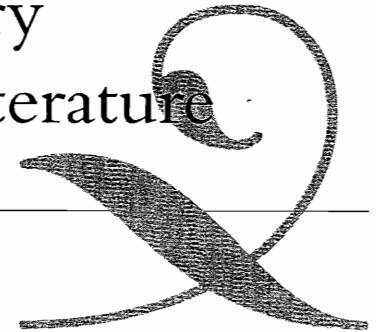


A New History of German Literature



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THE BELKNAP PRESS OF
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, Massachusetts

London, England 2004

European armies never reached Jerusalem, this moment is the emotional apex. But having reached a climax of imperial wish-fulfillment—the emperor has enfeoffed the Christian kingdoms and liberated the Holy City—the drama bows to eschatological exigencies. In consonance with the source material, the emperor enters the Temple in Jerusalem, lays down his crown and scepter, and abdicates:

Receive, O Lord, my grateful gift, for I
Resign my rule to Thee, the King of Kings,
Through Whom kings reign, and Whom alone we call
The Emperor and Ruler of us all.

(79)

After the emperor returns to his former realm (the play henceforth refers to him as the King of the Teutons), Antichrist takes the stage wearing a robe and cuirass, symbols of his sacerdotal and military treachery, and flanked by his “fifth columnists,” Hypocrisy (whose mission it is to infiltrate the laity) and Heresy (whose mission it is to infiltrate the clergy). Under Antichrist’s command, the Hypocrites depose the King of Jerusalem, who flees west across the stage to find refuge with the King of the Teutons. Antichrist is crowned in Jerusalem and in a geographical and ideological anti-Crusade, which begins in the East and moves to the West, he initiates his own round of demanding homage and fealty. The procedure from the play’s first half—“shuttle diplomacy” culminating in vassalage rituals—is reenacted in all its details. But this time the fealty vows are disturbingly different. The Kings of the Greeks and the Franks are allowed to continue their reigns as long as they recognize Antichrist as the Creator of All Things, a heretical variation on the oath they swore to the emperor. The ceremony also has a nefarious twist. As the kings kneel in submission to receive their crowns, Antichrist draws the first letter of his name on their foreheads, invoking the mark of the beast from Revelation 13. If the intended audience was to thrill to the thrice-repeated Imperial vassalage rituals, the playwright now seeks to make them shudder at this sinister parody. Yet Antichrist’s establishment of demonic vassalage relationships also demonstrates that he, too, is subject to the imperative to achieve political control by saturating the periphery from his usurped center in Jerusalem.

But the King of the Teutons, the former Roman Emperor, rejects Antichrist’s demands for homage and defeats him in another onstage war. Thwarted by German martial prowess, Antichrist tries his luck with German credulity. He goes before the King of the Teutons and heals a lame man, cleanses a leper, and seemingly revives a soldier who the stage directions tell us is only pretending to be dead. The German King’s faith waivers and he too finally swears homage to Antichrist. At this point the drama becomes brisk and giddy-paced. Babylon again wages war and is again routed, this time by Antichrist’s army. The prophets Elijah and Enoch appear, strip away Antichrist’s mask, and convert Synagoga to the true faith of the Holy Trinity. Enraged, Antichrist has Synagoga, the two prophets, and the Jews executed. There is a

thunderclap, and Antichrist collapses onstage. Everyone returns to the faith, and the play abruptly ends. The final theologically correct atmospheric notwithstanding, Antichrist’s reign is made possible by the Roman Emperor’s abdication after his victory in the Holy City. When the deposed King of Jerusalem decamps following Antichrist’s seizure of power, he grumbles that the King of the Teutons should never have surrendered his rule as Roman Emperor. A malevolence was bound to follow his departure, a “malum discessionis” as he puts it (*Ludus*, 24).

According to Paul’s second epistle to the Thessalonians, Antichrist will not be revealed “except there come a falling away [*discessio*] first.” For *Antichrist’s* author, both the empire and the emperor have an eschatological and political mission: they are the “power that holds [the man of sin] in check” (2 Thessalonians 2:6). *Antichrist’s* fantasy of imperial enfeoffment followed by the minatory disaster of antichristic enfeoffment comprise a spectacularly staged entreaty for the Roman Emperor’s divinely ordained power to be projected onto the periphery in order to prevent—or at least postpone—the *discessio*.

