

Dietrich von Bern and “Historical” Narrative in the German

Middle Ages:

An Investigation of Strategies for Establishing Credibility in Four Poems of the

Middle High German *Dietrichepik*

by Jonathan Martin

Senior Honors Thesis Submitted for German and MEMS, March 26th, 2010
Advised by Professor Helmut Puff

© Jonathan Seelye Martin 2010

Acknowledgements

My special thanks are owed to Dr. Helmut Puff, who has made his advice, time, and considerable knowledge available to me throughout the process of writing this thesis. He has steered me away from many misconceptions and improved my writing for clarity and style. It is very much thanks to him that this thesis appears in the form that it currently does. I also must thank him for repeatedly reminding me that one is never fully satisfied with an end product: there is always something left to improve or expand upon, and this is especially true of an overly ambitious project like mine. In a large part due to his wonderful help, I hope to continue working on and improving my knowledge of this topic, which at first I despised but have come to love, in the future.

My thanks also go out to Drs. Peggy McCracken, Kerstin Barndt, George Hoffmann, and Patricia Simons, who have at various times read and commented on drafts of my work and helped guide me through the process of writing and researching this thesis. My other professors and instructors, both here and at Freiburg, have also been inspirations for me, and I must especially thank Maria “Frau” Caswell for teaching me German, Dr. Robert Kyes for teaching me Middle High German, Gina Soter for teaching me Latin, Björn-Michael Harms of Freiburg for introducing me to the *Dietrichepik* to begin with, and Dr. Lenka Jiroušková of Freiburg for guiding me into Medieval Latin.

In addition, I must thank my friend Esei Murakishi who was kind enough to read through my whole draft from a modern English and Philosophy perspective. My mother, father, sister, and other friends, though they have little idea what I am writing about, have been a great source of support as well.

Amicis meis Quinto et Scipioni et Telemacho et alteris amicis amicibusque dicendum est quod (si mihi structuram Latinæ mediævalis permittetis) auxilium vestrum adversis interdum in rebus valde mihi sustinuit per ultimi tempus anni mei apud Universitatem Michiganiensem. Vitam longam prosperitatemque ut professores aut profestrices aut professionales alii opto ut habeatis. Gratias vobis omnibus ago et semper agebo.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction: Saga, History, <i>Aventiure</i> , and Dietrich von Bern	4
2. Historicity and Fictionality in the High and Late Middle Ages	18
2.1. Defining <i>Fabula</i> , <i>Argumentum</i> , <i>Historia</i> and <i>Veritas</i>	19
2.2. The Debate in the Reception over Theoderic/Dietrich von Bern.....	28
<i>The Historiographically Accepted Life of Theoderic the Great</i>	30
<i>Eleventh-Century Reception: The Quedlinburg Annals and Frutolf of Michelsberg</i>	32
<i>Twelfth-Century Evidence: The Kaiserchronik</i>	36
<i>Thirteenth-Century Evidence</i>	40
<i>Fourteenth-Century Evidence: Heinrich of Munich, and Jakob Twinger</i>	41
2.3. The Dietrich-saga's Disputed Historicity in Learned Reception	46
3. Historical <i>Dietrichepik</i> : The Dialog between Learned Writing and <i>Dietrichs Flucht</i>	47
3.1 Truth-Claims and Signs of Self-Reflexivity in <i>Dietrichs Flucht</i>	50
3.2. Dialog between <i>Dietrichs Flucht</i> and the Learned Tradition: The Poem's Credibility	59
3.3. The Lack of Fantastical Elements in <i>Dietrichs Flucht</i>	64
3.4. Defended Historicity in <i>Dietrichs Flucht</i>	68
4. The <i>Aventiure</i> -Like Poems: the <i>Eckenlied</i> and the <i>Virginal</i>	70
4.1. The <i>Eckenlied</i> and the Debate surrounding Dietrich von Bern	73
<i>Oral Hearsay: Praising nach wane</i>	76
<i>Dietrich's Ride to Hell Mirrored in Eckenlied E₇?</i>	83
<i>Bringing Dietrich into Focus: Ecke's Search for Dietrich; Dietrich's Ride to Jochgrimm</i> ..	87
<i>Truth-Claim, Irony, and Further Signs of Self-Reflexivity in the Eckenlied</i>	94
<i>The Eckenlied as Self-Aware</i>	102
4.2. The <i>Virginal</i> and the Flow of Information.....	103
<i>Finding and Defining aventiure</i>	107
<i>Messengers, Letters, and Summaries</i>	114
<i>Truth-Claim, Politics, and märchenhafte Unbestimmtheit</i>	120
<i>The Virginal between the Saga and Literate Poetry</i>	133
4.3. <i>Apud Germanos perdurarunt gigantes</i> – On the <i>Vorzeit</i>	134
4.4. Historical <i>aventiure</i>	140
5. The <i>Dietrichepik</i> as “Probable” History.....	141
Abreviations.....	147
Bibliography	148
<i>Primary Literature</i>	148
<i>Secondary Literature</i>	149

1. Introduction: Saga, History, *Aventiure*, and Dietrich von Bern

Who was Dietrich von Bern? If one were to ask a German-speaker from the Middle Ages, one might receive two different answers. The majority of German-speakers would probably say that Dietrich von Bern was an exile from his kingdom of Verona (Bern). He had been driven away by his uncle Ermenrich and lived in exile at the court of Etzel (Attila), King of the Huns, for thirty years before eventually reconquering his country. In addition to this story, which I will refer to as the exile-saga (in German, *Fluchtsage*), they would have said things about Dietrich which seem to us today to belong to a world of fantasy, namely that Dietrich went on numerous adventures wherein he fought dwarves, giants, and dragons. A few, especially clerics, might have then supplied a different picture, saying that Dietrich von Bern was an Ostrogothic king and Arian heretic who was born after Attila's and Ermenrich's (Ermanaric) deaths and who invaded Italy at the behest of the Byzantine emperor Zenon in order to drive the usurping barbarian Odoacer from Rome. There he ruled for thirty years before engaging in a persecution of Catholics and dying a sudden death at the hands of a vengeful God. One would receive, in short, two images of Dietrich, images which are not compatible. How is one to reconcile them?

It is important to recognize that these two ideas of Dietrich von Bern derive from different sources of transmission. The story which clerics might tell is based on Latin chronicles about the Ostrogothic king Theoderic the Great, who ruled in Italy from 493 until his death in 526, and was indeed born around the time of Attila's death and long after the fourth century Gothic King Ermanaric.¹ The majority response derives from a series of popular narratives

¹ For a summary of the lives of these three major characters and a summary of theories for their changed roles in the exile-saga, see Joachim Heinzle (1999). *Einführung in die mittelhochdeutsche Dietrichepik*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2-7.

transmitted to us today in a group of epic poems collectively known as the *Dietrichepik*.² All in all, eleven extant poems are devoted to Dietrich's exploits, making him the most popular hero of the German Middle Ages.³ Those that deal with the exile-saga are called the historical *Dietrichepik* (*historische Dietrichepik*), referring to their more obviously historical nature from a contemporary standpoint: they emphasize battles, armies, kingship, and campaigns. The second group of Dietrich-narratives, those which contain such things as his exploits fighting dragons, giants, dwarves, and other heroes, are referred to as the *aventure*-like *Dietrichepik* (*aventurehafte Dietrichepik*). This label derives from the Middle High German word *aventure*, meaning both a strange or wondrous event or series of events and the narration or reporting of that event or series of events. It emphasizes the supposed similarity of these poems to Arthurian romance.⁴

How could the differences between these two traditions, one popular and one clerical, have arisen? One could assume, as some scholars have, that the *Dietrichepik* represents a literary fiction, in which its authors have freely twisted and distorted the historical facts of Theoderic's life in order to present a more interesting story, in addition to inventing – that is, telling without a pretension of truth or a preexisting source – new narratives. As Monika Otter explains:

A fiction is free to make up a world – coextensive with the text – with its own temporal and spatial structures, its own characters, its own boundaries, its own rules for plausibility, coherence and relevance, and these parameters may or may not resemble the everyday world we know.⁵

² I have chosen to use the German term rather than a translation such as “Dietrich cycle” due to the implication of cyclification found in that term. See below.

³ Cf. Joachim Heinze (1984). “Dietrich von Bern” in *Epische Stoffe des Mittelalters*, eds. Volker Mertens and Ulrich Müller. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 141; 149-150. Other poems connected to the *Dietrichepik* where Dietrich is only a minor character are also included.

⁴ Heinze (1999), 33. Cf. also Jan-Dirk Müller (1998). *Spielregeln für den Untergang: Die Welt des Nibelungenlieds*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 83. In earlier scholarship, the *aventure*-like poems were also referred to as fairy-tale-like (*märchenhaft*): this label imposes modern ideas onto the texts, and for this reason I, following Heinze, avoid it.

⁵ Monika Otter (2005). “Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing” in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner. New York: Hodder Arnold, 115.

I would further define fiction, in a medieval context, as the *deliberate* creation of such a world,⁶ naturally with the caveat that this can only be deduced from indications found in the text itself. Since a world with its own temporal and spatial structures and rules for plausibility can indeed be found in the *Dietrichepik*, one might conclude that poetic fancy is the cause of the differences between the clerical and popular narratives.

This assumption of fictionality is dashed by numerous indications that the poems were viewed, in competition with the chronicle tradition, as conveyers of the “true history” of Dietrich von Bern. For a fiction, this would be impossible. One might still assume that the *aventure*-like poems represent the foray of a previously historically based tradition into fiction through their invention of ahistorical narratives. However, this too imposes a contemporary understanding of history and narrative production and transmission onto the medieval Dietrich-texts. As I will show, these texts, both historical and *aventure*-like, ought not be considered fictional just because they do not correspond to modern ideas of history. The spectrum between the two is more complex than simple binary opposition. Nevertheless, it is true that Dietrich and Theoderic seem very different to us today. As Ralph Breyer argues:

Theoderich der Große hat zu Dietrich von Bern nicht viel mehr als seinen Namen, einige vage geographische Zusammenhänge und das allerdings zwingende Bewußtsein beigesteuert, er sei ein bedeutender, gewaltiger Mann, über den zu erzählen sich lohne. Damit wird er eine Gestalt, ein Name, der Geschichten an sich zu ziehen vermag.⁷

⁶ Cf. Fritz Peter Knapp’s oral statement paraphrased in Benedikt Konrad Vollmann (2002). “Erlaubte Fiktionalität – die Heiligenlegende” in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 63.

⁷ Ralph Breyer (2000). “Dietrich cunctator: Zur Ausprägung eines literarischen Charakters” in 5. *Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Aventure-märchenhafte Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal Vienna: Fassbaender, 65.

“Theoderic the Great granted Dietrich von Bern little more than his name, a few vague geographical contexts, and the compelling awareness that he was an important, powerful man, about whom it was worth while to tell stories. In this way he became a figure, a name, which was able to draw stories to itself.”

By these stories Breyer means principally those in which Dietrich fights supernatural beings, but also those of figures like Ermenrich and Etzel, which seem to have been grafted onto Dietrich's own. The differences between Dietrich and Theoderic, and even the *aventure*, do not point to fictionality. In order to understand the *Dietrichepik* on its own terms, to understand the internal "historical" logic of the *Dietrichepik*, it is necessary to see how Dietrich was able to "draw stories to himself," and moreover, examine how this occurred without a crucial modern concept, the invention of fictional narratives.

