

THE LITERARY FUNCTION OF DIETRICH VON BERN IN
MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN HEROIC EPIC AND AVENTIURE

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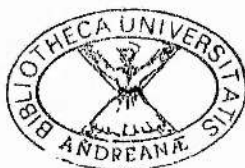
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M. Phil

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Abstract

Dietrich von Bern was a figure of great importance in the Middle Ages, both in literary and cultural terms, in the German speaking area and beyond. Unlike other important literary figures, however, such as the Arthurian or Carolingian heroes, the literary form of the works in which he is the central character show extreme divergence in terms of theme and material.

The "historical" epics show Dietrich in an essentially tragic role which has its origins in the narrative material of the Germanic heroic tradition. The *aventiuren*, on the other hand, show Dietrich pitted against a variety of unusual opponents, whose origins lie essentially in popular folk lore, and whose basic function is undoubtedly that of entertainment.

This dissertation examines these two traditions with the premise that each of the works within them can inform us as to the reception and significance of Dietrich as a literary and cultural symbol in the thirteenth century.

It is argued that the treatment of the "historical" tradition, as borne witness by the extant historical epics, demonstrates that this narrative tradition had lost much of its cultural and social relevance by the time these works were produced. The *aventiuren*, however, represent the literary adaptation of pre-existing traditional narrative elements, in a form which is much more immediately accessible to the thirteenth century public. It is further suggested that this narrative tradition was of sufficient independent strength not only to become the vehicle for resistance to incoming literary and social trends, but also to exert a certain influence over the development and reception of, in particular, later Middle High German Arthurian romance.

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Introduction

"Tragisch-heroische Problemdichtung und unbeschwert-fabulöse Unterhaltungsdichtung sind die extremen Möglichkeiten, zwischen denen sich die 'Heldendichtung' im 13. Jh. entfaltet."(1) This is the starting point of the difficulties which must be faced in any study of Middle High German heroic poetry. What are the relationships between works of such varying characters, yet somehow bound up in the same narrative sphere?

Certainly, as Rupp convincingly showed, the attempt to strip back the works which fall, for whatever reasons, into this category, to their "Germanic" core is in the end unproductive (2). This process leads inevitably to a position where, with the exception of the *Nibelungenlied* the overwhelmingly negative aesthetic judgments on these works cloud our ability to see them in their true literary and social context: "Man wertet diese Werke also nicht als Dichtungen an sich, als Dichtungen des 13. Jahrhunderts, sondern nach der Menge und Reinheit der in ihnen enthaltenen germanischen Vorstellungen."(3) Thus, Schneider's judgment on *DF* that "hier ein müßiger Kopf ein bestehendes älteres Handlungsschema sinnlos ausgeweitet hat"(4), has nothing to tell us about the role or function of that work in its contemporary context.

Far better then, if we are interested in these works as thirteenth century phenomena, rather than imperfect remnants of a past social culture, to follow Rupp in the aims of his study of *Ortnit*: "Der Vortrag versucht, einen literarischen Text, der

aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach im 13. Jahrhundert entstanden...ist, so zu verstehen, wie ihn ein Hörer im 13. Jh. beim Hören verstanden haben kann und wie ihn der, der für den vorgetragenen Text verantwortlich war, verstanden haben wollte."(5)

We may agree with Curschmann and Heinzle, that some of Rupp's conclusions regarding the nature of these works go too far (6), and this is a subject to which we shall return at some length later. Nevertheless, the starting point which Rupp takes opens up the whole area for discussion of these late heroic poems on their own terms, and to the production of work which contributes greatly to our understanding of the genre (7).

And yet there is still a lingering doubt that perhaps we too, like the older scholarship, should be trying to find in these texts the echoes of great and lost works, the obscured references to what Hugo Kuhn calls "eine Welt nicht nur aus Ehre, Ruhm und Rache, wie man sie oberflächlich zu sehen pflegt, sondern aus tieferer menschlicher Substanz"(8).

For when we refer to particular literary traditions, it is natural that we tend to think of the great works of those traditions. They are the embodiment of the greatness of the tradition itself. There is no doubt that for a thousand years the figure of Dietrich was an important cultural symbol for the Germanic peoples. We may well be justified in comparing his symbolic importance for these people to that of Arthur for the Celtic remnants in Britain.

Yet none of the extant German literary works of the Middle Ages which take Dietrich as their central figure can be remotely described as "great". Rather, they are evidence of a widespread and popular narrative tradition which impresses more by volume than by literary quality.

Its cultural importance, however, should not be underestimated. This study hopes to show that in the thirteenth century we see evidence of the adaptation of the Dietrich figure in a way which reflects the literary and social tastes of the society in which works about him were created, and that the influence of those works extended outwith the tradition itself. The study also hopes to illustrate the way in which the Dietrich tradition reflects the perception and nature of heroic literature in the later Middle Ages.

The study falls into two distinct parts. First, we examine the so-called "historical" Dietrich epics, namely *Dietrichs Flucht (DF)*, the *Rabenschlacht (Rschl)* and *Alpharts Tod (AT)*. Here, our main purpose is to examine the depiction of traditional narrative material in the thirteenth century, its deployment in these particular works, and the implications and results for the tradition of these processes.

The second section examines the Dietrich aventiuren, those works which see Dietrich pitted against a variety of unusual opponents: *Laurin (L)*, *Eckenlied (E)*, *Goldemar (G)*, *Sigenot (S)*, and *Virginal (V)*, taking into account the many different versions of

these texts. Here, we concentrate on establishing the basic nature of the tradition, in order then to be able to understand its role as a literary force and cultural expression.

It is hoped that close analysis of the works themselves will give us an insight into the changing function of the traditional figure of Dietrich in that society for whom he was still an important symbol in the thirteenth century. The starting point of the study, however, is to gain an insight into the nature of the relationship between individual work and the traditional material in which it is based. This is particularly important for the historical epics, whose subject matter is essentially the same, yet whose treatment of it is quite varied.

Notes

(1) W. Hoffmann: *Mittelhochdeutsche Heldendichtung*, Berlin 1974 p32.

(2) H. Rupp: " 'Heldendichtung' als Gattung der deutschen Literatur des 13. Jahrhunderts." In: *Das deutsche Versepos*, ed. W.J. Schröder (= Wege der Forschung CIX) Darmstadt 1969, p225-242. Reprinted from: *Volk, Sprache, Dichtung. Festgabe für Kurt Wagner* (= Beiträge zur deutschen Philologie 28), Gießen 1960, p225-242.

(3) As above, p228.

(4) H. Schneider: *Germanische Heldensage. 1. Band. Einleitung: Ursprung und Wesen der Heldensage. 1. Buch. Deutsche Heldensage.* Berlin and Leipzig 1928, p215.

(5) H. Rupp: "Der 'Ortnit' - Heldendichtung oder?" In: *Deutsche Heldenepik in Tirol. König Laurin und Dietrich von Bern in der Dichtung des Mittelalters.* ed E. Kühebacher, Bozen 1979, p231.

(6) M. Curschmann: *Spielmannsepik.* (Referate aus der DVjs) Stuttgart 1968, p109. J. Heinze: *Mittelhochdeutsche Dietrichepik. Untersuchungen zur Tradierungsweise, Überlieferungskritik und Gattungsgeschichte später Heldendichtung.* Munich 1978, p264.

(7) e.g. Curschmann: "Zu Struktur und Thematik des Buchs von Bern." In PBB 98 (Tüb 1976), p357-383. J-D. Müller: "Heroische Vorwelt, feudaladeliges Krisenbewußtsein und das Ende der Heldenepik. Zur Funktion des Buchs von Bern." In: *Adelsherrschaft und Literatur*, ed H. Wenzel, Bern 1980, p209-257. Heinze (above), W.Haug in Kühebacher (above), p116-134, etc.

(8) Hugo Kuhn: *Dichtung und Welt im Mittelalter.* Stuttgart 1959, p193.

Section One The Historical Epics

1.1 The integration of traditional material in the historical epics.

Any individual work taking as its core material a well known narrative tradition necessarily strikes up a particular relationship with that tradition. Each of the three historical epics is identifiable as an independently existing unit, fixed at a particular time and in a particular literary guise. Our first task is to attempt to understand the relationship between each of these three works and the Dietrich tradition, in other words to understand where the authors/redactors of these works saw themselves in relation to it. Various possibilities spring to mind: did they consider themselves as chroniclers, as manipulators, as re-asserters of the "alten maeren", as modernisers? We can only begin to answer these questions if first of all we understand the relationship between text and tradition.

Each of the three works deal with essentially very similar subject matter, namely the general conflict between Dietrich and Ermrich. It is clear that in dealing with this subject the works draw on a well known and widespread source tradition. Whether this source existed in the form of set works in a written form, or as less solid, less identifiable sources is unclear: what is clear is that all three works draw on what Curschmann terms "ein allgemeines Sagenbewußtsein von Dietrich"(1). The possible nature of this widespread knowledge of the Dietrich story is perhaps best encapsulated by two works which exist far apart geographically and temporally, but whose many areas of agreement

speak volumes for the diffusion of the tradition: the prologue to the *Straßburger Heldenbuch* (*SHb*), and the *Thidrekssaga* (*Ths*)(2).

As a particular example, we may take the important figure of Sibeche (Sifka in *Ths*), whose part in the events leading up to the conflict between Dietrich and Ermrich is, according to the tradition preserved in *SHb* and *Ths*, not inconsiderable. Indeed, his part in it is such that Hoffmann is led to assume the existence of a lost German poem devoted to Sibeche's role (3).

In *SHb*, Ermrich sends Sibeche away for twelve weeks, during which time Ermrich rapes Sibeche's wife. On his return, Sibeche learns of these events from his wife, and vows: "nu bin ich allewegen ein getruer frumer man gewesen / unnd ward mir der nam gebē der getruw Sibich. nu will ich werdē der ungetruw Sibich" (section 5a). Sibeche advises Ermrich to take the lands of his nephews, the Harlungen, whose guardian, "der getruw Eckart" (section 5b) is absent. The Harlungen are hanged. Eckehart, on discovering what has happened, rides to Dietrich, and together they attack Ermrich. Ermrich and Sibeche escape by foot, leaving Dietrich in possession of Ermrich's lands. From here the account follows that of *DF*.

Ths is the same in its description of the rape of Sifka's wife and Sifka's intended revenge. Here, Sifka is made responsible not only for the death of the Orlunge (Harlungen), but also arranges the death of Erminrikr's three sons. Eckehart's role is shared by two characters: Fritila, who dies with his wards, Egard and Aki, and Widga, whose absence Fritila laments, as he would

have protected the Orlunge, and who rides to Thidrek once he learns of events (p312-318).

In *Biterolf*, the names of the Harlungen are Fritele and Imbrecke (4765), and Ekehart is continually cited among the nobles associated with them (4771, 5228, 6387 etc). The names Fridla and Emerca appear in the OE *Widsith* (4), associated with the word *Herelingas*, and this would seem to imply a long tradition which is reflected in *Biterolf*. *Biterolf* also cites Sibeche as one of Ermrich's men (10995).

There is ample evidence, then, that Sibeche's role in the tradition surrounding the origin of the conflict between Dietrich and Ermrich was well understood and widely diffused. Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to examine the extent to which this role is integrated into the fabric of the three Middle High German "historical" epics, whose core material is that conflict.

DF displays an interesting ambivalence towards the character of Sibeche and the events with which he is connected in tradition. On the one hand, certain passages towards the end of the poem would seem to be consistent only with an integrated treatment of the Sibeche complex of material. As a general description, Sibeche is "der unstaete, / von dem die ungetriuwen raete / in die werlt sint bekomen" (9741-3). This would certainly square with the traditional role accorded to Sibeche, whose advice is of deliberately malicious intent. However, it hardly tallies with the assertion made earlier in the poem of Ermrich (and often repeated) that "untriuwe ist von im in diu rîch / leider

allerêrste bekomen" (3508-9).

A more concrete example is the particular relationship depicted between Ekehart and Ribstein. Ribstein is a character peculiar to *DF*, who takes on some of the functions usually ascribed to Sibeche. At no point in the poem apart from the following passage is Ribstein treated separately from Sibeche: when Ekehart chances upon him at the end of the third battle, Ribstein is told:

9820 "nû wirstû langer niht gespart,
 dû vil ungetriuwer man.
 dû gewunne mir mîn herren an,
 die getriuwen Harlungen."

Ekehart kills Ribstein, and ties him across his horse. This is, of course, a confrontation which we might expect between Sibeche and Ekehart, as a logical extension of Sibeche's traditional role. Indeed, *Rschl* has a parallel episode (863-866), in which it is Sibeche who suffers at Ekehart's hand. We shall return to this passage in due course.

Gillespie likens Ribstein to traitor figures from French epic, in particular Ripeu de Ribemont, whose role is similar (5). Certainly, the character does not seem to have a place in the German tradition. It also seems clear that the introduction of Ribstein serves to dilute the role of Sibeche in the events normally associated with him, in particular the deaths of the Harlungen. This view is strengthened when we examine the

treatment of the Harlungen material in *DF*.

Sibeche is given no specific involvement at all in the murder of the Harlungen: it is Ermrich alone who is held responsible for his nephews' fate (2548-2564). It is also worthy of note that Ekehart is not explicitly mentioned as the guardian of the Harlungen, or as the seeker of help from Dietrich. These two points are in many ways contradictory in terms of the unity of the poem as a whole: Sibeche's exclusion, on the one hand, paves the way for his later replacement in the confrontation with Ekehart; on the other hand, Ekehart's exclusion makes it all the more surprising that the confrontation between Ekehart and Ribstein should take place at all - for in terms of internal unity it is not motivated here, or at any other point in the poem.

What, in fact, begins to emerge is a complex conflict between the parameters of the individual work, and the demands of the tradition. It is hard to believe, for instance, that the author of *DF* was not aware of the traditional roles of both Sibeche and Ekehart in the Harlungen story, and yet there is evidence of a deliberate attempt to exclude those roles in the poem itself. We may have grounds to suspect a policy, the effect of which is to dilute the web of traditional material associated with Dietrich. And yet the intrusion of an episode (the confrontation between Ribstein and Ekehart), whose origin is only understandable by reference to that complex of material demonstrates that this policy, if such exists, is carried out with only limited efficiency.

We shall examine later how this highly adaptable approach to the work's raw traditional material fits into the poem as a whole. For the moment, however, it is interesting to compare the other historical epics' approach to the Sibeche complex.

The marginalisation of the role played by Sibeche is taken to an extreme in *Rschl*. Whereas in *DF* there was still a place for this figure as treacherous advisor to Ermrich, in *Rschl* this is not to be found. Indeed, the name Sibeche is mentioned in only one passage, a series of events which almost exactly parallel the encounter between Ribstein and Ekehart in *DF* (*Rschl* 863-866). Ekehart captures Sibeche, and binds him naked across his horse:

864,3 er sprach "nû muost dû hangen.
 nû wol mich dirre reise wart!
 nû sint gerochen mîne herren,
 nû kan mir leides nimmer niht gewerren."

This passage is also the only mention of Ekehart, and despite his words above, the Harlungen are never mentioned by name.

One could of course speculate as to the material relationship between *Rschl* and *DF*, but it is more important in this context to examine how the material is handled. In many ways, the appearance of this episode in *Rschl* is more surprising than *DF*,

through the use of a surrogate, Ribstein, here the contrast between the inclusion of the episode with the traditionally appropriate Sibeche, and the total omission of the broader complex surrounding him, is very striking.

We may perhaps suggest that while *DF*'s handling of traditional elements, at least in so far as the Sibeche figure is concerned, is consistent with a process of conscious editing and marginalisation, the approach adopted in *Rschl* is one of disregard. *DF* demonstrates a certain deference to the tradition by retaining Sibeche's role as treacherous counsellor, and thereby doubtless fulfilling some of the reader/audience's expectations. *Rschl*, on the other hand, functions without this reference. That the confrontation episode between Ekehart and Sibeche occurs at all, is an indication that neither internal unity, nor unity of traditional material and the individual work are of great concern.

This marginalisation of traditional elements does not, of course, imply an ignorance of the tradition either on the part of the author/redactor, or his audience. The evidence of *SHb* and *Ths* contradict this: indeed, it is hard to imagine that the contemporary public were not aware of exactly who Ekehart's "mîne herren" were, both their name and their fate, and very probably the circumstances of their demise. Additional evidence of this broader awareness may be taken from the treatment of the Sibeche complex in *AT*.

Sibeche's role is given some importance in *AT*. In reference to

the Harlungen story, Ekehart displays particular hatred of Sibeche, and Sibeche particular fear of Ekehart. We are told: "er (Ekehart) suochte den ungetriuwen, der den rât hete getân" (445,4), and when Sibeche sees Ekehart, he hides any distinguishing signs which might give away his identity. This characterisation of Sibeche as Ekehart's particular enemy, because of the nature of his advice, fits exactly the situation as known from tradition. The blame here attached to Sibeche is in *DF* attached to Ermrich, while in *Rschl* there is no specific mention at all.

The role assigned to Sibeche in the grand conflict between Ermrich and Dietrich is similarly enhanced by comparison. Dietrich identifies Sibeche as the main culprit:

71,1 "Sibeche der ungetriuwe hât über mich rât gegeben
 mîm veteren Ermenrîchen und wil mir an mîn leben.
 wolte got von himmel daz ich in solte bestân!
 so wurde ungetriuwer rât von Sibeche nimmermêre getân."

Sibeche is also held responsible for the disloyalty of Witege and Heime towards Dietrich:

41,2 er (Heime) hete sich erwegen,
 wan er sîne triuwe an hêrn Dietrich brach,
 er und sîn geselle Witege. von Sibeches raeten daz geschach.

In stark contrast to *DF* and *Rschl*, criticism of Ermrich's actions is remarkably light. In *DF*, Ermrich is repeatedly referred to as

"der ungetriuwe", and is characterised as such from the first mention:

2412 herre got, nû clage ich,
 daz er ie einen tac genas,
 wand er der ungetriuwist was,
 der ie von muoter was geborn.

In *AT*, it is Sibeche who is referred to as "der ungetriuwe" (eg 71,1 and 412,2), while Ermrich is termed simply "keiser" (413,4) and even "der edele keiser rîch" (50,1). By comparison with *DF* and to an even greater extent *Rschl*, the figure of Ermrich in *AT* is more complex, and to a large extent this is due to the integration of Sibeche along more traditional lines. Hoffman sees the role of Sibeche in *DF* as one which highlights Ermrich's faults, rather than explaining them (6). In *Rschl*, even this role for Sibeche is dispensed with - Ermrich's evil nature is taken for granted. In *AT*, however, by depicting Sibeche in much nearer his traditional role, some of the psychological complexity associated with Ermrich in *Ths* and *SHb* is retained. As we shall see later, this is an important element in the poem.

By taking the example of Sibeche, this introductory section hopes to have given a taste of the diversity of approach taken towards traditional source material in the three historical epics. In this regard, it seems we must have reservations about making too many assumptions about the prescriptive power of the available matrix of source material: what Haug calls the "Eigengewicht der Fabel" (7). With these reservations in mind, we may move on to

closer discussion of the individual works. The questions to be asked are: how did the individual author/redactors working in the tradition approach that tradition, and what consequences did these approaches have for the development of the tradition itself, and its reception? As a starting point, we may take the introductory sections of *DF*, the "Vorgeschichte", as a graphic illustration of one method of approach.

Notes

- (1) "Zu Struktur und Thematik..." p357
- (2) *Die Geschichte Thidreks von Bern*, ed. and translated F. Erichsen, Jena 1924 (=Sammlung Thule 22). *Anhang des Heldenbuches*, in A. von Keller, *Das Heldenbuch*, Stuttgart 1867, pp1-11.
- (3) *Mhd. Heldendichtung* p165
- (4) *Widsith* 112. Also G T Gillespie: *A catalogue of persons named in German heroic literature (700-1600) including named animals and ethnic names*. Oxford 1973, ps47 & 85.
- (5) Gillespie, as above p107.
- (6) *Mhd. Heldendichtung*, p165: "...die Gestalt des bösen Ratgebers entschuldigt und entlastet den König nicht, vielmehr verweist auf seine Bereitschaft, bösen Einflüsterungen nur

allzuwillig Gehör zu schenken, auf sein Wesen, in dem sich Schwäche und Bösheit verbinden."