See also 1147, 1150

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Sean Ward

♣ Circa 1170

Minnesingers begin imitating troubadours and trouvères

Phantom Ladies

The first German lyric poets came from the Danube region between Regensburg and Vienna and may have performed at the Vienna court of Duke Heinrich II of Austria (1146–1177). Although we know almost nothing about these early singers (the Lord von Kurenberg, Dietmar von Aist, the castellan [*Burggraf*] of Regensburg), they were certainly noblemen. Writing and performing songs was for them a leisure-time avocation, which links them to the court singers of France, the troubadours and trouvères. For about ten generations (1100–1300), unique in European cultural history, members of the ruling aristocracy produced great poetry, writing verse and composing melodies. The subject of these early lyrics, as of all minnesong, is love: courting, pledging loyalty, love fulfilled, jealousy, love lost. As Hartmann von Aue (about

1195) attests, these poets called themselves minnesingers, *minne* being the medieval German word for love. It is related to English "mind," suggesting that love is an intellectual activity, and to the Swedish word for "memory," love as emotion remembered.

Medieval poetry is not confessional, the poet does not explore his own feelings. Like a composer, he works with established genres that specify the subject, the way to deal with it, and the voice that is to speak. The voice in about one third of early poetry is a woman although all minnesingers known to us were men. Women's songs are found in the early poetry of many European cultures. This suggests that such songs, often lamenting the absent or faithless lover, are indigenous, much as dancing songs are. The first German lyric poet (exact dates of birth and death unknown), the Lord of Kürenberg, is also one of the masters of the German love poetry. In a surviving work of only fifteen strophes are four different voices: the demure woman longing for her lover, the dominant woman asserting her claim over the man, the macho knight who lures women as easily (with a flesh lure) as he does his hunting falcon, the subservient knight humbly yearning for his lady. In contrast to later minnesong, the woman here speaks freely of her need for love. She does so in her gown by the bed at night, on the castle rampart overlooking her domain, while watching the falcon, her lover, wheeling in the sky, free from the yoke of courtly discipline. Many of these songs consist of a single strophe or stanza. The original meaning of the German word *Lied* is "single strophe" (*daz liet*) while the plural (*diu liet*) denotes a gathering of stanzas, a song.

Coupling two single strophes gave rise to a song type called *Wechsel* ("Exchange") found only in German poetry. It links the monostrophe of the woman with that of the man. They speak about a love they share or remember, not to each other but to themselves. In their understated brevity, in their use of a few powerful symbols, in giving voice to the passionate woman, the earliest German love lyrics appeal most directly to the modern reader. Later minnesingers, like master Reinmar (dates unknown), "a scholastic of unhappy love," as the German Romantic poet Ludwig Uhland called him, are much harder to appreciate.

In contrast to later minnesingers writing in the French mode, the Danube school poets use a long verse (a pause separates three- or four-beat half lines), with four verses forming a strophe. Clearly meant to be sung, this strophe is used, about 1200, by the Passau cleric writing the *Nibelungenlied*, the first and greatest German heroic epic. The long verse goes back to Germanic alliterative poetry. Yet while based on native forms, the early lyrics are not devoid of French influence. The troubadour style manifests itself in the theme of love service: the knight is happy just to serve his lady whom he praises as the embodiment of physical and moral perfection.

The minnesingers who begin composing around 1170 along the Rhine and the Neckar rivers are familiar with the old Austrian poets, but they fix their gaze firmly on the West. They imitate the troubadours of southern France, writing in Occitan, and the trouvères of the north, writing in French.