The nature of their transmission provides a first answer to how Dietrich attracted stories: the narratives were originally transmitted orally. Allow me to explain: there is a large temporal gap between the sixth century, when Theoderic the Great lived and reigned, and the thirteenth, when the Dietrich-poems began to be written down. Unlike the written sources on which the chronicles are based, the *Dietrichepik's* predecessors cannot be traced to books: with one exception, the *Hildebrandslied* (c. 840), no vernacular text in which Dietrich/Theoderic plays a role is to be found between Theoderic's death and the composition of the *Nibelungenlied*, c. 1200. The *Dietrichepik* itself only appears in writing after the *Nibelungenlied*, throughout the thirteenth century, even later for some poems. Had a narrative tradition existed in writing over such an extended period of time, it is highly unlikely that there would today be only a single surviving written poem, which was inserted as an afterthought onto the first and last leaves of a Latin manuscript. It is therefore reasonably clear that the narratives which later fed into the written *Dietrichepik* were not transmitted by writing. Nevertheless, it is equally clear that some tradition about Dietrich existed throughout this time: instead of writings, there are occasional mentions of the exile-saga narrative in some early and high medieval chronicles, mentions of Dietrich and events resembling *aventure* in Anglo-Saxon heroic poems and on Norse rune

stones, and pictorial depictions of events which can be connected to Dietrich. Narratives about Dietrich were being received, but not from books. Given this secondary evidence for a reception which cannot be connected with textual transmission, one can assume that the narratives about Dietrich were transmitted orally, without the aid of writing.⁸ If stories have been “drawn to Dietrich,” it must have occurred in the context of oral story-telling: these stories existed as part of an oral saga before they were written down. It is necessary to appreciate the manner of existence of this saga to understand the narrative and historical logic which, to some degree, still operates in the *Dietrichepik*, though this degree is not open to our analysis.

The term “saga” is somewhat confusing, in that the Norse sagas are written prose narratives. I, following the general use of the word *Sage* in German secondary literature, use it according to its etymological base, “to say.”⁹ This is because the saga is something that lives primarily apart from writing, though this does not mean it is never written down nor that written narratives do not influence and change the saga. According to Michael Curschmann, a saga is “ganz allgemein das Gesamt dessen, was man zu einem gegebenen Zeitpunkt über ein bestimmtes Ereignis zu berichten wußte.”¹⁰ The exile-saga, for instance, does not just encompass whatever part of the exile-narrative was told at any given time, but also what was not being told, and the Dietrich-saga encompasses everything that a given person might know about Dietrich. It thus forms an important part of the context of the poems. As modern scholars have no access to the living orality of the saga, there is no way of knowing for sure what a narrator knew and consciously chose to leave out of his rendition: proof can only be provided through allusions to saga-knowledge. It is clear, however, that the saga binds the narrator to a tradition. This does not

⁸ See Joachim Heinzle (2003/4). “Was ist Heldensage?” in *JOWG* 14, 1-6.

⁹ The connection is somewhat clearer between German *Sage* and the verb *sagen*.

¹⁰ Michael Curschmann (1989). “Zur Wechselwirkung zwischen Literatur und Sage: ‘Das Buch von Kriemhilt’ und Dietrich von Bern” in *PBB (West)* 111.3, 383.

mean that the story is entirely determined by the saga so that the narrative is always told the same way: the saga has many variants and is adapted with each new retelling.¹¹ What it does mean is that the narrator cannot simply invent according to whim.¹²

If the narrator cannot invent then my argument seems to have hit a brick wall: how could these two very different pictures of Theoderic/Dietrich have developed without invention? Or rather, how could invention take place without the creation of fiction? This can be answered by a closer look at the logic of oral transmission, still at play in the *Dietrichepik*. Though I will speak of changes and alterations, it is important to realize that oral transmission is not a children's game of "telephone" – the secondary evidence for the Dietrich-saga makes it likely that its early manifestations were not all that different from what is found in the written *Dietrichepik*. Nevertheless, changes did occur, as the lack of correspondence between Dietrich and Theoderic shows. Joachim Heinzle lists three processes which can be deduced from later written sources to generally be at work in oral story-telling and which determined the majority of such alterations: reduction, "das Verfahren, die meist sehr verwickelten historischen Ereigniszusammenhänge auf elementare menschliche Affekte und Konflikte wie Goldgier, Hybris, Eifersucht, Rache zurückzuführen"; assimilation, "die Anpassung der historischen Fakten an traditionelle Erzählschemata und Erzählmotive"; and coordination, which "zielt darauf ab, die Sagen eines Kreises zyklisch zu einer Art Gesamterzählung zusammenzuschließen, in der alles mit allem zusammenhängt und jeder irgendwie mit jedem zu tun hat."¹³ The first two processes serve to make an account more understandable, to provide motivation, and to diffuse complicated series

¹¹ Müller (1998), 23; 19.

¹² Müller (1998), 25.

¹³ Heinzle (2003/4), 11-13. "the action of reducing mostly very complicated continuities of events to elementary human affects and conflicts like greed, hubris, jealousy and revenge"; "the accommodation of historical facts to tradition narratives schemes and motifs"; "aims to connect the sagas of a sphere cyclically to a sort of complete narrative, in which everything is related to everything and everyone somehow has something to do with everyone."

of events into simpler ones: in this way an explanation might be offered for how Theoderic became an exile, etc. The last of these processes, coordination (also known as synchronism), can be subsumed under the term confabulation, first used in this sense by Harald Haferland, as a way to describe “filling-out” the narrative.¹⁴ According to Haferland, rather than consciously inventing, the narrators of heroic poetry invented without realizing it. The narrators

waren nicht Augenzeugen der Ereignisse, von denen sie singen. Man will etwas hören von ihnen, und sie bedienen die Erwartungshaltung tendenziell aus der Situation einer Gedächtnislücke heraus, indem sie kollektiver Gedächtnisbildung beispringen. Sie legen sich ein Ereignis nach Maßgabe ihrer Verfügung über narrative Schemata und dessen, was sie gehört haben, zurecht. Sie haben Namen, aber keine chronologischen Daten, und Fakten überhaupt nur im Umriss je schon gebildeter Ereigniskonstrukte. Was sie nicht schon gehört haben, müssen sie selbständig hinzufügen. Daraufhin ist es in der Welt und als Gehörtes stabil.¹⁵

Haferland’s description of oral transmission emphasizes the lack of clarity in the collective narrative horizon. Heinzle’s, on the other hand, shows a purpose, perhaps conscious, perhaps unconscious, behind changes. The two approaches are compatible: the narrator of an oral story both seeks to make the story understandable through the first two processes described by Heinzle, and he seeks to fill out or confabulate that which he does not know. Of special importance for confabulation are two factors: names and synchronism. Names are “Stabilisatoren und Sammelpunkte der Tradierung,” they are associated with certain series of events.¹⁶ Etzel, for instance, is a host of exiles; Ermenrich is famous for his savagery towards his kin. Through a

¹⁴ Harald Haferland (2004). *Mündlichkeit, Gedächtnis und Medialität: Heldendichtung im deutschen Mittelalter*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 413.

¹⁵ Harald Haferland (2007). “Poesie des Synchronismus: Historizität, Konfabulation und Mythisierung in der Heldendichtung” in 9. *Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldenzeiten – Heldenräume: Wann und wo spielen Heldendichtung und Heldensage?* eds. Johannes Keller and Florian Kragl. Vienna: Fassbaender, 19. “were not eyewitnesses to the events of which they sing. People want to hear something from them, and they tend to serve this expectation as if they had a hole in their memory, in that they rush to create a collective memory. They arrange the event according to the degree they control narrative schemes and according to what they have heard. They have names, but no chronological dates, and they only have facts in the contours of events which have already been created. They need to add whatever they have not already heard. Thereupon, [the narrative] is in the world and stable as something already heard.”

¹⁶ Haferland (2007), 19-20. “stabilizers and collection-points of transmission.”

heavy reliance on names and their associated characteristics, persons who could never have met each other on the plane of history become intimately connected in the oral tradition. Such anachronisms as Dietrich appearing with Etzel and Ermenrich would not have attracted any attention, since the narrators “hätten sowenig wie ihre Hörer noch einen historischen Kontext der Personen, geschweige denn ihre Lebensdaten, benennen können.”¹⁷ It would seem logical in the context of confabulation, reduction, and assimilation that if Dietrich were driven from his homeland, it would be by Ermenrich, the bane of kinsmen and a historical relative, and that when he was in exile he would go where all the other exiles go in the heroic tradition, to Etzel. Chroniclers, on the other hand, *could* name a historical context of Dietrich/Theoderic and Etzel/Attila. Thus Bishop Otto of Freising’s statement in his learned *Chronica sive Historia de Duabus Civitatibus* (c. 1143-1146) that *Attilam longe post Hermanaricum constat exercuisse tyrannidem istumque post mortem Attilae octennem a patre obsidem Leoni augusto traditum* (it is well known that Attila exercised his tyranny long after Ermanaric and that after Attila’s death [Theoderic] was given as a hostage to Leo Augustus as an eight year old boy; Hist. de du. Civ, V.III, p. 232).¹⁸ This was “well known” only among the educated, at least at first. The saga’s processes clashed with the information stored in textual transmission.

In the saga it was natural that Etzel and Dietrich would appear together: its process of synchronism/coordination, whereby the names of heroes are brought into contact with one another, collapsed the linear past into a heroic age, a time period which cannot be concretely dated, in which all heroes appear full-grown and famous.¹⁹ The heroic age is almost identical with another concept of the past found in written works which derive from oral transmission, the

¹⁷ Haferland (2007), 14. “neither they nor their audience would not even have been able to name a historical context for the characters, let alone the times they were alive.”

¹⁸ All translations in this work are my own unless marked otherwise.

¹⁹ Cf. Heinzle (2003/4), 13; Haferland (2007), 10-16; Müller (1998), 49.

Vorzeit. The *Vorzeit* is a primeval age which is distinguished by one key feature: it took place a long time ago and it is, to varying degrees, radically different from now. In an oral culture, this *Vorzeit* is often the only real concept of a past.²⁰ The narrators of the *Dietrichepik* emphasize that their poems take place in the *Vorzeit* by speaking of them as having happened long ago. This unspecific long-ago in turn becomes a *Vorzeit* by virtue of its unspecificity: in this conception of the past it is possible for a single person to have seen Dietrich, Alexander the Great, the Anglian King Offa, and almost every other hero of Germanic poetry, as in the Old English poem *Widsith*, despite chronological incompatibility from a modern vantage point. Furthermore, medieval audiences, the educated included, *knew* that giants, dragons, dwarves, and the like, had existed, and might still exist in far away places; by the unspecific chronology of the *Vorzeit*, dragons and giants might find their way into the stories of Dietrich von Bern.²¹ In the oral memory, as we know it from written evidence, Theoderic, a historical figure rooted in the time of the collapse of the Roman Empire, became a primeval hero; the datable events of his life became altered and inserted into an undatable, nebulous *Vorzeit*. This *Vorzeit* is, because of its nebulosity, incompatible with historical time as constructed by chroniclers and as constructed today.

