as Aeneas announces his grief stricken tale of Troy in *Aeneid* II. For Virgil, a *Queen* (Dido) bids Aeneas *renew* his **dreadful grief** and tell how the Greeks plundered the ill-fated *kingdom* of Troy. For the author of the *Waltharius*, a *King* (Attila) rules a *kingdom* and is indefatigable (*impiger*) to *renew* ancient triumphs¹¹³. The *Waltharius* author adopts the natural opening, Virgil uses the artificial¹¹⁴, but the allusion to *Aeneid* II is not to be lost on the attentive reader: Horace in his *Ars poetica* links *impiger* with *iracundus*, *inexorabilis* and *acer*¹¹⁵: just as the *Danai* plundered *opes Troianas*, so Walther is to plunder the Hun treasures¹¹⁶, and Attila, *impiger* at *Waltharius* line 12, becomes *efferus ira* at line 380, when Walther, *lux Pannoniae*¹¹⁷, the Trojan Horse for the Huns, betrays his lord (Attila) - just as Hector, *lux Dardaniae*¹¹⁸, disappoints Aeneas by announcing doom (in a dream), rather than providing a remedy against it.

The *Waltharius* author is careful to hint at a Trojan link - Hagen is described as *veniens de germine Troiae*¹¹⁹ - but does not permit the allusion to be more than a hint of dramatic irony: it is not thematically *structuring*; the heroic world and its audience is a much more straightforward one than the late Roman republican audience for the *Aeneid*, and the *Waltharius* author has no wish to obscure his theme. He has chosen, in the main, to highlight heroism on the battlefield: the central episode, dominating 70% of the poem, is Walther's battle for defence of

also Vynckier 199 n.18, Langosch 1973: 57, Bate 1978: 1ff). Novalesa, where an early chronicle version of the *Waltharius* seems to have been compiled, lies just north of Susa, which is en route to the Mt Cenis tunnel linking Turin with Modane and Lyon.]

¹¹³ The emphases in my text at this point are designed simply to draw the reader's attention to parallelisms between the opening of the *Waltharius* and that of *Aeneid* II. Kratz 1977 deals with other examples of the medieval poet's interest in Virgil (Kratz 1977 p.129, the banquet given by Dido in honor of Aeneas, *Aeneid* I 637-756, W 305-09 etc.), and with the medieval poet's interest in Statius and Prudentius. See too Dronke 1971, Alfonsi 1977, Wolf 1976 and Schaller 1987.

¹¹⁴ See Nims 1967 (Geoffrey of Vinsauf *Poetria Nova* §2) pp.18ff.

¹¹⁵ in the case of Achilles, Horace *AP* 121.

¹¹⁶ W (= *Waltharius*, line) 261ff.

¹¹⁷ Cf. W 121ff, 376-77.

¹¹⁸ *Aeneid* II 280.

¹¹⁹ W 28.

treasure and *sponsa*¹²⁰, and the ethos of the poem is faithful to the lay aristocratic world of the early middle ages, and its values. An appreciation of this is essential to any understanding of the deeper motives lying behind the composition of the work¹²¹.

The poem assumes lordship as the fundamental basis of society¹²². Walther is keen to hang on to the treasure he and Hiltgunde have taken from the Huns and to increase it from the spoils of his combat with Gunther's twelve companions¹²³; so too does Gunther covet the treasure¹²⁴, for treasure is the essential lubricant of lordship¹²⁵. Thus Hagen, in a famous passage, like a kind of Greek choric figure, expostulates against the ruling thirst for gold and riches: *O vortex mundi, fames insatiatus habendi, gurges avaritiae, cunctorum fibra malorum... O saeva cupido...*, the bottom line, as it were, of lordship¹²⁶; at one point¹²⁷ Walther's offer of 'a hundred arm-rings made of bright red metal' to Gunther is recommended by Hagen, for with it 'you can reward your band of men (*tecum comitantes*)'. With this treasure - though his title to it does not emerge clearly from the poem¹²⁸ - Walther can set up as a lord, buy

¹²⁰ W 428-1446 (the poem ends at 1456); in fact, only one third of the poem is devoted to actual military feats.

¹²¹ Wailes 1978: 129 draws attention to 'the heroic trait of will, that utter tenacity of purpose which will not be deflected from its object. Such power of will, which need not be exerted for a good cause, is the essence of heroic literature'. This is, I maintain, an aspect of the Germanic warrior ethos that the author of the *Waltharius* wished to retain, not mock. It is for this reason that I find Vynckier's view of the *Waltharius* as a 'crafty *vituperatio* of the unchristian *modus operandi* of the Germanic warrior caste' inappropriate (Vynckier 1987: 183-84). Vynckier elaborates his views pp.189-90, arguing that the 'counter-rhetoric'/irony/sarcasm of the final scenes overturns, mocks, undermines the Virgilian heroism built up in the bulk of the epic. The degeneration into anti-*gesta*, insult, cynicism, *facetiae*, serves the Christian purpose of *vituperatio*, exposure and castigation of sinners. For V. the *Waltharius* 'represents the *via negativa* of the *miles*', it functions as 'an instrument of the *via negativa* of the monastic spiritual journey', it attempts to remove any appetites for the heroic which the monks might have felt,...and strengthens the monk in his rejection of the world outside' (pp.196-97). Such a reading, while perhaps appropriate to Hrosvitha's plays, reduces to nonsense by far the largest part of the *Waltharius*. I return to this subject below.

¹²² W 633 'if to be angry with one's lord is ever right...'. This is, indeed, a key theme also in the *Nibelungenlied*. Note, for example, Rüdiger's compulsion to fight the Nibelungs because of his ties of lordship to Etzel (Hatto p.269).

¹²³ W 1217-18:9 (Kratz 1984 p.59): 'to seek a noble death by wounds is better than, / my wealth lost, to survive, a lonely wanderer'.

¹²⁴ W 470ff and cf. 483.

¹²⁵ As is abundantly clear from the *Nibelungenlied*.

¹²⁶ W 857ff (Kratz 1984 p.43); a curious expostulation in view of Hagen's role in the *Nibelungenlied*. Kratz 1977 pp. 131-32, 137 sees this expostulation also as the central to the poem, because, for him, the theme of the poem 'is the condemnation of avarice'. I find this a somewhat narrow, didactic, approach to the author of the poem's creative purpose. See Kratz 1980 p.47 and Schaller 1987 p.91.

¹²⁷ W 618.

¹²⁸ Contrast W 471-72, 516 with 654. If one accepts that the treasure of the Huns contained much that was derived from the western tribute-paying nations, then it may seem right that Walther should take it, however much he did so by way of stealth and deception. Gunther, however, seems to feel

retainers and found his power. In a related way, Walther must hang on to Hiltgunde, as well as the treasure, because Hiltgunde is (a) beautiful (and hence likely to produce children), (b) well born, (c) devoted to Walther, as a future wife should be, and, (d), perhaps the strongest argument, betrothed to him. With her he can found a lineage¹²⁹.

Loyalties and obligations, however, pull in different directions in the poem. Hagen, for example, finds himself - like Bernier in the *Raoul de Cambrai* of a later age¹³⁰ - torn between conflicting loyalties, his loyalty to Gunther as lord¹³¹, and to Walther as comrade¹³²; to this tension is added the tension between comradeship towards Walther, and hostility occasioned by Walther's slaying of his, Hagen's, nephew (the tie of kinship¹³³). All these tensions come to a great climax in Walther's speech to Hagen, perhaps the core of the poem. Turning away from Gunther, who had just addressed him as *hostis atrox*, Walther speaks directly to Hagen: *ad te sermo mihi, Hagano, subsiste parumper....* With a directness perhaps peculiar to this clerical reworking, Walther asks why Hagen, whom he expected to be the first to welcome himself and Hiltgunde, should have turned hostile *nullis nempe malis laesus*¹³⁴. To this speech Hagen makes what seems to us a weak rejoinder, claiming that it was Walther who first began hostilities, though he should have recognised Hagen's *arma*¹³⁵. This is a peculiar response as Hagen made every effort to dissuade the insane Gunther from the hostile course of action the latter proclaimed upon learning of Walther's return¹³⁶; having failed, and given the hostility inevitable in Gunther's first approach to Walther through Gamalo¹³⁷, it was only to be expected that Walther would resist the

that the question of origins is the crucial one. One should go back further, and since Gibicho, Gunther's father, *did* send a large volume of treasure eastwards (W 31 *cum gaza ingenti*), by rights, Walther should yield it up. This line of argument, however, runs into the sand, for Hereric and Alpha *also* sent treasure to the Huns (W 72 and 91), and who, in any case, can work out what proportion of the Hunnic treasure was western in origin? It seems the poet approves the idea that, whatever its origin, Walther won the treasure by his prowess and by Hiltgunde's cunning.