(7) Haug in Kühebacher p117.

1.2 Dietrichs Flucht

1.2.1 Form and function of the Vorgeschichte.

The *Vorgeschichte* (1-2564) represents a significant proportion of the total volume of *DF*. Its importance lies in the fact that it is almost certainly not part of the traditional material available to the redactor of *DF*. It is only with the generation of Dietmar and Ermrich that the *Vorgeschichte* is tied into the events of the following Dietrich sections (2405 ff). In addition, the author of the *Vorgeschichte* integrates the well known Ortnit/Wolfdietrich complex into the history of Dietrich's predecessors. Wolfdietrich's son in *DF*, Hugdietrich, is also known in *Wolfdietrich* (D), where he is brought up by Herebrant, Hildebrant's father. Of the others, it is significant that by far the greatest attention is paid to Dietwart (1-1884), a figure which has no counterpart in any other work. We shall return to this in due course.

The integration of the Ortnit/Wolfdietrich complex into the *Vorgeschichte* corresponds with a process which may be observed in Middle High German heroic poetry in general. In Ortnit itself, we are told that Wolfdietrich is an ancestor of Dietrich of Bern (597,3). *E* describes how Dietrich wins Ortnit's armour from Ecke: Seburg recounts how the armour was passed by Wolfdietrich to his monastery from which Seburg bought it (L21-22). This story is repeated in the *Dresdner Heldenbuch* version of *Wolfdietrich* (K)(331ff). In *Ths*, Dietrich takes over the role of Wolfdietrich by killing the dragon responsible for Hertnid's

death (437-8). In the *Kaiserchronik*, "der alte Dietrich" is Dietrich of Bern's grandfather (13840 ff), and it is possible that this refers to Woldietrich (1).

The evidence suggests that stories such as those of Ortnit and Woldietrich are considered to belong to the same (semi-) fictional world as that of Dietrich. In *Ths*, motifs known from the Woldietrich stories are transferred into the adventures of other heroes, as we saw above. In view of this, the integration of these stories into the *Vorgeschichte* of *DF* would not have been an unusual step. It is important for this study, however, to examine how this integration occurs.

In both *Ortnit* and *DF*, Ortnit is advised by his vassals to take a wife (*DF*2118-2122;07). In both works, Ortnit immediately conforms to this advice, asking his advisors to recommend a suitable bride (*DF*2123-2132;08). Evidently, the author of the *Vorgeschichte* has a working knowledge of a version of the story similar to that available to us. The *Vorgeschichte* proceeds to describe Ortnit's *Brautwerbung* in a relatively edited, but accurate way (2133-2224). From the brevity with which the rest of the story, including the Woldietrich section, is described, it is clear that the author's main interest in the Ortnit story lies in the depiction of this *Brautwerbung*. The author refers to the knowledge of his audience regarding the circumstances of both Ortnit's death and Woldietrich's subsequent deeds to excuse him the trouble of describing them at length (2235ff;2279ff). Indeed, Woldietrich's exploits are only of interest in that as a consequence Woldietrich marries Ortnit's widow.

As far as the Brautwerbung process itself is concerned, the descriptions in *DF* and *Ortnit* are very similar. The action undertaken by the king is instigated by his advisors, and is seen not only as a personal action, but as action for the good of the state. In *DF*, the taking of a bride is for the common good: "edeler künig, des ist uns nôt"(2122), while in *Ortnit* the future wife's role as queen is also stressed (7,4). Thus, we may see that the author of the *Vorgeschichte* deliberately emphasises particular aspects of the *Ortnit* story which are available to him, namely Brautwerbung as an aspect of the king's responsibilities towards his vassals, and the dependence of the king upon the advice of his vassals.

In many ways, however, this depiction of the *Ortnit* story follows a model set up by the long sections devoted to Dietwart. Even in the most general way, the comparison with *Ortnit* is obvious: once he has grown of age, Dietwart asks the advice of his vassals with regard to a wife (785ff). He is told of the perfect match, Minne(!), whose father's kingdom is over the sea (865-925). Accepting the advice, Dietwart embarks on the familiar model of gaining his bride after overcoming many dangers (1521-1869).

The same basic narrative elements are used by the author of the *Vorgeschichte* to construct the story of Dietwart as occur not only in *Ortnit*, but in other Middle High German heroic works. In *DF*, however, this narrative model is employed without the complicating factors often associated with other works. In *Ortnit*, for example, the unwillingness of the bride's father to

accept the marriage is crucial to the later tragedy of the poem. Similarly, the circumstances of Gunther's "winning" of Brunhild play an important role in future events in the *Nibelungenlied*. In Dietwart's case, there are no complicating factors: with the completion of the bridal quest the author's interest in the manufactured figure of Dietwart is exhausted, the rest of his life being given remarkably short treatment (1870ff).

In other words, the author of these sections uses the narrative model of *Brautwerbung*, without endowing it with any narrative significance in the context of the work as a whole. Its significance is solely to stand as an example of approved behaviour. In much the same way, the passages devoted to Ortnit are a distillation from the whole, in which those aspects of the story not relevant to the author's editorial intentions are passed over, and any potential complications arising out of the original avoided.

Dietwart's bridal quest is, then, an employment of a narrative model available to the author in heroic tradition. The *Schwertleite* which Dietwart undergoes has similar parallels in Middle High German literature in general, and in particular with that of Sifrit in the *Nibelungenlied*. Thus, the Dietwart section is constructed predominantly from two major elements available to the author. Both represent the "socialisation" of the young king, and both are seen as actions for the good of the state (in order to take up his kingly responsibilities, Dietwart is advised: "Werdet ritter schiere"(329)).

For Dietwart's son, Sigehar, the scheme is similar, although here his marriage to Amelgart precedes his Schwertleite (1935ff). His heir is Ortnit, while the succeeding generations follow the same narrative model, until with the birth of Dietmar, Diether and Ermrich, we break into the fictional present of the Dietrich sections.

It is clear that the *Vorgeschichte* is built up on familiar and widely distributed narrative models, which appear in heroic material as well as in the wider body of Middle High German literature. As we have said before, these appear almost as abstracts distilled from the wider literary knowledge of the *Vorgeschichte*'s author. It is also significant that these narrative models appear not to be a common element in the specific Dietrich tradition to which they are here attached : we have, for example, no instance of Dietrich's Schwertleite, or of a Brautwerbung of the type depicted in the *Vorgeschichte* (although see discussion on Herrat below). As we shall see, the integration of these models into *DF* cannot be explained by reference to the Dietrich sections of the work alone, but stems from a distinct thematic concern which is developed in the *Vorgeschichte* itself.

1.2.2 Marriage and kingship in the *Vorgeschichte*.

Dietwart's choice of bride is dependent on the advice of his vassals. The premise for all action undertaken by the king is that it is action on behalf of the state, in the common good. The author of the *Vorgeschichte* takes an explicit interest in

marriage as the institution upon which society is founded,
 comparing the old ways with the modern world:

162 dô was ein site alsô getân:
 er waere junc oder alt
 oder swie er waere gestalt,
 arm oder rîche,
 man liez in sicherlîche
 nimmer gewinnen wîbes teil
 noch versuochen solh meil,
 daz minne waere genant,
 der site was dô übr alliu lant.

This apparent criticism of modern practices in the field of
 courtship is made more specific:

179 sît der site ist hin getân,
 daz man die vrouwen und die man
 ê ir tage ze einander gît,
 des ist diu werlt bî dirre zît
 an manegen sachen gar ze kranc,
 daz er haben muoz undanc
 der uns den site brâhte
 und sîn von êrste gedâhte.

It would be interesting to speculate as to who was in the
 author's mind in these last two lines. It is not entirely
 impossible that this is a literary reference as much as a social
 comment. Certainly, the fact that the author uses a literary

medium to state his own case speaks volumes for the power he attaches to it.

In the ideal past represented by Dietwart then, marriage is a socio-political contract between mature and responsible adults (at thirty years of age Dietwart is described as only "vil nâch ze man" (161)). The modern practice of, as the author sees it, laissez-faire indulgences towards love and courtship is nothing but destructive.

Nevertheless, *minne* is given its place in the courtly world of the *Vorgeshichte*, as a code of behaviour towards the opposite sex:

254 swie unkunt im waere
 die vrouwen und diu minne
 doch het er in sîm sinne
 der minne also guoten vlîz
 daz si im nie itewîz
 vür breiten kunde.

Minne as a destructive force is of course most famously portrayed in the story of Tristan and Isolt. However, *minne* as a stylized form of 'civilised' behaviour is embodied above all in the figure of Arthur, with whom Dietwart is explicitly compared (106, 131). The comparison with Arthur is significant, for while he may embody these ideals of behaviour, he is not typically the central figure of the Arthurian romance, and hence not subject to the traumas associated with the courtly hero's social and romantic

development. He is thus safe to be deployed as an ideal not only of courtly behaviour, but also of responsible kingship in a courtly context.

In this way, then, the author of the *Vorgeschichte* appears to attempt to reassert models of behaviour from the past as he sees it, while dressing them up in a fashionable costume. The particular emphasis on the role of marriage, however, quickly gives way to a more general complaint.

This complaint centres on the role of the contemporary princes, and in particular their behaviour towards the lesser noble and chivalric classes:

238 ir herrn, ir habt nû kleinen trôst,
graven, vrîen, dienstman,
sît man iu niht dienstes lônem kan.

The princes do not follow the old ideals of behaviour:

217 si enruochent waz die alten
tugent haben behalten,
si tuont niwan den niuwen site.

The princes have disregarded the guidance of the "alten maere" (244), no longer reward their vassals for service rendered, and their courts are no longer places of honour (206-7). The contrast with the relationship between Dietwart and his vassals is obviously there to be made:

80 si wârn im dienstes undertân
 âne valsches riuwe.
 daz macht sîn gûetlich triuwe
 die er in ze allen zîten bôt.
 er lie si seltn in keiner nôt:
 er hoeht in williclîch ir muot,
 er gap in sô rîches guot.

True kingship is thus a recognition of the mutual ties that exist between king and vassal, the upholding of the relationship of mutual service, in which it is above all the king's responsibility to act for the greater good. The modern princes have broken this relationship, acting only for their own personal benefit, with scant regard to their wider social responsibilities. Primary symbol for this message is the depiction of marriage in the *Vorgeschichte*, where the old model of marriage as a socio-politically beneficial act is contrasted with the perceived social destructiveness of *minne*. For this reason, the central narrative and structural device of the *Vorgeschichte*, repeated throughout, is the *Brautwerbung*. As with the way in which the *Ortnit* complex is handled, as examined earlier, it is an excellent example of thematic concerns dictating both the form and content of the narrative material (2).

1.2.3 Dietrich's marriage to Herrat.

At this point, it is useful to examine how the *Vorgeschichte*'s

central motif of marriage as an aspect of kingship is carried through into the Dietrich sections. The *Nibelungenlied* demonstrates that Herrat as Dietrich's wife must have been well known in the tradition surrounding Dietrich (1380-1). In *DF*, however, the marriage takes place in a very particular political situation.

Etzel considers that the time is right for Dietrich to take a wife: "ez ist vol wahren iuwer lîp:/ir soldet werben umb ein wîp"(7513-4). Not only that, but such a move is considered advantageous on a more general level: "des bedorfte vil wol iuwer lant / und ouch die iuren allesant."(7515-6). Dietrich is unwilling at first, but Helche explains the situation a little more clearly:

7536 "vogt von Bern, dîn ungemach
 des mac werden guot rât.
 Etzel ditz sus niht gesprochen hât.
 ob dû dir wil guotes gûnnen,
 sô nim ûz mînem künne
 ein wîp, künic rîche."

The situation of the *Vorgeschichte* - the ideal world - has changed. Unlike Dietwart, Dietrich is in a highly insecure position, for his conflict with Ermrich requires the support of Etzel. The concept of marriage as a king's duty is given sharper focus: a refusal to marry the bride selected for him would entail the loss of support.

When placed in this position, Dietrich consults with his advisors, a process which we have already recognised as vital to the concept of kingship as represented in the *Vorgeschichte*. Typically, it is Rudiger and Hildebrant who supply the expected advice:

7610 "ez enkan anders niht ergân,
 sult ir betwingen iuwer lant,
 (...)

7614 daz muoz mit Etzeln geschehen.
 nemt ir vrouwen Herrâten niht,
 nimmermêr iu dienst geschiht."

Dietrich reluctantly accepts this advice.

The connection between the model set up in the *Vorgeschichte* and in this section of Dietrich's story is inescapable. What occurs in the idealised world of Dietwart is transferred to the fictional reality of political necessity in Dietrich's world. The relationship which is created between *Vorgeschichte* and Dietrich is one almost of the application of theory to reality. In that reality, *minne* has no part to play: there is no question of personal choice in Dietrich's marriage.

We can see through this example that the *Vorgeschichte* is given at least a measure of integration with the events in the main body of text. However, we may speculate as to the direction of dependence of these two parts. More precisely: are the choice of narrative models and the depiction of kingship in the

Vorgeschichte dependent on models and themes inherent in the traditional material of the Dietrich story, or is that traditional material manipulated with reference to the particular thematic concerns of the author of the Vorgeschichte? We have already stated that the Brautwerbung model employed in the Vorgeschichte is not, as far as we know, typical of the Dietrich material. *Rschl* contains a useful point of comparison, in that it also portrays the marriage of Dietrich to Herrat.

Fundamentally, *Rschl* portrays Dietrich's marriage as a personal event offering comfort to the grieving prince. When Helche announces to Dietrich the news of the proposal that he should marry Herrat, this is done in a tone of personal congratulation: "nu vröut iuch, unverzagter recke maere!"(34,6). There is no hint of the near political blackmail of *DF*: indeed, Rudiger assures Dietrich of Hunnish support before marriage is even mentioned (27), in this context a gesture of personal as much as political support. This is also true of Etzel's assurances of continuing support (37ff). Furthermore, we are given a greatly expanded description of Dietrich's marriage, which is equally couched in terms of personal and emotional happiness: "zwischen in was lieplichiu minne"(120,6); "si wâren ze ende komen gar ir sorgen"(122,6).

Both versions of Dietrich's marriage to Herrat make use of exactly the same narrative elements: Helche's nomination of a suitable bride, Etzel's offer of men and money in Dietrich's cause etc. However, the significance given to the same event in each work is markedly different. In *DF*, the marriage is a

political event in keeping with the essentially political nature of marriage as depicted in the *Vorgeschichte*; in *Rschl*, the marriage is an event of personal significance. As we shall see in due course, this difference in characterisation is entirely in keeping with the nature of the two works.

We may reasonably suggest, then, that the depiction of Dietrich's marriage in *DF* is heavily influenced by the programme set out in the *Vorgeschichte*. *Rschl*'s version demonstrates that it is only one possible depiction, thereby further demonstrating the pliable nature of the raw traditional material available to the author/redactor. A detailed examination of *DF* will reveal the extent to which this process of adaptation of the traditional raw material is typical in the work as a whole. More importantly, perhaps, it may show us what implications such a process may have for the transmission of that material, in terms of completeness, complexity and coherence (3). First, however, we will examine the way in which the author/redactor makes his presence felt explicitly in the Dietrich sections.

1.2.4 Heinrich's Invective

We have already examined the criticism of contemporary princes made in the *Vorgeschichte*, and the way in which the narrative model of *Brautwerbung* is employed to exemplify the author's concerns. In the famous passage of invective claimed by the otherwise unknown Heinrich, these themes are further addressed and specified. In particular, the economic basis of the relationship between feudal lord and vassal is central to the complaint (4). The ideal is first established:

7949 Den hōhen vürsten daz wol stât
 daz man die liute liep hât
 mit helpe und mit guote
 und mit willigem muote.
 sō sint ouch in die liute holt
 und dienen willeclîch den solt.
 swer urluigen wil und strîten sol,
 der bedarf der liute gunst wol.

By contrast, contemporary practice is characterised as "betwungen dienst" (7965):

7966 ez ist nû meist der werlde clage,
 daz si sō vil dienen âne ir danc
 und daz diu helpe ist sō cranc,
 die man in dar umbe tuot.

Heinrich then expands on the idea of "betwungen dienst", with

specific examples: nobles are expected to appear at court, in all their finery, with attendant expense (7982-89); on other occasions they are required to provide fighting men (7990-95). In the absence of adequate material recompense, the result is the impoverishment of the lesser nobility (7996-7998). A third aspect, and of particular interest to historians, is one method by which "betwungen dienst" is enforced:

8009 man setzet die geste
 ûf iuwerbeveste
 und müezet ir dar zuo sehen.
 swaz iu des immer mac geschehen,
 dar umb türret ir niht sprechen wort
 od ir sît alle mort.

Quite apart from giving us useful information on the kind of audience which the author/redactor of this work expected to receive the poem - one assumes not the great centralised courts! - these passages are, as we shall see, crucial to an understanding of *DF* as a whole.

They depict a society in the throes of fundamental change, even in a state where irreversible change has already taken place. The feudal system of mutual dependency between lord and vassal has been replaced, in the eyes of the author, by a system based on constraint, and operating in the interest of a small minority of the greater nobility. The author, however, professes his fundamental pessimism about the situation (8015-9), while all there is to be done is to damn the princes to hell (7970-5).

The link between this passage and the passages of complaint in the *Vorgeschichte* is very strong, with a virtual duplication of theme, even down to a fundamental pessimism about the possibility of altering the situation (see, for example, 241ff). This link, then, of explicit complaint is strong between the two sections of the work. The extent to which the two sections are linked in terms of their representation of events and characters in the Dietrich sections is of great significance for the work as a whole.

1.2.5 The depiction of Dietrich's story.

Our examination earlier of the depiction in the historical epics of the figure of Sibeche was designed to show that the availability of traditional material to a redactor working in that tradition does not necessarily imply the uniform integration of that material in the individual poem. In the early parts of *DF*, the redactor also departs quite markedly in the representation of the prevailing political situation from what is commonly the case in other works in the tradition.

In *DF*, Ermrich is the ruler of Gâlaber, Wernhers marke and Püllen, which he receives from his father Amelunc (2430f). Brîsach and Beiern are given to Diether, the father of the Harlungen who are hanged by Ermrich. Dietmar receives "Lamparten allez gar/Roemisch erde und Isterrîch"(2440f), as well as Frîûl and the Intal. In addition, he builds Bern (2497). Dietrich is

thus called "kūnec von Roemisch lant" (3140), while Ermrich is equally given the title "kūnic" (2457). Their status is thus equal as rulers. The situation in *Ths* is somewhat different. Thetmar receives the lands of Jarl Elsung, including Bern, from his father. Ermanrik, on the other hand, is the oldest son and receives the whole of his father's kingdom, taking Rome as his residence. While Thetmar and consequently Thidrek are kings in their own right (ps 84 and 193), there is little doubt that Ermanrik's kingdom is the greater. Sifka, in inciting Ermanrik against Thidrek, plays on this indication of a hierarchical relationship (p319). In *AT*, the situation is made fairly clear. Here, Ermrich is both "von Lamparten der edel keiser rîch" (53,1), and "der keiser von Rôme"; Dietrich, on the other hand, is generally called "der vogt von Berne" (23,1), and is addressed as "vürste rîche" by Heime (24,1). Furthermore, Ermrich sees himself most definitely as Dietrich's feudal overlord:

64,4 "er muoz mir diu lant rûmen, wan mir dienet Roemisch rîch.
 Ich trîbe ez mit im umbe dem helde wil ich niht flên,
 ern gebe mir dan Berne und enphâz von mir ze lên.

In *SHb*, Ermrich is also called "keiser" (5a), while Dietrich is simply referred to as "der berner". This would seem to be more in line with the relationship depicted in *AT* than that of *DF*.