The function of the oral transmission which conveyed the Dietrich-saga and other heroic narratives was that of *Vorzeitkunde*, to convey the knowledge of the *Vorzeit* to a contemporary medieval audience: the inventions which took place through confabulation did not create mere “fiction” in the minds of its narrators or audience.²² In that the confabulated *aventiure* narratives depended as much on the *Vorzeit* as the more clearly historical exile-saga, both sets of poems can

²⁰ Cf. Müller (1998), 104-105. Against my take on the matter, see Thomas Klein (1988). “Vorzeitsage und Heldensage” in *Heldensage und Heldendichtung im Germanischen*, ed. Heinrich Beck. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 115-122.

²¹ Haferland (2007) 76. This will be elaborated on further later.

²² Cf. Haferland (2004), 76; 455. Cf. also Müller (1998), 51; 59.

be said to have contained historical information and to have operated as *Vorzeitkunde*.²³ The giants, etc, which found their way into the *Dietrichepik* were historical by the logic of the saga and need not be seen as marking a significant difference between the “historical” and “*aventiure*-like” poems. A real opposition, on the other hand, clearly existed between the *Dietrichepik*, with its claim of passing historical knowledge to the present, and the chronicles, which made the same claim on the basis of written sources rather than oral authority. So it is that, c. 1292, the anonymous ecclesiastical chronicler of the *Flores Temporum* can say this about the saga’s picture of Dietrich/Theoderic: *Multa de ipso cantantur, que a ioculatoribus sunt conficta* (many things are sung about him [Theoderic], which have been invented by minstrels).²⁴ In saying this, the chronicler attacks the confabulation found in the Dietrich-saga as illegitimate for use in his historical record. He identifies it as such because its information deviates from that found in the written sources he values.

Despite what we as twenty-first-century scholars might like to assume, the resistance of chroniclers to the claims of the *Dietrichepik* had less to do with contemporary notions of verifiability – chroniclers were just as unable to verify the claims they found written in Latin books about Theoderic as they were to disprove those found in the saga – and more to do with authority. As the Alsatian chronicler Jakob Twinger von Königshofen dismissively states about Dietrich’s *aventiure*: *do schribet kein meyster in latyne von. dovon habe ich es für lügene* (No authority writes about [the *aventiure*] in Latin. Therefore, I take them for lies; Stras. Chr., p.

²³ Cf. Florian Kragl (2007b). “Mythisierung – Heroisierung – Literarisierung: Vier Kapitel zu Theoderich dem Großen und Dietrich von Bern” in *PBB* 129.1, 93. I do not agree with Kragl’s conclusion of a different sort of time operating in the historical and the *aventiure*-like poems. Cf. also Hans Fromm (1986). “Riesen und Recken” in *DVjs* 60.1, 44.

²⁴ Text excerpted in Elisabeth Lienert et al. (eds.) (2008). *Dietrich-Testimonien des 6. bis 16. Jahrhunderts*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 139-140. Otto Gschwantler sees a contradiction here, as the saga was at this point largely written down. However, the poems are still being referred to as ‘sung’ as late as the fifteenth century *Heldenbücher*. See *idem* (1988), “Zeugnisse zur Dietrichsage in der Historiographie von 1100 bis 1350” in *Heldensage und Heldendichtung im Germanschen*, ed. Heinrich Beck. Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter, 63.

380). Jakob, like other chroniclers, elevates the authority of Latin sources over the authority of the poems' narratives. This is clearly not the case for the transmitters of the saga. As Karl Reichl writes:

If the singer's tale is true – whatever 'true' may mean here – then it is true only on the basis of authority. He is the voice of authority and his authority stems from his official position in the chain of transmission. The truth the singer speaks on the basis of authority is neither factual/historical, nor is it for that matter fictional truth, but rather it is a belief shared by singer and hearer in the (historical) truth of what is narrated. As with all beliefs, doubting and wavering are possible: but the believer will basically accept the relevance of what he believes for himself and his fellow believers.²⁵

This idea differs greatly from Haferland's assumption of "naiver Glaube an die Wirklichkeit des Geschehens" on the part of the poems' recipients, though it does not diminish his position that "Heldendichtung wird durch Erfindung nicht fiktional."²⁶ If something in the narrative seemed improbable to a recipient, that did not mean that he did not accept the narrative as a whole, based on the authority of the narrator. Both the belief in the saga and the freedom of the singer/narrator to confabulate details derived from the authority of the tradition and the singer's authority as the "mouthpiece" of the tradition, which, theoretically, derived in turn from eyewitnesses to the events themselves.²⁷ If the audience found something unlikely, it still had reason to trust that the narrator, and, behind him, the saga, knew better.

These considerations contextualize the developments of the oral Dietrich-saga. They do not fully explain the ways in which the poems we possess were understood after those poems began to be written down in the thirteenth century. The emergence of written transmission had a noticeable effect on the authority of the saga, and furthermore, made evident the incompatibility of the all-encompassing *Vorzeit* and a literate understanding of historical time. This is because of

²⁵ Karl Reichl (2000). *Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 142.

²⁶ Haferland (2004), 455. "naïve belief in the reality of the event" "Heroic poetry does not become fiction through invention."

²⁷ Müller (1998), 250. "Sprachrohr."

the ability to compare different versions of the same narrative that comes with writing:²⁸ textual sources made it clear that Attila and Theoderic were not contemporaries, as Otto of Freising and many others would comment. As literacy became increasingly pervasive in the communicative scenario of the High Middle Ages, the authority of the oral tradition among literates appears to have slowly diminished in favor of the authority of the written text.²⁹ This change was not immediate and would not result in a complete disregard of all oral story-telling in learned circles, but outside of the epic tradition, although sources connected to the saga were often used in the chronicles of the Early and High Middle Ages, by the end of the Late Middle Ages they were used much more rarely.³⁰ Despite this, there was also much debate in ecclesiastic and educated circles over the status of the Dietrich-saga and the later written Dietrich-poems, as a closer look at some of the learned reception will make clear.

By the time the *Dietrichepik* first appeared in writing after 1200, book-learned individuals had been attacking the Dietrich-saga for nearly a hundred years. At the same time, there are references as late as 1617 to continued belief in the Dietrich-saga among some social groups.³¹ Much scholarship either assumes blithe ignorance of these attacks on the part of the saga's proponents, or else that the poems existed as a genre of fantasy that some foolish peasants were duped into believing. To me, such appraisals seem based on a modern prejudice against the way the *Dietrichepik* conveys historical knowledge and have little to do with the texts themselves or the Middle Ages. Rather than ignoring challenges to their authority, the narrators of the *Dietrichepik* were aware of problems in the saga narrative, much more so than is accepted

²⁸ Cf. Wlad Godzich and Jeffrey Kittay (1987). *The Emergence of Prose: An Essay in Prosaics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, xvii-xviii

²⁹ Godzich and Kittay (1987), xv-xviii.

³⁰ See Fritz Peter Knapp (1997). *Historie und Fiktion und in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik: Sieben Studien und ein Nachwort*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 164.

³¹ See Otto Gschwantler (1979). "Die historische Glaubwürdigkeit der Nibelungensage" in *Nibelungenlied – Ausstellungskatalog des Voralberger Landesmuseums* 86,2. Bregenz, 66.

in current scholarship, and made the “truth” of their texts an issue in a number of ways. I will show that the written poems attempt to integrate the events of the *Vorzeit*, and thus the authority of the saga, into a literate concept of history. This is true both of the “historical” *Dietrichepik* and the “*aventiure*-like” *Dietrichepik*: I will also show that the distinction made between the two sets of poems by modern researchers has less to do with medieval and early modern understandings of historical writing and “fiction” than with imposing modern ideas onto the *Dietrichepik*.

In this thesis I therefore intend to address the following questions, examining the text both on the level of the story and through the remarks of the narrator: what evidence is there in the poems of the *Dietrichepik* of a truth-claim, the assumption and assertion of the truth of events as reported in the saga and as reported in each particular poem?³² Is there evidence for reactions to the ecclesiastical chronicle tradition, in which Theoderic was a heretic and evil-doer, and to the attacks on the saga’s chronology that began in the twelfth century? In what ways do the Dietrich-poems make the transfer and validity of information a topic within their own narratives? Are there signs of conscious “fictional” story-telling in the Dietrich-poems? In addressing these questions, I will analyze four epics, *Dietrichs Flucht* and *Die Rabenschlacht* from the historical poems, and *Das Eckenlied* and *Die Virginal* from the *aventiure*-like poems, in addition to selected pieces of saga reception in learned sources. This investigation will serve to move the debate over the status of the *Dietrichepik* and Middle High German heroic poetry in general beyond considerations of genre and serve to expose the “game rules” (*Spielregeln*), in Jan-Dirk Müller’s phrase, by which the narratives were believable. In doing so, I will demonstrate that previous attempts to categorize the *Dietrichepik* as “fiction” or “history” have been misguided. My analysis will have the larger implication that medieval narrators and recipients were much

³² The term “truth-claim” derives from Monika Otter. See eadem (2005), 111.

more aware of problems in the poems than they are often given credit for, and that the poems show a sophisticated understanding of “fictionality” and their own claims to historical truth.

2. Historicity and Fictionality in the High and Late Middle Ages

The issue of whether or not there was a concept of “fiction” in the High and Late Middle Ages is a contentious one in present-day scholarship. This contention reflects a lack of clarity among medieval authors themselves on how to define a “fictional” or “historical” narrative: although definitions *approaching* our notions of historicity and fictionality were given, they were neither consistently applied nor does there appear to have been a universal consensus as to which works, particularly in the vernacular, belonged to one category or the other. The same work might even be defined as both depending on who was receiving and/or transmitting it at any given time.³³ This, from our point of view, lack of clarity does not appear to have been a concern to medieval “theorists”: they provided working definitions, and where these definitions were inadequate they could be modified or else the question might be ignored. The resulting imprecision of the terminology for “fiction” and “history” used in the Middle Ages is reflected somewhat in the debate over the status of the Dietrich-saga in learned sources.

In order to fully understand this same debate, it is necessary to see what “fiction” and “history” signified in the writings of medieval authors: in some cases, there may be no clear separation of the two,³⁴ which complicates any effort to pigeon-hole the texts of the *Dietrichepik* in one category or the other. Nevertheless, in order to gain some idea of how the *Dietrichepik* could have been received by contemporaries, this chapter will first examine some of the attempts of medieval authors to define “historical” in opposition to “fictional” writing, and then examine the ways that select learned sources, recorded by ecclesiastical writers of chronicles and histories within the Holy Roman Empire, responded to the Dietrich-saga in their own works of history. This chapter will thus allow a better understanding of the debates surrounding the “historical”

³³ Fritz Peter Knapp (2005), *Historie und Fiktion in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik (II): Zehn neue Studien und ein Vorwort*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 26.

³⁴ Cf. Knapp referring to Wace’s *Roman de Brut*. See idem (2005), 29.

status of the Dietrich-saga, by understanding the ways in which it, despite its confabulated “fictional” elements, might still have been seen as “factual.”