¹²⁹ See Barker 1985.

¹³⁰ Herlihy 1979 pp. 131ff.

¹³¹ W 120 (Hagen hurries to his lord Gunther [standing for Gibicho] as soon as the Frankish tribute to the Huns is stopped, even though this means leaving his ancient comrade Walther behind); 633; 1109 *dolor succumbit honori regis*; 1113 *promissam fidei normam corrumpere nollem*; 1141 *oscillum regis subter complexibus actum*; 1366 *satelles (Hagen) domino (Gunther)*; all this even though Gunther is *infelix* (W 488).

¹³² W 478 *memor antiquae fidei sociique prioris*, 1090 *sponsam/ Walthario plerumque fidem volvebat*, 1240 *fidem amicum*, 1255 *inclita...concordia*, 1259 *fidem...pactam*, 1261 *foedus*, 1411 *fidei si iura reservet*, 1444 *pactum coactum*.

¹³³ W 1112 *carum nepotem*. Compare the effect of Hagen's murder of Ortlieb in the *Nibelungenlied*, and Gunther's riposte to Etzel (Hatto p.259).

¹³⁴ W 1239ff (Kratz 1984 p.60).

¹³⁵ W 1270.

¹³⁶ W 466ff, 479-487, 530 (*male sana mente*), 619 etc.

¹³⁷ W 602.

demands of Gunther and resort to arms. It was, in fact, Gamalo who initiated combat: *consumare etenim sermones nunc volo cunctos / aut quaesita dabis aut vitam sanguine fundes*. Whereupon, he positioned his shield and hurled his spear at Walther.

The dilemma for Walther is a very personal one. Should he surrender Hiltgunde and the treasure¹³⁸ because Gunther was 'supreme king' in the west, because Gunther was the first to meet him on his return from the Huns, because Gunther's father supplied so much of the treasure in the first place? If we find such reasoning bizarre we should remember the celebrated incident of the Vase of Soisson in Gregory of Tours¹³⁹, or the extraordinary lengths to which Attila went to secure justice - according to his own understanding of the word - in regard to 'booty'¹⁴⁰. Or was Walther to stand up for his own independent rights as a king and lineage-founder/continuer, and fight for his booty? When it actually comes to *fighting* Hagen, Walther obviously feels vassalic loyalty has gone too far: he is, no doubt, prepared to recognise that the mainspring behind the hostile Frankish reception of himself and his betrothed was Gunther's 'luckless' arrogance; he is, doubtless, prepared to accept that Hagen has done all in his power to prevent the events that have taken place, but has failed. Yet, that Hagen should actually *fight* Walther, is the balancing point between ties, and that is the theme of Walther's address at lines 1239 and following of the *Waltharius*. To have accepted Walther's offer at this point, Hagen would have undoubtedly had a breach with Gunther on his hands. However, by plunging on with the pre-ordained, at it were, course of action, Hagen involves each of the heroes in the demeaning and critical wounds they each receive from each other: *illic Guntharii regis pes, palma iacebat / Waltharii nec non tremulus Haganonis ocellus*¹⁴¹. Only then, when the damage has been done, do the remaining combatants come to some agreement. In the end it is the pact and the tie of friendship/comradeship that prevails: *his dictis pactum renovant iterato coactum...*¹⁴²: neither lordship nor vassalage prevail as such, only a kind of forced compromise rendered inevitable by the unresolvable balance of conflicting forces and emotions. In the *Waltharius* poet's mind, perhaps, the element that might, indeed *should* have been otherwise, was Gunther's 'luckless' arrogance. Yet that very element was an intrinsic part of the Germanic warrior/retinue-band/ treasure-oriented survival ethos; its unfortunate aspects could only be gradually expunged from society by the

¹³⁸ See W 602.

¹³⁹ *The History of the Franks* II.27 (trans L Thorpe, Penguin Books 1974, p.140).

¹⁴⁰ Bury 1958 I p.282.

¹⁴¹ W 1402-03.

¹⁴² W 1443 *pactum coactum*.

process of civilization, and in that process, the *Waltharius* was meant to play its part.

It should be clear by now that the poet of the *Waltharius* did not shrink from the problematising of values that is, perhaps, peculiarly associated with the epic form. His main interest, however, or the area in which he perhaps hoped to contribute most of novelty, concerned another type of loyalty, that based on the betrothal of a man and a woman. In this connection it should be pointed out that Hiltgunde occupies a rather special place in the poem. She is a *fida amica*, and a *sponsa*, and *cara*; she is the only companion who does not do the dirty on Walther, and her support is crucial to his success. She is the only person in the poem to whom he can *pandere cuncta...cordis mysteria*¹⁴³. It is, after all, Hiltgunde who provides Walther with the crucial treasure, through her own good offices. She is also Walther's truest vassal: she calls him *domne, senior*; his *iussi* are *placiti*, she is at one point *virii genibus curvata*, at another *obsequitur dictis virguncula clara iubentis*¹⁴⁴.

The stage has, in fact, been carefully set by our author to focus on Hiltgunde. An initial 21 lines are devoted to the Hunnic negotiations with the Franks¹⁴⁵, within which four lines mention Gunther¹⁴⁶ and two describe Hagen¹⁴⁷. Fifty lines describe the encounter between the Huns and King Heriricus, within which six and a half mention and describe Hiltgunde¹⁴⁸: we are told that she was an only daughter, of high birth capped by beauty, heiress to her father's hall and wealth¹⁴⁹. Here is a woman firmly embedded within the patriarchal, propertied feudal nexus¹⁵⁰. Hiltgunde was the *pulcherrima gemma parentum*, not the least because she was so entirely eligible on all counts and could be expected to secure for her parents a rich connection. We are reminded of the Germanic lawcodes' ferocious protection of the patriarchal right to dispose of daughters' bodies¹⁵¹. All of which leads to a puzzle: why would Heiric resign so precious a daughter to the Huns? The act underlines the absolute nature of patriarchal power and prerogative in Germanic society: Hiltgunde was valued property, whether to make an alliance with another house, or to ward off destruction¹⁵².

¹⁴³ W 247.

¹⁴⁴ W 1225.

¹⁴⁵ W 13-33.

¹⁴⁶ W 15-16, 29-30.

¹⁴⁷ W 27-28; see Learned 1970 pp.166-69.

¹⁴⁸ Learned 1970 pp.170-71.

¹⁴⁹ W 36-39.

¹⁵⁰ See Barker 1985.

¹⁵¹ Cf. *The Lombard Laws*, trans K F Drew (University of Pennsylvania Press 1973) pp.84-95 (#178-222). See Ennen 1989 p.27.

¹⁵² W 59-63.

The final Hunnic negotiations are conducted with Alpher¹⁵³, and only sixteen lines are allocated to them, within which a solitary phrase describes Walther¹⁵⁴: *primaevio flore nitentem*¹⁵⁵, a neutral phrase of undistinguished Virgilian context¹⁵⁶. Three lines¹⁵⁷, in fact, advance our understanding of the fate of Hiltgunde: she has been betrothed by pact to Walther¹⁵⁸. Such an arrangement (*desponsatio*) was normal and binding upon the parents of the girl: 'young men, on the other hand, could escape with relative ease from unwanted engagements'¹⁵⁹. Indeed, in one celebrated ninth-century case a marriage was annulled in an ecclesiastical court simply because the husband, a count, had had previous pre-marital intercourse with a relative of his wife. Naturally ninth-century churchmen were more than keen to tighten up the legal and procedural technicalities for the conduct and preservation of valid marriages¹⁶⁰: strict betrothal and due execution of the obligations it called for were essential.