All to the castle born, these new minnesingers gather at the court of the Hohenstaufen emperor Friedrich I whose son Heinrich (1165–1197) was himself a poet. Three of his love songs survive. The most accomplished singer of the Rhenish school, Friedrich von Hausen (d. 1190 on crusade), was cabinet secretary, in today's parlance, to the emperor. Like most courts of the time, the imperial court was peripatetic, moving often into France and Italy. This provided many social occasions to meet trouvères and troubadours. Heinrich, the royal minnesinger, had a French mother, Beatrix of Burgundy. In 1178, the archbishop of Arles crowned his father Friedrich King of Burgundy. Many French poets, among them Guiot de Provins (Friedrich von Hausen imitates one of his songs), joined the company of European princes in 1184 at the Mainz Pentecost festival where Emperor Friedrich knighted his son Heinrich, the minnesinger (then nineteen years old), and his brother. Heinrich von Veldeke (near Maastricht, d. ca. 1200), the first German poet to write in the trouvère style, took part in the festival and described it as the high point of European chivalry. After Heinrich was crowned King of Italy and Sicily in 1186, several of his fellow minnesingers (Friedrich von Hausen, Ulrich von Gutenberg, Bigger von Steinach) traveled with him to northern Italian castles whose lords were fond of hosting troubadours. Much of court culture was oral. Most noblemen did not know how to read or write. Thus, Heinrich and his fellow singers must have had an excellent command of French and a good ear, as just listening to the songs enabled them to imitate words, strophic form, and melody.

Most of the classical minnesingers, heirs to the Rhenish school, were also aristocrats. Professional poets of the age, wandering from castle to castle and singing for their supper, wrote didactic or instructional verse that taught the lessons of life, moral wisdom, and basic religion. Only Heinrich von Morungen (thirty-five songs) and Reinmar (fifty-three) left oeuvres of a size associated with professional poets. Heinrich appears to have earned his keep singing at the court of the Margraves of Meissen (in Saxony, north of Dresden). Reinmar was court poet to the dukes of Austria at Vienna. There he mentored the first great professional singer, Walther von der Vogelweide (ca. 1170–ca. 1230), who by conjoining minnesong and instructional verse became one of the immortal German poets.

Minnesingers were selective in the lyric forms they took over from the French. They ignored major parts of the troubadour repertory: the debate songs (*tenson*, *partimen*), the political songs (*sirventes*), songs lamenting the death of a patron or a colleague (*planh*). Of the song types favored by trouvères, they opted not to imitate the *pastourelle* (knight meets shepherdess) and dancing songs, usually featuring a refrain. Minnesingers were most fascinated by the centerpiece of the Romance repertory, the *grand chant courtois*, the song celebrating unrequited love. Yet in writing their *Minnelieder*, the Germans omitted certain features of the great court song. They did not give cover names (*senhal*) to their ladies and did not add closing verses (*envoi*) that mention the lady, friends, or a patron to whom the song is addressed. Lacking a social or histori-

cal context, the songs of high *minne* tend to be more theoretical and abstract. They dwell on the ideal of courtly love and love service.

In high minnesong, the lyrical voice switches resolutely to the first person. The singer, the male I, speaks obsessively about himself in probing what love is and what love means. There are two other protagonists. One is his lady, distant and unreachable, forever indifferent to his pleas. In contrast to the early lyrics, she no longer speaks. The other party is the people at the court, the audience, whom the singer befriends and tries to enlist in his cause. Endlessly frustrated, the singer analyzes himself, plays philosopher to his sad feelings: what is love, why am I unworthy of my lady's love, how can I improve myself to be worthy of her? He finds the answer in constant faith and unremitting service. He serves his lady the way, in feudal or lordship society, the vassal serves his lord. Metaphors of the feudal contract abound. His service consists of singing. He sings of his desires, of a love that keeps him enthralled, clouds his reason and sense, of the pain of yearning, and the hope of winning his lady's love, eventually. The lady is a phantom; she has virtually no physical features. Only sometimes do singers mention radiant eyes and red lips. In evoking Ovid's myth of the self-enchanted Narcissus, Heinrich von Morungen suggests that the singer is creating the lady in his own image. He must sustain this vision in order to write. The minnesinger, observed the poet Rilke, fears nothing so much as that one day his lady will say yes. That would be the end of his singing.

The courtiers are party to his song. As "friends," they share the singer's distress and support his pleas. As "spies" (*Merker*), they personify public morality and prevent him from approaching his lady. The singer finds himself locked in a paradox: While unrequited love (and thinking too much about himself) makes him sad, he is expected to make court people happy with his singing. The more profound paradox is social. In writing songs to an unattainable lady, aristocrats, who in real life had women aplenty, stylize themselves as vassals and plead for their lord's favor. This is more than a parlor game. By humbling themselves before an ideal, these noblemen profess faith in the new secular religion of courtesy and chivalry created in literature.