2.1. Defining *Fabula*, *Argumentum*, *Historia* and *Veritas*

In the High and Late Middle Ages, there does not seem to have existed any term comparable to “fiction” in the definition supplied by Monika Otter: a freely created world that exists only within a text and does not need to relate to the world outside the text.³⁵ Nevertheless, it is clear that a distinction between “true” and “false” narrative was made.³⁶ This is most evident in the fact that narration, in accordance with the *Etymologiae* of the Visigothic bishop Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636), was generally divided by authorities writing in Latin into three categories: *historia*, *argumentum*, and *fabula*.³⁷ Isidore derived these terms from Cicero, and later authors did not stray far from Isidore’s definitions. His text is therefore still applicable to the period of discussion:³⁸

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

(Etym. I, 44, 5; my emphasis.)

(Likewise there is a difference between *historia*, *argumentum*, and *fabula*. For *historiae* are *true things* which *have occurred*; *argumenta* are those things which, although they have not occurred, could still occur; but *fabulae* are those things which *have neither occurred nor can occur*, because they are against nature.)

³⁵ Monika Otter (2005). “Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing” in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner. New York: Hodder Arnold, 115.

³⁶ Cf. Otter (2005), 111. Otter goes so far as to say that practically, the twelfth century distinguished between these concepts much as we do.

³⁷ Otter (2005) 109-10; Joachim Knape (1984). ‘Historie’ in *Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit: Bregriffs und gattungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen um interdisziplinären Kontext*. Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 58-59. Other schemes of division also existed, but the definitions of the three terms generally did not change significantly. Of the other categories, only *tragoedia* will be of any interest to us later, and this is generally subsumed under *historia*.

³⁸ Knape (1984), 19; K. Schnitt (1991). “Historiographie B. Westlich-abendländischer Bereich” in *LexMA*. München: Artemis Verlag, 49.

Historia and *fabula* are given their own sections in the *Etymologiae*, while *argumentum* appears only occasionally: here, because it was in Isidore's source, Cicero's *De Inventione*. Later authors do not generally apply *argumentum* to any works they are discussing: it is only used in the definitions of *fabula* and *historia*.³⁹ Thus, while *argumentum* cannot be ignored entirely, my analysis will mostly be focused on *historia* in opposition to *fabula*.

Based on the definition given above, the essential difference between *fabula* and *historia* would appear to be truth or "factuality," in the etymological sense of "having occurred." *Fabula* is *contra naturam*, that is, opposed to the world as it really is, in contrast to modern fiction which can theoretically be free from any relation to "reality." *Historia*, by this same token, must conform to "reality"/*natura*. However, as Fritz Peter Knapp states:

Der entscheidende Punkt liegt natürlich nicht im tatsächlichen Grad mimetischer Abbildung von Wirklichkeitselementen, sondern in der prinzipiellen Prätension des Autors, generell Wirklichkeit darzustellen, und der Akzeptanz dieses Anspruchs beim Rezipienten. Beides hängt selbstverständlich nicht zuletzt von der Überzeugung ab, diese Abbildung sei dem Subjekt überhaupt adäquat möglich.⁴⁰

Knapp's statement serves to remind that the "truth-value" of a text is not a factor in determining a work's historical or fictional status in a medieval context: people in the Middle Ages believed things to be true that we currently believe to be false, much as people fifty years ago did and people a hundred years from now will. It is a work's truth-claim and the acceptance of this claim by recipients that determines its place between *historia* and *fabula*.⁴¹ This must be kept in mind when considering the status of the *Dietrichepik*.

³⁹ Otter (2005), 112.

⁴⁰ Knapp (2005), 8. "The deciding point is not, of course, the actual degree of mimetic representation of elements of reality, but the principal pretension of the author to generally show reality, and the acceptance of this claim by the recipient. Both of these depend as a matter of course on the certainty that this representation is at all adequately possible for the subject."

⁴¹ Cf. Otter (2005), 112-113.

To return to Isidore: he further defines *historia* thus: *Historia est narratio rei gestae, per quam ea, quae facta sunt, dinoscuntur* (*Historia* is the narration of past events [or deeds], through which those things which have occurred are known; Etym. I, 41, 1). It is important for my further investigation to note that, at least in principal, Isidore seems to recognize the difference between the *res gestae* and the *historia* itself, which is the *narratio* of those *res gestae*: *Historiae... monumenta dicuntur, eo quod memoriam tribuant rerum gestarum* ([Literary] monuments... are called *historiae* because they convey the memory of past events; Etym. I,41,2). Through their narration, the past events achieve the status of knowledge.⁴² Another important point for Isidore is the principle of eyewitnessing; *historiae* are ideally written by eyewitnesses to the events being narrated: *Melius enim oculis quae fiunt deprehendimus quam quae auditione colligimus. Quae enim videntur, sine mendacio proferuntur* (For we better comprehend with our eyes what is happening than we gather by hearing. For what is seen is conveyed without falsehood; Etym. I. 41, 1). Thus, eyewitnessing is a way of assuring the accuracy of an account, which can be related back to *historia*'s status as *res verae*. (I will later show that eyewitnessing becomes an important principal in some of the Dietrich-poems.) Though Isidore does not include it in his definition, Cicero also stated that *historia* means *ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota* (remote from the memory of our time): this sort of *historia*, which Isidore refers to as *annales*, would theoretically be based on previous eyewitness reports, thus allowing works written by non-eyewitnesses to still be reckoned *historia*.⁴³

⁴² Monika Otter (1996). *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 9.

⁴³ This part of the definition continued to be cited by later authors, such as the Parisian scholar Johannes de Garlandia (between 1190-1290). Text quoted in a footnote in Benedikt Konrad Vollmann (2002). "Erlaubte Fiktionalität – die Heiligenlegende" in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 64; Also in Fritz Peter Knapp (1997). *Historie und Fiktion und in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik: Sieben Studien und ein Nachwort*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 12. I will not speculate as to why Isidore has failed to include this part of Cicero's definition.

Let us now turn to *fabula*. Isidore defines it thus: *Fabulas poetae a fando nominaverunt, quia non sunt res factae, sed tantum loquendo fictae* (The poets named the *fabulae* after *fari* [to speak], because they are not events which have occurred, but were only made up [*fictae*] through speech; Etym. I, 40, 1). The Latin verb used here, *tingo*, carries with it some important connotations in the Christian Middle Ages and beyond: it is generally used in a negative sense; a *tingens* or *fictor* is a spreader of false rumors. *Fictio* itself, meanwhile, though not always used in this sense, is a term that can be applied to heresy, i.e. “made up religion” as opposed to the “true faith.”⁴⁴ In other words, *tingo* is almost synonymous with to lie (*mendicor*), and indeed, a *fabula* is often called a *mendacium*,⁴⁵ which is reflected in the first definition listed above: *fabulae vero sunt quae nec factae sunt nec fieri possunt* (but *fabulae* are those things which neither have occurred nor can occur; my emphasis). The particle *vero* makes it clear that the distinction being made is not between *res factae* and *res fictae*, as *argumentum* are also composed of *res fictae*, but between the possible and the impossible, i.e. the true and the untrue, or at least that which conforms to reality/*natura*. *Fabulae* are devoid of any literal truth or even plausibility in that they lack the act of mimesis which Isidore imputes to *argumentum*.

The statement that *fabulae* are not true needs qualification. While the final definition of *fabula*, which I have listed first, makes it seem so, Isidore also provides a more nuanced view. He divides *fabulae* by the purpose for which they were made: a *fabula* can be made simply for enjoyment (*delectandi causa*), such as those told among the commoners (*ut eas, quas vulgo dicunt*), or it can have hidden allegorical meaning (Etym. I, 40, 3). Such allegorical *fabulae*, although they are still *fictae narrationes*, have a true meaning (*verax significatio*; Etym. I, 40, 6). It is thus possible for a *fabula* to be true by functioning as an *integumentum*, a garment, under

⁴⁴ Fuller analysis in Vollmann (2002), 66-72.

⁴⁵ Otter (2005), 111-112; Vollmann (2002), 69-70.

which truth could be detected.⁴⁶ In this regard, Isidore seems primarily to have had beast-fables in mind, such as those of Aesop, which serve to educate but at the same time have animals acting as humans, an impossibility. Their truth is a truth of education, not a literal truth.

With the revelation that the, from a modern standpoint, “fictional” *fabulae* can have a *verax significatio*, it seems prudent to investigate what is meant by “true.” The truth (*veritas*) mentioned above cannot immediately be equated with our present-day conception of truth. To begin with, the truth that Isidore alludes to, but never defines, is ultimately divine truth, and thus derived from God and not necessarily connected with the idea of “verifiability.”⁴⁷ This divine truth often has a connotation of genuineness, as in the modern expression “a true friend.” In this expression, the verifiability of the friend is not in question; whether he or she possesses those qualities which a genuine friend ought to have is at issue. This same idea also contains the notion of truth as something that is morally good, or else that promotes moral goodness.⁴⁸ an *integumentum-fabula* is thus true because it provides an exemplum of behavior which is either to be imitated or avoided.

It is now worth asking: is moral truth also what Isidore meant by *res verae* in his discussion of *historia*, i.e. could an invented narrative be seen as *historia* so long as it served to edify? Isidore’s definition of *historia* as *res factae*, i.e. things that have happened, undermines this suggestion, as does his preference for eyewitnessing in historical writing.⁴⁹ Equally important are the frequent reassurances of medieval authors of *historiae*, typically in prologues

⁴⁶ Walter Haug (2002). “Geschichte, Fiktion und Wahrheit: zu den literarischen Spielformen zwischen Faktizität und Phantasie” in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 122-23; Otter (2005), 111-112

⁴⁷ Ernst Breisach (2007). *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern*. 3rd Edition. Chicago, 103; 126-127.

⁴⁸ Fuller Analysis in Vollmann, (2002), 63-66.

⁴⁹ Cf. Vollmann (2002), 64-65.

to their works, that they have not invented (*fingo*) anything.⁵⁰ *Historia* was, furthermore, given a special dignity in the Middle Ages, because, according to St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) in *De Doctrina Christiana*, it was through *historia* that God's plan for the world was revealed: *non inter humana instituta ipsa historia numeranda est* (*historia* itself is not to be counted among human designs).⁵¹ According to Augustine, God is both the *conditor* and *administrator* of the *ordo temporum*, the founder and guide of history. Given this divine connection, it is not surprising that the ultimate form of *historia* was the Bible, which contained sacred history.⁵² The Augustinian evaluation of history continued to be cited throughout the Middle Ages, meaning that it continued to be a factor in defining *historia*.⁵³

It is important to stress that, although *historia* was not, in the Augustinian tradition, regarded as true simply because it was morally good, it was often still seen as promoting morality, just as the Bible was seen to be both factually and morally true. Isidore, in defending the reading of pagan histories, formulates this rather subtly: *Multi enim sapientes praeterita hominum gesta ad institutionem praesentium historiis indiderunt* (For many wise men have transmitted the past deeds of men in *historiae* for the education of the present; Etym. I, 43, 1). The education to which he is referring likely goes beyond mere facts, and alludes to a saying, attributed to Cicero in the Middle Ages, that *historia* is the *magistra vitae*, the teacher of life, i.e. a provider of exempla of proper behavior.⁵⁴ Similarly, in his *Speculum Virtutum* (c. 1300), the learned Austrian monk Engelbert of Admont speaks of *historia vel exemplum* (*historia* or *exemplum*; Spec. Virt, X, XV, p. 340) in listing the forms of narration, and says, furthermore:

⁵⁰ Fuller analysis in Peter Johanek (2002). "Die Wahrheit der mittelalterlichen Historiographen" in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 11.