The prominence given these betrothal arrangements by the *Waltharius* author is significant. Apart from the *Waltharius* itself, only the *Novalician Chronicle*¹⁶¹ and the Graz Middle High German fragment mention these arrangements¹⁶². The former is entirely derivative from the *Waltharius*¹⁶³, but the latter, perhaps, reflects 'doubtless the remains of a M.H.G. *Epic of Walther and Hiltgunde*'¹⁶⁴. In the *Waltharius* the betrothal arrangements¹⁶⁵ are broached for the first time since the exiles left their native land, during the episode in Attila's Hall.¹⁶⁶ Learned ##10-11 are mentioned in no other version of the Walther material, although in the thirteenth century Old Norse and Polish versions - independently related to the source for the *Waltharius* - it seems that Walther meets Hiltgunde at a feast held by Attila and persuades her by wooing to

¹⁵³ Learned 1970 pp.171-72.

¹⁵⁴ Learned 1970 pp.172-75, 188-95.

¹⁵⁵ W 79 and cf. *dilectum* 90.

¹⁵⁶ *Aeneid* VII 162.

¹⁵⁷ W 80-82.

¹⁵⁸ *jusiurandum...inter se dederant*.

¹⁵⁹ Wemple 1981 pp.32-33 and cf. pp.37, 93. Ennen 1989 pp.28ff, 33ff, 41-61. The endowed marriage, public and contractual, was the normal form of marriage among the early medieval Germans.

¹⁶⁰ Wemple 1981 p.83; Ennen 1989 p.59.

¹⁶¹ Learned 1970 pp.45, 132, Magoun/Smyser chs 3 and 5.

¹⁶² Learned 1970 pp.65-66, 133, 182-83, Magoun/Smyser ch.5. I owe thanks to Professors Clunies-Ross and Clifton-Everest of the University of Sydney for their kind assistance with the Norse and M.H.G. versions of the *Walther-saga*.

¹⁶³ Learned 1970 p.182.

¹⁶⁴ Learned 1970 p.182.

¹⁶⁵ #6 in Learned's summary of the main episodes in the surviving versions of the poem, Learned pp.131ff.

¹⁶⁶ Learned ##10-11, pp.139ff.

accompany him in his escape plans¹⁶⁷. In the Old Norse *Thidhreksaga*, Hiltgunde, confronted by Walther's announcement at a sumptuous banquet and war-dance held in Attila's court that he intends to escape and that she should accompany him, requests him not to make fun of her since she is not with her kinsfolk, but confesses that she has loved him since she first saw him at the age of four and will gladly fly with him. There is no mention of any betrothal and the reference to possible mockery of her by Walther suggests there has been no betrothal: Walther's proposal to return together is seen as a proposal of concubinage (against which Hiltgunde's kinsmen would naturally protest). Walther's reply, stressing their lineage, is intended to allay Hiltgunde's fears: they are both sufficiently noble and well-connected to marry in due time in the proper way; again this would be less meaningful if the couple had been already betrothed.

It seems likely that the early Germanic versions of the saga made Hiltgunde and Walther's relationship that of a simple love story: exiles meet at a Hun banquet, mutually deplore their lot and decide to escape (elope?) together. Alone the Graz fragment complicates this version of events, but interestingly. Hagen's departure from the Hunnic court is presented - in so far as the fragmentary relicts can be satisfactorily made out - as an amicable and public event; there seems to have been some suggestion that Walther should leave with Hagen, abandoning Hiltgunde so to speak. Hagen reminds Walther that this would be perfidious: (a) Hiltgunde is of such noble birth that in normal circumstances she would be 'an empress with a crown' (*mit krōne ein [k]eyserinne*); (b) she has waited so long already for Walther (implying a betrothal); (c) she *is* in fact betrothed to Walther: Hagen was there at the ceremony, but has to remind Walther of it; Walther is satisfactorily recalled to his senses and exclaims with remorse that he will henceforth be faithful to Hiltgunde¹⁶⁸.

There are some points of interest in this version of events. Walther had forgotten about, or chosen to ignore, the betrothal. Hiltgunde seems not to want to mention it openly (as if the insult is too deep for *her* to allude to it). Hagen assumes the role of upholder of marital law and order, an interesting reversal of his role in the *Nibelungenlied*. This latter poem, too, is a tale 'of spousal troth kept beyond the grave, of mutual faith between vassal and lord passionately maintained till death'¹⁶⁹, yet in it Hagen plays a major and an ultimately destructive role: he sets Siegfried up in Gunther's eyes and this leads to Siegfried's covert role in Gunther's wooing of Brunhilde, which leads to Siegfried's death - on Hagen's advice - which leads to Hagen's embattled display of vassalic loyalty to Gunther

¹⁶⁷ Learned pp.93ff, 144-46, 184-87, Magoun/Smyser ch.6.

¹⁶⁸ Carroll 1952 pp.141, 157-58.

¹⁶⁹ Clark 1973 p.206.

(when asked by Kriemhild for the whereabouts of the Nibelung treasure), which leads to his own death - at the hands of the outraged wife of Siegfried (Kriemhild). In the *Waltharius*, Hagen plays only the shadow of this role, although it is important for the plot's resolution. In the Graz fragment, Hagen's role is pivotal once again: in the *Waltharius* Hagen plays no such role.

A further curious point arising from the Graz fragment's version of events is this: how was the betrothal made in the presence of Hagen? Were Walther and Hagen childhood friends among the Franks or the Aquitainians? We are not told in any source¹⁷⁰. Finally, it seems that in the original form of the saga, as reflected in the Graz fragments, there must have been no mention of the betrothal earlier than the events to which Learned has assigned ##10 and 11, for, otherwise, why would Hagen have to vouch his own authority for it?

It is therefore possible that the betrothal element, mentioned for the first time in Attila's palace¹⁷¹, is a (later) variant of the love-story version¹⁷², effected because the latter gave offence to some audiences who may have worried because of the lack of legitimization for the alliance between the hero and the heroine. Is it too far-fetched to see in this the advance of (clerical) culture and civilization: in the older Germanic ethos it may have seemed perfectly natural for Walther to carry off Hiltgunde, take her with him, seize her or however else the act of abstracting her from Hunnic tutelage was described. Later sensibilities - whether Latinized or simply Germanic aristocratic/patriarchal - might have felt this procedure a little too disrespectful of Hiltgunde's nobility and parentage, a little too lacking in the social niceties that should surround successful marital alliances.

At any rate, the *Waltharius* author has further improved the respectability of the situation and makes the betrothal a central feature of his preliminary arrangements. His initial presentation of Hiltgunde and her context is fuller than that of either of her two male partners in exile and Hiltgunde remains central to the poet's concerns: more attention is given to her in the early days of the exile at the Hunnic court than to the two boys, who are dealt with collectively and somewhat perfunctorily: they display strength and intelligence leading to military command, as one might have expected of heroes. But Hiltgunde, *puella, virgo, is moribus eximius*

¹⁷⁰ That they were childhood friends seems clear from, e.g., W 1252 and 1254 *ludos pueriles...primos...annos*; among the Huns they were *adolescentes* (W 100).

¹⁷¹ Learned ##10-11.

¹⁷² See Westra 1980 p.53. Cf Carroll 1952: 158: the Polish version of the tale has a falling in love and an elopement; Norman 1969: 263; cf. also the context 'of the rape of a maiden, either with or without her consent' inherent in the early versions of the story, discussed by Norman 1969: 264.

operumque industria habundans,....provida, and autonomous: *nam quicquid voluit de rebus, fecit et actis*¹⁷³. Carefully arranging the saga events to suit his purpose, the *Waltharius* author has Hagen escape *alone* and *secretly*¹⁷⁴, following Gibicho's breach of the pacts formed initially between the westerners and the Huns. Strategically this permits a dialogue between Attila and his queen in which the latter advises Attila as to how he can keep Walther from doing what Hagen has done, and hence to keep up the flow of Hunnic *triumphos*¹⁷⁵. It is noteworthy that a woman here provides this key advice - even to the very words to use - and that the advice turns on the role a woman can play: Walther is to be married to a Hunnic noblewoman and hence tied to a Hunnic existence. The author thus keeps the betrothal and the woman-focus central to his version of the poem and it is perhaps significant that none of these developments are extant in the relicts of any other known version of the saga.

Walther's reply to Attila's execution of his wife's plan is also worth attention. The poet gives nothing away except to hint that Walther has other secret plans - presumably to escape¹⁷⁶. His direct speech reply is a masterpiece of clerical casuistry: marriage would impede a warrior's duty and hence it is in Attila's best interest to keep Walther a single warrior, on call all the time.