The relationship between Dietrich and Ermrich in the poems is an important starting point for understanding the depiction of their confrontation. It is evident from the above that *DF* seems to be out of step with other poems and works in the tradition. By

presenting Dietrich as "künic von Roemisch lant", ruling from Bern, Ermrich's role as Dietrich's feudal superior is removed. With it is removed any claim over Dietrich's lands which might have had justification according to the tradition which is reflected in *AT*. In *Ths*, Sifka presents Thidrek as a threat to Ermanrik's power and prestige, claiming that Thidrek has increased his kingdom at Ermanrik's expense (p319). In *DF*, however, Dietrich is not depicted as a threat to Ermrich's feudal superiority - after all, they are of equal status - but Sibeche appeals to Ermrich's inherent lust for power and riches:

2576 "sô hâstû quot und êre
 mê danne dehein dîn genôz.
 sô wirt dîn gewalt grôz,
 daz sich in den rîchen
 nieman getar ze dir gelîchen.

This is the fundamental motivation of Ermrich in *DF*.

In comparison with other works in the tradition, this motivation lacks depth. In *Ths*, it is made clear that Sifka's advice to Ermanrik is designed to cause Ermanrik harm - it is an act of revenge (p313). Hildebrand himself also recognises that Sifka is chiefly responsible for Ermanrik's actions (p415), while Sifka's role as usurper of the crown after Ermanrik's death demonstrates that the author, and no doubt the wider tradition, gives him a significant influence over events. *SHb*, as we have seen, also knows the story of Sibeche's revenge, and equally shows Ermrich as the victim (although to some extent deserving) of his advice,

as well as the persecutor of Dietrich. Once again, *AT* seems to preserve some of this, when it is Sibeche who is identified as the chief persecutor by Dietrich:

71,1 "Sibeche der ungetriuwe hât über mich rât gegeben
 mîm vetern Ermenrîchen und wil mir an mîn leben.
 wolte got von himele, daz ich in solte bestân!
 sô wurde ungetriuwer rât von Sibeche nimmermêre getân."

In particular, Sibeche/Sifka's role in the death of the Harlungen is emphasized in both *Ths* and *SHb*. This is not referred to at all in *DF* (except, as we have seen, implicitly through Ekehart's actions). Instead, the death of the Harlungen is brought into the theme of Ermrich's desire for power and wealth. This may be seen when Dietrich explains how Ermrich is able to raise his armies:

7854 "swaz hordes zwêne kûnege rîch
 heten von golde und von gesteine,
 daz hât er alters eine:
 er hât der Harlunge golt,
 dâ von gît er noch lange solt."

We cannot say for certain, of course, that the more complex situation as represented by *Ths* or *SHb* was material available to the redactor of *DF*; although Ekehart's particular hostility towards Ribstein, Sibeche's alter ego, would seem to be somewhat gratuitous otherwise. In a sense, this is not important. What is important is that in *DF* the conflict between Ermrich and

Dietrich is seen to be based on Ermrich's lust for power, without significant secondary motivation. This represents a particular interpretation of the traditional material available to the author, one which, as far as we can see, is not inherent in the material itself. In the context of that reinterpretation of the traditional material, it is useful to examine more closely the depiction of Ermrich in *DF*.

The first mention of Ermrich is accompanied by a lament:

2412 herre got, nû clage ich,
 daz er ie einen tac genas,
 wand er der ungetriuwist was,
 der ie von muoter was geborn.
 vom im wart manic man verlorn.

Ermrich's character is defined from the very beginning. An early example of his untriuwe is his treatment of his son, Friderîch, whom he treacherously sends "hin ze der Wilzen lande" (2460):

2461 dar an man sîn untriuwe sach:
 nu seht wie er sîn untriuwe brach
 an sînem lieben kinde!

Ermrich's nature is defined by comparison with the ideal represented by Dietmar:

2489 Dietmâr unde Ermrich
 die zûgen bede ungelîch.

Ermrich der wart karc:
 Dietmâr vor êren niene barc,
 er was milte und tugenhaft.

Even before his confrontation with Dietrich begins, Ermrich's character is defined, and all his actions are to be understood as functions of that character.

The example of Friderich is interesting. In *Ths*, Ermanrik sends Fridrek to King Osantrix of Wilzenland in good faith, while the untriuwe rests with Sifka (p313f). In *DF*, the treachery is transferred to Ermrich, without reference to Sibeche's (potential) role. In *DF*, contrary to the version represented by *Ths*, Friderich is not killed in the Wilzen lande, but reappears among the prisoners taken by Dietrich after the first battle. Dietrich offers to exchange Friderich for the nobles held by Ermrich. Ermrich is unmoved:

3848 "mînen sun Friderîch
 ich ê selbe verstieze
 ê ich iuch leben lieze."

This is seen in direct contrast to Dietrich's willingness to sacrifice his lands and position in order to save his nobles, an episode to which we shall return. For Ermrich, the eight nobles he holds are the means by which he may attain the goal of usurping Dietrich's crown. This desire, motivated as we have seen through his innate lust for power and wealth, is more powerful than the ties of kinship not only to his son, but also

to his nephew and ward, Dietrich. In this way, Ermrich represents a threat to the society in which he lives which comes from the inside. His willingness to compromise the ties of blood in pursuit of power represents a very particular and vile kind of untriuwe. The importance of kinship as a building block of society is one of the constant themes of *DF*, one which is expressed through the negative aspect of Ermrich's actions. This is emphasized by Dietrich when he appeals to Ermrich: "...gedenke, veter sūeze, /daz ich bin dīnes bruoder kint." (4222f). This is also aware of this theme in the tradition, commenting explicitly that Thidrek is surprised by how Ermanrik is so hostile towards his relatives (p318).

Ermrich's untriuwe in *DF* is thus characterised by the breaking of the bonds of kinship in the pursuit of power and wealth. In other words, it is the placing of his own personal advancement above the accepted norms of behaviour. Another aspect of his untriuwe may be detected in his relationship with his vassals. As we have seen, the gold of the Harlungen is the means by which he raises his army for the third battle. This is also true of the first battle:

2829 Ermrīch daz golt rôt
 allen den recken bôt,
 and swer ez nemen wolde
 den rīchte er mit solde.

This is not the sole method available to him. His second army is also raised partly by compulsion. "Māge, liute unde man" (5863)

are asked to gather at Prissân, but there is a second clause:

5689 "und gebiet, swer ez dar über lât,
 daz ez dem an sîn leben gât."

This aspect of compulsion demonstrates clearly how Ermrich perceives his relationship with his vassals. They are the instruments by which he pursues his goal. When that instrument fails him, when defeated in battle, his reaction is one of characteristic disloyalty:

3515 Dô er wart vlühtic von dan
 dô vergaz er mâge unde man.
 dô liez er sicherlîchen
 sînen sun Friderîchen
 unde dannoch manegen man
 der ûf dem wale was bestân.

The depiction of Ermrich in *DF* may be summed up as an exemplification of *untriuwe* in its principal forms, namely the subordination of family and feudal ties in the pursuit of tyranny. As we have seen, this represents a significant simplification of the Ermrich figure in the wider tradition in terms of psychological complexity. It is of course no accident that this particular stylisation of Ermrich should fit rather neatly with the depiction of contemporary princes in both the *Vorgeschichte* and Heinrich's invective. This stylised depiction, however, only achieves its full effect when seen in contrast to that of Dietrich.

1.2.6 The depiction of Dietrich

The relationship between Dietrich and his vassals is established very early on, in response to the threat from Ermrich. Dietrich receives his vassals, secure in the knowledge of their support:

3043 "nû sît gote willekomen unt mir,
 stolze recken. ich waen ir
 welt nû retten miniu lant."
 mit gemeinem mund si zehant
 sprâchen "daz wirt willeclîch getân.
 welt irz selbe grîfen an,
 wir helfen rechen iuriu leit.
 wir sîn iu alles des bereit
 und ze wenden iuwers landen nôt
 od wir geligen bî iu tôt."

The goals and desires of king and vassals are identical, and are not dependent on material concerns. In victory, nevertheless, Dietrich is aware of his obligations towards his warriors - and this includes reward for the service they have given him. On returning to Bern, he finds his treasury empty, and in his reaction we may draw a sharp contrast with Ermrich:

3595 er clagt so sêre niht daz guot
 noch enhete dar umbe trûrigen muot:
 er clagt niwan die edelen degen
 den er nicht quotes hete ze wegen.

With Dietrich, the material reward of his warriors is seen as an aspect of the triuwe-relationship which exists between king and vassals. As we have seen, with Ermrich it is a means to an end, to be replaced when necessary by compulsion. It is significant that it is Dietrich's foremost nobles, in the persons of Hildebrant and Berhtram, who come to his aid by putting their resources at his disposal. This act further underlines the identity of purpose which exists between king and vassals.

Ironically, however, it is Dietrich's desire to fulfill the obligations of his position which leads to the loss of his lands, and the suffering of his people. Here again, we see a contrast between Dietrich and Ermrich. Where Ermrich refuses to exchange his son for Dietrich's nobles, Dietrich's loyalty to his vassals demands that he capitulate, even against the recommendations of his advisors:

4018 "und waere mîn elliu rîch,
 diu wolde ich elliu lân
 ê mine getriuwe liebe man.
 diu rîche ich alliu verkür
 ê dann ichs alsô verlür."

Dietrich's nobles are saved, but at the expense of the state: when Ermrich reaches Bern, the results are devastating for its inhabitants (4093-4101). Once again, Dietrich laments the loss in terms not of his own loss, but that of his people:

4106 er clagte niht sîn selbes guot,
 er clagte den jâmer den er sach,
 der an sînen liuten geschach.

The similarity of this lament to that at his inability to reward his men earlier is no coincidence: in both situations it is the expression of frustration that actions founded on *triuwe* are unable to prevail in the face of Ermrich's *untriuwe*.

If we compare the situation in which Dietrich is placed with that of the *Vorgeschichte*, it is quickly apparent that the concept of kingship and society depicted there is no longer adequate to the demands of Dietrich's situation. In the *Vorgeschichte*, the identification of interests of king, vassal and state was the motivation which defeated all obstacles. In the situation created by Ermrich, however, Dietrich is faced with an impossible choice between loyalty to his nobles at the expense of the state, or the preservation of the state with the loss of some of its greatest nobles. Dietrich's *triuwe*, his adherence to the concept of kingship formulated in the *Vorgeschichte*, is impotent in such a situation. Furthermore, it is significant that the situation is created by Ermrich's *untriuwe*, his denial of the traditional models of kingship and kinship. As we are told, it is Ermrich who is the origin of *untriuwe*:

3508 untriuwe ist von im in diu rîch
 leider allerêrste bekomen.

Untriuwe is, however, not simply confined to Ermrich. The

behaviour of Witege, in handing over Raben to Ermrich, after Dietrich had entrusted it to him, is a symptom of the general malaise which afflicts feudal society. As Etzel comments, the relationship between lord and vassal is no longer to be taken for granted: "an wen suln sich nû die vürsten lân?"(7782). The behaviour of Witege shows that the denial of the traditional models has implications throughout society - untriuwe threatens to become a general condition.

Within this context where the old models may no longer be taken for granted, the triuwe of Dietrich and his companions struggles to reassert its dominance. The Vorgeschichte expresses just this:

193 swie gerne ein man nû taete,
 sô ist sô vil der valschen raete,
 daz man deheim getriuwen man
 rehter vuore niht engan,
 als er doch gerne taete.

Furthermore, just as Ermrich, as a ruler in his own right, is seen to be the origin of this situation in Dietrich's world, it is the princes who are held responsible for the contemporary situation:

217 si enruochent waz die alten
 tugent haben behalten,
 si tuont niuwan den niuwen site.

The identification of Ermrich with the contemporary princes is thus a crucial element of the Dietrich/Ermrich confrontation.

Dietrich's willingness to entrust Witege with Raben demonstrates a political naivety which has its origins in his adherence to the models of feudal kingship. It is also significant that this occurs on the advice of Rudiger, a figure who in all works in which he appears is the embodiment of feudal loyalty. We have seen how consultation with advisors is the basic mode of decision-making in the *Vorgeschichte*, and a guarantee of the ideal of action for the common good. In the Dietrich sections, this institution fails: Dietrich goes against the advice of his nobles in giving up his lands to save the hostages, while Rudiger's advice causes disaster when Witege breaks his oaths of loyalty. The origins of Dietrich's continued exile lie in the inability of these traditional institutions to overcome the dilemmas which arise when those institutions no longer have the universal application which characterises the *Vorgeschichte*. The naivety lies in the continued adherence to those institutions.

In the persons of Helche and Etzel, Dietrich receives support which is not so naive. We have seen how Dietrich's marriage to Herrat is seen as a necessary political move, a precondition for the continuing support of Etzel. When news breaks of Witege's treachery, Etzel orders his armies to assemble, but the methods of raising this army bear closer resemblance to those employed by Ermrich than the common motivation of Dietrich and his vassals. Etzel sends a message, calling his warriors to Gran:

7897 dâ stuont ouch slehtes an geschriben

(des bin ich niht ûz belîben),

waz er geben wolde

allen den ze solde,

die die hervart wolden varn.

"und sagt" sprach Botelunges barn,

"swer dar über hie heime bestê,

daz ez dem niht wol ergê."

We see here the same mixture of material reward and compulsion which characterises Ermrich's methods, and which in itself represents a significant comment on the way in which the relationship between lord and vassal has changed. Furthermore, Helche emphasises the role of material reward in retaining the loyalties of the warriors:

7945 "dû weist wol, hôhes küneges kint,

swie holt dir die liute sint,

si gewinnet undiensthaften muot,

swenn dû in niht hâst zu geben guot."

The behaviour of Etzel and Helche is characterised by a hard-headed grasp of political reality which is lacking in Dietrich. This political realism is of a very different nature from that of Ermrich, however, even if there are similarities in method. It is placed in the service of Dietrich, the embodiment of the ideal of kingship as depicted in the Vorgeschichte. It thus represents a rationalisation of that ideal, an adaptation of that ideal to the prevailing political situation. Helche's action in sending

treasure to support Dietrich is thus "die allergroezisten tugende/die kein vrouwe begie in der jugende"(7924,5).

Dietrich's kingship is based on an ideal which in the fictional present is inadequate to cope with the untriuwe of Ermrich. Ermrich is the embodiment of the denial of that ideal, a static symbol of tyranny. In a sense, the depiction of Etzel and Helche owes something to the depiction of Ermrich - it is parallel yet opposite. They recognise the necessity of maintaining authority and controlling their societies in a world where the old values of mutual loyalty and dependence are no longer taken for granted. Dietrich emerges as the character unable to come to terms with the demands of his world. When political reality and ideal diverge, he shows himself unable to adapt. Thus each battle is a successive attempt to reassert that ideal, an effort which is continually greater and characterised by ever increasing hyperbole, and which is doomed to end in lament and frustration (5). The end of *DF* tells us more than any other passage about this: the military victory is achieved, but this does not satisfy, for Dietrich's losses are too great. These losses of his dearest nobles represent the failure of the ideal, of which Dietrich is the symbol, to remain intact in the modern world. Like Heinrich's invective, Dietrich's struggles are bound to end in lament:

10149 si clagten in ir muote
 die edelen recken guote
 und swer ûf dem wale dâ verschiet
 hie mit endet sich daz liet.

1.2.7 Conclusions

DF is characterized by the domination of theme over traditional material. In the general sense, the theme is the relationship between feudal lord and vassal. The redactor relates this general theme to the more particular concerns expressed in the explicit passages of invective against the contemporary princes. The major relationships in the work, and even the structure of the work (6), are conceived as literary expositions of this theme.

This theme is given relative coherence throughout. Each major character in the work may be seen in terms of their symbolic importance: Dietwart as representative of the ideal past of the *alten maeren*, Dietrich as the contemporary incarnation of that ideal, Ermrich as the contemporary denial of that ideal. Minor characters play out the theme of feudal loyalty through their actions: Amelolt, who regains Bern for his feudal lord; Witege, who treacherously gives Raben into Ermrich's hands (7). Where the opportunity presents itself, individual episodes from the tradition are fashioned in line with this theme: Dietrich's marriage to Herrat, for example.

But this process of thematisation of the available material has a profound effect on that material itself. Where what we know of the available material suggests complexity, there is in its place a didactic simplicity. Here we may cite in particular the role of Sibeche with regard to Ermrich, as well as the way in which

the feudal relationship between Dietrich and Emrich is portrayed. The redactor creates a fundamentally simple system of good versus evil, where other evidence from the tradition suggests a far more complex web of motivation. Ironically, it is perhaps a brief episode which best illustrates the effect of this process, namely that examined earlier when Ekehart confronts Ribstein. In the context of *DF*, this encounter is meaningless, devoid of motivation, because the relationships which lie at its root are suppressed in the work.

What applies to this particular instance applies as a general rule to *DF* as a whole. It is the complex of relationships, and the interaction of motivations, which give the battles and confrontations of the tradition meaning. *DF* replaces this complexity with sheer volume and hyperbole: battles which are ultimately meaningless, because they achieve nothing. The figure of Dietrich thus becomes no more than a symbol of the redactor's pessimism about the contemporary social situation. We may well suggest that this process is significant in that it raises the possibility that the Dietrich figure, at least in his pseudo-historical manifestation, is struggling to maintain its relevance in the contemporary world which the redactor describes. If *DF* is an attempt to reassert that relevance, its fundamental pessimism indicates that attempt's failure. To gain a broader picture, we may turn to the other "historical" Dietrich epics.

Notes

(1) Gillespie, as above p31.

(2) See Haug in Kühebacher, p118: "...den manipulierenden Umgang mit verfügbaren Erzählstoff, verbunden mit freier Erfindung unter einen bestimmten thematischen Perspektive." Cf. Curschmann, PBB 98, p361.

(3) Compare with Haug (above) p119, again cf. Curschmann p382f: "So hat er betont, daß der Stoff nicht wirklich thematisch bewältigt, vielmehr von außen auf thematische Positionen hinarrangiert worden ist; und er hat auch nicht verschwiegen, daß selbst dies nur bedingt gelungen ist."

(4) For in depth discussion see Müller in "Adelsherrschaft" etc, as above.

(5) Haug in Kühebacher p126

(6) see Curschmann, in PBB 98

(7) as above p364: "...das Ideal wechselseitiger Treue zwischen Herrn und Gefolgschaft".

1.3 The Rabenschlacht

1.3.1 General Description

Rschl contains many parallels to episodes and events depicted in *DF*. We have already dealt with some above, and these showed some interesting differences of approach in the two works. On a general level, however, the characterisation of Dietrich and Ermrich is remarkably similar, forming the basis of one of the two main narrative strands of the work, namely the military confrontation between the two.

As in *DF*, this conflict is defined as the struggle between *triuwe* and *untriuwe*. Ermrich, once again, is the arch villain, responsible for all wrongs:

79 Des werde im verteilet,
 des schulde ez erste was!
 sîn sêl sî ungeheilet!
 wand ich an buochen nie gelas
 von sô grôzen ungetriuwen.

Ermrich's disloyalty is further demonstrated by a characteristic reaction to defeat in battle: "Ermrîch entran von allen sînen mannen" (1008,6).

As in *DF*, Ermrich's motives are simple:

2,3 der wolte gewalticliche

ertwingen Roemisch lant:
 Badouwe, Garte und Berne
 daz wolte er allez einic hân vil gerne.

In direct contrast to Ermrich, the actions of Dietrich and his allies are characterised by *triuwe*. Dietrich is offered "helfe" by a succession of nobles and kings, including Etzel, who recognise the justness of his cause: "wir strîten nâch dem rehte" (51,5). The redactor further emphasises this justness by borrowing motifs which strongly echo crusading poems such as the *Rolandslied*: the Hunnish army gives up prayers before battle (512ff), and at one point God sends a wind to cool Dietrich's men in the heat of battle (619ff). The religiosity of the poem is superficial, but it is an effective tool in creating a polarity between the confronting sides.

Thus, on the macro level of the conflict between Dietrich and Ermrich, a very simple system is created, whereby good apparently triumphs over evil in battle. Unlike *DF*, it is not Dietrich's losses in battle which cause the negation of his military success, but rather the result of the second narrative strand which runs parallel to this grand scale conflict, namely the death of the young princes.