⁵¹ Text quoted in Knape (1984), 67.

⁵² Knape (1984), 134-148.

⁵³ Knape (1984), 67-68.

⁵⁴ Knape (1984), 23.

[h]istoria rerum praeteritarum inducitur in testimonium ad credendum, et in exemplum ad imitandum (The *historia* of past things is brought into an account to be believed and into an exemplum to be imitated; Spec. Virt. X, XVII, p. 344).⁵⁵ *Historia* for him, therefore, is true both because it happened and because it promotes morally good behavior.

The moral quality of a *historia*, because of its divinely sanctioned “factuality,” ought to be beyond question in all instances. However, where that factuality, through falsification or a garbled version of events, was lost, the exemplum-function was lost as well. For this reason, the medieval writer of *historia* sought to assure his audience that he had not invented any part of his narrative or twisted the facts (*falsa vel adulatoria fingere*), even if he had in fact altered the account of his sources.⁵⁶ Where these inventions were detected, the offending author might be accused of lying, as was the case with the rather outrageous “source-fiction” of Geoffrey of Monmouth.⁵⁷ Despite this, certain additions to a historical narrative, e.g. speeches, did not affect the perceived truth of that narrative, so long as whatever was added seemed probable.⁵⁸ The goal of the *historiographus* was to reproduce the world as it really is as he understood it;⁵⁹ the author of a *fabula*, on the other hand, did not have this concern, as, according to Isidore’s definition, he created a narrative that always stood in contradiction to reality (*contra naturam*).

The definitions given above could be conflated or redefined in several ways, and these redefinitions can be observed in the works of high and late medieval authors. On the one hand, there are *argumentum* and *fabula*, both of which are defined as not having occurred. The regrouping of these terms as two variants of *res fictae* is found in the Spanish scholar Dominicus

⁵⁵ Quoted and further discussed in Knape (1984), 60; 70-71.

⁵⁶ See Vollmann (2002), 69.

⁵⁷ Johanek (2002), 18. This does not, of course, mean that many (or even most) people did not believe Geoffrey’s account of events. See above.

⁵⁸ This tradition had its roots in Antiquity. See Knapp (2005), 16-17.

⁵⁹ Knapp (2005), 45.

Gundissalinus' well known work *De Divisione Philosophiae* (after c. 1150), immediately following his definition of *historia: res autem ficta alia est, que fieri potuit, et dicitur argumentum, ut parabole evangelii, alia est, que fieri non potuit et dicitur fabula* (One type of made up thing (*res ficta*) is that which could happen, and it is called *argumentum*, like the parables of the gospel, the other is that which could not happen and it is called *fabula*; *De Div. Phil.*, p. 55).⁶⁰ The text then proceeds to follow Isidore's definition of *fabula* almost word for word without any further detail on *argumentum*. One might still see some inkling of a concept of "fictionality" in such a grouping.

Another overlapping of terms could occur because of the ability of both *historia* and *fabula* to be true.⁶¹ A *fabula* is something that is not true literally, i.e. in the exact meaning of the words, but that can claim to be true on an allegorical level, i.e. as an exemplum. A *historia*, meanwhile, is true ipso facto, and the addition of small "fictional" elements, such as speeches, does not harm its status as truth. It is an exemplum by virtue of this truth. Thus, it is through their roles as exempla that the terms *historia* and *fabula* might overlap. For instance, in the anonymous *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (c. 1324), a collection of pious narratives intended for moral instruction, the reader is informed: *in hoc opusculo variae historiae tanguntur, / quae non de verbo per omnia exponuntur* (in this little work various *historiae* are contained that are not meant entirely literally [*de verbo per omnia*]).⁶² More confusing from a modern perspective, Engelbert of Admont, whose work otherwise conforms closely to the Isidorean definitions, states that, due to their exemplary value, *inveniuntur in libris et dictis auctorum et in hystoriis fabule et metaphore* (one finds, in the books and sayings of the authorities [*auctores*] and in

⁶⁰ The Latin seems to be open to the possibility of the events of the *fabula* occurring; however, I believe this is simply because of the author's misuse of Latin tenses and moods. A more literal translation would be "things that were able to happen" and "things that were not able to happen".

⁶¹ Cf. Haug (2002), 123.

⁶² Knape (1984), 152.

historiae, [both] *fabulae* and metaphors; Spec. Virt. X, XXII, p. 351; my emphasis). Joachim Knappe also discusses an exemplum-collection of beast-fables, precisely the sort of narrative that Isidore regarded as the *fabula par excellence*, in which the various fables are referred to as *historiae* more often than *fabulae*.⁶³ Clearly, these texts are still making a claim to truth, as Engelbert also recognized, but it is not the same sort of “factual” truth that might be expected from Isidore’s definition or the statements of other authors I have examined.

The situation becomes more complex when the vernacular is taken into account, where words equivalent to *fabula* and *historia* either did not exist or existed in a very rudimentary form in the High and Late Middle Ages.⁶⁴ Knapp cites the example of Wace in his *Roman de Brut* (c. 1155) using the Old French word *fable*, cognate of *fabula*, to refer to the Arthurian narratives as containing a garbled version of actual historical events: in other words, a “fictionalized” version of a historical narrative rather than an invented or “fictional” one.⁶⁵ In Middle High German, meanwhile, almost all narratives can be – and normally are – referred to as *mære*, without direct reference to their truth content: this must be done by use of an adjective, e.g. *ein warez mære* (a true *mære*). The loanword [*h*]istorje seems to have some of the qualities of Latin *historia*, in that it sometimes implies a greater content of truth in a narrative, though this is not always the case. Indeed, the word seems to be used more and more often to mean merely “story” as it loses its force as a loanword and becomes a more normal item of vocabulary – which is not to say that the sense of “accurate, true narrative” is not sometimes retained. As a result, it is more difficult to

⁶³ Knapp (1984), 156.

⁶⁴ Cf. Fritz Peter Knapp (1987). “*Tragoedia und Planctus*: Der Eintritt des Nibelungenlieds in die Welt der *litterati*” in *Nibelungenlied und Klage: Sage und Geschichte, Struktur und Gattung; Passauer Nibelungenliedgespräch 1985*, ed. Fritz Peter Knapp. Heidelberg, 152-153.

⁶⁵ Knapp (2005), 29.

discern what is meant.⁶⁶ Another loanword frequently used to refer to a narrative is *aventure*, which, besides generally being limited to particularly exciting exploits, does not seem to convey any notion of “fact” or “fiction.”

Even if not always strictly respected, the idea of factually true and factually false narratives still existed in the vernacular alongside that of morally true and morally false narratives. This can be demonstrated through the attempts of vernacular chronicles such as the *Kaiserchronik* and *Saxon World Chronicle* to assure their readership of their believability. This believability is often connected with the so-called *veritas latina*, the authority of Latin writing, meaning that attempts were made to connect vernacular narratives with Latin, or at least written, sources. These seem to have had a higher prestige and authority than their vernacular counterparts.⁶⁷ This phenomenon will be explored in the following section. It is indeed in many ways authority, the competing authorities of the saga and historiographical writing, which will inform the debate over the “historical” or “fictional” status of the *Dietrichepik*.

2.2. The Debate in the Reception over Theoderic/Dietrich von Bern

These considerations of *fabula* and *historia* have prepared a look at one half of the puzzle regarding the “historicity” of the Dietrich-saga: its reception in learned, mostly ecclesiastical, circles, which I will now sketch in brief. Reliable sources for the views of other social groups are lacking. Once readers have some idea of how the saga, and later, its texts, were viewed by some contemporaries, they will have a better understanding of the ways that authors and later redactors

⁶⁶ For an analysis of the word *historje*'s development in medieval German, see Knappe (1984), 110-134; 157-165; 172-179; 187-190; 198-212. The more general sense of “story” might parallel and be influenced by the word's Old French counterpart, *estoire*.

⁶⁷ See Klaus Grubmüller (1995). “Das *buoch* und die Wahrheit: Anmerkungen zu den Quellenberufungen im *Rolandslid* und in der Epik des 12. Jahrhundert” in *bickelwort und wildiu mære: Festschrift für Eberhard Nellmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Dorothee Lindemann et al. Göttingen: Kümmerle Verlag, pp. 37-50.

of the *Dietrichepik* seem to be responding to the questions posed here. As shall be seen, there is not necessarily a consensus on how to regard the claims of the saga. Some authors will reject them, some will accept them, but the saga will generally be altered, manipulated, and adapted when used as a source by historiographic writing, a process which can also be observed in the *Dietrichepik* itself.⁶⁸

In my discussion of medieval narrative theory, I have dealt with texts mostly from a literate, learned perspective, and I will continue to do so in this section. However, it is important to remember that the texts of the *Dietrichepik*, while written, appear to have emerged from an oral tradition, a statement which can be supported by the lack of earlier Dietrich-writings despite clear allusions to, depictions, and summaries of parts of the saga before the first Dietrich-poem is known to have been written down.⁶⁹ It can be assumed that the oral saga continued to play a large role in the authority of the written poem's narratives, and likely continued to exist in tandem with the written poems.⁷⁰ At the same time the poems also began to claim written authority. That a claim of both written and saga authority was felt necessary points to a perceived deficiency of authority on the part of the saga's proponents: written authority was used to shore up the saga's claims.⁷¹ Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep this oral background in mind: the chroniclers remark on it through their constant references to singing and saying when referring to the saga and poems. Performative, oral transmission will continue to be a factor in the reception of heroic poetry into the early modern period.⁷² This serves to remind a modern reader of the fact

⁶⁸ Cf. Jan-Dirk Müller on the manipulation of the saga, idem (1998). *Spielregeln für den Untergang: Die Welt des Nibelungenlieds*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 59.

⁶⁹ See Joachim Heinzle (2003/4). "Was ist Heldensage?" in *JOWG* 14, 1-6.

⁷⁰ Heinzle (1999), 29.

⁷¹ Cf. Elisabeth Lienert (2003). "Rede und Schrift: Zur Inszenierung von Erzählen in mittelhochdeutscher Heldenepik" in *Eine Epoche im Umbruch: Volkssprachige Literalität 1200-1300*, eds. Christa Bertelsmeier-Kierst et al. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 136.

⁷² Cf. Dennis H. Green (1994). *Medieval Listening and Reading: The Primary Reception of German Literature 800-1300*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 67-68.

that the saga was not perceived in the same way that a written text would be: that medieval chronicles, and indeed, the *Dietrichepik* itself, continually mention singing and saying in connection with heroic poetry suggests that they too may have been aware of the different reception-mode/purpose of the heroic poems. The chroniclers may even have been putting this mode of reception into question.