The poem moves swiftly to a first climax, weaving a tapestry found in the relicts of no other extant version and changing modes significantly: a passage rehearsing the characteristics of traditional heroic prowess and strewn with carnivalesque grotesqueries¹⁷⁷, builds Walther's military reputation to a height (*vir inclitus*¹⁷⁸); the poet then, with 'Alexandrine' skill, switches into a slow moving, delicate personal mode, which scholars have done well to note carefully¹⁷⁹. To Westra's analysis should be added certain observations drawing out more clearly the poet's purpose, which we may define as to stress the innate, irrefragable sanctity of the betrothal vow, with its inevitable consequences, and to build a portrait of Walther as *fortis*, but also as respectful in his approach to women.

Events compel the fulfilment of the betrothal vow - without Hagen's intervention - and the fulfilment expresses innate tendencies within the characters' make-up. The context is entirely believable: the action is slowed to nothing and behavioural details are dwelt upon carefully¹⁸⁰. The

¹⁷³ W 94, 110-115

¹⁷⁴ W 120 *nocte fugam...*

¹⁷⁵ W 12 and 108.

¹⁷⁶ W 143-44.

¹⁷⁷ W 185-207.

¹⁷⁸ W 217.

¹⁷⁹ For example, Westra 1980.

¹⁸⁰ For example W 219-20.

word *offendit*¹⁸¹ expresses much: the encounter with Hiltgunde is a chance one; it upsets Walther (who may not have thought to include Hiltgunde in his plans); it upsets Hiltgunde (who may have been offended that Walther has apparently made no mention of their betrothal since their arrival in the territories of the Huns, and who would undoubtedly, given her relationship with Attila's queen, have been consulted over Osprin's plan to marry Walther to a Hunnic noblewoman). All this is, at least, implied by the word *offendit*. The words *cui post amplexus atque oscula dulcia*¹⁸² stress Walther's capacity for fondness towards women and, since he would doubtless not have taken such liberties with a girl unrelated to him or to whom he was not betrothed, is probably intended to imply that Walther wishes to communicate to Hiltgunde his awareness of the betrothal obligations.

The next lines¹⁸³ ('Bring drink here quickly; I am gasping with exhaustion' / At once she filled a precious beaker with strong wine / And gave it to the man, who, as he took it, crossed / Himself, and pressed the maiden's hand with his...') move from traditional heroic male/female relations (attendant, attractive female brings refreshment to weary warrior), through a reminder of Christian duties (*signans*) to a renewal of the affection exemplified earlier¹⁸⁴, couched in a peculiarly feudal form, hinting at loyalty and ties between the two. At this point the relationship becomes complicated: in lines evocative of the more powerful passage from *Aeneid* IV in which Dido upbraids Aeneas for ingratitude and treachery¹⁸⁵- and the *Waltharius* author had Dido in mind¹⁸⁶ - Hiltgunde treats Walther as if he *were* Aeneas, planning to run out on her - in *Aeneid* IV literally, in Hiltgunde's mind for another (Hunnic) woman, in the reader's mind one *or* the other. The poet underlines Hiltgunde's concern by shifting from the military *vir* to a word that implies a domestic power/sexual relationship between the two: (*h*)*erilem* (*vultum*). The word, popular in Latin comedy, means (in this case) 'the (her) master's'. As with Dido - who had Aeneas' right hand¹⁸⁷ and had begun marital

181 W 221.

182 W 222.

183 W223-226, Kratz 1984 pp.13,15: "Ocius huc potum ferto, quia fessus anheho". / Illa mero tallum complevit mox pretiosum / porrexique viro, qui signans accipiebat / virgineamque manum propria constrinxit...'

184 *virgineamque manum propria constrinxit*: see W 222.

185 *Aeneid* IV 362-64. Dido had upbraided Aeneas for hoping *tacitus...mea decedere terra...nec te noster amor nec te data dextera quondam* (below n.179); to this Aeneas had made a feeble return and in the lines cited Dido assails him again for ingratitude and treachery.

186 See Westra (1980) p.54 on W 222, Kratz 1977 p.129.

187 *Aeneid* IV 307, 314. For other (Biblical/Christian) implications inherent in the references to the right hand found in the *Waltharius*, see Kratz 1977 pp.135-36.

procedures¹⁸⁸. Hiltgunde felt Walther was committing an act of betrayal. The slow-motion continues - *Walthariusque bibens vacuum vas porrigit olli*¹⁸⁹ - and the poet suddenly plays the ace: *ambo etenim norant de se sponsalia facta*. Both *knew* of the betrothal arrangements, *but* the one had not mentioned them, and perhaps had not *wanted* to do so, while the other, because of her sex, *could* not mention them.

Walther then challenges/makes his appeal to/provokes/excites¹⁹⁰ Hiltgunde and the phrase *caram puellam* confirms earlier hints¹⁹¹ and indicates the hero's intention *now* to execute his obligations: they have both been in exile for a long time; for how long are they to ignore *quid nostri forte parentes /inter se nostra de re facere futura* ? Walther's question, which softly attempts to push aside his male responsibility for the fact that the betrothal arrangements have *not* so far been mentioned, invites Hiltgunde to *share* responsibility for this fact. She does not respond as Walther expects: taking a cue, perhaps, from the extensive discussion of irony in Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory* ¹⁹², the author of the *Waltharius* makes Hiltgunde believe that Walther is here feigning: what he *really* means is 'we should not any longer mention this matter of betrothal; circumstances have rendered it null'. Hiltgunde's response - *quid lingua simulat quod ab imo pectore damnas...* ¹⁹³- is thus the direct equivalent of Virgil's *dissimulare etiam sperasti, perfide, tantum / posse nefas tacitusque mea decedere terra*¹⁹⁴. Walther (Aeneas) is to marry another (leave the land) and abandon Hiltgunde (Dido) 'as if it were a disgrace now to take up such a bride'¹⁹⁵ (presumably since a more respectable, Hunnic, bride has been offered). The poet has in fact deliberately left it vague whether Walther refused¹⁹⁶ the Hunnic bride because he planned to run away *and* take with him his betrothed, or just

¹⁸⁸ *Aeneid* IV 316.

¹⁸⁹ Bate's note p.56 line 229 cites Hatto 1965: p.75 ('But Brunhild did not wish to embrace her lord on the way and so their pleasures were deferred till a high festivity') and interprets W 221-43 as 'a joke concerning the differences between Germanic and Christian concepts of marriage'. W 229 is supposed to recall W 80-82: Walther wants to consummate the betrothal and suggests this (argues Bate) by giving back an empty goblet: no longer the *tallum* but *vas*, which, in medieval proverbs stands for the female vagina. This interpretation is supported neither by Niermeyer 1976 (his meaning #4 is, in fact, 'baptismal font'!) nor R.E.Latham *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List*, London, 1965 p.505, but I am informed by my colleague Professor Brian Taylor of the Germanic Studies Department, University of Sydney, that 'Falß' 'barrel, vat, keg', MHG spelling often 'vas', has in modern slang the meaning of 'vagina'.

¹⁹⁰ All of which are implied by the word *provocat*: W 230.

¹⁹¹ W 222.

¹⁹² *haec contraria dicendi quam quae intelligi velis ratio. Inst.Or.* 9.2.50, and cf. in general 9.2.44ff, citing *Aeneid* IV 381 (*Inst.* 9.2.48).

¹⁹³ W 237.

¹⁹⁴ *Aeneid* IV 305.

¹⁹⁵ W 239.

¹⁹⁶ W 167.

the former; nor are we told how much Hiltgunde knows or suspects of Walther's options and plans. However, in the event, trust is reestablished as certainly as it is betrayed in the case of Dido and Aeneas: Walther, *sapiens, heros magnanimus*¹⁹⁷, reveals that only Hiltgunde's close relationship to Ospirin placed a guard on his mouth: having tried and found good her loyalty he can reveal his intention to flee, *and* the fact that he could have done so long ago *si non Hiltgundem solam remanere dolerem*¹⁹⁸.

There are two curious aspects of the above sequence of events and emotions. First, the line from the *Waltharius* just cited *should* read something like 'were we not betrothed' (though *sola* could mean 'alone, unmarried'); secondly, the ensuing events reveal that even though Walther *could* have escaped alone, he could do so in a far more stylish manner with Hiltgunde's help¹⁹⁹. Indeed, Hiltgunde's pledge of loyalty is absolute²⁰⁰ and our final impression is that the girl has *not* wavered from *her* correct path in regard to her betrothal vows, whereas Walther, to whom the initiative in furthering the betrothal arrangements properly belonged by social convention, had let himself get carried away, and put his own fame, comfort and future slightly ahead of the strict alacrity with which he should have furthered the vows of betrothal once it became possible or desirable on other grounds to leave the Hunnic camp. Certainly at the end of the poem, Hiltgunde is the only principal actor who emerges unscathed.