Where on the grand scale Dietrich's struggle against Ermrich is characterised by simplicity, and leads smoothly to military victory, the story of the young princes juxtaposes this in its early stages by foreboding, and in the denouement by destructive tragedy. For instance, it is no accident that the personal

happiness of Dietrich and Herrat (119-122) is immediately followed by Helche's prophetic dream about the death of her sons (123-126). The moment of the Hunnish army's departure from Gran is for Dietrich and his followers a moment of joy; for Helche it is cause for grief: "owê, jâ sagt ir ir herze / umb diu kint allen den smerzen" (119,5-6).

Dietrich himself is fully aware of the significance of Helche's sons, as he makes clear to his brother:

301,4 "ob uns inder missegât
 an vrouwen Helchen kinden,
 sô müeze wir ouch immermêre swinden.

302,1 An êren und an guote"
 sprach her Dietrîch,
 "an vürstenlîchem muote
 müez wir verderben sicherlîch.
 verlies wir Hiunisch marke,
 sô sî wir tôt immermêre" sprach der starke.

Here we see the first indication of the significance of personal ties in the political and military domain. Military success is dependent not only on victory on the battlefield, but also on the successful maintenance of the personal connections set up in the poem. For this reason, the death of the young princes is seen not as an admittedly tragic by-product of the conflict, but as a negation of its militarily successful outcome. This process benefits from closer examination.

1.3.2 Personal misfortune as a theme of *Rschl*

This theme of the interplay between the political and the personal is seen above all in the bearing of the various protagonists, and in particular in Dietrich himself.

On the field of battle, Dietrich achieves monumental feats of arms: we are told, for instance, that Dietrich kills 2,000 men by his own hand. However, this is accompanied by markedly controlled behaviour. When Dietrich confronts and lays low Fruote in combat, he spares Fruote his life:

797,5 daz tete der Bernaere
 umbe daz er ân angest waere.

For Dietrich, armed combat is a natural environment, in which he is presented with essentially simple problems requiring straightforward solutions. He is comfortable in that environment, at ease with the situation, to the point where he can, in the thick of battle, mourn the death of his opponents (805,6).

We may compare this with his bearing after learning of the death of Etzel's sons and his brother. When Dietrich finds the bodies of the princes, his lament takes up 27 verses (886-913). It is interesting that this lament is to a large extent concerned with his own predicament, and in particular the loss of his personal

honour. In particular, he mourns the fact that his personal pledge to Helche to protect her sons has proved ineffective (889,5-890,2).

Dietrich's reaction is to seek vengeance. This is a typical reaction for Dietrich in both *DF* and *Rschl*, where words denoting vengeance occur innumerable times. However, in this instance vengeance achieved through force of arms is denied him: Witege is rescued by a "merminne" (964), a remarkably surreal episode in the historical epics, who informs Witege that at this particular moment Dietrich would have been vulnerable, had Witege stood his ground:

973,5 "dâ was daz edel gesmîde
 allez reht ergluot an sînem lîbe."

Witege himself had previously remarked on the heat which seemed to be emanating from Dietrich: "...nû sihestû wie er limmet, / rehte alsam ein hûs, daz dâ brinnet" (946,5-6)(1).

These clear references to Dietrich's traditional ability to emit fire when enraged (eg *L* 1224) are hardly in this context evidence of his divine kingship, as Pütz describes it (2). Rather they demonstrate the exaggerated nature of Dietrich's reaction to misfortune, his *unmâze*. Unable to persuade Witege to turn and face him, and therefore unable to satisfy his thirst for vengeance through the only *modus operandi* he knows, Dietrich becomes an unstable and vulnerable character.

Dietrich's reaction to this apparently insoluble dilemma is lament of a ridiculous scale and subsequent depression. Indeed, these passages of lament represent a study in the subject to the extent of indulgence. Helphrich's reaction is refreshing in contrast:

956,2 "wie lange sul wir clagen?
 ez ist vil unmügelîch.
 wir suln darumbe niht verzagen,
 ob uns ist geschehen vil leide."

This sort of approach to misfortune is one much more characteristic in *Ths*, where Erka(Helche) lays great emphasis on the bearing of her sons in battle (p351), and shows great stoicism on hearing the news of their deaths (p367,368). In *Rschl*, Etzel and Helche's reaction is to accuse Dietrich of treachery (1066, 1115), while Helche even turns on Herrat, the source of such great joy earlier (1072).

Dietrich's reaction to personal misfortune in *Rschl* is a grossly exaggerated depiction of the "armer Dietrich" figure, never defeated in battle, yet doomed to spend long years in exile. Here, it is the personal aspects of the tragic figure which are juxtaposed with the military successes. Heroic action cannot solve the situation - all Dietrich's good faith, his triuwe, is impotent to overcome the obstacles placed before him. The work resorts to a kind of immersion into self-pity, which Haug succinctly describes as "Leiden und Mitleiden als innere Form der Wirklichkeitsbewältigung" (3). In other words, the attempt to

come to terms with the fundamental discrepancies of the Dietrich figure is given up.

In many ways, this reaction mirrors the state of mind of the redactor of *Rschl*. Like Heinrich in *DF*, he also directs complaints against contemporary society, looking back to the "good old days" (97-100). Unlike *DF*, however, the specific target of these complaints is not clear, and the complaint itself remains of a general nature:

98,1 Getriuwe und êrbaere
 was diu werlt bî alten tagen.
 ditz ist ein wârez maere,
 ir habt ez ofte hoeren sagen.
 nû ist diu tugent verswunden,
 mit schanden lebt diu werlt bî disen stunden.

But the redactor is conscious that his complaints are ultimately futile:

100,1 Ich wil mich clage mâzen,
 wand ez vervaecht mich niht,
 und al min vluochen lâzen.
 swaz grôzer schande nû geschiht,
 dar ûf ahtet man nû cleine.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that *Rschl* is the vehicle for the redactor's disillusionment, and performs for him the cathartic function of a good moan.

1.3.3 Conclusions

Rschl is a work characterised more by volume than substance. Ultimately there is no attempt made to reconcile the contradictions of the Dietrich figure. It is a work whose prime function is to reflect an unspecified regret for things past without achieving any relevance to the contemporary world other than critical. So once again the Dietrich figure is seen as one belonging to another age, an irrelevance. And in this process the narrative tradition surrounding Dietrich is reduced to the bare minimum. In literary terms, the tradition is on its last legs, struggling to find a form of expression which does it justice.

Notes

(1) see G. Plötzeneder: *Die Gestalt Dietrichs von Bern in der deutschen Dichtung und Sage des frühen und hohen Mittelalters*. Dissertation, Innsbruck 1955, p186

(2) H. P. Pütz: *Studien zur Dietrichsage. Mythisierung und Dämonisierung Theoderichs des Großen*. Dissertation, Wien 1969, p304

(3) Haug in Kühebacher p131

1.4 Alpharts Tod

1.4.1 Introduction

The narrative of *AT* covers basically the same ground as that of the first battle in *DF*. As in *DF*, the outcome of the battle is victory for Dietrich: unlike *DF*, *AT* retains that sense of victory without reference to Dietrich's tragic fate. We may well wonder if this did not cause some surprise to contemporary audiences well acquainted with the tradition. Indeed, the whole depiction of Dietrich in *AT* is at some variance with the "armer Dietrich" of *DF* and *Rschl*.

In particular, Dietrich's reaction to misfortune is characterised not by the indulgent self pity so copiously portrayed in *Rschl* and *DF*, but by a defiant tone indicating that this Dietrich, at least, is made of sterner stuff. For instance, when confronted by Heime's defection to Ermrich's cause, Dietrich reacts in a positive manner:

34,1 "waz waenstû daz ich vliese? ich vliuse an dir niht mêr
 wan ein schilt ein ros und einen ungetriuwen man:
 des muoz ich mich erwegen sô ich allerbeste kan."

This may be compared to Dietrich's reaction to Witege's betrayal in *DF*:

7737 "owê daz ich ie wart geborn!
 alrêst han ich gar verlorn.

nû swindet immermêr mîn muot."

This contrast is typical of the prevailing moods of the poems - two poems which deal with essentially the same subject matter (1).

Despite the fact, however, that the basic narrative situation of the early parts of *DF* and *AT* is the same, there are elements in *AT* which do not have their counterpart in *DF*. Obviously, the central encounter between Alphart and Witege and Heime is the most important of these, in conjunction with the "mock" combat between Hildebrant and Alphart. We shall return to these later. Other aspects of the subject matter in *AT* are echoed in *Ths*, and have no counterpart in the extant Middle High German poems. To these and other aspects of *AT* we shall turn first, in order to understand the working relationship which the *AT* poet strikes up with his raw material.

1.4.2 The integration of traditional material in AT

In *Ths*, it is Widga who rides to Dietrich in order to warn him of the approach of Ermanrik's army (320-1). In *AT*, it is Heime who appears before Dietrich, but like Widga, he too expresses his regret at the situation (*Ths* 321, *AT* 6,2). In *Ths*, it is clear that Widga is accompanied by Heime - both return to Ermanrik from Thidrek's camp (322). In both versions, Dietrich asks why Ermrich should be so hostile towards him. While these parallels are not exact, it is clear that the basic situation is the same:

Dietrich is told of Ermrich's intentions by men who suffer split loyalty in the affair.

The nature of Heime's relationship to Dietrich is given clarification in AT:

7,3 "du bestüende mich in kintheit durch dînen übermuot:
ich betwanc dich mit gewalte" alsô sprach der helt guot.
"Du gelobtest mir ze dienen" sprach hêr Dietrîch.

This reference to Dietrich's defeat of Heime when young has no equivalent in any extant versions of the tradition in German. *Ths*, however, gives us a complete account of how Heime left his father and challenged Dietrich in combat, Heime being defeated only when he breaks his sword on Dietrich's helm (91-3). It seems clear that the poet of AT is here making a reference to an aspect of traditional material which has some significance for the contemporary audience. With this knowledge to hand, the meeting which takes place between Heime and Dietrich is given a certain psychological complexity and interest, and Dietrich's bravado at Heime's defection (see above) a sharper focus, than would otherwise be the case.

This example would therefore appear to indicate that the author/redactor of AT is interested in the material at least partly for the complex of relationships it throws up. He also appears to be interested in the causes of Heime's behaviour, and demonstrates this by giving an explanation rooted in the tradition. Heime takes his leave:

41,3 wan er sîne triuwe an hêrn Dietrîchen brach,
 er und sîne geselle Witege, von Sibeche raeten daz geschach.

We have already seen that the integration of the Sibeche figure is more complete in *AT* than in either *DF* or *Rschl*. Indeed, the extent to which Sibeche is made the villain of the piece is closer in *AT* to *Ths*, where Sifka is, on several occasions, held responsible (eg 320, 415). This role is suppressed in the other Middle High German poems.

A further interesting reference is made by Heime, in his assurance to Dietrich "daz wir [Heime and Witege] ûf Hildegrînen niemanne weln ze helfe komen" (42,4). Hildegrin is the name of Dietrich's helmet (upon which, in *Ths*, Heime breaks his sword!). However, there is no indication in the text of what is meant here: it is clear that once again the poet assumes a familiarity in his audience with traditional objects and stories. It is also interesting that Hildegrin is not mentioned in either *DF* or *Rschl*, despite its frequent mention in the *Eckenlied* and *Sigenot* texts, as well as *Laurin (D)*.

A further reference made by Witege is of interest in a similar way. During the encounter between Alphart and Witege and Heime, Witege reminds Heime of their mutual loyalty:

252,3 "dar an soltû gedenken, dû ûz erwelter degen,
 wie ich dir kam ze helfe unde vriste dir dîn leben.
 Daz tet ich zuo Mûtâren, da helf ich dir ûz not.

dâ müestestû zewâre den grimmiclîchen tôt,
 dû und der von Berne beide genomen hân,
 wan daz ich iu beiden sô schiere ze helfe kam."

The place name mentioned appears in *Virginal*, where Dietrich is held prisoner by giants. Witege's account gives us no detail, and the circumstances appear very different to that described in *V*, but nevertheless we are justified in thinking that this refers to events from Dietrich's youth, subject matter which is normally confined to the 'aventiurenhaft' Dietrich poems, and only elsewhere brought together with the 'historical' material in *Ths*, and in a different way in *SHb*. This is a similar process to that already identified in Dietrich's earlier reference to his youthful encounter with Heime, and also the reference to Hildegrin, whereby the poet of *AT* is prepared to refer widely to traditional material, in order further to substantiate the action and relationships in his poem. We shall return later to the significance of *AT*'s relationship to the Dietrich *aventiuren*.

In terms of the depiction of Ermrich, it is clear that *AT* is again closer to *Ths* than *DF*. Sibeche's advice to Ermrich in *DF* plays on Ermrich's innate lust for power and wealth. In *Ths*, Sifka presents Dietrich as a threat to Ermanrik's sovereignty (319). This is echoed in *AY*, where Ermrich sees the conflict in similar terms: "er [Dietrich] wil wider daz rîch sich setzen, daz hân ich wol vernomen" (52,3). He considers that Dietrich has outgrown his position: "Er treit übermüete, der ûz erwelte degen." (59,1). In the final analysis, Ermrich sees his actions as fully justified by what he is convinced is Dietrich's breaking

of the existing feudal relationship:

64,2 "waz wil der von Berne mit mir heben an?

waent er urluges herten, der edel Dietrîch?

er muoz mir diu lant rûmen, wan mir dienet Roemisch rîch.

Ich trîbe ez mit im umbe, dem helde wil ich niht flên,

ern gebe mir dan Berne und enphâz von mir ze lên."

While the narrator may use the word "untriuwe" (56,2) to describe the events of *AT*, it is significant that it is not applied to Ermrich. More than any other in *AT*, the term is used of Sibeche, and this is recognized by Dietrich himself:

71,1 "Sibeche der ungetriuwe hât über mich rât gegeben

mîm veteren Ermenrîchen und wil mir an mîn leben.

wolte got von himele, daz ich in solte bestân!

so wurde ungetriuwer rât von Sibechen nimmermêre getân."

We have already seen that *Ths* places a very similar emphasis on Sifka's responsibility in Dietrich's misfortunes.

In general, then, we may conclude that, especially in the early part of the poem, *AT* demonstrates a very different attitude to *DF* and *Rschl* in terms of the way in which it handles traditional material. There is almost a sense of pleasure in the invocation of events and names which belong to the wider sphere of Dietrich material, and which serve to give the poem at the outset a strong sense of belonging to that sphere. But of course, this is a poem whose central sections are devoted to events which appear to

have no part in the tradition, namely Alphart's encounter with Witege and Heime. And indeed, it is a poem whose apparently successful and optimistic outcome would seem to be fundamentally at odds with that tradition. To reconcile these two sides of the subject matter of the work we need to look more closely at its main themes and the sections devoted to Alphart.

1.4.3 General Framework

In common with *DF* and *Rschl*, *AT* compares the flawed behaviour of certain characters with an idealised past. However, unlike the two former works, the dichotomy which is described between honourable and dishonourable behaviour is not of the same generalised polarity. We have already seen how Ermrich's behaviour is made understandable to a certain extent by the role of Sibeche as evil influence, rather than stemming from innate causes.

Nevertheless, the redactor explicitly condemns the behaviour of Witege and Heime by reference to an idealised code:

14,1 Witege unde Heime die brâchen gotes reht,
 die beiden hergesellen: hie vor dô was ez sleht.
 daz mûeze got erbarmen daz ez ie geschach,
 daz man an eim jungen ritter daz gotes reht ie gebrach.
 Zwêne bestuonden einen: daz was hie vor niht site.

This criticism, however, concentrates on the particular, without seeking to generalise.

In this context, the generalised conflict between Ermrich and Dietrich acts as a framework in which the sections devoted to Alphart are placed. This focus on one particular character, and his encounter with Witege and Heime, are the core of the work, and the themes which these situations throw up the central concerns. We must then look closely at the figure of Alphart.

De Boor and Hoffman see Alphart as an exemplary figure, through which is conducted a general criticism of contemporary knighthood. De Boor: "Das sinkende Rittertum soll mit diesem Gedicht angesprochen und an seine Pflichten und und Werke gemahnt worden"(2). In reference to Witege and Heime breaking "gotes reht", Hoffman comments: "Man darf hierin einen Zeitbezug und... eine Mahnung an die Zeit, konkret: an das Rittertum in der zweiten Hälfte des 13. Jh. sehen,...wobei die Idealität der hochhöfischen Dichtung zur Norm wird, an der man das abweichende Verhalten der eigenen Gegenwart mißt" (3).

Zimmer, on the other hand, sees it differently. For Zimmer, Alphart is "der in archaischen Vorstellungen Befangene" (4) and his knighthood "ein verspätetes Ideal, den geschichtlichen Umständen unangemessen" (5) Thus, he sees in *AT* not only criticism of Heime and Witege (and by extension contemporary knighthood), but also a practical realisation that the ideals of courtly knighthood are not adequate to the demands of an age when adherence to those ideals is on the wane.

Both these interpretations run the risk of insisting that we must

see characters in the poem purely in terms of their symbolic importance to the audience of the poem. This assumes that Alphart, on the one hand, and Witege and Heime on the other, are represented in the poem simply as opposites in some kind of moral or ethical debate on acceptable modes of knightly behaviour. This need not necessarily be the case. The evidence of the poem's relatively broad integration of elements of the wider Dietrich tradition suggest that the redactor of the poem is interested in the relationships that the tradition is capable of throwing up, and in the tensions created thereby. There is little evidence of a desire to judge the behaviour of individual characters in the tradition according to preset didactic parameters.

Given this, we are likely to gain a greater insight by examining the behaviour of the central protagonists from the point of view of what motivates that behaviour, rather than what that behaviour may or may not symbolise.

Above all, Alphart sees the ride "ûf die warte" as an opportunity to prove himself as a great warrior. In particular, he reacts angrily to Wolfhart's attempt to discourage him:

90,1 "du enganst mir keiner êren, bruoder Wolfhart,
 daz ich hie heime belibe als ein armez wîp.
 sô hât man iuch vûr recken und aht ûf mich ze keiner zît."

It is no accident, of course, that the poet should make Alphart the brother of Wolfhart, known as the most fearsome of Dietrich's

warriors (6). It is a sensible use of the tradition available to him, for it emphasises the desire of Alphart to prove himself.

Alphart does not therefore see his mission as an aspect of service to Dietrich - he sees it purely in terms of personal esteem. Indeed, he seems in particular concerned with the esteem in which he is held by others, and measures personal worth by that token. For instance, he is concerned that if he were to kill an opponent he had disarmed, "des wurd mir übel gesprochen" (245,3), while his sense of pride leads him to refuse a companion (112), and to refuse to reveal his identity (94-5), an act associated in courtly literature with defeat in combat.

Above all, Alphart's refusal to summon help sums up his bloody-minded addiction to a creed of personal honour which is responsible for his death (294,3). This contrasts sharply with the behaviour of Witege and Heime, which is characterised by a pragmatic desire for survival. True enough, Witege is proud of his reputation as a warrior:

224,3 "ich hân noch ie von mînen kintlîchen tagen
in stürmen unde in strîten den prîs ritterlîch betragen."

However, when it is a question of survival, questions of honour come a firm second, as he makes clear to Heime:

256,1 "Dû sagest mir von untriuwe: ê ich verliur den lîp,
mir waere lieber, schulden mich alliu werdiu wîp."

This contrast between youthful obsession with one's own prowess, and recognition of the practical realities of survival is one which Dietrich himself is aware of, and he warns the young Alphart:

98,1 "Swer in herten stürmen alle zît vehten wil"
 sprach der vogt von Bern "und trîbet er sîn vil,
 witze unde sinne waere im beider nôt.
 ez wundet dicke ein wîser ein starken tumben in den tôt."