The Historiographically Accepted Life of Theoderic the Great

Before engaging in a discussion of the ways that the written histories of Late Antiquity came to be in conflict with the saga, it would be prudent to discuss what we today know about Theoderic, Ermanaric, and Attila, which is, to a large degree, derived from the same late antique historians who influenced medieval chronicles, most important among them the Gothic-Roman historian Jordanes († c. 552), who appears himself to have used some oral sources in his *History of the Goths (Getica)*, most notably in the case of Ermanaric.⁷³ I will derive my own summaries from the information provided by Joachim Heinzle and Roswitha Wisniewski.⁷⁴

All three historical figures lived in the fourth through the sixth centuries A.D., during the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. Ermanaric was a Gothic ruler in the Ukraine whose powerful kingdom was destroyed by the Huns c. 375/376. The Huns, meanwhile, became their most powerful under Attila, who ruled as monarch 441-453 and reigned over many Germanic peoples in his empire. At the Battle of the Catalaunian Fields (451), during which Attila's attempt to conquer Gaul from Rome was repulsed, his army included the Ostrogoths, among

⁷³ Elisabeth Lienert et al. (eds.) (2008). *Dietrich-Testimonien des 6. bis 16. Jahrhunderts*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 37-38.

⁷⁴ Heinzle (1999), 2-4; In almost unnecessarily complete detail, Roswitha Wisniewski (1986). *Mittelalterliche Dietrichdichtung*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 25-34. For a listing of the late antique sources themselves, see Heinrich Joachim Zimmermann (1972). "Theoderich der Große – Dietrich von Bern: Die geschichtlichen und sagenhaften Quellen des Mittelalters." Diss.: Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 30-51; also the first sources listed in Elisabeth Lienert et al. (eds.) (2008).

their leaders Theodemir, father of Theoderic the Great. Following Attila's death, the Ostrogoths rebelled against the sons of Attila, defeating them in 454 and killing Attila's son Ellac. The Ostrogoths became allies of the Eastern Roman Empire, settling in present day Austria.

In order to secure the Ostrogoths' allegiance, the East Romans had Theodemir send Theoderic as a hostage to Constantinople, where he lived 459-469/470. When Theoderic returned to the Ostrogoths, he co-ruled with his father, who led his people on a military campaign against the East Romans in Macedonia in 473 and died the following year. Thereafter Theoderic succeeded to the throne, the same year the Eastern Emperor Zenon I (474-491) came to power. Following further military action, including a siege of Constantinople, Zenon and Theoderic made a treaty in 488 which allowed Theoderic to conquer Italy on Zenon's behalf: there the barbarian general Odoacer had deposed the last Western Roman Empire Romulus Augustulus and taken power for himself. Theoderic defeated Odoacer definitively at Ravenna in 493, but made a treaty which allowed Odoacer to be his co-ruler in Italy. However, shortly thereafter, Theoderic killed Odoacer with his own hands.

With his rule recognized by Zenon's successor Anastasius I in 497, Theoderic's reign in Italy was a time of peace which he assured through extensive alliances with other Germanic tribes. However, at the end of his life he began to face internal opposition from Italian natives, resulting in the execution of the philosopher and politician Boethius in 524 and Symmachus, Boethius's son in law and head of the Senate, in 525. The Emperor Justinus I (518-527) reacted angrily to the execution of the Catholic Symmachus by the Arian Theoderic, and revoked religious freedom for the Arians of the Eastern Roman Empire. Theoderic sent Pope John I as an envoy to Justinus so that East Roman Arians might regain religious freedom; when the pope was unsuccessful, Theoderic arrested him upon his return in 526, and the pope died soon thereafter,

for which Theoderic was blamed by the Catholics. Theoderic died slightly later that same year. The Catholics interpreted this as God's wrath; Pope Gregory the Great would later include in his *Dialogues* that Theoderic's soul had been seen being thrown into Mount Aetna by the souls of Symmachus and Pope John. Ten years after Theoderic's death, the Emperor Justinian (527-565) invaded Italy and destroyed the Ostrogothic kingdom in a devastating war of nearly twenty years (535-553).

With the late antique historians' image of Theoderic in mind, I can begin to discuss his place in medieval chronicles. His prominence as a late antique historical figure ensured that most world histories included at least some information on his reign.

Eleventh-Century Reception: The Quedlinburg Annals and Frutolf of Michelsberg

The first high medieval historiographic text to bring the historical Theoderic expressly into contact with the exile-saga, the saga of Dietrich's expulsion from Italy and exile at the court of Attila, is the *Quedlinburg Annals*, a compilation of history likely begun c. 1024 in a monastery in Quedlinburg. The *Annals* can be regarded as the high point of the saga being taken as *historia* by chroniclers:⁷⁵ passages about Theoderic which had not previously found their way into writing appear in the text next to information derived from the sixth century *Liber Pontificalis* and Bede's *Chronica Maiora*.⁷⁶ These passages primarily concern the exile-saga and it is from this chronicle that most future learned discussions of the exile-saga derive. Regarding Theoderic, the *Annals* state that Ermanaric, king of all the Goths, first hung two of his nephews to acquire their gold and then *Theodericum similiter, patruelem suum, instimulante Odoacro patruelo suo, de Verone pulsum apud Attilam exulare coegit* (similarly he drove Theoderic, his

⁷⁵ Otto Gschwantler (1988). "Zeugnisse zur Dietrichsage in der Historiographie von 1100 bis 1350" in *Heldensage und Heldendichtung im Germanschen*, ed. Heinrich Beck. Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter, 35.

⁷⁶ Lienert et al. (eds.) (2008), 63.

nephew/kinsman, because of the accusations of Odoacer, his nephew/kinsman, from Verona and forced him to stay with Attila in exile; Qued. Ann., p. 31). Ermanaric is then killed by the brothers Hamidus, Serilus, and “Adaccarus” (Odoacer?). These are all events of the saga which are not likely to have been found in earlier written sources and which violate historical chronology as we know it. Odoacer is, however, Theoderic’s historical opponent and it is significant that the annalist inserted him into the story, in a role which in vernacular sources is played by Ermenrich’s evil advisor Sibeche. This is likely in order to harmonize his written sources with the saga.⁷⁷ After Theoderic’s expulsion the *Annals* return to a slightly altered version of historical events, with Theoderic defeating Odoacer and reclaiming Verona, then proceeding to rule as a tyrant.⁷⁸

If it is true that the annalist preferred written to oral sources, as Otto Gschwantler argues,⁷⁹ he must not have known of Jordanes’ *Getica*, which would have made him aware of the chronological distance between the historical Ermanaric and Theoderic the Great. The writer of the *Würzburg Chronicle* (c. 1057), who copied much of his text from the *Quedlinburg Annals*, evidently had access to more written sources but still not the *Getica*, as he retains the sentence about Theoderic’s exile being caused by Ermanaric but otherwise omits the passages from the saga found in the *Annals*.⁸⁰ The use of the oral tradition as an additional source for these chronicles shows that, despite its lack of written documentation, the saga was at this time thought

⁷⁷ See Knapp (2005), 42-43. Stephan Müller suggests that it may have been as a way to connect the exile-saga with a local tradition in Saxony. See idem (2000). “Helden in gelehrten Welten: Zu Konzeption und Rezeption der Heldensagenpassagen in den *Quedlinburger Annalen*” in *Theodisca: Beiträge zur althochdeutschen und altniederdeutschen Sprache und Literatur in der Kultur des frühen Mittelalters*, eds. Wolfgang Haubrichs et al. Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter, 369-376. Odoacer also appears in the *Hildebrandslied*, there probably as a part of genuine oral tradition.

⁷⁸ Another section that appears to show intimate knowledge of the exile-saga is most likely a later interpolation. For a discussion of this section, see Otto Gschwantler (1984b). “Zu Lautung und Herkunft der Heldensagenamen in den Quedlinburger Annalen” in *Linguistica et Philologica: Gedenkschrift für Björn Collinder (1894-1983)*, eds. Otto Gschwantler et al. Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 135-42;145-151.

⁷⁹ Cf. Gschwantler (1984b), 160.

⁸⁰ Gschwantler (1984b), 170.

to convey historical knowledge even among the educated, although they gave book sources first priority when seeking to harmonize conflicting accounts.⁸¹

Future debate over the status of the exile-saga would be informed by Frutolf of Michelsberg's *Chronicon Universale* (Universal Chronicle), which was completed before 1103. The chronicle is conceived as a history of the world from creation until 1099, and represents the first time that the chronological error of placing Theoderic as a contemporary of Attila and Ermanaric is commented on. The relevant portion reads as follows:

Haec Iordanis quidam grammaticus, ex eorumdem stirpe Gothorum progenitus, de Getarum origine et Amalorum nobilitate, non omnia quae de eis scribuntur et referuntur, ut ipse dicit, complexus, exaravit, sed brevius pro rerum notitia huic opusculo inseruimus. His perlectis diligenterque perspectis, perpendat qui discernere noverit, quomodo illud ratum teneatur, quod non solum vulgari fabulatione et cantilenarum modulatione usitatur, verum etiam in quibusdam cronicis annotatur, scilicet quod Ermenricus tempore Marciani principis super omnes Gothos regnaverit, et Theodericum, Dietmari filium, patrualem suum, ut dicunt, instimulante Odoacere, item, ut aiunt, patruelo suo, de Verona pulsum, apud Attilam Hunnorum regem exulare coegerit, cum hystoriographus narret... [etc.]

(Chron. Univ., 130; my emphasis.)

(Jordanes, a learned man, born of the tribe of these same Goths, of Gothic origin and of the noble house of the Amals, did not collect, as he himself says, all the things that are written and said about them [the Goths], but we have inserted them [Jordanes' work? the following?] very briefly into this little work to have note of these things. Having diligently read through them, may he who knows how to discern consider whether this [what follows] is thought certain, because it is common *not only* in popular story-telling [*fabulatio*] and songs *but* is *also* noted in certain chronicles, namely that Ermanaric ruled over all the Goths at the time of Emperor Marcianus, and that he forced Theoderic, his nephew, as they say, the son of Dietmar, at the accusation of Odoacer, likewise, as they say, his nephew, from Verona into exile with Attila, King of the Huns, while the *historiographus* says... [etc.]

Naturally, the *historiographus* (Jordanes), writing only a few years after Theoderic's death, says nothing of the sort. Frutolf's considerations after he has determined the incompatibility of the account of Jordanes with the account of the saga would greatly influence the chronicles written after him: *Igitur aut hic falsa conscripsit, aut vulgaris opinio fallitur et fallit, aut alius*

⁸¹ Gschwantler (1984b), 171. Müller believes that this change has less to do with a reestablishment of historical chronology and more to a lack of local historical interest on the part of the chronicler. See idem (2000), 377-378.

Ermenricus et alius Theodericus dandi sunt Attilae contemporanei, in quibus huiusmodi rerum convenientia rata possit haberi (Therefore either he [Jordanes] wrote false things, or the opinion of the people is deceived and deceives, or another Ermanaric and another Theoderic must be provided who were contemporaries of Attila, in which case there can have been agreement among these accounts; Chron. Univ. 130). This is because, as Frutolf next explains, the Ermanaric that Jordanes writes of was dead long before Attila was born, and the Theoderic that Jordanes writes of was born shortly after Attila's death. If they are the same people, Frutolf concludes, then one of the accounts must be wrong.