The central emotional episode of the poem is therefore devoted to the reestablishment of trust between the two principals, a trust which has been ruptured by their separate experience in the Hun camp and the separate need/desire to 'get on' there. In passing up fame and good fortune among the Huns, Walther and Hiltgunde are deliberately turning the clock back and putting (a) hatred for a foreign land²⁰¹, (b) love of the fatherland, and (c) *quid nostri forte parentes/ inter se nostra de re fecere futura*²⁰² before success in the new world. The poet neatly distances his couple from the ill-fated Dido and Aeneas by having Walther purposely give the bridle of the horse carrying their wealth (and future happiness) to Hiltgunde's right hand²⁰³: Hiltgunde had obtained all this for them both and symbolically she shall retain control of it. It is now Attila and Ospirin

¹⁹⁷ W 240, 292.

¹⁹⁸ W 255. I find Bate's view of lines 221-43 inappropriate.

¹⁹⁹ W 263ff.

²⁰⁰ W 248-51, 256-59.

²⁰¹ W 340, 354, 401.

²⁰² W 232-33.

²⁰³ W 332 and cf. *Aeneid* IV 307, 314, 316. [Frances Muecke draws my attention to Monti's remarks (1981) on the 'right hand', but the book has not been available to me].

who are cast in the role of abandoned Dido²⁰⁴, as opposed to the equal comites, Hiltgunde and Walther, both on foot, leading their laden horse.

The Virgilian allusions in the *Waltharius* thus play an important role at the major points of the medieval poem. It is, in fact, essential to have in mind the 'meta-' or 'sub-' text of *Aeneid* IV in order to grasp the full meaning and gist of what is going on, for example, in the central episode just discussed. Betrayal is at the core of the matter, but it is never stated directly in the text. To have made explicit Walther's intention to abandon Hiltgunde would have irretrievably flawed the hero's character, reducing him henceforth to the role of a penitent. Aeneas was to survive his betrayal because it occurred in a context which was essentially a deviation from the path of his destiny: Walther's destiny, on the other hand, was to rediscover his loyalty to Hiltgunde, not to betray it. Hence the *Waltharius* poet could not reproduce or imitate the Virgilian oratory in *Aeneid* IV: he achieves his goal by the devices of parallelism (where his characters seem to play roles parallel to those of Aeneas and Dido) and inversion or reversion (where his characters seem to invert or revert the relationship that exists between Dido and Aeneas): thus Aeneas and Attila are both parallel but reverted in being called upon/wishing to renew griefs/triumphs: Attila, who is *impiger renovare* at the beginning of the poem (not grief-stricken as in the case of Aeneas who is being asked to recall unpleasant memories, but joyous in anticipation of pleasant victories²⁰⁵), has become *efferus ira* (i.e. grief-stricken²⁰⁶); Aeneas, on the other hand, passes in the course of book 4 from grief and anger to calm restoration of congruence between his actions and destiny: he thus *reverses* Attila's passage from joy to grief. Again, Attila and his Queen are both *united* (unlike Aeneas and Dido) and abandoned (like Dido); they are thus Dido-like (parallel, abandoned), in their un-Dido-likeness (their being united as a couple). The young couple too, instead of *breaking* their trysts like Dido and Aeneas (which would put them in a parallel relationship with Virgil's couple), rediscover and renew the trysts, thus proceeding along their destined path and subverting the parallelism²⁰⁷ that exists at one point²⁰⁸.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Strecker's note to W 397 (Strecker 1951 p. 40).

²⁰⁵ W 12.

²⁰⁶ W 380.

²⁰⁷ Walther = Aeneas vs. Hiltgunde = Dido (at, for example W 227, 237ff) becomes, as it were, Hiltgunde + Walter = Aeneas + Destiny, vs Attila [and Ospirin] = Dido. [Cf. Boyle to me 2/8/1991 'your remarks at this point need rethinking and rewriting. Note that the classic text for Aeneas' *ira* is his final act in the poem (12.946 and ff), thus negating your contention that 'Aeneas passes from grief and anger to calm restoration of congruence between his actions and destiny'. Indeed this final act of Aeneas is precisely not congruent with Anchises' description of his and Rome's destiny at 6.853...'. I have adjusted my text here to make clear that I am referring only to book 4 of the *Aeneid*].

²⁰⁸ W 227, 237ff.

This may sound overly complicated and I do not intend to imply that the *Waltharius* poet plotted every element in the pattern of the intertwined relationships just suggested, or that his text was intended to read the way Virgil's does. However, it is beyond dispute that the *Waltharius* poet knew the *Aeneid* and wished to recall it at various points to his reader's mind or auditor's ear: once *Aeneid* II/IV and the *Waltharius* are thus set in mind together, the coincidences and oppositions suggested above automatically multiply²⁰⁹. Unwittingly perhaps, the *Waltharius* poet has absorbed the fusion of the Callimachean and the heroic that marks the success of the *Aeneid*²¹⁰. Consequently, the registers of resonance between the two texts are *available* and *accessible*, whether precisely intended at each point in the *Waltharius* or not. They are also enriching. They hint of the perilous path of destiny versus the abyss of deviation, of the power of 'illicit' sex versus duty, of passion versus order, cultivation of the self versus duty towards society, state and family, of the perils of contrasting paths of duty (Walther's duty towards the Huns and to Hiltgunde), of the fragility of social conventions (the Hunnic world promotes Walther and Hiltgunde, but differently and in a contrary manner to what their western fortunes might/should have been, and the whole network of patronage and promotion can collapse in a moment; Walther, new friend of the Huns, emerges from the Hunnic camp their enemy and finds himself also an enemy in his homeland etc.). Life is a lottery; no one wins all (Aeneas loses Dido, Walther his right hand, Hiltgunde a 'whole' husband). The best one can do is to be aware of the choices and their consequences, of models and guidelines and of the dimensions of one's own character and of the characters and situations of other persons. Armed thus, the good person, with God on his/her side, will come out on top. If this is the message of the *Waltharius*, it is powerfully reinforced by the kaleidoscopic parallelisms and reversions set in motion by the juxtaposition of the medieval poem and its classical 'sub-text'.

Faithful to his purpose, the *Waltharius* poet sacramentalises the couple's journey to the Rhine: they are forty days in the wilderness and during the whole time Walther makes no assault upon Hiltgunde's chastity, despite the presumably numerous opportunities and their necessarily close cohabitation during the journey (*namque fugae toto se tempore virginis usu / continuit vir Waltharius laudabilis heros*)²¹¹. Why should the poet

²⁰⁹[See my note 19 to Boyle 1993 p.291-92, adding to 'statistics' p.292: 'in a poem of 900 [actually 1416] lines, Strecker has assembled in his edition well over 400 Virgilian reminiscences'].

²¹⁰ See the beginning of the present paper.

²¹¹ W 426-27: 'and that praiseworthy hero Walter, all the time / they fled, refrained from carnal use of Hiltdegund', Kratz 1984: 23 [adding the word 'carnal', which is not in the Latin]. Bate p.58 n. to W 341 sees a further concern for Hiltgunde's virginity in that line.

introduce such an idea? Because, in the first place, it would certainly have been assumed by his audience that the couple *would* have made love together, had the poet not specifically stated that they did *not*, and, secondly, the poet was keen to castigate such conduct: 'marriage in Carolingian times became a serious affair'²¹². Incest was progressively condemned²¹³ and marriage by way of *public* ceremony was increasingly insisted upon; concubinage was considered an inferior form of union and progressively frowned upon; trial marriages, with their unfortunate consequences for women, were condemned as concubinage, and episcopal condemnation of sexual promiscuity and pre-marital sex became more pronounced. Indeed, women who participated in 'trial' or 'informal' marriages, were prone to acquire - among ecclesiastics at least - the reputation of being sorceresses²¹⁴.