Such words are significant, for they indicate strongly that we cannot simply see Alphart as the exemplary representative of a mode of behaviour personified by Dietrich. The relationship is far more reflected than that, for Alphart is in fact an example of the exaggeration of a sense of knightly honour taken too far, and placed no longer in the context of service to feudal lord, but seen purely in personal terms. This does not excuse the behaviour of Witege and Heime, of course, but their actions are treated more with world weariness than with total condemnation.

We may suggest, then, that the Alphart sections of the poem perhaps question the role of feats of arms in proving a young man's personal worth. In other words, these sections throw up questions about the role in general of what we might call "heroic" action. In many ways, the following sections act as an answer to these questions, showing the positive employment of these very same feats of arms.

As Hildebrant returns from Breisach with help for Dietrich, the

army makes camp for the night. Hildebrant is selected, and accepts the post of forward guard for the night - by common consent he is the most able (328,4). This may be compared to Alphart's self-selection. Hildebrant accepts the post "durch hêrn Dietrîches willen, der mich hât ûz gesant" (329,2). However, he also requests his companions to remain ready at arms, and accepts gratefully the help first of Nitger, and then four others (333-4). Furthermore, he arranges to blow a horn should they require assistance (335). All these actions may be contrasted with those of Alphart.

Hildebrant does, however, ride out alone from his companions, and meets two members of the enemy forces. He at first attempts to convince them that he is a vassal of Ermrich : "damit wolte er sich vrîsten" (343,2), a pragmatic attempt to avoid a dangerous situation. Combat inevitably ensues, however, and hearing the clash of arms, a further six thousand knights appear against Hildebrant (!). Hildebrant at first turns to flee, but decides to stand and fight (353). Now, on hearing the fray, Hildebrant's companions join him. It is only when a further six thousand men join the battle against Hildebrant and his companions that Hildebrant bows to the superiority of numbers and summons help by blowing the horn (362).

Despite the hyperbole of the numbers faced by Hildebrant and his men, this passage is important as a point of comparison with Alphart. Hildebrant sees his role not so much in terms of personal glory, but as service to his feudal lord: to be killed while on guard defeats the point of his role, and thus he takes

practical steps to avoid that outcome, even to the extent of lying about his identity in order to avoid combat.

Indeed, the second half of AT as a whole may justifiably be seen as the depiction of knighthood in the service of a feudal lord, a dramatisation, as it were, of *triuwe* between vassal and lord. That Dietrich is equally aware of the importance of this relationship is given practical expression at the end of the main battle:

460,1 Wie balde der vogt von Berne in des keisers zelt gie!
 dâ vant er hort grôzen, den er hete gelâzen hie,
 silber und gesteine und daz golt so rôt,
 daz der adel vogt von Berne sînen helden dô mit êren bôt.

The harmony of Dietrich's world is restored, and the death of Alphart avenged.

1.4.4 Conclusions

AT may be seen as an examination of the role of armed action. Alphart sees armed combat as a means to integration into the knightly circle: however, his fundamental fault, and the eventual cause of his death, is to divorce armed combat from its role as the means by which feudal society is protected. His exaggerated sense of personal pride obscures the true purpose of his function "ûf die warte". In the second half of the poem, we find Hildebrant placed in a comparable situation, and witness a far different approach and outcome. Witege and Heime may be

condemned for breaking "gotes reht", but this condemnation is characterised more by a world-weary recognition that these things are inevitable, than by self-righteous pontificating. What is strongly restated is the role of armed combat as a collective instrument of the feudal state, in defence of that state.

However, this positive depiction of heroic deeds is fundamentally at odds with what we see in both *DF* and *Rschl*, where ever more exaggerated armed action is constantly negated by other factors. "Armer Dietrîch" has no place in *AT*, and this in itself represents a substantial reworking of the tradition, in a work which, ironically enough, ties itself vigorously into that tradition.

It is tempting to see the work as a deliberate attempt to refashion the Dietrich tradition in a positive light understandable to a contemporary audience, to reassert the role of collective action, and to emphasise the benefits of feudal systems of social rule. In this scenario, we may understand *AT* as deriving from different factors: a reaction against the stultifying pessimism of the branch of the tradition represented by *DF* and *Rschl*; equally, a reaction against a perceived obsession with the individual in "courtly" literature. Certainly, while *AT* can in no way be described as a great work, it succeeds in injecting a certain amount of new vigour and interest into a tradition which judging by the other extant representatives had become introverted and irrelevant.

There is, however, another possible influence on *AT*, namely the

co-existing tradition based on the adventures of Dietrich in the folk-tale-like world of works such as the *Eckenlied*, *Laurin* and *Virginal*. We have already suggested that the poet of *AT* was acquainted with stories of this kind, and if this is the case, it is entirely reasonable to suggest that they, along with the other factors mentioned above, had their influence.

Notes

- (1) see Hoffmann in *Mhd. Heldendichtung*, p176
- (2) De Boor, *Geschichte*, 3,1 p157
- (3) Hoffmann, as above, p177
- (4) U. Zimmer, *Studien zu Alpharts Tod nebst einem verbesserten Abdruck der Handschrift*. (Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 67), Göppingen 1972, p113.
- (5) Zimmer as above p111.
- (6) see Gillespie on *Wolhart* p151.

Section Two

The Dietrich aventiuren

2.1 Introduction

The historical Dietrich epics would seem to give evidence that the relevance of their subject matter to contemporary audiences was under strain: as a general rule, they seem to represent a world which, while lamented, is no longer a valid representation of the contemporary world, nor even a practical model of behaviour for the nobility in the contemporary world. *AT* perhaps represents a partial exception to this rule, but at the same time, in terms of its treatment of the core material, represents a significant departure from the tradition: no "armer Dietrich" here! The Dietrich *aventiuren* also offer an alternative depiction of the Dietrich figure, with strong similarities to the pre-eminent literary genre of the time, namely Arthurian romance.

German Arthurian romance is, in its most literal sense, a literary tradition. The "classical" romances, those of Hartmann and Wolfram, may be seen in a direct line from Chrétien de Troyes, the poet responsible for giving the Arthurian romance its ground-rules and typical structures. Later, "post-classical", German romance has habitually been described by reference to those ground-rules and structures, to an extent that consideration of its derivative, or "epigonal", nature has hindered appreciation of these texts as manifestations of the tradition in their own right. The qualitative judgments made by many modern scholars on these works seems to be strangely at odds with the judgements made by near contemporaries, such as Rudolf von Ems (1). Nevertheless, this method of investigation can be

fruitful: a good example is de Boor's re-evaluation of the Pleier's *Garel* as a literary "correction" of the Stricker's *Daniel* in the manner of the tradition embodied in the works of Hartmann and Wolfram (2). As Cormeau's study of *Wigalois* and *diu crône* convincingly shows, the forms and structures of the so-called "classical" romances were to a large extent formative for the later romances (3). We shall return to this later.

Until Heinzle's work on the Middle High German Dietrich epics, an examination of the *aventiuren* from a similar angle was lacking (4). His work therefore goes a long way in filling a gap in our understanding of these texts. It is helpful to give a summary of Heinzle's approach and to define our position with regard to his conclusions.

Heinzle's summary of his textual analysis of the different versions of *L* may serve as a summary of his results with regard to the genre in general:

Die besondere poetische Machart des Laurin - die schematische Kombination vorgeprägter und deshalb eigengewichtiger Erzählmodelle - schlägt sich in einer Fabel nieder, deren Bausteine nicht restlos zu einem geschlossenen Gesamtzusammenhang integriert sind. Die strukturelle Offenheit der Fabel bot Ansätze, sie nach verschiedenen Richtungen auszufalten. Sie erwies sich dabei als erzähltechnisches Vehikel, mit dessen Hilfe es möglich war, die Sinnggebung des Textes verschiedenartig zu akzentuieren. Diese Akzentuierungen stellten sich dar als verschiedene Möglichkeiten der Einstellung zum *Aventiuere*begriff

der höfischen Epik (5).

Heinzle defines the narrative models (Erzählmodelle, Handlungsschemata) (6) used in our texts as "Herausforderung" and "Befreiung" (7). In the first, Dietrich rides out to face a dangerous opponent; in the second, Dietrich frees a lady from a captor. All our poems are constructed using various combinations of these models, as well as variations (i.e. *E* employs the "passive" variant of the Herausforderung model).

In many ways our examination of the texts will confirm Heinzle's description of them. Certain reservations will become apparent with regard to Heinzle's definition of the narrative models in the poems (Herausforderung and Befreiung). Where our main difference with Heinzle lies, however, is in one of the main thrusts of his study, namely his assertion that "die Literaturgeschichte von Texten mit extrem unfester Tradierung müsse Überlieferungsgeschichte sein":

Das literarhistorische Interesse des Textes liegt in seiner Qualität als Austragungsfeld der Spannung zwischen höfischen und nicht-höfischen Traditionen, zu der ihn seine gattungsmässig hybride Stellung disponieren mußte. Daher kann er sinnvollerweise nicht in einer einmal fixierten "originalen" Gestalt Gegenstand der Literaturgeschichte sein, sondern nur in seiner Eigenart als "Spannungsträger", wie sie allein im Gesamtbild der verschiedenen Versionen sichtbar wird.(8)

Heinzle's approach here is a somewhat extreme reaction to

outdated research methodology. True, the search for an "original" poem hidden in the versions represented by the extant texts is bound to be in vain. However, to see the genre of the *aventure* only in its function as the "Spannungsträger" between "courtly" and "non-courtly" poetry is to devalue much of what he himself implies in his examination of the texts (9). The *aventuren* must be seen not only in their relationship to "courtly" literature (more specifically, Arthurian romance), but also as the literary manifestations of a tradition which exists in its own right, and which is not necessarily dependent on its relationship with courtly literature and themes for its existence. We must, in other words, deal with the possibility, even probability, that these texts represent only the literary reflex of a tradition which was even more widespread and viable in its own terms than even our extant texts suggest. The following, therefore, attempts to examine the texts with the premise that, taken as a whole, the body of evidence can take us beyond the texts themselves. The examination has two major questions to answer: first, what is the nature of that tradition, and secondly, how does that tradition fit into our picture of the literary context in which it exists?

2.2 Jüngerer Sigenot: individual work and tradition.

JSig has some claim to fame: with the exception of the *Jüngerer Hildebrandslied*, more prints are known of this poem than any other Middle High German "heroic" work (10). Yet, it is generally reckoned to be among the youngest of the Dietrich epics (11). This evidence of public success in itself gives grounds for a detailed examination of the form and content of the poem: certainly, it seems to imply that it fulfilled the expectations of the receiving public with regard to the genre. Many of the elements which we can identify in *JSig* are also common in various forms to other works in the tradition. We shall therefore use *JSig* as a starting point for the discussion.

2.3 Grin and Hilde: evidence for the sub-literary origins of the tradition.

JSig contains several references to a story which is not preserved as an independent poem in the Middle High German texts, namely Dietrich and Hildebrand's encounter with the giant pair Grin and Hilde. The story is also referred to in the early sections of *E*. In addition, *Ths* carries a complete account of the story. Of further interest is a possible reference in the Runkelstein frescoes.

The account in *JSig* tells us that Dietrich kills both Grin and Hilde, thereby saving Hildebrand from Grin (3,4). Sigenot recognises Dietrich by his helmet, Hildegrin, which he calls "mîns oeheins Grîmen heln" (64,5). When at Sigenot's mercy,

Dietrich pleads that he had no choice but to kill the two giants (108). The account given in *ASig* is similar, but differs in one detail: here, it is Hildebrant who saves Dietrich from the giantess.

E gives a similarly confused picture. *E(L)* makes it clear that it is Dietrich who is helped by Hildebrant (12,9-13), while *E(DrHb)* once again reverses the situation, although this time Hildebrant is threatened by the giantess, Hilte (12,8). This is the version given by *Ths* (p88-9): Hildebrant is overpowered by Hild, and is only saved when Thidrek kills Grim and then Hild. Amongst the treasures they find a helmet, named after its owners.

The Runkelstein frescoes depict a wild woman with a sword named "nagelringen", which the *Ths* tells us was also in Grim's possession (p87f). In the frescoes, however, it seems to belong to a wild woman named Riel or Ruel, a character not known from the Dietrich stories, but from Wirnt's *Wigalois*. We shall return to this later.

We may compare the function of of the Hilte/Grim story with one of the main aspects of *E*, namely the aetiological function. Among other things, *E* explains the name of Dietrich's sword, *Eckesahs*. However, it seems clear that the name of the sword would have pre-dated *E* itself. Heinrich von Veldeke mentions *Ecke sahs* in his *Eneide* (5728), but this need not necessarily imply a knowledge of the sword's origins as related in *E*. *Eckesahs* is an appropriate name for a sword without bringing in the character of *Ecke* ("das Schwert mit der scharfen

Schneide" (13). Similarly, Hildegrin would appear to be an old name (14), and the story of its origin secondary.

Gillespie suggests that the Hilde/Grin story is "late aetiological fiction" (15), to which we may ask the question what does "late" mean. Considering that one of the earliest Dietrich epics, *E(L)*, displays a knowledge of this story, we may wish to consider the possibility that in terms of the generally held chronology of the epics, the Hilde/Grin story is remarkably early. Certainly, its inclusion in *Ths* points to a widespread currency in the first half of the thirteenth century.

What is certain about the references to the story is that it demonstrates that the extant texts cannot be seen as the be-all and end-all of the tradition which they represent. The Hilde/Grin story points to the existence of a much broader base of traditional material than is accessible to us. In much the same way, references to Dietrich's youthful encounter with Heime in *AT* point in the same direction. The variations in detail in the references to this story in our texts also tell us a great deal about the sub-literary origins of the Dietrich *aventiuren*. A further example from the Runkelstein frescoes helps to clarify.

The frescoes depict three wild women, of whom two (Ritsch and Rachin) are otherwise known only from the version of *E* in the *Dresdener Heldenbuch*. It seems certain, however, that the titles of the frescoes giving these names are in the older writing dating back to around 1400, in other words around 70 years earlier than the *Heldenbuch* (1472) (16). Evidently, this further

limits Heinzle's assertion that with this genre the literary history must be based solely on textual transmission.

The Hilte/Grin story can extend our understanding of the genre as a whole. We naturally have no way of reconstructing what a fuller version of the story might have been like. Nevertheless, it seems evident that the existence of the story as we see it in the various references discussed owes nothing whatsoever to a literary relationship with "courtly" literature. Its origins are probably less sophisticated - perhaps simply the desire to hear about Dietrich's fights with colourful opponents. To this end, the story takes up a pre-existing element of the tradition, namely Hiltegrin, and employs it as the basis for the story. *E* has a very similar purpose. However, in *E* we also have a literary phenomenon, and not merely the literary reflex of an aetiological tale, as we shall see.

It is true that we cannot see clearly beyond the texts of the poems which we have. Nevertheless, we can get a feeling of the underlying narrative tradition through stories such as that of Hilte/Grin. Another possible way into that tradition is through the texts themselves, for if we can identify the common structures and forms in these poems, we are probably coming nearer to recognising the essential features of the core tradition.

2.4 The role of Hildebrant

In *JSig*, Hildebrant initiates the adventure by reporting the existence of the giant Sigenot: the mere existence of a potential adventure is motivation enough for Dietrich. Nevertheless, Hildebrant is anxious that Dietrich should not expose himself to unnecessary danger (5-7). This "catalyst" role is a common one in the tradition, in various forms.

In *L(DrHb)*, Hildebrant's role is very similar to that in *JSig*. Hildebrant tells his companions of Laurin's rose garden, and of the dangers involved in entering it (10-14). However, he refuses to tell them the location of the garden until Dietrich and Witege promise to do no harm (27-28).

In other *L* versions, A and D, Hildebrant sees the potential adventure in a positive light, as an opportunity for Dietrich to prove his manhood:

A29 "âventiure ist im unbekant
 in den holn bergen,
 der dâ pflegent diu getwerge.
 des muoz man in von schulden jehen:
 swêr ir âventiur wil sehen,
 der kumt in angest und in nôt.
 si slahent manegen helden tôt
 dâ hât er selden mit gestriten
 oder keinen kumber dâ erliten.

hête er den gesiget an,
 ich wolde in prîsen vür alle man."

In *V*, Hildebrant performs the same function, although on this occasion, the ride in search of adventure is to do with impressing courtly ladies:

h18,9 "swenn er bî vrouwen sitzen sol,
 er hât sîn iemer schande,
 daz er in des niht kan verjehen
 daz ime bî allen sînen tagen
 dekein âventiure sî geschehen."

In *E*, this scheme is given further variation. Here it is Ecke who goes out in search of Dietrich. Nevertheless, Hildebrant performs his function as catalyst to the action by directing Ecke towards Dietrich (L48-49).

While this typical role for Hildebrant is absent in both *G* and *ÄSig*, it is clear that this is one of the standard narrative devices common throughout the tradition. Closely allied to this is Hildebrant's role as Dietrich's teacher and guardian.

Indeed, *Sig* integrates this as one of its central themes. Hildebrant refers specifically to this role in *JSig*: "Sît ich iu, edeler fürste hêr,/Zeim meister wart gegeben..." (17,2-3). Later, this is developed in a fairly light-hearted manner: after Hildebrant has finally killed Sigenot, he threatens to leave Dietrich in his dungeon:

ÄSig 27,7 "war hâst du dîne sinne getân
 daz du einec rite von Berne?
 nu hâst doch mengen vrumen man,
 der mit dir rite gerne.
 du hast burclen enpfangen hie:
 dir ist geschehen als mengem
 der guot lâr übergie.

28,1 Du wilt mir leider volgen niht.
 des scheid ich mich, swie mir geschicht,
 von dîr und lân dich eine."

Naturally, Hildebrant relents from this not entirely serious threat.

This teacher-pupil relationship is evident throughout the poems, as, for instance, in *L(A)*, where Hildebrant scolds Dietrich for expressing his anger:

49 er sprach: "swer wil sîn ein biderman,
 der sol sîn rede verborgen hân,
 unz er gehoeret, wie man'z kêre:
 sô hât er tugent und êre."

More than any of the other works, *V* exploits this traditional aspect, and in particular *V(h)* (17). Hildebrant's role is to teach Dietrich the ways of courtly life:

361,1 "ich lârte in sprechen reiniu wort,

ganzer tugende vollen hort:
 ich liez in nie gehirmen,
 ich lêrte in êren priesters leben,
 lop den reinen vrouwen geben,
 schâchzabel ziehen, schirmen.
 ich lêrte in êren rîterschaft,
 wie er die behielte
 menlîch in rechter noete kraft
 alde man schatzes wielte."

Hildebrant's particular concern is to instruct Dietrich in the role of aventiure, which he defines with particular reference to service on behalf of courtly ladies:

2,8 "hât ir diu künigîn lîden,
 wir müezen dulden ungemach
 dar umbe in herten strîten
 vil snelliclîche an dirre stunt.
 mîn herre und ich müezen dar:
 sô wirt uns âventiure kunt."

Whether or not this depiction of Hildebrant as experienced Frauenritter is to be taken seriously is a matter of some doubt - we may certainly have some sympathy with Gillespie's opinion that this may be one big joke (18). It is perhaps no surprise that Dietrich is slow to accept Hildebrant's "Minnelehre".

For the authors of the various versions of our texts, Hildebrant is a stock item of material available from the tradition to be

employed in various ways in the different works. It is not plausible to see the depiction of this role in any given poem or version as directly derivative from that in another. Rather, these individual depictions draw on the traditional role of Hildebrant in the tradition, a tradition which underpins the individual literary manifestations available to us. As a further demonstration, it is useful to identify other aspects of that material commonly employed in our texts.

2.5 The depiction of Dietrich

The depiction of Dietrich is more or less consistent throughout our poems. We shall examine his attitude towards adventure in the next section: for the moment we will concentrate on his typical behaviour in those adventures. In *JSig*, Dietrich kicks the giant to wake him up, but then suddenly backs away from engaging him in combat:

67,2 "Du solt mich gen Bern rîten lân
 Durch aller risen êre.
 Fund ich dich slâfend alle tag,
 Für wâr ich dir daz sagen mac,
 Ich gewact dich niemer mêre.
 Daz dû mîn vîgent woltest sîn,
 Daz west ich nit für wâre."