In listing possibilities for overcoming the impasse of the saga's synchronistic time versus Jordanes' annalistic, Frutolf engages in an activity with which he frequently busies himself upon encountering sources in disagreement with each other: it suggests that he views both the saga narrative and the account of Jordanes as equally valid.⁸² However, it is important to note that, while it could be argued that Frutolf is putting the oral tradition on equal footing with Jordanes,⁸³ this is not entirely true: he justifies his including a version of the saga in that it is also found *in quibusdam cronicis*, of which the *Würzburg Chronicle* is the most likely source for his account. He follows the wording of this chronicle almost exactly.⁸⁴ If he views both narratives as equally valid, his inclusion of chronicles as a source for the saga-narrative must be taken into account: since Jordanes admits that he does not include everything, Frutolf suggests that there might be some truth to the events as reported in some chronicles and the saga. At the same time he clearly recognizes that those chronicles more closely resemble "popular story-telling and songs," a fact which is underlined by his constant repetition of *ut dicunt*, which I would interpret as the naming

⁸² Gschwantler (1984a). "Frutolf von Michelsberg und die Heldensage" in *Philologische Untersuchungen gewidmet Elfriede Stutz zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Alfred Ebenbauer. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 199.

⁸³ As does Otto Gschwantler (1984a), 200.

⁸⁴ Lienert et al. (eds.) (2008), 71.

of a source.⁸⁵ In other instances, where there is a no disagreement between written sources and saga, Frutolf makes use of other oral traditions without such additional support.⁸⁶ In Frutolf's mind, the saga thus had some, but not absolute, authority and conveyed legitimate historical information.

Twelfth-Century Evidence: The Kaiserchronik

As we move into the twelfth century, the exile-saga's chronology comes under attack in several works which used Frutolf's chronicle as a source. All react to his determination of the chronological incompatibility of the saga and written sources; in all probability, none of these authors was aware of the others. Their appraisals are more negative than Frutolf's,⁸⁷ which could be a sign of an erosion of the saga's authority in the minds of chroniclers. The most important of these, for our purposes, is the rhymed *Kaiserchronik*, the first chronicle written in the German vernacular (between c. 1140 and 1150).⁸⁸ The *Kaiserchronik's* existence as a vernacular work makes it especially important for this thesis, as it was more likely to have reached a broader audience directly, including the proponents and transmitters of heroic poetry, than a Latin work.

Because the *Kaiserchronik* represents the first attempt to bring what was otherwise an exclusively Latin tradition of history into the vernacular, the chronicler appears to have gone to some lengths to position himself on the side of Latin writing. This allowed him to claim a greater degree of authority than he could for a purely vernacular text. In his prologue, the chronicler even refers to his own work as a *crônicâ*, a term which was otherwise reserved for Latin

⁸⁵ See Lienert (2003), 136. A contrary opinion is expressed by Ernst Hellgardt (1995). "Dietrich von Bern in der deutschen 'Kaiserchronik': Zur Begegnung mündlicher und schriftlicher Tradition" in *Deutsche Literatur und Sprache von 1050-1200*, eds. Annegert Fiebig et al. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, pp. 98-100.

⁸⁶ Gschwantler (1984a), 202-203; Müller (2000), 379-381.

⁸⁷ Cf. Gschwantler (1984a), 102.

⁸⁸ Zimmermann (1972), 136-140.

historiographic texts in the twelfth century.⁸⁹ His efforts are especially evident in the discussion of Dietrich/Theoderic: the exile-saga is one of only a few cases in which the vernacular saga directly contradicted Latin historiography and thus represented a convenient place for the chronicler to differentiate his own effort from what was typically found in the vernacular.⁹⁰ Accordingly, the chronicler takes a highly critical position on the exile-saga. Immediately after stating that “Dieterîch” burns in hell, he adds: *Swer nû welle bewæren,/ daz Dieterîch Ezzelen sæhe,/ der haize d a z b u o c h v u r t r a g e n* (Whoever wants to claim that Dietrich saw Etzel [Attila], let him have *the book* brought forth; Kaiserchr., v. 14176ff.; my emphasis). This book did not exist at this time: the saga could not claim literate authority and could thus be discarded. This is the first time such a direct appeal to the authority of written texts is made in German historiography.⁹¹

The *Kaiserchronik*'s insistence on book-learning is matched by a denigration of the alternatives. To conclude his section discussing Theoderic, the chronicler states: *hie meget ir der luge wol ain ende haben* (here you can have an end of the lies; Kaiserchr., v. 14187). For further explanation of the use of the word *luge*, one can turn to the *Kaiserchronik*'s prologue. There, readers are told: *Nu ist leider in diesen zîten/ ein gewoneheit wîten:/ manege erdenchent in lugene/ unt vuogent si zesamene/ mit scophelîchen worten* (unfortunately, now in these times there is a common custom: many invent lies and put them together with inventive words; Kaiserchr., 27-31). When the chronicler says inventive, he does not mean it as a compliment.

⁸⁹ Cf. Jürgen Wolf (2008). *Buch und Text: Literatur- und kulturhistorische Untersuchungen zur volkssprachigen Schriftlichkeit im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 109.

⁹⁰ Cf. Hellgardt (1995), 95-96.

⁹¹ Gabrielle Spiegel, following Godzich and Kittay, notices a similar phenomenon in France, as vernacular histories attempted to differentiate themselves from other vernacular narratives. See Gabrielle M. Spiegel (1993). *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 67-68; and Wlad Godzich and Jeffrey Kittay (1987). *The Emergence of Prose: An Essay in Prosaics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 195.

The adjective *scophelîch* is essentially a loan-translation of Latin *fictivus*,⁹² and by referring to the exile-saga as lies, the *Kaiserchronik* makes the exile-saga into a deliberate *fictio*: “Diese Lügen sind demnach falsche Behauptungen über einzelne historische Persönlichkeiten, die unter Hinweis auf eine sichere, meistens schriftliche Überlieferung widerlegt werden können.”⁹³ This would seem to place the exile-saga firmly in the camp of *fabulae*.

If only the *Kaiserchronik*'s explicit condemnation of the exile-saga as lies were examined, it might seem that the chronicler rejected the saga in every way. However, closer analysis shows that, while the chronicler trumpets the superiority of Theoderic's life found in Latin sources, he has in fact quietly incorporated parts of the Dietrich-saga into his history according to Frutolf's third suggestion, by introducing another Dietrich. It is possible that this choice was facilitated by the fact that there truly were multiple Gothic (and Frankish) kings named Theoderic, who really were often confused.⁹⁴ Regardless, the chronicler tells the life of *der alte Dieterîch*, Theoderic's grandfather and a contemporary of Attila's, who is forced to flee from the Huns out of his homeland of “Mêrân” to Lombardy, and there has a son, Dietmar, Dietrich's father (*Kaiserchr.*, v. 13839-57). The name Mêrân is probably derived from heroic poetry, and Gschwantler attempts to connect *der alte Dieterîch*, who otherwise appears to be entirely the invention of the chronicler, with the saga of Wolfdietrich, likewise sometimes listed as Dietrich's grandfather.⁹⁵ Through his inclusion (or invention) of *der alte Dieterîch*, the chronicler can create a narrative quite similar to the exile-saga which does not violate the

⁹² Hellgardt (1995) would like to connect the word to the Old High German *skop*, poet. I find my suggestion more likely. See pp. 95-96.

⁹³ Xenja von Ertzdorff as quoted in Gschwantler (1988), 55-56. “According to this, these *luge* are false assertions about individual historical figures, which can be disproven by referring to secure, mostly written, sources.”

⁹⁴ Hellgardt (1995), 100.

⁹⁵ Gschwantler (1988), 52-56; Hellgardt (1995), 102. For information to Meran, see Wisniewski (1986), 3.

chronology of Jordanes, thus harmonizing the two accounts. This is regardless of the fact that *der alte Dieterîch* does not exist in written sources.

In addition to *der alte Dieterîch*, the chronicler recreates events which seem derived from the saga in more subtle ways. A notable instance is in Dietmar/Theodemar's battle against the sons of Attila: two sons of Attila die in the battle rather than the one that the chronicler would have found in his written sources. This seems to show that he altered the battle to resemble a version of the story told in *Die Rabenschlacht*, where two sons of Attila also die.⁹⁶ What remains different is that the chronicler has changed the tyrant who drives *der alte Dieterîch* from Ermenrich (Ermanaric) to Etzel (Attila), and consequently *der alte Dieterîch* flees to Lombardy rather than out of it. Similarly, in the chronicle's rearranged *Rabenschlacht*, the sons of Attila die fighting against the Goths rather than on their side.⁹⁷ Rather than completely disqualifying the saga, the *Kaiserchronik* integrates it into accepted historiography in rather inventive ways. Throughout the *Kaiserchronik*, however, the chronicler makes a point of saying: *daz saget daz buoch vur wâr* (the book says this truly; Kaiserchr., here: v. 14190), so that it "postuliert... generell den Vorrang des Buches gegenüber der mündlichen Überlieferung."⁹⁸

The *Kaiserchronik*, like other contemporary chronicles, seems to take the saga's claim of *Vorzeitkunde* seriously to some degree, in that they feel the need to show why it is "wrong." In the case of the *Kaiserchronik*, this claim is further verified by the chronicler's incorporation of parts of saga into his historical narrative.⁹⁹ This suggests that, so long as written authorities were not directly questioned, the authority of the oral tradition was generally accepted even by *litterati*

⁹⁶ Hellgardt (1995), 101.

⁹⁷ Cf. Hellgardt (1995), 102-103.

⁹⁸ Gschwantler (1988), 78. "generally postulates the precedent of the book over oral transmission."

⁹⁹ Cf. Gschwantler (1988), 41.

at this time.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the reaction was decisively against the saga in those cases where oral transmission contradicted textual authority.

Thirteenth-Century Evidence

In the thirteenth century, the criticism of the saga became “more general and sharper,” possibly because the poems were now being written down and could thus aspire to the sort of *veritas latina* already claimed by the twelfth-century *Kaiserchronik*.¹⁰¹ Correspondingly, the *Saxon World Chronicle* (c. 1260), the first German vernacular chronicle written in prose,¹⁰² saw fit to mention in its section on Theoderic’s reign that *Hit wirt doch van eme manich logentale gedan* (There are many lies told about [Theoderic]; Sax. W. Chr., CXI, 134-35). The chronicler is very vague about what the lies might be, but since they are multiple, he probably is not referring to the exile-saga alone.¹⁰³ Immediately before this, readers were told: *Swe so mer wille weten van sineme slechte unde sinen orlogen, de lese Hystoriam Gothorum* (Whoever wants to know more about his [Theoderic’s] race and his battles, let him read the *Historia Gothorum*; Sax W. Chr., CXI, 134-35). The reader is directed away from the saga to a written, Latin source. At the end of the century (c.1292), in the anonymous ecclesiastical chronicle *Flores Temporum*, it is similarly said that *[m]ulta de ipso cantantur, que a ioculatoribus sunt conficta* (many things are sung about him [Theoderic], which have been made up by minstrels).¹⁰⁴ Here, the saga is depicted as a deliberate *fictio* perpetrated by the class of minstrels: the authority of the

¹⁰⁰ A number of other sources also continue to make mention of the *fabula* of Theoderic’s ride to hell. These narratives will be discussed in chapter 4. For a more in depth analysis, see Gschwantler (1988).

¹⁰¹ Gschwantler (1988), 78. “allgemeiner und schärfer”.

¹⁰² Zimmermann (1972), 140.

¹⁰³ Gschwantler (1988), 60.