The *Waltharius* thus clearly reflects the ninth century, in which 'the continuance of aristocratic lineages could no longer be entrusted to a succession of wives or to simultaneous wives'²¹⁵. 'Marriage became exclusively a social institution "by which families of the same standing among the aristocracy perpetuated themselves". Thus, fewer women, only those whose unions were approved by their parents and in-laws and sealed with a *dos* provided by their husbands or husbands' kin, qualified to occupy the lofty position of wife'²¹⁶.

Contrary to the official ecclesiastical position announced in some Carolingian synods²¹⁷, Walther and Hiltgunde are inseparable equals on their 'liminal'²¹⁸ return journey, he *rex inclite...viro forti similis*, she *puella...incredibili formae decorata nitore...virguncula clara*, though their roles are different: she is to lead the horse, keep second place²¹⁹ and encourage her man in battle²²⁰, he is to bear and use arms for protection and hunting; he is to sleep and she to stand guard, singing herself awake²²¹, he is to be bold in the face of danger, she to be fearful²²². Yet, they stand side-by-side²²³, united by gentle caresses²²⁴, terms of affection

²¹² Wemple 1981 p. 89.

²¹³ See the pertinent comments of Herlihy (1990) pp.12-13.

²¹⁴ Wemple 1981 pp.76-96. See also Ennen 1989 pp.43-76.

²¹⁵ As in Merovingian times: Wemple 1981 pp.51-57, 95-96.

²¹⁶ Wemple 1981 p.96.

²¹⁷ E.g. Nantes 895 AD, Wemple 1981 pp.105-06 and cf. her conclusion on p.123.

²¹⁸ For the implications of the term 'liminal' (i.e., when the formal 'structures' that normally constrain and bind life's patterns are less in evidence) see Turner 1969, 1974a and 1974b, 1978.

²¹⁹ *hunc... assequitur calcemque terit*: cf. W 452-57, 1225.

²²⁰ See Ker 1957 pp.86-87.

²²¹ W 504, 1181.

²²² W 543, 892 *sonum...muliebrem*, 1211 *sexus enim fragilis animo trepidare coegit*.

²²³ W 542.

²²⁴ *attactu blando* W 506, *placido tactu* W 534.

and respect²²⁵ and frequent recalling of their betrothal²²⁶. The two face the world as equal partners. Outside the charmed *munt* offered by betrothal, Hiltgunde is but an object of carnal lust²²⁷, a chattel²²⁸.

Nevertheless, the poet reminds his audience from time to time of Walther's failings: pride verging upon vainglory, and, perhaps, the conventional *chanson de geste* view of women as domestic stalwarts or courtly ornaments to whom to boast on return from war²²⁹. It is also undeniable that the core of the poem concerns the traditional martial prowess of males: carnivalistic military exploits occupy a substantial section of the poem²³⁰, interspersed with suitable battle-field dialogue and a choric outburst of vatic/satiric nature from Hagen²³¹. An interlude²³² is inserted to build up momentum for a final crisis and serves two purposes: first, it underlines the 'fraternal' horror of the foreshadowed fight between Walther and Hagen - *solus enim Hagano fuerat suspectus et illud / oscillum regis subter complexibus actum*²³³ - and secondly it underlines Walther's chivalry towards women: treating Hiltgunde as a conversational partner²³⁴, allowing her to sleep²³⁵.

The interlude leads into the final triangular battle²³⁶ which serves to allocate to each of the three combatants their *insignia*, their 'punishments': *insignia quemque notabant*²³⁷, *insignia* which originate, as in the *Nibelungenlied*, in a dispute over treasure²³⁸. Gunther, the king, loses his leg, from the knee to the thigh. Walther, the hero, loses his right-hand. Hagen, the vassal, loses his right eye, his teeth and his lips. These 'injuries' are in many respects unique to the *Waltharius* version of the story²³⁹.

Walther is excessively conscious of shame/honour/pride²⁴⁰ and hence loses the means to that in which he principally glories: his sword

225 *mi cara* W 508, *mi senior* W 545, *fida amica* W 550.

226 W 571, 1174.

227 W 546-47.

228 W 602, 819.

229 W 561-65, 980: Cf. *The Song of Roland* (trans. R.Harrison, Mentor, 1970) lines 1720 and 1960-61, pp. 104, 111.

230 W 666-1061.

231 W 857ff.

232 W 1172-1280

233 W 1140-41; Kratz 1984 pp.55,57; cf. the epic battle between Hildebrand and Hadubrand (*Hildebrandslied* c.800 A.D., *The Penguin Book of German Verse*, ed. L. Forster, Penguin Books 1965 pp.3-6). Note too the fratricidal theme of Statius' *Thebaid* (1.1 *fraternas acies*....); on Statius' *Thebaid* and the *Waltharius* poet see Kratz 1977 p.128.

234 W 1174 - contrast W 104.

235 W 1184-85.

236 W 1280-1396.

237 W 1401.

238 W 1404.

239 Carroll 1953: 34; Kratz 1977: 135-36.

240 W 561-65, 980.

hand (*Waltharius manu fortis*). Nevertheless, he does keep his treasure, he does marry his betrothed and he does live happily ever after. Arguably, he comes off better than the other two. His superiority comes out most clearly, in fact, in his attitude towards women: contrast the neglect Hagen's nephew shows for his wife with Walther's detailed consideration for Hiltgunde²⁴¹.

Nevertheless, there is more to Walther's loss of a right hand, his spear hand²⁴², than meets the eye: recall the right hand that Aeneas gave to Dido, ultimately to betray her, remember the right hand which Aeneas invoked at the height of the battle in *Aeneid X*²⁴³ and before he hurled his spear at Mezentius, the right hand into which Walther entrusted the bridle²⁴⁴, the key to his future happiness: Walther has lost *his* right hand because he *did* contemplate betrayal²⁴⁵. Hiltgunde thus becomes the only truly loyal character in the poem.

Hagen too, has conceded too much to conventional notions of rank, honour and manhood²⁴⁶, breaching his *sponsam/ Walthario plerumque fidem*²⁴⁷. It is this, rather than the desertion of Walther involved in his escape from the Huns, that forms his major failing and results in his fateful combat with Walther. Yet Hagen is far superior to Gunther because he *realises* what he should do; he sees the faults of Gunther yet does not speak decisively against the role he is being asked to play because he is a client and Gunther is his lord²⁴⁸. He thus loses an eye because he *saw* but did not act accordingly: he does not need an *eye* if he pays no attention to what it shows him. Similarly, since he was prepared to *act* against *plighted* (pledged, *spoken*) troth (to Walther), what need has he of a properly functioning mouth? If you pay no attention to what is said in

²⁴¹ Cf. the contrast between *virginis usu* and *consortia carnis* at W 427 and 547. Hagen's nephew and his wife: W 872-74 (note the assumed automatic link between *marita* and *pueri ludicra* in the poet's mind).

²⁴²W 339.

²⁴³line 773.

²⁴⁴W332 *virgineae dextrae*.

²⁴⁵Cf. W 23 *dextras...dextris*, Kratz 1977 pp.135-36 for further allusions to the right hand, with Biblical overtones. [F.J.Tschan *The Chronicle of the Slavs by Helmold, priest of Bosau*, N.Y., [1935] 1966 p.110, (B.Schmeidler [ed.] *Helmolds Slavenchronik*, Hannover, 1937, I.29 p.57) records for the year 1080 A.D. a similar equation of a sinning and a punished right hand: 'do you see the wound on my right hand?...what our end is you see, since I have received this mortal wound in the hand with which I violated my oath'.

²⁴⁶ W 1080, 1085, 1095, 1109-10.

²⁴⁷ W 1090 and cf. 1113 (note how 1278 cancels out 1113); cf. too 1443 *pactum*.

²⁴⁸Hagen's speech at W 1067 is hardly valorous, and it derives from one who is *aversum* (W 1074) from his lord. See W 1094, 1098-99, 1109-10, 1113 for Hagen's avowal of Gunther's lordship - and of his own reputation. Also W 1141.

faith, and you are prepared to speak against it when the going is tough, what need is there of a mouth?²⁴⁹

Gunther has few virtues by modern standards, but he *is* king. This is his greatest virtue, his headship of the pyramid of lordship. This inspires all his actions and earns for him survival, but the worst of the injuries, the one most likely to weaken his image as a king and hence to injure his pride²⁵⁰: *consedere duo, nam tertius ille iacebat*, as the poet, somewhat wickedly, says.