In addition to creating the high minnesong, minnesingers also take over three other French song types. In the crusading song, first written by *trouvères*, the singer has to decide whether to continue serving his unyielding lady or go on crusade as a soldier of Christ and serve God. The usual option is to bid the lady a reluctant farewell (Friedrich von Hausen). An alternative is to take the good lady along in the shrine of the heart and share the heavenly crusader reward with her (Albrecht von Johansdorf, ca. 1165–after 1209). Thematizing both *minne* and religious service (to the cross, the Virgin), the *Leich* (French *descort*, *estampie*) makes the greatest demands on the poet's skill as versifier and composer. This long poem consists of multiform short strophes, usually paired, called versicles. Although the first minnesingers under French influence compose *Leichs* (Ulrich von Gutenberg, dates unknown), most write only one as a formal, through-composed showpiece.

Quite different from these subjective forms, is the objective or narrative

genre of the dawn song (*tageliet*), the Occitan *alba* (morning light). It features two lovers, not married to each other, who must part at dawn after spending the night in "secret love." Here the woman speaks again, as she does in the early lyric. She is in fact much more vocal than her partner. Dietmar von Aist (dates unknown) wrote a dawn song not influenced by the *alba*, suggesting that the form is indigenous. The lament of lovers parting at dawn is found in love poetry throughout the world. In the *alba*, a watchman on the ramparts wakes the lovers and urges the man to leave. The German master of the genre is the great romancer Wolfram von Eschenbach (ca. 1170–ca. 1220). In his dawn songs, the watchman embodies the woman's conscience and the moral claims of society. Enormously popular, dawn songs continued to be written for three centuries.

Much of what minnesingers learned from their French colleagues concerns the craft of form: to alternate stresses and dips in a regular rhythmic pattern, to regulate the beginning (anacrusis) and the end (cadence) of verses, to build strophes with verses of different length, to devise new rhyme patterns, to compose an original tune. Imitating French verse was not easy. It is defined by the number of syllables (syllabic) while German (and English) verse alternates between stressed and unstressed syllables (rhythmic). German singers transposed (1) French decasyllabic (ten-syllable) verse into dactyls, or triple measures. Alien to the German sense of duple rhythm, dactylic verse did not outlast the Rhenish school for long. It is easier to find rhymes in French than in German. The minnesingers, therefore, did not try to imitate the more complex French ways of rhyming. Eighty percent of German court lyrics are set in a tripartite form first used by Duke William IX of Aquitaine, the first troubadour (d. 1127). It gave rise to the sonnet and is still with us today. If you hum the "Star Spangled Banner," you will note that the first melody (*pes*, *Stollen*) is repeated (*contra-pes*, *Gegenstollen*), thus forming what Dante called the *frons* (German *Aufgesang*). The second melody, set in a higher register, makes up the *cauda* (*Abgesang*).

Aside from imitating the subject matter, the Rhenish minnesingers sometimes copied the strophic form of French songs in a process known as "contrafacture." Presumably they also borrowed the melody. But since melodies survive only for the French songs, this remains an assumption. Of Friedrich von Hausen's seventeen songs, seven are contrafactures of songs composed by three troubadours and three *trouvères*. As minnesingers devise their own strophic form and compose an original melody, this "tune" (*dôn*) becomes their intellectual property. The only "copyright" widely respected, it shows the enormous artistic importance medieval song poets attached to creating metrical and musical forms. When Gottfried von Strassburg (in his *Tristan* romance) praises the minnesingers as nightingales, he celebrates them as musical composers. This heritage is largely lost. The urban patrons of the great song collections (Zurich, Constance, perhaps Strasbourg, 1290–1340) chose not to transcribe the melodies.

Minnesingers exercised mind and memory to write songs, inventing lyrics

and melody in the same process. Ulrich von Lichtenstein (ca. 1260) tells us that he composed songs while castle-bound in winter, while riding to tournaments in the summer, while lying on his sickbed, while riding as pilgrim to Rome, while languishing in prison. Manuscript variants suggest that the modern concept of a single authentic or authorized version did not exist. Singers would, at times, add strophes to an existing tune and try out different strophic sequences. Musical memory is more permanent; the melody aids in remembering the words. Troubadours speak of writing down their songs to send them to their lady or a patron. Living in an age without paper, they or their scribes would have inscribed them on wax tablets, on vellum (calf skin), or parchment (sheep skin) sheets or on rolls formed by sewing together such sheets. Yet until about 1250, when song collections begin to be compiled, songs were largely performed by heart, retained in and passed down from memory.