This is of course a direct contradiction of his intentions expressed at the beginning of the poem, and of what Hildebrant has reported.

Once engaged in battle, however, Dietrich loses all trace of this hesitancy. Indeed, in the heat of battle Dietrich's fury is such that fire comes from his mouth (82,9-13; see also his encounter with the wild man, 35,1). Sigenot interprets this fire in a way which is typical of the tradition:

83,5 "Ich weiz werz in dich getragen hât.

Ich kan nit anders erkennen,
 Wan daz der tiufel in dir sî
 Mit allen sînen knehten."

Not surprisingly, Dietrich denies this angrily (84,1).

This pattern of behaviour is closely paralleled in *E*. When challenged by Ecke, Dietrich initially refuses the combat. Among other reasons, Dietrich is clearly afraid of Ecke, and in particular the alleged power of his sword:

L84,7 "ich haete guoter witze niht,
 swenn ich dar an gedaechte,
 daz man im sölhes prîses giht,
 und ich dan mit dir vaehte:
 so bruofte ich mir selb ärebeit.
 ich wil mit dir niht vehten,
 ez sî dir widerseit."

It is only when Ecke renounces the help of God that Dietrich is willing to do battle with his opponent (99-100). It is his

knowledge that God is on his side that makes him confident of victory:

L109,5 "ich getar dich wol bestân,
 wil er mir helfen eine
 den du mir vor gegeben hâst."

As the battle continues, the reasons for these references to Dietrich's trust in God become more apparent. Ecke is amazed at Dietrich's strength:

L123,4 "ich sihe niwan dîn eines schîn,
 und vihtest als dîn zwêne sîn.
 ist ieman in dir mêre
 der dir hie gît sô grôze kraft,
 sô kaem du nie von wîbe:
 der tievel ist in dir gehaft,
 der viht ûz dînem lîbe."

We may see in these references to the devil in Dietrich an echo of the legend of Dietrich's demonic nature and origin, as attested in the *SHb* (19). The *Kaiserchronik* refers to Dietrich as "der übel wuotgrimme" (14154). *E* provides Dietrich with an opportunity to counter this reputation: he gains his strength from the fact that God is with him, while Ecke has given up God's help (124).

This apparently inconsistent behaviour is a characteristic feature of Dietrich in our texts. Dietrich's *zagheit* is

typically countered by uncontrolled fury. This is apparent in *L*, where Dietrich's initial reluctance to enter into battle with the dwarf king is interpreted by Witege as cowardice (A333-342). Having defeated Laurin, however, Dietrich's fury is such that he refuses to spare his life, even to the extent of attacking Dietleib, who protects the dwarf. In *V*, the motif of Dietrich's *zagheit* is integrated into the programme of Hildebrant's instruction in courtly knighthood: Dietrich constantly complains at being put in danger, but also constantly overcomes his opponents with relative ease.

Zips sees this behaviour as being the fundamental characteristic of his portrayal in tradition (20). Of course, such a split between Dietrich's self control (almost to the point of suspected cowardice) and his fury in battle is also well known from the *Nibelungenlied*. Heinzle's suggestion that this may be the first depiction of Dietrich in this way, and that it is not characteristic of the historical epics, is probably mistaken: we see a good example of this in *Rschl*, as we saw earlier (21). It is more likely that our texts represent the literary reflex of characteristic behaviour traditionally associated with Dietrich, and as such it is part of the core traditional material available to the authors of these works.

2.6 Dietrich's opponents

The relatively consistent depiction of Hildebrant and Dietrich in the *aventiuren* points to the existence of a well of defined characters in the tradition which the authors and revisors of the

texts use in varying ways. This may also be said to be true of Dietrich's opponents.

The description of Sigenot in JSig is entertaining and graphic:

60,11 Wann der ris den âtem liez od zôch,

Sô volgeten im die este

Al in den baumen hôch.

61,1 Sîn bein diu wâren als zwei bloc.

Gar rûhe was sîn wâfenroc,

Mit riemen wol durchnaeget.

Der gie im vaste für diu knie.

Ein tunst im ûz dem halse gie,

Alsô ein wint der waeget.

Sîn munt het in begrifen gar

Zuo beiden sînen wangen.

Sîn ougen wâren fiuwervar.

During their combat, Sigenot is separated from his "stange", and tears a tree from the ground as a replacement (73,12-13). The wild man which Dietrich meets in the early part of the poem is covered in hair, and carries a dwarf tied to his "stange" (31-32).

There is little doubt that such descriptions would have had particular significance for the audiences of our stories. The hairy body of the wild man, the manner of carrying his victim, Sigenot's use of a tree as a weapon and the close association between the giant and the wind: these are all motifs which can be

found in folk material dealing with wild men and related beings (22). When we look through others of Dietrich's opponents, it is clear that the influence of folk material is strong in their depiction.

The dwarf who carries off young maidens to his underground dwelling is a common theme in native folklore, represented here by Laurin and Goldemar (23). The figures of Orkise and Vasolt bear close relation to the "wild hunter" of popular myth (24). The giant which Dietrich meets while chasing the wild boar in V(DrHb106-107) has many characteristics associated with the wild man, in particular his close relationship with the animals (this is of course also a type represented by the wild herdsman in Iwein)(25). It is evident that in general terms Dietrich's opponents are representatives of a "wild" world which would already have been deeply embedded in the consciousness of those who composed and received the poems.

We see, then, that the tradition provides those working within it with a set of character types, both in terms of the heroes and their opponents. More than that, however, it also provides a concept which furnishes the motivation for the narrative, namely that of aventure. Evidently, this is a word taken from courtly literature, but closer examination shows that it refers to a narrative entity whose existence does not necessarily depend on that courtly influence.

2.7 The concept of aventiure

While Dietrich may promise Hildebrant not to seek out Sigenot, it is inevitable, indeed necessary for the poem, that he does. Sigenot represents a challenge to Dietrich's sense of honour, more particularly his own perception of his reputation:

10,10 "Man hât mich dick geprisen:

Solt mîn lop nuon undergân?"

Sigenot, despite his desire to avenge Grin's death (7,9ff), does not represent an imminent threat to Dietrich or Bern. Nevertheless, the mere fact of his existence represents a blow to the otherwise complete reputation of Dietrich. In order to conform to the demands made of him by his own perceived position in society, Dietrich must accept the challenge.

In *Sig*, the primary adventure is that involving Sigenot himself. A secondary, or incidental adventure is included in *JSig*, namely Dietrich's encounter with the wild man. This is a scheme common among our poems, and which we will deal with at greater length later. If we examine the motivation which lies behind the acceptance of the primary adventures of the poems, we see that they are all seen primarily as challenges, in one form or another.

JSig is uncomplicated in this respect - there is no secondary motivation needed for Dietrich to ride out in search of Sigenot. This is also the case with *L(A)*. Here, Dietrich's reputation is

established by Witege: "man sol in prisen vür alle man"(28).
Hildebrant expresses doubt, to which Dietrich reacts angrily:

43 er sprach: "meister Hildebrant,
von arte ein wîser wîgant,
und waere diu rede ein wârheit,
du hêtest mir's lange vor geseit."

This anger expresses Dietrich's constant desire to maintain his perceived standing. The adventure and dangers attending Laurin's rose garden are an opportunity to enhance that standing, which Dietrich takes without hesitation: "ich wil suochen die rôsen rôt,/solde ich komen in grôze nôt"(79-80).

E(L) represents a passive variant of this scheme (26). In the initial stages of the poem, it is Ecke who shows concern for his standing:

14,5 "ez weiz noch nieman wer ich bin:
wan muoz ouch mich erkennen.
ich hân michs beidenthalp verwegen,
ich vlies ald ich gewinne.
vrô Saelde mac mîn alsô pflegen
daz ich im nime die sinne:
sô hoert man in den landen sagen,
und sprechent 'seht, her Ecke
hât den Bernaere erslagen.'"

The opening sections of V provide us with an interesting insight

into the varying ways in which aventure as a challenge is presented. V(h) would seem to present a situation in which Dietrich and Hildebrant are motivated by a desire to protect the queen Virginal from the ravages of Orkise. Yet Hildebrant's words do not concentrate on the service they may be able to render this courtly lady, but more on the shame this situation brings them:

9,10 "wir hân sîn iemer schande,
 daz man sus wüestet unser lant.
 wol ûf, lânt uns rîten dar,
 sô wirt uns âventiure erkant."

Orkise represents primarily a blemish on their reputations, not an opportunity for courtly service. It also offers Dietrich the opportunity to experience adventure in general, and therefore build a stock of strange stories to relate to the ladies at court, the lack of which is a source of some embarrassment to him. V(DrHb) stresses this aspect, when Hildebrant uses their perceived shame to motivate Dietrich:

4,6 ..."her, helft mit vrumen
 mir treiben den heiden auß den lant;
 er hat mort vil getriben
 an einer kungin hoch genant.
 do von ist uns beliben,
 das man sagt zagheit hie uns peidn."
 der Perner sprach: "fur ware,
 des wöl wir nymer leidn."

It is the thought of the accusations of cowardice which above all motivate Hildebrant and Dietrich, even though both versions are set in the context of giving service to a courtly lady. On close examination, this courtly veneer is not very thick.

The *G* fragment is revealing in this context. By common consent, this work seeks to present Dietrich in a specifically "courtly" role (see below). However, the poet is well aware of the traditional motivation which drives him to seek adventure:

4,7 er sprach, er wolte gerne sehen
 die risen ungefüege.
 swaz kumbers im dâ möhte beschehen,
 dô ieglicher trüege
 ein stange grôz und dar zuo lanc,
 diu wunder wolte er gerne spehen.
 sîn manheit in dar zuo betwanc.

We can see, then, that the common motivation of Dietrich in our poems is the desire to prove his "manheit" and maintain his reputation. Even in situations where there is a strong secondary motivation, for instance the freeing of a courtly lady, this motivation is the overriding factor. For instance, this is evident in *L*, when Laurin invites Dietrich and his companions to his underground kingdom. In *L(A)*, this is an opportunity to rescue Dietleib's sister, Kunhilt, who has been abducted by Laurin. But Hildebrant sees the invitation in a different light:

851 "...wolde wir'z durch vorhte lân,

zewâre daz stüende uns übel an,
 des hête wir michel schande,
 swâ man ez in dem lande
 seite vür vürsten zageheit:
 daz waere uns ein grôz leit."

Similarly, the wild man section of *JSig* provides an opportunity for Dietrich to free a dwarf, who appeals for his help (31,9-13). However, more importantly for Dietrich, the appearance of the wild man provides him with the opportunity to test his manhood, a desire expressed earlier:

30,11 "Her got, nu send mir einen man,
 Er sî gehiur oder ungehiur,
 Daz ich ze vehten hân."

Aventiure as a means of establishing and maintaining Dietrich's reputation may be recognised as one of the basic elements of the tradition. It provides the motivation for the action which follows, and in many cases is the only justification required in the works for that action. We shall see later, however, that this narrative model can also become the framework for a more reflective discussion on the role of armed action. For the moment, however, we shall continue our attempt to see in the poems the common elements which form the core tradition. We have talked of primary adventures - another common element of the tradition is the tendency for secondary adventures to be added to the core action, giving rise to greatly differing versions of the same basic story.

2.8 A narrative principle: addition without obligation.

Dietrich's encounter with the wild man in *JSig* is entirely superfluous to the main action and original reasons for Dietrich's ride into the forest. There is no organic or logical connection. *ÄSig*, for instance, makes no mention of this encounter, and has no need to in narrative terms. The addition of this episode reflects a common process in the works, which also tells us something of how they were perceived.

Perhaps the most interesting example of addition is in the various versions of *L*. *L(D)* includes an additional section at the beginning of the poem, before joining up with a presumably pre-existing version (*A*). This section describes the abduction of Similt (Dietleib's sister, Kunhilt in *A* and *K*), and subsequent events: Laurin takes Similt to his kingdom, where she is apparently happy, at least initially: "sît du bist quotes sô rîche,/sô sûln wir allez trûren lân" (82f). On discovering his sister is missing, Dietleib seeks out Hildebrant for help and advice. They leave Garte, presumably to search for Similt (165ff). Hildebrant has an encounter with a wild man, who tells him about Laurin and his rose garden (but not that Laurin has Similt). For obscure reasons, Hildebrant tells no-one of what he knows: "durch grôzen list was daz getân", remarks the narrator somewhat enigmatically (222). The companions now join Dietrich in Bern, where they remain, apparently having forgotten their quest to find Similt. The narrative then follows *L(A)*.

This addition tells us one potentially important piece of

information, which in all other versions is held back until the final stages of the events in Laurin's rose garden, namely Laurin's responsibility for Similt/Kunhilt's abduction. In A, we must even doubt that Dietleib himself is aware of the abduction, as Laurin tells him that this took place only the previous morning (720-2). L(DrHb), on the other hand, gives a time of 12 years since the abduction (145,8)! At the corresponding point in D, Laurin gives no indication of how long he has held Similt - presumably the audience is expected to remember the figure of 6 months.

Despite the fact that the addition of these episodes in D opens the possibility of characterising Dietrich and his companion's ride to Laurin's rose garden as a rescue mission, once these opening sections are completed, D retains virtually verbatim the form of A. In other words, Dietleib's concern at the disappearance of his sister in the added section remains in narrative terms completely 'functionless'. Heinzle asserts that this indicates a lack of interest on the part of the narrator in providing a better motivation for the second half of the poem (27). However, this can be seen in a different way. From the point of view of a poet working within this particular tradition, the factors which motivate Dietrich and his companions to seek out Laurin's rose garden in A are perfectly adequate. As we have seen, they are the stock motivation of the tradition for action. There is no requirement for a "better" motivation.

More importantly in this context, it is evident that there seems to be no requirement felt by the redactor of this initial section

in D to tie this episode in to the following events organically. This section merely takes advantage of the narrative opportunity presented to the redactor by Laurin's own description of the abduction of Kunhilt in both A and his own version, while also explaining how Hildebrant knows about Laurin and his rose garden at the beginning of the main sections, when he describes the adventure to come (A53-74, D291-312).

This process of adding episodes without obligation to, or repercussions for, the central story of the various poems is so common in our texts that we may justifiably regard it as a narrative principle of the tradition. We may define further this principle by closer examination of V.

The primary adventure of V is the liberation of the queen from the oppression of Orkise and Dietrich's subsequent visit to her court. The first part of this is achieved in quick time: by line 119 in h, and line 42 in DrHb. All versions then agree on the following Rentwin episode and the visit to Arona. After this, the versions part company. H depicts Dietrich's capture by giants and imprisonment at Muter (314ff), and the subsequent attempts to rescue him. Following this there are further battles with giants and dragons (848-956), before the primary adventure is finally brought to completion with the arrival at Virginal's camp. V(DrHb) completely omits the Muter episode, having in its place Dietrich's fight with Libertin, followed by the Janapas episode (85-105). Before they eventually arrive at Virginal's camp Dietrich also successfully hunts a wild boar and defeats a giant who claims the right to hunt in that area (106-115). The

version *w*, on the other hand, combines the other two versions, including first the events of *DrHb* (Libertin through to the combat with the giant), and then a second departure from Arona, followed by the *Muter* episode (though much shorter than in *h*). The combination of the other two versions in *w* demonstrates clearly the way in which episodes may be interchanged without reference to factors such as internal motivation (28). What is important, however, is that whatever secondary adventures may be added on to the main plot, they never actually disrupt the eventual completion of it. *E* in its various forms also shows this, following basic narrative agreement up to *Vasolt's* second defeat by *Dietrich* (*L201*, *DrHb267*, *prints179*). Thereafter *Dietrich* faces a variety of enemies, all intent on avenging *Ecke's* death, but their identities vary from version to version.

A final interesting example is the integration in *Ths* of an episode which closely resembles the *Rentwin* episode in *V*. In *Ths*, this is inserted in the passages dealing with *Ecke* and *Vasolt* (168ff). Despite the change of name (*Sistrum* instead of *Rentwin*), the parallels are strong enough to suggest that both episodes derive from a common source. The fact that this story may be integrated equally in either context demonstrates how strongly the principle of addition without obligation operates throughout the tradition, and not just in our extant Middle High German texts.

The tradition shows, in general, an extreme narrative flexibility. In the works we see a core story, which defines the work. Thereafter, however, the individual works are open to an

addition and variation which is unique in Middle High German literature. This perhaps gives us some clues as to how these stories were perceived in literary terms. There would seem, for example, to be no question of "intellectual copyright" associated with the production of these poems. We may even visualise the primary stories - Dietrich and Laurin's rose garden, or Ecke's challenge to Dietrich - as belonging to the public domain. They form the kernel around which are formed the more fluid additions of individual versions. But these additions in themselves are the concrete evidence of the perception of a tradition which offers the chance to create entertainment and, as we shall see, debate, through free addition. This licence to create, or indeed add in episodes from traditional stock, is perhaps one of the main explanations of the tradition's evident popularity.

2.9 The aventiurenhaft epics and courtly literature.

We hope to have established in the preceding sections an indication of the ground-rules and structures which underpin the tradition at least as we see it in our extant texts. These basic structures are essentially very simple, relying on a pre-existing set of stock characters, straightforward motivation, and a flexible narrative concept. We do not need to look to other narrative traditions for the inspiration for these structures - their consistency indicates that here we are dealing with a narrative tradition which is established and understood in its own right. If we look, for example, at *JSig*, we see a work whose basic constituent parts are so consistent with those of other

works in the tradition that it strikes the reader almost as an exercise in "how to compose a Dietrich aventure". Yet it is very probably a late addition, at least in the form that we have it, to the repertoire. It is evidence of a poet consciously working within the tradition, anchoring himself in that tradition not only by his references to Ecke and the Grin/Hilte story, but also in his use of the structures and raw character material available. The plethora of prints of JSig stand witness to his success in producing a work which satisfies an evident public demand for narratives of this type.

However, this flourishing of the tradition in the late medieval period need not necessarily imply that the material itself is nothing but modern concoction. OE *Widsith*, for example, knows of Dietrich's imprisonment by giants, a tradition which may underpin either Sig or the Muter episode in V. Here the evidence of G is interesting.

If we assume that the poet of G, who calls himself Albrecht von Kemenaten, is the same Albrecht referred to by Rudolf von Ems (*Alexander* 3252f and *Willehalm von Orlens* 2243-46), we may plausibly date the poem to around 1230-40. The only other poem in our group which may be dated anywhere near this date is E, and yet Albrecht assumes a knowledge in his audience of Dietrich's adventures ("wir hoeren wunder von im sagen"^{3,7}), and characterises them as "unhövelich". The suggestion must be that stories of this type were circulating often long before the extant versions which we have. In the absence of contemporary texts, but based on our examination of the later texts above, we

have grounds to see these as relatively unsophisticated narratives existing in a sub-literary sphere, that is to say, in a form not generally committed to paper in a "final" version. How many of these tales there may have been in circulation is a matter of guesswork, but the many different versions of the surviving poems, and the wide variety of secondary adventures contained within them, suggest that in the even freer creative environment, as we would imagine it, of this pre-literary narrative world, there would have been many, both localised and with wider geographical distribution.

Our texts imply the existence of this long standing narrative tradition: but more than that they also show that this tradition itself becomes an object of discussion, as Albrecht von Kemenaten makes quite clear. He accuses Dietrich, and by extension the tradition, of being uncourtly, and determines, as we shall see, to show Dietrich in a new light. The relationship of the Dietrich aventiuren to courtly ideas recurs again and again as a theme in the poems.

In *JSig*, the "courtly" nature, or otherwise, of aventure becomes a subject of some debate. Dietrich's decision to ride out and find Sigenot is a cause of consternation among the ladies at court:

14,1 Dô sprach vil manic schoenez wîp

"Welnt ir iuwern werden lîp

An eim risen sô verkoufen?

Daz dunket uns nit wol getân."

Die schoenen frouwen lobesan
 Begunden zuo im loufen:
 "Und welnt ir wegen iuwer jeit
 Gegen eim walthunde,
 Des degenheit ouch nie verzeit?
 Daz sagen wir iu ze stunde:
 Und wer er och ein edelman,
 Wir liezen iuch dest gerner
 Zuo im in den tan."