Nevertheless, despite his preoccupation with warfare, and males, as the saga demanded, the poet of the *Waltharius* places Hiltgunde in the foreground of his story: she and her betrothal dominate both beginning and end of the tale, as well as its chief emotional episode. The two final episodes are in this regard telling. In the first²⁵¹ the male survivors engage in an incredible display of carnivalesque, grotesque humour: at once the *varios pugnae, strepitus ictusque tremendos*, the pomp and seriousness of

249 W 1393-95. [Kratz 1977 pp.134-36 and 1980 pp.49-56 has ably demonstrated the Biblical elements behind the *Waltharius* poet's reshaping of the heroic story of the punishments received by the heroes and the use of Virgilian and Prudentian imagery to suggest a link between Walther, Turnus and *Ira*. Bate's discussion pp.5ff suggests the mutilations are an innovation of this author 'in which the individual wounds are not chosen in the desire to be varied, but correspond to the words of Christ after his sermon on the *Beatitudes*, as reported in the *Gospels of Matthew and Mark*' (p.6). See too Bate p.66 n.to W 1400, where it is concluded that the relevant lines of the *Waltharius* were 'not written seriously' and that line 1403 *sic, sic armillas...* was a joke. Again, I am not prepared to view the *Waltharius* as a guide to medieval humour, and, in fact, the line in question is a pointed, and poignant, allusion to W 266 his *armillarum tantum da Pannoniarum*. Cf. Alfonsi p.6 on the punishments ('in fondo sono ideali'). A more promising approach to the comic, bathetic aspects of the punishments and their immediate aftermath is 'what Bakhtin has isolated and labelled as the techniques of debasement, and of grotesque realism (Bakhtin 1984: 370, 235 cited from the Cambridge 1968 edition by R.Levine, whose typescript paper 'Liudprand of Cremona: history and debasement in the tenth century' has been of much help to me here [I quote from p. 12], as has been his paper 'Prudentius' Romanus: the rhetorician as hero, martyr, satirist and saint' *Rhetorica* 9[1991]5ff). Certainly, the mutilation passages in the *Waltharius* intrude upon the closed, official, formal world of Germanic warrior-heroism, but there may lurk here a more fundamental aspect of the relationship between literature and society, intellectual and folk, than a simple urge to make fun of one formal, official, system, merely to replace it with another. For Mary Douglas 'the joke connects and disorganises. It attacks sense and hierarchy....if it devalues social structure, perhaps it celebrates something else instead. It could be saying something about the value of individuals as against the value of the social relations in which they are organised. Or it could be saying something about different levels of social structure' (Douglas 1995: 104). Jones 1959 pp.13-14 considers the post-combat banter to be a carry-over from the original Germanic lay/ballad (so Kratz 1980 p.57, but Kratz's allusions to Prudentius here are more satisfying). Useful further remarks will be found in Curtius 1963 pp.429ff. One must keep in mind the epic poet's ultimate purpose, 'to sum up a vision of the society or history or condition of man at his largest and best' (Giamatti p.7). Cf. also Conte pp.142 and 150: the 'epic code' 'allows a community to consolidate its historical experiences, conferring sense on them, until they become an exemplary system that is recognised as the community's new cultural text or scripture'. Conte's whole discussion here is illuminating].

²⁵⁰Katscher p.63; on *Walther's* pride see W 561-65. Yet (W 602) it is Gamalo *ore superbo* (W 591) who acts as the Siegfried of first pages of the *Nibelungenlied*, and Walther who fulfils the role in the *Waltharius* of the peace-seeking Gunther of those early pages of the *Nibelungenlied*!

²⁵¹ W 1424-46.

males locked in lofty struggle, collapses into drunken play: *inter pocula scurrili certamine ludunt* - all in the space of a line! For Hiltgunde, however, as the final episode makes clear, there is no play, only duty: 'even the champion of women, Hincmar of Rheims, while stressing equality of men and women before the law, referred to women as the weaker vessel and upheld the notion that a husband was the ruler of his wife'²⁵². So it could be said of the author of the *Waltharius*. Hiltgunde is timid, as a member of the *sexus fragilis* should be²⁵³; she obeys her lord²⁵⁴. It is Walther who 'commands'²⁵⁵; he is *sponsus ac senior* to the *virgo*²⁵⁶. The poet sets his seal of approval on this arrangement of roles in his epilogue: Hiltgunde, who, because of her sex, is exempt from the trials and failings of men²⁵⁷, and who is thus able to be the ritual celebrant at the final ceremonies marking each hero's punishment²⁵⁸, secures the proper and tranquil reward appropriate to nature, role and sacrifices: *publica Hiltgundi fecit sponsalia rite*²⁵⁹, followed by thirty years of happy, successful, married life, as, indeed, was foreshadowed early in the poem²⁶⁰. For Hiltgunde, there are *publica sponsalia* rather than *pactum*, and no carnivalesque ribaldry: just thirty years of 'happy married life', the very opposite of male mateship enshrined in the notion of *pactum* and *scurrili certamine*. Hiltgunde is thus a classic illustration of our recent textbook accounts of Carolingian attitudes towards women and marriage²⁶¹.

Thus there are no absolute heroes in the *Waltharius*, only a heroine who is matched to the best of a flawed lot - Walther, through whose experiences the trying situations and conflicting loyalties of the man's world are reconciled. Walther *is* the best of the heroes, the least *flawed*, but he *is* still flawed. The pattern of values and moral suasions in the poem as we have it confirms the view that the *Waltharius* is *not* simply an aristocratic vernacular epic in Latin, it is not simply *translated*. It has been carefully and symmetrically re-crafted by a skilled Latin speaking Christian cleric in imitation of Prudentius, Statius and Virgil; it has *not* been designed to ridicule pagan sin in a Christian manner, or to joke on

252 Wemple 1981 p.103.

253 W 1209, 1408.

254 W 249, 1225.

255 *sponsus praecepit eidem* W 1409.

256 W 1419-20.

257 W 1209, 1407.

258 W 1407ff.

259 W 1448.

260 W 39.

261 Wemple 1981 pp.105, 123, Brundage 1987 pp.173-75.

the misguided values of the characters²⁶² or to criticize the values associated with the epic tradition. It was no doubt written to entertain upper clergy, and through them, perhaps, the lay aristocracy, and to reduce the tendency or need for both groups to read or hear read pagan Latin literature, or, worse, bardic songs and epics in the vernacular. Yet it seems also to have been written as an exercise in the exploration and probing of public and private values in the aristocratic world of the day, whether secular or ecclesiastical, and to suggest that the role of no one in life is perfect or straightforward: each character is constrained by his/her social stereotype, whether that of king, female, betrothed, vassal, captive, recipient of trust, friend or similar. No one can, of course, escape the primary ethical system of the day, which stressed valour, shame, honour, material success. This ethical system is *not* criticized or satirized in the poem, but exposed for what it is. If there *is* a message in the poem, it is, first, the general desirability of girls like Hiltgunde (whose best fate [not a perfect one, for who would, in an ideal world, want a husband with no right hand?] is a man like Walther), and secondly, the need for warrior aristocrats to respect and treasure such girls. The poet makes clear that Walther's real treasure is Hiltgunde, not the baggage carried by his destrier. The Germanic saga has been carefully rewritten to suggest a new model of male/female relations, one based on male respect for females, on female subservience and fidelity from betrothal to death, on marital indissolubility, on continence before marriage.

Is it too far-fetched to connect this rewriting with the 'moral and social revolution' effected by church legislation in Carolingian times within the field of marriage and attitudes towards sexual relations²⁶³? Certainly the author of the *Waltharius* would have been duly scandalised by events such as those associated with king Lothair II and his wife Theutberga²⁶⁴, and just as certainly he would have seen eye to eye with archbishop Hincmar of Rheims²⁶⁵ who (like the poet) 'sought to harmonise Germanic tradition with Christian teaching'²⁶⁶. The traditional dedicatory preface of the *Waltharius*, whether it records an act of authorship or simply the gift

²⁶² Kratz 1984 p.xxiii, Kratz 1977 p.137. Kratz elsewhere (1980 pp.1-59) sees the *Waltharius*' poet's use of his sources as ironic, mocking and destructive, or designed at times to 'elicit laughter, not sympathy' (p.30). 'I would not shrink from calling [the *Waltharius*] a masterpiece of comic narrative...The mocking tone which pervades the work keeps one constantly amused' (p.165; Kratz applies the same interpretation here to Walter of Chatillon's *Alexandreis*). I find myself, however, less confident about what a tenth-century Frenchman or German would have found comic (humorous, ironic, sportive, entertaining). Cf. also Andersson 1976 pp.131-44].