There is no evidence that minnesingers, as did gentry troubadours, hired minstrels (*joglars*) or professional singers (*cantadors*) to sing their songs. They presumably sang themselves before the assembled court, perhaps accompanying themselves on a drone instrument like the fiddle. Yet formal recitation was not the only way in which songs were disseminated. If literature mirrors life, courtiers would sing songs together after dinner, while taking a walk or riding a horse, before jousting, when dancing. Reading these songs on the printed page falsifies them. Singing a text slows it down, intimate sentiments become artfully enunciated public statements. Performing before an audience made singing a cabaret-like show, court theater, in which listeners, versed in the art, would participate. Medieval music groups have, for three decades, struggled to recreate this experience. Yet the melodies we have were notated at least a century, sometimes two or three, after the songs were composed. The single-line notation tells us little about rhythm and tempi and nothing about instrumentation. So the recordings we hear today are at best informed guesswork.

See also 1150, 1189, ca. 1200, 1203 (November 12), 1210, 1922 (February)

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Eckehard Simon

1172, January

At the height of his power, Duke Henry the Lion embarks on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Religious Devotion and Courtly Display

Einhard reports in chapter 9 of his *Vita Karoli Magni (Life of Charlemagne)* that at the time of the Saxon wars, the Emperor Charlemagne also fought a

campaign in Spain and conquered several cities and castles across the Pyrenees. While crossing the Pyrenees on the way back, his army was ambushed in a mountain pass by Basques, and his entire rear-guard was lost. Eggihard, the king's steward; Anselm, Count Palatine; and Roland, margrave of Brittany, were killed in the fighting. The attackers fled in the difficult terrain as night fell, and the deaths of Charlemagne's men remained unavenged.

This event of the year 778 is reported by other chroniclers as well. One late account, from the second half of the 11th century, is particularly noteworthy. The *Nota Emilianense* limits the historical events to a military encounter near Saragossa and expands the number of participants to include twelve nephews of the king. Six are mentioned by name: Roland, Bertran, Ogier, William of the Short Nose, Olivier, and Bishop Turpin. The site of the disaster is now the valley of Roncesvalles, and Roland is killed by Saracens instead of Basques. The changes obviously reflect a reworking of the events into legend, which then took literary form in the later *chansons de geste*. In this process the *gestes* of Charlemagne and William diverged.

The story of Roland remained part of the *geste* of Charlemagne and shortly after the turn of the century found its most significant literary expression in the *Chanson de Roland*. The oldest extant version is the Oxford manuscript (O) from the first half of the 12th century, where the story runs as follows: Charlemagne has been waging war in Spain for seven years. Saragossa alone remains to be conquered. King Marsilie decides to trick Charlemagne by pretending he wants to surrender. He declares himself willing to pay tribute and be baptized. Charlemagne confers with his vassals and twelve paladins, among them the knights Roland and Olivier and the pugnacious Bishop Turpin. They decide to accept the offer of surrender, and Roland proposes his stepfather, Guenes (Guenelun), as messenger. Guenelun fears for his life and vows to take revenge for the hatred that Roland has long harbored against him. He carries the message to the Saracens and secretly allies himself with them. As the Christians depart, Guenelun proposes that Roland be left behind with a small number of troops to guard the territory. The emperor is forced to accept the general decision but is tormented that night by ominous dreams, which soon become reality. King Marsilie attacks the Christian rear-guard, and in heroic defiance Roland refuses to summon back the emperor's forces. Only when his badly outnumbered troop is exhausted does he order the signal horn to be blown. The emperor returns, but it is too late. He laments the dead, among them Roland and Olivier, pursues the fleeing heathens, and destroys them. King Marsilie is already mortally wounded by the time Baligant, the supreme ruler of all heathen empires, comes to his aid. In a second battle, Charlemagne defeats the heathen reinforcements, in spite of being outnumbered. He sees to it that the fallen Christians are buried and returns home. In Aachen he holds a court of justice. Guenelun invokes his right to a trial by combat, and so God's judgment is sought. Guenelun loses and is drawn and quartered.

The epic concept is straightforward. The historical event remains recognizable (not the case in Germanic heroic sagas); the motives are outlined, and the