There is a distinct line drawn here between what we might call "courtly" opponents - knights of similar social rank - and those inhabiting the wild world of the "tan". As we have already seen, Dietrich's opponents in the tradition as a whole are overwhelmingly of the latter variety, and here JSig makes reference to this fact, and uses it to introduce a debate on the nature of aventure. While of course we must recognise that even the most courtly of knights, as for example in Hartmann's works, come up against a variety of non-courtly opponents, it seems clear that this passage is at least evidence of a perception of a body of courtly literature in which opponents are predominantly of similar rank and background. Dietrich, however, is unmoved by these appeals. Typically, he sees it as a challenge not to be ignored:

15,5 "Und daz der ungefüege man
 Ísen ezzen künde,
 Ich muoz sîn degenheit besehen,
 Die man sô hõhe prîset."

Dietrich's words are strongly reinforced by Wolfhart:

22,5 "Waz sol eins edeln fürsten lîp

Des lop ist gar verswigen,
 Daz er in aller kristenheit
 Kein âventiur kan gesagen?

It seems that the concept of aventure is closely bound up with the wild world away from court and courtly behaviour. To prove himself, the young man must step outside the confines of this courtly existence, and face the dangers of the world outside. This division which is made between courtly ritual on the one hand, and the testing of one's manhood on the other, is amusingly developed in a scene involving Wolfhart, Hildebrant and Uote. As he prepares to ride out in search of Dietrich, Hildebrant consoles the fearful Uote: "Ach, frou, durch iuwern willen / ich gerne strîten wil" (130,12-13). Wolfhart leaps on this as an opportunity for amusement:

131,3 "Nu ist der ris verlorn!

Wann mîn oehein hochgemuot
 Gedenket an den kus sô guot
 Al von der ûzerkorn,
 Sô ist ez umb den grôzen man
 Waerlich gar ergangen.
 Wann er von frouwen wunnesan
 Wirt lieplîchen umbvangen,
 Sô gewinnt er wol eins lewen muot

Daz er ist in den noeten

Wol für sehziç quot."

Wolhart's obvious sarcasm is met by the perfect riposte from Uote, who asks why he does not himself find a lady who would kiss him: "dô wil mich keine" replies Wolhart (132,2ff).

The concept of love service, therefore, appears to be the object of some ridicule in *JSig*. *Aventiure* is a means by which the young man proves himself, and has nothing to do with the ladies at court (although doubtless the strange tales it engenders will be used to impress them!). However, we also see the theme being developed in a much more serious light.

Dietrich, sorely pressed by Sigenot, refuses to submit to the giant:

81,4 "Ich wil in disem tan ersterben

Oder ich wil prîs erwerben,

Und daz ich vor den frouwen

Nit mîn waehez lop verliur,

Daz ich sô lang hân ghalten."

Sigenot is surprised at this:

82,1 "Vihtest dû durch frouwen ruon?

Sich, helt, daz maht du ungeruon:

Siu lônent ungelîche.

Saehens dich in dem bluote baden,

Siu liezen dir den veigen schaden."

Dietrich's reply cuts through all doubt:

82,7 "Ich viht durch vrouwen und durch man
Und durch mîn selbes êre."

We shall come to the positive aspects of this statement in due course. More important for the present discussion is the rejection of the love service ideal perceived to belong to courtly literature. It is interesting that at this point we see Dietrich's fire breath, symbol in this context of that side of his nature which is itself wild and uncourtly (82,9-13).

The love service theme is of central importance in E. Among the many gifts which Seburg gives to Ecke as he prepares to ride out in search of Dietrich is the promise of the love of one of the three queens of Jochgrimm (L30, DrHb34). When Ecke encounters Dietrich in the forest, he formulates his approaches in the manner of a knight in love service: "...ich bin her komen/durch die drî küniginnen" (L74,7-8). He attacks Dietrich's refusal to do battle in terms consistent with that role:

L97,4 "drî edel küniginne hêr
hânt mich nâch dir gesendet her:
die maht du gerne schouwen.
sî sint alle in mîner pflege.
nu merke niuwer maere:
swenn ich den sage daz mich die wege

vlühe der Bernaere
 sô muoz dîn hôhez lop zergân."

Thus, Ecke's actions are given a secondary layer of motivation in addition to his basic desire to prove himself which we identified earlier. Dietrich himself recognises both layers:

L142,1 Er sprach: "Ecke, mich riwet dîn lîp.
 dîn übermuot und schoeniu wîp
 went dir den lîp verkoufen.

However, it is not Ecke's übermuot which is the subject of criticism by Dietrich, but the queens whom he holds responsible:

L98,7 "daz wir umb sî hie vehten gar,
 des munt sî dort wol lachen.
 ich waen sî ein des lebens bar
 undr uns zwein wellen machen.
 mich wundert waz sî daz gevrumt
 ob einer hie belîbet
 und der ander hinnân kumt."

As Heinzle remarks, this is "eindeutige, unverblümte Kritik am Aventiure- und Minnewesen höfischer Observanz" (29).

The ending of *E(L)* is lost, but we may well imagine that its end would have been fairly similar to that in *DrHb*. Here, Dietrich throws Ecke's head at the queens' feet:

324,1 "War umb wolt ir durch ewren nait
 mich geben in des todes streit,
 gar sünder alle schulde?
 und das ir Ecken in die lant
 also habt noch mir auß gesant,
 darumb der fürsten hulde
 sult ir gar pillich hie entpern
 und trawren an ende."

In this passage we perhaps see the denial of one concept of aventure, and an indication of an alternative role for it. Dietrich makes reference to the protection which the princes can offer the queens - however, by contributing towards the death of Ecke, they have forfeited this protection. Ironically, perhaps, the printed versions of E turn this around, depicting Dietrich as the saviour of the queens from Ecke:

"Got und euch dancke wir d geschicht
 er het uns sunst genoettet
 so hat gefreyt uns ewer hand
 darumb het wir zuo herzen
 Euch geren alle sandt."

This is a concept which is also given an airing in JSig, in Hildebrant's words:

154,9 "Wir vehten durch der welte frumen,
 Ich und her Dieterîche,
 Daz wir der risen übermuot

Zerstoeren; want der vâlante

Der welt vil ze leide tuot."

The actions of Dietrich and Hildebrant are given a social justification, which is further underlined by Sigenot's own words, when he believes he has finally defeated Dietrich:

93,1 "Des wil ich iezent gen Berne gân:

Ez muoz mir wesen undertân;

Des wil ich siu betwingen."

This idea of aventure as social action receives its strongest formulation in *L(DrHb)*, where a quite deliberate polarity is created between the "kaysser and konge, /und fursten hoch genant" (1,5-6) and the "helt gar ongehawr" (2,2). It is said of the latter:

2,3 die lagen in dem walde,
al freud die was in teur,
und warden nit geporen
von adellicher art;
auch waren sie nit kristen
gelaubig auf der fard.

Die recken von adel geporen,
die warden in gehas
der flugen sie mit zoren
was ungelaubiger was.

In this polarised universe, the action of the poem is given a specific interpretation, whereby Dietrich and his companions represent civilised courtly society, threatened by this wild world outside.

V represents an interesting example of the wider significance which is attached to aventure. On the face of it, it seems, as we have seen, that Hildebrant initiates Dietrich in a programme designed to teach him the ways of courtly love service.

Virginal, however, frames the situation in a different light:

h59,2 "es waere zît, und möhte ez sîn,
 daz got dar an gedaechte
 daz er mich tiure erarnet hât
 und daz ich bin sîn hantgetât,
 und mich von sorgen braechte
 und mir sîne ritterschaft
 an den ungetouften sante."

This stresses the social aspects of Dietrich and his companion's actions. It is very reminiscent of the role assigned to the knightly classes in the *Schwertleite*, in both literature and actual life (30), and which is referred to by Biterolf in the same poem:

548,11 "nû strîtâ durch der êren solt:
 beschirme witewen, weisen,
 sô wirt dir got von himele holt."

Indeed, the notion of Dietrich as "Minneritter" is treated in a decidedly sceptical way which, with Gillespie, it is hard to see as anything other than parody (31). Dietrich cannot understand the notion:

112,7 "wê warumbe tuont sî daz
 die minniclîchen vrouwen,
 daz ich hie habe bluotes naz
 und durch sî bin verhouwen?"

This echoes Dietrich's criticisms of the queens of Jochgrimm. When the giants mock Dietrich, it indicates a great deal about the idea of Dietrich as a *Minneritter*: "Wie dünkt iuch nû, her Vrouwenzart?" (338,2). The ending of h prevents the forthcoming marriage of Dietrich to Virginal by, significantly, calling Dietrich back to Bern to protect it from attack. Even in *DrHb*, where a marriage takes place, the event is laced with parody: Hildebrant, for instance, is required to hide under the marriage bed for three nights to ensure the marriage is consummated (125ff).

In the context of this generally negative attitude towards the concept of love service, it is no wonder that the author of *G* makes explicit reference to this, as a background against which he sets out his programme:

2,6 wan seit uns daz er waere
 gên vrouwen niht ein hovelîch man
 (sîn muot stuont im ze strîte),

unz er ein vrouwen wol getân
 gesach bî einen zîten.

The author is well aware that in this programme he is breaking the mould. As has been suggested, it is entirely possible that the author is acquainted with a story similar to our extant *L*, which, as we have seen, makes no attempt to present Dietrich's encounter with Laurin as a service to the kidnapped Kunhilt. In general in the tradition, it is not a motivation which has narrative force.

We see, then, that in the *aventiuren*, the role of *aventiure* itself becomes the subject of some debate. But the extent to which this becomes a major issue should not be overestimated. The poems' origins most decidedly do not lie in this debate. In general it is a secondary factor in the poems, an issue which arises from them, but does not define them. Even in *E*, where it is of evident importance, it is secondary to the main action, which essentially revolves around the basic issues of self-assertion by the young warrior.

The tradition is not by nature problematic: nevertheless, it shows itself capable of defining itself with regard to a perception of the ideals represented in courtly literature. It rejects the concept of love service, finding this idea an inadequate justification for the pain and injury suffered in armed combat. Where an alternative justification is given, there is some development of the idea of *aventiure* as a social action. For the most part, however, *aventiure* needs no justification: it

is simply the means by which the young man must assert and maintain his position in the world. This freedom from the need to justify and explain gives those working in the tradition an equal freedom to portray the wide array of adventures which Dietrich experiences in the different versions of the poems.

In terms of the range and volume of adventures contained within a single identifiable genre in Middle High German narrative poetry, only Arthurian romance is comparable. We now turn to considering the relationship between Arthurian romance and the Dietrich *aventiuere*.

Notes

(1) Rudolf von Ems in *Willehalm von Orlens*, and *Alexander*.

(2) H. de Boor: "Der Daniel des Stricker und der Garel des Pleier." PBB 79 (Tüb 1957) p67-84, also in *Kleine Schriften I*, Berlin 1964, p184-197.

(3) Ch. Cormeau: "*Wigalois*" und "*diu crône*". *Zwei Kapitel zur Gattungsgeschichte des nachklassischen Aventiurerromans*. Munich 1977.

(4) eg Heinzle: *Mittelhochdeutsche Dietrichepik*, as above. And Heinzle in Kühebacher, p172-191.

(5) Heinzle in Kühebacher p185.

- (6) *Mhd. Dietrichepik* p186
- (7) as above p186, in Kühebacher p175.
- (8) in Kühebacher p185.
- (9) see P. K. Stein: "Überlieferungsgeschichte als Literaturgeschichte - Textanalyse - Verständnisperspektiven. Bemerkungen zu neueren Versuchen zur mittelhochdeutschen Dietrichepik." in *Sprachkunst* 12 (1981) p75.
- (10) see Hoffmann, *Mhd. Heldendichtung* p202.
- (11) However see Heinzle, *Mhd. Dietrichepik* p46f and 227f.
- (12) J. Heinzle: "Die Triaden auf Runkelstein und die mittelhochdeutsche Heldendichtung", p80f. In: *Runkelstein. Die Wandmalereien des Sommerhauses*, Wiesbaden 1982, p63-93.
- (13) de Boor: *Geschichte* II,1, p160
- (14) Gillespie: *Catalogue*, p78
- (15) As above
- (16) *Runkelstein* p92
- (17) See Gillespie: "Hildebrants Minnelehre. Zur 'Virginal h'."

In: *Liebe in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*. St Andrews Colloquium 1985, ed J. Ashcroft, D. Huschenbett, W. H. Jackson. Tübingen 1987, p61-79.

(18) as above p74.

(19) see also Gillespie: *Catalogue* p27 and 31, and Plötzener, as above.

(20) Zips in *Kühebacher*, p138.

(21) *Mhd. Dietrichepik*, p190.

(22) R. Bernheimer: *Wild men in the Middle Ages*, p26 and p1, and fig 15.

(23) as above p127f.

(24) as above p130.

(25) as above p27f.

(26) Heinzle, *Mhd. Dietrichepik* p186.

(27) as above p196.

(28) see Gillespie, "Minnelehre", p62.

(29) Heinzle, *Mhd. Dietrichepik*, p203.

(30) on the *Schwertleite*, see Joachim Bumke: *Studien zum Ritterbegriff im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert*, Beihefte zum *Euphorion* 1, Heidelberg 1964, pp101-108, and *ibid.*, *Höfische Kultur: Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, München 1986, pp. 318-341.

(31) Gillespie, "Minnelehre", p76.

Section Three

Arthurian romance and the Dietrich
aventiuere.

3.1 Introduction

It is evident from the above that while not necessarily formative for the tradition, the influence of courtly literature is of some importance in the Dietrich aventiuren. In particular, we may look to Arthurian romance as a genre which must have been of particular significance in this regard.

When we talk of Arthurian romance we tend to refer to the so called "classical" works of Hartmann and Wolfram. We think, therefore, of a tradition which is defined by certain common structures and preoccupations (1). We think in terms of a developing hero, moving towards the goal of social integration in courtly society. In particular we think of a hero who suffers a fundamental crisis which requires him at a particular point in his development to reassess and alter his pattern of behaviour in order to eventually achieve the social integration which is the end goal of the work. The development of these heroes is real, in that it entails this reassessment of behaviour.

However, a basic problem of the great volumes of scholarship devoted to analysing these "classical" models is that its results are largely irrelevant for a large section of the genre which has been characterised as "post-classical". Included in this description are works such as Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet*, Wirnt von Gravenberc's *Wigalois*, and der Stricker's *Daniel*. From a purely chronological point of view, the term post-classical is misleading - *Lanzelet*, for example, is considered to have been composed around 1194, right in the middle

of the "classical" period.

These works share neither the typical bipartite narrative structure of the classical romances, nor do they depict a hero undergoing true development. Indeed, Nagel's judgment on the literary qualities of *Lanzelet* is damning: "...eine bedenkenlose Kompilation rohstofflicher Art, in der die ethisch-ästhetischen Ideale von Rittertum und Minne noch kein Rolle spielen, in der lediglich Abenteuer gehäuft werden und psychologische Gesichtspunkte außer Betracht bleiben." (2) Doubtless Nagel would describe the Dietrich poems in a similar way.

The problem, surely, is this: in Hartmann and Wolfram, and indeed Gottfried von Straßburg, we are dealing with the acknowledged masters of a highly developed particular form of courtly literature. Even near contemporaries such as Konrad von Stoffeln, the author of *Gauriel von Muntabel*, recognise their special place in the literary canon:

29 meister Gotfrît unt her Hartman
 von Eschenbach her Wolfram
 die hant ius kunt getan.

This author clearly sees himself as referring to the works of these men in his own work. Yet we must doubt strongly whether he seriously wishes to imply that he sees himself on the same literary plane.

Schultz puts his finger on the problem when he states: "...the

devotion to critical tradition has turned what was originally a perfectly defensible set of descriptive observations on a few works into a prescriptive poetics for an entire genre" (3). If we even briefly examine the so called "post-classical" works we see that in certain ways they have just as much in common with the Dietrich adventures as with classical Arthurian romance.

3.2 The static hero

In many ways, the role of the Dietrich adventures is simply to confirm his reputation as consummate warrior. There is no development, merely restatement of his cherished position. The situation in the post-classical romances is somewhat different in that in each work we are introduced to a new hero, who must establish his pre-eminence as a knight. However, universally in these works this is achieved without problem or fundamental crisis.

Lanzelet's quest to find his name may be defined by Ruh as a quest for "Selbstverwirklichung" (4), but this is hardly borne out by the behaviour of the hero: throughout the first series of adventures which he undertakes, this "quest" is of little significance. Lanzelet proceeds sublimely from adventure to adventure, his goal apparently little more than to increase his self-esteem. He rides out, we are told, "durch niht wan umb êre" (352). True, Ulrich sees Lanzelet's successful navigation of these adventures as the passport to his acceptance at Arthur's court: "durch sîne wirde (er) gewan/stuol zer tavelrunde" (5418f). Nevertheless, it is difficult to agree with Ruh that

these adventures represent a process of development to that position. His "development" is characterised more by the quantity of adventures undergone, rather than their symbolic social or psychological significance. In this context, the adventures which lead up to the discovery of his name cannot be seen in terms of progression towards the ultimate goal of self-discovery. From the moment when he sets out in search of adventure he is already, in terms of this work, the consummate knight - the adventures which follow merely confirm this.

This is a process characteristic of the post-classical works. Wigalois is a hero entirely untroubled by crisis. Even on his first expedition, Wigalois confounds the fears of the court regarding his inexperience, successfully fulfilling all the norms of behaviour expected of the knights of Arthur's court. As Cormeau puts it, "Wigalois erfüllt mit diesem Verhalten Regeln als selbstverständlich, wie die soziale Verpflichtung des ritterlichen Handelns oder seine Unabhängigkeit vom eigenen Vorteil, die ein Erec oder Iwein erst nach der Krise einholen."

(4). The hero of the Stricker's *Daniel* is equally sublime in the assumption of his mantle as consummate knight - it takes less than 400 lines for the author to establish Daniel as an accepted member of the Arthurian fold, while in the Pleier's *Garel* progress from adventure to adventure is equally unimpeded, bringing with it a wife and kingdom.

Perhaps most indicative of the concept of the hero as static in these works is the example of *Diu crône*, by Heinrich von dem Türlin. The choice of Gawein as hero of the work avoids even the

necessity to cursorily establish the reputation of the hero. Gawain is well known as the complete knight, often the benchmark by which other heroes are measured. For this author, at least, the development of the Arthurian hero is not a theme (5).

3.3 The role of *minne*

We know from the evidence of the texts, and also from the explicit comments in *G*, that Dietrich is not traditionally associated with anything approaching love service. Of course, we would think of this as a central theme in Arthurian romance: yet the evidence of the post-classical works does not universally back this up.

Diu crône shows Gawain in an apparently classic love relationship with Amurfina. However, it is striking that in many ways this relationship is of no more than passing consequence, as Cormeau explains: "...trotz aller Betonung reicht Gaweins Minne nicht über die Episode hinaus, wirkt in keiner Beziehung auf nachfolgende Aventiuren und bleibt vorübergehend, ohne notwendige Tendenz zu einer statusgesicherten Ruhelage. (6) The *minne* episode apparently has no function other than to delay further episodes devoted to feats of arms.

The Stricker's *Daniel* at no point depicts its hero in a love relationship: "(Daniel) besteht zwar die gefährlichsten Abenteuer zur Rettung schöner Frauen, aber von Minne ist im ganzen Epos nicht die Rede." (7) Here we perhaps see a stress on the role of armed action as social action, a process which to a limited

extent we have also seen in the Dietrich texts. The Pleier's *Garel* may justifiably be seen as a reworking of *Daniel* in a "politically correct" way, in terms of courtly themes (8), and this lack of *minne* is one of the aspects of the Stricker's work which is addressed.