²⁶³ Wemple 1981 pp.75-76; Gies 1989 pp.83ff; Duby 1983 pp.1-53.

²⁶⁴ Gies 1989 pp.88ff.

²⁶⁵ Gies 1989 pp.96ff.

²⁶⁶ Brundage 1987 p.136.

of another's book²⁶⁷, commends the book to a bishop who is to be entertained²⁶⁸, but also improved²⁶⁹. It was the bishop in the ninth century who, individually and in synod, bore the particular brunt of Carolingian and late Carolingian marital and sexual reform²⁷⁰. During the ninth century, 'clerics were thought to be definitive problem-solvers'²⁷¹ in the area of marriage, and this required the resolution of many thorny problems peculiar to the clerical condition. Effecting a balance between the Christian notion of the equality of the sexes²⁷² and the notion of woman as the gateway for Satan was the chief problem: celibacy, monogamy, marital restrictions were the chosen *formulae* to effect this²⁷³. Nevertheless, in searching themselves, the canons and the Bible for counsel, ninth-century bishops avoided the worst conclusions of Roman Christian misogyny: 'it is notable that in this era neither disgust at feminine corruption nor admiration of wifely subordination *per se* is known to have entered into the calculations of any ecclesiastical marital advisor. There was, it is true, some discussion of husbandly headship, but it seemed to imply responsibility rather than privilege. But women who were resisting actual or potential wrongdoing by their husbands and who consulted churchmen about it, found not lectures about their duty of womanly deference to their husbands' wills, but encouragement in their fights...the ninth-century tendency was to maneuver (the basic Christian tradition) in the direction of an egalitarian and reciprocal view of marriage' and to control the disgust 'churchmen who had themselves forsaken sexual life' felt ' at its continuation in others'²⁷⁴.

This spirit distinguishes ninth-century episcopal attitudes towards marriage and it is one of the major inspirations behind the *Waltharius* poet's 'rewriting' of his saga materials. The poet was, no doubt, fascinated by an element of the story of little concern to the original bards and singers, who must have chosen to celebrate, in the main, prowess, and, perhaps, the foundation of the house and lineage of the son of Alpher. For the Carolingian poet, on the other hand, the saga events have become a *Magic Flute*-like Trial, a testing of the devotion that should be inseparable from a betrothal, a tale of heroism no doubt, but one in which the warrior's closest companion, partner and, indeed, saviour, is woman. The

267 Kratz 1984 p.3

268 W 19. Chiri's view that the poem is *solely* a school exercise to divert the reader and display the author's poetic maturity, seems narrowly drawn (Chiri 1936 pp.102ff but cf. Wilson 1988 p.155 and n.47).

269 W 14 (?).

270 See Bishop 1985 pp.53ff.

271 Bishop 1985 p.59.

272 St.Paul *Galatians* 3.28, Bishop 1985 p.59.

273 Bishop 1985 pp.63ff, 75ff.

274 Bishop 1985 pp.83-84 and for an intellectual parallel see Nichols 1988 pp.50-54.

poet has thus effected a union between the heroic world of the freelance warrior leader and the merging seigneurial world of the post-Carolingian age, a world in which, as Georges Duby and others have amply shown, lineage, property, rank and title were increasingly protected by a more rigid aristocratic/ecclesiastical attitude towards marriage and a progressive reduction of the role of woman to that of obedient subordinate, but vital partner and legitimate/licensed *procreatrix*²⁷⁵. The heroic epic has thus been rewrought to create space for the *Romance* and to explore the tensions between convenient social arrangements protecting male privilege/ hegemony, and the chaos of external events threatening them²⁷⁶.

No more insightful example could be located, therefore, of the function of the epic in medieval Latin culture (the subject of the present paper) than the case of the *Waltharius*. Fed by such different streams as Germanic heroic (oral) song and the moving phenomenon of Virgilian epic, the written Latin epic of the medieval period maintained its hold as a major literary form for influencing and entertaining the leading writers and thinkers of medieval Europe. The latter's continued capacity to consume such epic fare derived from the vitality of the Latin-based educational curriculum of the earlier medieval period and the political hegemony of the clerical class. If the 'Virgilian revolution' in late Roman republican antiquity amounted to the renovation of heroic song in a cultivated, urban context, then there is no more eloquent testimony to its impact and success than the long line of Latin epic and epic-type writings that followed it, from the time of Lucan to that of the *Alexandreis* and beyond²⁷⁷. Of this long line, the *Waltharius* forms perhaps the clearest illustration of the use to which contemporaries put the epic genre, and it is no accident that to

²⁷⁵ The *Waldere* fragments record a sample of Hiltgunde's oratory of encouragement to Walther: the *Waltharius* has no monopoly, therefore, of the idea that Hiltgunde played a valuable role for Walther. The context of the *Waldere* fragment A, however, is one of narrowly military exploit (Gordon 1957 pp.65-66).

²⁷⁶ While it is true that in the *Waltharius* 'the Germanic epic kernel, the conflict involving Hagen, is no longer the central theme' (Katscher 1973: 115), nevertheless, to conclude that 'the Germanic material has been fundamentally transformed and given a Christian soul' (*ibid.*) is surely to miss the point: Walther *must* remain a Germanic warrior to act as a mostly recognisable model for the poet's lay aristocratic peers, *ethos germanico primitivo in veste romana* (Alfonso p.14). Chiri pp.111-12 has the same idea.

²⁷⁷ [For the fate of the Latin epic beyond the period covered in this paper and into the Renaissance see Boyle 1993 ch.14; D.Robin *Filelfo in Milan 1451-1477* Princeton 1991 ch.2; Di Cesare 1982. Perhaps the text best indicative of the full circle that the Latin epic has come since the invention of the form is the 1073 line hexametric panegyric (with a 36 line elegaic proem) of Guarino da Verona's most accomplished pupil, Janus Pannonius, to his master. In this masterpiece of assimilation and surpassing of classical modes and models, the heroes are neither Germanic nor ruling, but the author (Achilles - Aeacides) and his subject (Chiron): the (mini-?) epic has become the vehicle for immortalising something as intangible as a great teacher's method and charisma, (ed. *Iani Pannonii Poetarum sui seculi facile Principis in Hungaria Quinque Ecclesiarum olim Antistitis Poëmata, Traiecti ad Rhenum 1784* I pp.1-59)].

understand certain crucial episodes within the late Carolingian poem, the reader needs to have in mind the Virgilian antecedent, especially *Aeneid* books II and IV²⁷⁸.

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²⁷⁸See Claudio Leonardi 'Medioevo' *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, Roma, 1987, III pp.420-28, p.426: the encounter between the Germanic world and Vergil reaches a climax in the tenth century with the great poem the *Waltharius*, where the Germanic tradition, already embodied in various vernacular texts, merges with the Latin tradition, and it is still Virgil who presides over the operation: it is Aeneas, the living hero, who is in our memory when we read of Walther, his battles, his flight and the events that eventually brought down a shadow of sorrow over his life. [for the Boyle 1993 version of this paper (pp 285-90) a comparison was added between Hrotsvit's *Gesta Ottonis* and the *Waltharius*. To this discussion should now be added: Kratz D.M. 'The Nun's epic: Hroswitha on Christian Heroism' *Wege der Worte. Festschrift für Wolfgang Fleischhauer* ed D.C. Riechel, Köln-Wien 1978, p.132. J Ferrante 'Public postures and private maneuvers: roles medieval women play' in M. Erler and M. Kowaleski (eds) *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, Uni. of Georgia Pr., 1988 221-224; Zeydel 1945 (where the influence of the *Waltharius* on Hrotsvit is first discussed). Kratz compares the *Ruodlieb* with the *Gesta Ottonis* as 'unique among Latin writers of the early middle ages in their attempt to create a positive exemplar of Christian heroism' (Wilson 1987: 207). Kratz proposes (Wilson 1987: 202) that the purpose of such poems is to undermine the Germanic warrior ethos in favour of a refurbished, classically influenced Christian model of heroism. I think this kind of interpretation places the poems in a straight-jacket, and would prefer to see them as embodying a flexible and multi-faceted reworking of the Virgilian epic legacy.

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