It is interesting, then, that the central role of *minne* in the classical romances is not necessarily carried through in the post-classical works. Even in the majority of post-classical works where love and consequent marriage have a prominent place, it is not a process which is problematic. On the contrary, marriage is simply seen as one of the consequences arising out of the hero's prowess in armed adventure - it does not have the spiritual or social implications of the classical Arthurian texts.

3.4 The heroes' opponents

Certain of the opponents faced by the heroes of the post-classical romances are of a nature which in many ways reminds us strongly of those faced by Dietrich and his companions.

Certainly, even Hartmann's knights face opponents who could be described as "uncourtly", but in the post-classical works this would appear to be taken a step further.

The figure of the wild woman or wild giantess is particularly interesting in this respect. In *Wigalois*, for example, the hero is faced with Ruel, a wild woman who shares many of the features of the wild herdsman in *Iwein* (9), but with the important

difference that she is female. Götting, for example, finds only one example of a wild woman in medieval French texts, and certainly the wild woman is completely unheard of in Chretien (10). This figure would certainly seem to be more at home in the German area, and is likely to find her origins in folkloric figures such as the Faengge (11). However, it is also a figure familiar from German heroic poetry, such as the remarkably similarly named "rûhe Else" of *Wolfdietrich* (B309ff), Ecke's mother, Birkhilt, or Hilde.

There is further particular art historical evidence relating to Ruel which is of interest. The frescoes of Runkelstein castle include the depiction of three giantesses. Each giantess is depicted with a sword, the first of which is entitled "fraw riel nagelringen" in the older script (around 1400), and "fraw rvel (or ryel) nagelringen" in the later (early C16th) (12). The other two giantesses are figures known only from *E*(DrHb).

Nagelring is the sword which, according to *Ths*, was made by Alberich, from whom Dietrich won it, and which was eventually given to Heime. In *Ths*, at least, the story of Nagelring goes hand in hand with that of Hildegrin, Dietrich's helmet. As we have seen, *E* itself also serves this aetiological function with regard to Dietrich's sword. It is interesting to speculate on the possibility that Ruel's origins belong to that pre-literary narrative world in which the extant Dietrich poems find their beginnings.

Another example of a wild female opponent is Fidegart, wife of

Purdan, in *Garel*. We may compare this pair with the giants who guard the borders of Cluse in the same work (11367-11692). The latter conduct themselves in a manner befitting any of Hartmann's knights; Purdan and Fidegart, on the other hand, are characterised in a way much more familiar from works such as the Dietrich texts. *Garel* finds them deep in the wild woods (5463), Fidegart being described as "...ein unbeschaiden weib,/Die waz michel und starch,/Unguet, uebel und arch." In defeating Purdan and Fidegart, *Garel* liberates among others Albewin, a dwarf king, and his people, who had been forced to serve the giants. It is clear that the name Albewin finds its origins in figures such as Alberich, the most famous dwarf in German heroic literature. Moreover, the role which *Garel* plays in liberating him and his people corresponds very closely to that described in the *SHb* (13). We may even recognise similarities in *JSig*, where Dietrich frees a dwarf from a wild man.

A further example of the wild woman in the post-classical texts is supplied by *Diu crône* (9340ff), a further example of the acceptability of this kind of figure in these works. More consequential, however, is the inclusion in this poem of an episode which almost exactly mirrors some of the most important narrative features of the *Wolfdietrich* story (*Crône* 15051ff, *Wolfdietrich* A556ff, B656ff). Here, Gawein plays the role of dragon slayer in a manner familiar from heroic poetry: "Der Handlungsverlauf muß sich in der Tradition der volkstümlichen Dichtung entwickelt haben, offenbar aus einem Grundschema, das z.B. schon im *Beowulf* gelegt ist: Das Ungeheuer kann nur durch ein besonderes Schwert besiegt werden, das in seiner eigenen

Höhle liegt" (14). As mentioned, the most obvious parallel is with *Wolfdietrich*, but it is a scheme which is not uncommon in the Dietrich aventiuren as well. For instance, Hildebrant only manages to defeat Sigenot by using Dietrich's weapons, which Sigenot has hung on his wall (JSig167). Similarly, it is with Nagelring, stolen from Grim and Hilde, that Dietrich kills the two giants.

It is perhaps no surprise that Heinrich von dem Türlin should be at home with folk traditions and native heroic epic, as his likely home area of Kärnten places him close to the native lands of such tales. It is of significance, however, that such material is integrated so easily with material which to a large extent is from a specifically Arthurian source.

This varied use of source material is perhaps best embodied by the Stricker's *Daniel*: "Die Masse des Stoffes besteht...aus Variationen von Episoden der deutschen Artusromane von Hartmann bis Wirnt und aus anverwandtem Stoff deutscher Heldensage, Motiven antiker Bildungstradition und deutscher Aneignung der Chanson de geste" (15). In his use of material sources, as well as in many other ways, the Stricker demonstrates a freedom from the norms of the classical works which in many ways is more characteristic of the post-classical texts than uncharacteristic. This leads us to speculate on how these works were conceived in terms of their relationship to the acknowledged classics. Certainly, we see evidence of admiration, but it is debatable whether that implies that both contemporary (in the case of Ulrich and Wirnt) and following poets saw that as a cue for

slavish impersonation.

It is more likely that in the so called "post-classical" romances we see a different kind of Arthurian poem, characterised by a heightened pleasure in the material for its own sake, and less concerned with the problematic relationship between the individual and courtly society. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that these works do not address issues of importance, for at certain points they do, but these issues are not the *raison d'être* of the poems. However, it is apparent that a heightened interest in the depiction of strange adventures carries with it a willingness to cast the net wider in terms of sources for this material. It is for this reason that we can detect the modest, but nonetheless distinct, influence of material from traditional native Germanic sources. And because of the many similarities in terms of basic form, we may well have reason to see this material being at least partly supplied by stories very similar to our extant Dietrich adventures.

3.5 The reception of Dietrich tradition and Arthurian romance.

In many ways, the way in which a work is received by its audience is just as important as the author's intentions. *Problemdichtung* is only *Problemdichtung* to a particular audience or reader at a particular time and place if it is perceived as such. The way in which a work is received is governed by many things: literary knowledge, cultural background, formal education, literary preference and so on are all factors which contribute to defining how a particular audience receives any given work. At a basic level, the classical Arthurian romances are also good stories, and if a medieval audience received them as such, then no amount of critical analysis in the late twentieth century will alter that fact.

For instance, the explanation included in *Gauriel von Muntabel* for Erec's behaviour towards Enite is far more simple than the interpretations we might offer through detailed analysis today:

2897 "ir liebe mich entsatzte
 von manlîcher wirdikeit
 des was ir mîn laster leit
 und klaget ez durch ir güete;
 daz enkande mîn gemüete
 und vuogte ir michel ungemach,
 unz ich die triwe an ir sach,
 des ich dô sicher wolde sîn:
 si taete ez durch die minne mîn.

Erec's motives here are simple in comparison to the subtle self-inflicted programme we, or indeed other medieval minds, may wish to read into Erec's actions.

The possibilities of the reception process with regard to Arthurian poems and the Dietrich texts are indicated tantalisingly by the art-historical evidence of Rodeneck and Runkelstein.

The *Iwein* frescoes at Rodeneck are dated to around 1200, and thus very close to the approximate date of composition for the poem itself (16). Among the frescoes is a depiction of the wild herdsman who directs the knights towards the magic spring. The descriptions offered by Chrétien and Hartmann are very similar, and very bizarre (*Yvain* 267-373, *Iwein* 418-564): by comparison, the wild man of the frescoes is a much more familiar figure (17). Indeed, he bears more resemblance to the wild men encountered by Dietrich in *JSig* or Ecke's relatives. Doubtless, the geographical proximity of Rodeneck to the heartlands of such stories goes a long way to explaining this. However, the frescoes seem to suggest that the wild herdsman of *Iwein* was interpreted by the artist not by reference to the text itself, but according to local tradition surrounding this kind of figure.

This raises wider possibilities for the reception of *Iwein* in this, and other locations. If one aspect of the work is received with reference to local narrative traditions such as may be represented by the Dietrich stories, to what extent might this be

the case for the work as a whole?

It is of course a matter of great debate that the Rodeneck frescoes depict only the first cycle of adventures up to Iwein's marriage to Laudine. There is therefore no crisis for the hero, no struggle to find the correct balance in courtly society between knighthood and love, a situation which in the poem at least is clearly not reached by the end of the first cycle. It is entirely possible that for the painter of the frescoes the first half of the poem was perceived as complete in itself (here, of course we make the assumption that he knew the second half). Certainly, in purely narrative terms, this is understandable - the first half of Iwein is no less complete than many of the "post-classical" works. This does, however, imply that for this recipient of the poem, at least, and perhaps for the audience of this location, the narrative interest may be greater than the understanding of the inner "sens" of the work. Of course, this interest in the depiction of lively narrative is one which we have identified as fundamental in the composition of both the Dietrich aventiuren and the post-classical Arthurian texts.

The frescoes of Runkelstein depict scenes from the Pleier's *Garel*, Wirnt's *Wigalois*, and Gottfried's *Tristan*. The very fact that these works appear together is probably significant in itself as a clue to how works we might be tempted to divide on grounds of literary merit were received. Of particular interest, however, is a series of figures grouped in threes, as follows:

Hector, Alexander, Caesar

Joshua, David, Judas Maccabaeus

Arthur, Charlemagne, Godfrey of Bouillon

Parzival, Gawain, Iwein

Aglie and Wilhelm von Österreich, Isolde and Tristan, Amelie and
Willehalm von Orlens

Dietrich von Bern, Siegfried, Dietleib

three giants

three giantesses

three dwarves

The first of these groups corresponds to the "nine worthies", a well known artistic and literary idea from the fourteenth century onwards (18). The second group is defined by Haug as the "höfisch-ritterlich" against which is opposed the third "Bereich des Ungestalt-Dämonischen" (19). If this division is correct, then it is interesting that the second group brings together figures to which the literary historian has been wont to apply fairly strict generic distinctions. Furthermore, this group, which includes the three most famous of Arthurian heroes, is ranged against a world whose figures are more at home in general in native traditions. This tends to suggest that, at least around 1400, the heroes of Arthurian romance were thought of as belonging to the same civilised courtly society, opposed to which was the wild world outside the court environment. Of course, this idea is hardly new to either tradition: Chrétien's herdsman is described as a "vilain" (208), and we may well see him as a representative of this non-courtly world. Nevertheless, it is

true to say that the "classical" Arthurian heroes must work out their fates within courtly society. The interesting aspect of the "post-classical" works is that the role of the Arthurian hero as an opponent of the wild world is greatly increased, setting up far greater generic similarities with traditions such as the Dietrich aventiuren. The evidence of the frescoes suggests that in this later period of reception even the classical figures were perceived in a very similar way.

Haug sees in the frescoes of Runkelstein evidence of a particular late medieval pattern of reception, in which the concept of the consummate hero was paramount. The characters of Wigalois and Garel would certainly fit into this, while the representation of Tristan shows only those passages where he acts without blame or reproach (20). Again, Dietrich as a literary figure certainly fits this mould. The giants, giantesses and dwarves thus represent the common enemy: "...also weniger Präsentation heimischer Heldendichtung, sondern eher Bild einer Gegensphäre zur ritterlichen Welt, die man in der Perspektive Gaweins, und zu einer Heldenwelt, die man in der Perspektive Dietleibs sah" (21). In this way, the two traditions maintain their identity - there is no crossover of personnel, for example. However, the relationship is not necessarily one of competition for pre-eminence. It is far more likely that they were seen as complementary, as two aspects of the same world.

But must we see this as a peculiarly late medieval process? Our discussion of the Dietrich texts suggests that similar stories would have been widely available for inter-action with incoming

literary traditions from very early on. The evidence of Rodeneck suggests that these incoming literary traditions may have spread much more rapidly than might have been suspected. In addition we see the possibility that at least aspects of these new works were interpreted not necessarily according to the inner "sens" of the work, but according to the existing literary experience of the recipient. The evidence of texts such as *Lanzelet* and *Wigalois*, which belong in time more to the "classical" generation, shows that the classical texts represent only one interpretation of the Arthurian tradition. After all, the Arthurian romance incorporating the hero without crisis, and raw material which remains essentially foreign to a Hartmann or Chrétien, is just as original a representative of the tradition, and in terms of the period in which it was created, longer lasting.

3.6 Conclusions

It is clear that the narrative traditions which we are discussing have two potential functions. On the one hand, we recognise their ability to entertain on the level of material and narrative. On the other, they have the potential to use that narrative to explore artistic, social, psychological or political themes. To achieve success, the poet must find the balance between these two functions which satisfies his public. There is no doubt that Hartmann and Wolfram showed themselves capable of combining these two functions at a highly sophisticated level, and indeed were recognised by their near contemporaries, such as Rudolf von Ems, for their achievements.

But this does not invalidate the other works. To describe the so-called "post-classical" works as purely "Unterhaltungsliteratur" (22) is to sell them short. Nevertheless, this kind of generalised classification expresses the undoubted fact that in these works the entertainment function is of first importance. It is also important to recognise that the classical works have the potential to be received as poems whose dominant function is to entertain.

In a geographical area where there already exists a strong and coherent native narrative tradition, such as the Dietrich *aventiuren*, whose origins lie in the opposition of the civilised world against the wild world outside, it seems more than likely that the incoming tradition might be initially received in the light of native narrative preference, and then adapted in other works to suit that preference. We might call it literary market forces. This would seem even more likely if the incoming and the native narrative traditions shared enough inherent common motifs as to encourage this process in the first place: this would certainly have been the case with Arthurian romance and Dietrich *aventiuere*.

Notes

(1) For most recent discussion of this theme, see W. H. Jackson: *Chivalry in Twelfth-Century Germany: The Works of Hartmann von Aue*, *Arthurian Studies* 34, Woodbridge 1995, especially chapter 3: "Knighthood and the Ethics of Force in *Erec*", pp84-146.

- (2) B. Nagel: *Staufische Klassik. Deutsche Dichtung um 1200.* Heidelberg 1977, p678f
- (3) J. A. Schultz: *The Shape of the Round Table. Structures of Middle High German Arthurian Romance.* Toronto 1983, p5.
- (4) Cormeau: "Wigalois" und "diu crône", p41.
- (5) see Cormeau above, also L. Jillings: *Diu Crône of Heinrich von dem Türlin: The attempted emancipation of secular narrative.* Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 258. Göppingen 1980.
- (6) Cormeau, as above, p148.
- (7) W. M. Moelleken: "Minne und Ehe in Strickers *Daniel von dem blühenden Tal.* Strukturanalytische Ergebnisse." *ZfdPh* 93(1974) Sonderheft p42-50, p43.
- (8) de Boor: "Der Daniel..." as above.
- (9) 418-564
- (10) H. Göttling: *Die wilden Leute und ihre Verwandten im altdeutschen Schrifttum.* Dissertation, Erlangen 1925. Quoted in W. Mulertt: "Der wilde Man in Frankreich." *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, LVI (1932) p88.

- (11) On folk origins of material, see P. B. Wessels: "Dietrich-Epik und Südtiroler Erzählsubstrat." *ZfdPh* 85 (1966) p345-369.
- (12) *Runkelstein*, as above, p80.
- (13) SHb on role of knights
- (14) B. Kratz: "Gawein und Wolfdietrich. Zur Verwandtschaft der Crône mit der jüngeren Heldendichtung." *Euph.* 66 (1972) p397-404, p399.
- (15) Cormeau, as above, p21.
- (16) A. Masser: "Die Iwein-Fresken von Rodenegg." In *Heimatbuch Rodeneck. Geschichte und Gegenwart.* ed. A. Rastner and E. Dalmonego, Rodeneck 1986.
- (17) as above p129.
- (18) Heinzle in *Runkelstein* p65.
- (19) Haug in *Runkelstein* p60.
- (20) as above p53
- (21) as above p60
- (22) see for example Rupp: "Heldendichtung"...p242.

General Conclusions

We can draw a sharp line between those works we call the historical Dietrich epics, and the Dietrich aventiuren. There is no attempt made to integrate the two traditions into a coherent relationship. Nevertheless, they are intimately bound together.

The historical epics demonstrate fully that the age of the great literary work expressing the sentiments and ethos of heroic society is past by the time our poems were written down in the form we know them. It is part of that same process which sees the *Hildebrandslied* transformed from overpowering tragedy to the inconsequence of the *Jüngeres Hildebrandslied*. At the point in time where works like *DF* and *Rschl* are preserved in their extant form, they express nostalgia for the "good old days", but show themselves entirely incapable of expressing the values and ethos of the society to which they refer. They idealise a past which has no practical relevance in the present.

In literary historical terms, we must regret the fact that the sole extant versions of this great body of traditional material are characterised by the subjugation of this material to the thematic functions of the works. Where the tradition suggests ambivalence, there is didactic polarisation; where there is the potential for psychological depth, we see rigid characterisation.

In all this, *AT* may be granted some credit. When compared to *DF* and *Rschl*, this work shows a certain willingness to embrace the wider aspects of the Dietrich tradition. Implicitly and

explicitly it refers to the wider tradition, creating the network of complex relationships and tensions which we know from our wider knowledge.

But the problem with *AT* is that it is not a poem about Dietrich. Essentially, it is a poem about the folly of *übermuot* in the individual, opposed to the ideal of collective armed action. If here we see echoes of Roland's *desmesure*, this may well be no accident. The difference with Roland, however, is that he is a central figure in Carolingian tradition. Alphart, on the other hand, is inserted, and the effect of this insertion is to fundamentally alter the tradition itself - there remains no place for Dietrich, the tragic victor.

While therefore adapting the "historical" Dietrich tradition in a relatively effective manner, *AT* does not tackle the central subject matter of Dietrich himself. And here would appear to lie the basic problem for the "historical" tradition in the thirteenth century, namely an inability to come to terms with a figure whose cultural presence is so huge, yet who is denoted by the concepts of exile and tragedy.

However, in *AT* we may just be able to see the hint of a connection between the "historical" Dietrich tradition and the *aventiuren*. *AT*, as we have seen, seems to make indirect reference to the youthful exploits of Dietrich and his companions, the kind of adventure described in *JSig*, *E* and so on. Yet its critical attitude towards individual armed action outside of the collective social context would also seem to imply

criticism of the aventure ethos of such works. Just as Albrecht von Kemenaten criticises Dietrich from a courtly perspective in *G*, perhaps *AT* is conceived in response to the popularity of Dietrich the "Haudegen", from what we might call the feudal perspective. It thus perhaps crystallises the gulf between the historical and aventure traditions, in terms of their social function and ethos.

It is difficult to see this as anything other than isolated retrospection. Placed in the context of the "historical" Dietrich figure, yet not a true part of that tradition, there is nothing to suggest that *AT* is representative of a popular literary trend, a "Sproßdichtung" culture surrounding this "historical" Dietrich in the thirteenth century.

The exact opposite is true of the Dietrich aventure type works. Dietrich remains there, firmly embedded as an icon of Germanic consciousness. The aventure represent an alternative avenue for the expression of this consciousness, the plethora of tales surrounding Dietrich's adventures in the mountains and wild lands of the southern homelands an indication that his symbolic importance was still great.

These essentially simple tales take delight in the equally simple philosophy that a man is known by his deeds - a philosophy which no doubt has its eventual origins in the heroic traditions of which the historical epics are inflated remnants. But these origins are obscured in the aventure, where no further justification is needed for the adventures of Dietrich and his

companions, other than the desire to prove one's manhood.

The tradition is nevertheless a solid platform for the creation of stories which satisfy the urge to express this philosophy in the face of the incoming ideas expressed by the new courtly literature. We may even argue that it was strong enough to have a certain influence on the development of that courtly literature, and in particular in the way in which it was received as a narrative tradition whose primary function was to entertain.

We may thus see the Dietrich aventiuren as one branch of the popular fiction of their age. This need hardly be a demeaning definition, and perhaps we need not mourn too greatly the lack of that one great poem taking Dietrich as the central figure. For in the constant search to identify and analyse literary greatness, it may sometimes be easy to forget the power of popular fiction, now and in the past, both to express and to shape the ethos of the society in which it is created.

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