¹⁰⁴ Text excerpted in Lienert et al. (eds.) (2008), 139-140. Gschwantler (1988), 63, sees a contradiction here, as the saga was at this point largely written down. However, the poems are still being referred to as ‘sung’ as late as the fifteenth century *Heldenbücher*.

performers of the texts themselves is questioned.¹⁰⁵ The thirteenth century thus marks a period in which the saga is especially denigrated by chroniclers. However, not much is said that was not already said previously, and the attacks do not appear to have hampered the composition of the *Dietrichepik*.

Fourteenth-Century Evidence: Heinrich of Munich, and Jakob Twinger

To conclude this chapter, I will examine the accounts of two chroniclers from the fourteenth century, starting with the rhymed *World Chronicle* of Heinrich of Munich, and finally discussing the prose *Strasbourg Chronicle* of Jakob Twinger von Königshofen. Heinrich of Munich's vernacular *World Chronicle* (c. 1370) appropriates text from many vernacular works.¹⁰⁶ It engages with the Dietrich-saga in order to convey historical information to the public. The *Strasbourg Chronicle*, on the other hand, is a very bookish endeavor which contrasts the authority of the *Dietrichepik* with that of Latin texts.

Heinrich of Munich chronicle, which exists in several versions, gives an especially broad array of views on the Dietrich-saga. This is because the different manuscripts are an excellent example of the same sort of "open transmission"¹⁰⁷ that is also seen in some German heroic poetry, meaning that different manuscripts contain different versions of the same work.¹⁰⁸ Some of these versions contain an account of the exile-saga derived from the poem *Dietrichs Flucht*, some do not.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Godzich and Kittay (1987), xv on the French translation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*.

¹⁰⁶ A summary of the relevant portions of the chronicle is found in Lienert et al. (eds.) (2008), 159-61. Unfortunately, the chronicle has still not been printed.

¹⁰⁷ For more on "open transmission," see the introduction to chapter 4.

¹⁰⁸ For a fuller discussion of "open transmission," see the introduction to chapter 4.

¹⁰⁹ Norbert H. Ott (1985). "Kompilation und Zitat in Weltchronik und Kathedralikonographie: Zum Wahrheitsanspruch (pseudo)historischer Gattungen" in *Geschichtsbewußtsein in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Tübinger Colloquium 1983*, eds. Christoph Gerhardt et al. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 119.

Before discussing Heinrich of Munich's use of saga material, it is important to realize that he follows written sources in most cases,¹¹⁰ but does not limit his written sources to other chronicles. With the exception of Arthurian romance, he makes some use of almost every genre of vernacular literature.¹¹¹ The vernacular source used for Heinrich's Dietrich material is *Dietrichs Flucht*, from which Heinrich has excerpted his list of Dietrich's ancestors. After having listed them, he writes:

*nu han ich ew gesait gar
von dem gesläch der Amelungen,
wir jr stam ist entsprungen,
alz ir choranik sait
vns für die gantzen warhait
vnd alz ich ez gelesen han.*¹¹²

(Now I have told you everything about the race of the Amelungs, how their tribe came into being, as their chronicle tells us to be the whole truth, and as I read it.)

The chronicler thus asserts the textual nature of his source and grants the information found in it authority by referring to *Dietrichs Flucht* as a chronicle. In most other cases where material has been taken from heroic poetry, he does not cite a textual source: for instance, he includes the events of the *Nibelungenlied* without excerpting the text or citing it in any way.¹¹³ This suggests that Heinrich believed *Dietrichs Flucht* to have a greater amount of authority than these other poems, possibly due to its similarity to a rhymed chronicle, which itself may be an attempt to claim greater authority for the saga.¹¹⁴ It also suggests that, in other cases, the saga was the preferred authority over any one rendition of a saga narrative.

¹¹⁰ Gisela Kornrumpf (1985). "Heldenepik und Historie im 14. Jahrhundert: Dietrich und Etzel in der Weltchronik Heinrichs von München" in *Geschichtsbewußtsein in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Tübinger Colloquium 1983*, eds. Christoph Gerhardt et al. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 90.

¹¹¹ Ott (1985), 121-123.

¹¹² Text quoted in Heinzle (1999), 62.

¹¹³ Kornrumpf (1985), 104.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Norbert Voorwinden (2007). "Dietrich von Bern: Germanic Hero or Medieval King? On the Sources of *Dietrichs Flucht* and *Rabenschlacht*" in *Neophilologus* 91, 244-245.

In piecing together his chronicle, Heinrich has not merely taken up unchanged the ancestors and narrative of *Dietrichs Flucht* and other poems/events from the saga. He has altered the chronology of both the poems and his other sources in order to remove discrepancies, so that, for instance, Dietrich's ancestors' several hundred-year lifespans from *Dietrichs Flucht* are reduced to more realistic lengths. The place names have also been altered to match the *Kaiserchronik*. Finally, a bridge is built to the established historical chronology of learned sources in that Dietrich goes to the court of the Byzantine Emperor Zenon following the destruction of the Burgundians as portrayed in the *Nibelungenlied*, thus reinserting Dietrich into the historiographically accepted timeline.¹¹⁵ The saga and historiography are thus combined, in differing amounts in different versions, while undefined "lies" about Dietrich also receive criticism: *von dem selben weigant/ wirt manig gelogens mære gesait,/ des mich vil oft hat betrait* (about the same warrior many lying *mære* are told, with which I have often been confronted).¹¹⁶ Heinrich asserts the truth of his own information about Dietrich through the degradation of other *mære* about him, despite the fact that the version of Dietrich's life he portrays originally prompted that criticism.

Heinrich of Munich's chronicle makes a clear demonstration of the differing views on the saga that were competing with each other in learned circles even in the latter part of the fourteenth century. Despite the sharp and persistent criticism of the saga by other chroniclers, it was still considered *historia* when it was inserted into the *World Chronicle*, just as it was considered *fabula* by those who removed it in other versions of the same chronicle. For the further history of German vernacular chronicles, however, Heinrich of Munich's pro-saga

¹¹⁵ Kornrumpf (1985), 102-105.

¹¹⁶ Text quoted in Kornrumpf (1985),

redactors do not appear to have had much influence: their appraisal of *Dietrichs Flucht* and the exile-saga as *historia* was not shared by later authors.¹¹⁷

The final source to be discussed, the *Strasbourg Chronicle* (c. 1390 or later) of the Alsatian chronicler Jakob Twinger of Königshofen takes a completely different approach to the saga than does Heinrich of Munich. Rather than incorporating it into his work, Jakob takes the antagonistic position familiar from the *Kaiserchronik*. He opens his section on Theoderic by saying:

Doch sit Dieterich von Berne, von dem die geburen singent und sagent, ist ein künig ouch gewesen über ein teil dis volkes der Gothen und Hünen, darumb wil ich etwas von ime sagen, das do in den bewerten büchern von ime ist geschriben.

(Stras. Chron., pp. 376-7)

(But since Dietrich von Bern, about whom the peasants sing and tell, was also a king over a part of this people of the Goths and Huns, I want to say something about him, which is written there about him in the verified books.)

Jakob thus elevates his work over the tales of the peasants/uneducated, and reports according to his written sources, although he still connects Theoderic with the Huns under the influence of saga. He also makes it explicit he is writing about Theoderic because the peasants tell stories about him: it could be that this points to his desire to oppose those stories. At the end of his section on Theoderic's life, Jakob adds:

Aber wie her Dieterich von Berne und sin meister Hildebrant vil wurme und drachen erslügent und wie er mit Ecken dem rysen streit und mit den querhen und in dem rosegarten, do schribet kein meister in latyne von. dovon habe ich es für lügene.

(Stras. Chron., p. 380)

(But how Sir Dietrich von Bern and his educator Hildebrand slew many dragons and how he fought with Ecke the giant and with the dwarves and in the rose garden, no authority (*meister*) writes about that in Latin. Therefore, I hold these things for lies.)

This insistence on sources written in Latin rather than simply on book sources could be a response to the various written poems of the *Dietrichepik* that had by now existed for over a hundred years, and which Heinrich of Munich incorporated into his chronicle. Jakob finishes by

¹¹⁷ Kornrumpf (1985), 107.

concluding: *Etliche leigen lobent disen Dieterich gar vaste, und hette doch einen bösen anevang und usgang* (certain laypeople greatly praise this Dietrich, but he had an evil beginning and end; Stras. Chron, p. 381). Jakob's goal seems to be to correct this vernacular perception of Dietrich by contrasting it with and degrading it in favor of the Latinate version of his life. He calls the *aventiure lügene*, just as the *Kaiserchronik* described the exile-saga. This implies that the *aventiure*-like narratives claimed to be true, and thus Jakob felt the need to combat them.

After Jakob, positive evaluations of the saga's truth become increasingly difficult to find in learned sources, though references to continuing belief among peasants remain. Later educated authors would also occasionally try to reinsert information from heroic poetry into the established historiographic chronology, with varying degrees of success. These later authors often used allegorical readings, especially of the *aventiure*-like poems, or else saw in the poems garbled versions of true events: their narratives could thus be corrected to reveal the "true history." For instance, Hagen of Tronje from the *Nibelungenlied* was believed to actually be Hector of Troy.¹¹⁸ The long-running debate over the historiographic value of the saga, having begun as a critique merely of the false chronology of the exile-saga and eventually becoming an attack on the saga itself, was far from over. However, these later sources no longer seem to insist on the saga as literal truth. A literal, historical reading seems to have had its last manifestation in Heinrich of Munich's *World Chronicle*, and even there it was not completely undisputed by all editors/copiers of the text.

¹¹⁸ See Klaus Graf (1992). "Heroisches Herkommen: Überlegungen zum Begriff der 'historischen Überlieferung' am Beispiel heroischer Tradition" in *Bild der Welt in der Volkserzählung: Berichte und Referate des fünften bis siebten Symposions zur Volkserzählung Brunnenburg, Südtirol 1988-1990*, eds. Leander Petzoldt et al. Frankfurt am Main/New York: Peter Lang, 56-58.

2.3. The Dietrich-saga's Disputed Historicity in Learned Reception

Throughout this section readers have seen that there was considerable debate during the High and Late Middle Ages about the status of the Dietrich-saga: was it to be regarded as *historia* or as *fabula*? This debate centered on the historical *Dietrichepik*. Only in the fourteenth century do the chroniclers see fit to attack, or mention, the *aventiure*-like poems. It is clear that, to some parties, the saga as a whole was suspicious, while others seem to have regarded it as partially true, or at least containing truth in a warped form, a belief which would last into the early modern period. It is important to remember, however, that we only have the views of learned ecclesiastical sources and must deduce the views of other parties from the point of view of ecclesiastical writers.

The debate that I have discussed here is a background to the poems that I will be examining: learned writers began to dispute the historicity of the saga over a hundred years before the first poem of the *Dietrichepik* was written down, and they continued to dispute and discuss it throughout the entire period during which these poems were being produced, and beyond. Given the duration and ubiquity of this criticism, some of which was written in the vernacular, it is only fair to assume that the composers of the *Dietrichepik* had some idea of the attacks on and questioning of their poems' truth. For the rest of my examination I will therefore look for signs of reaction within the poems themselves.

3. Historical *Dietrichepik*: The Dialog between Learned Writing and *Dietrichs Flucht*

In this chapter I will discuss *Dietrichs Flucht*, also known as *Das Buch von Bern*, and *Die Rabenschlacht*, both from the second half of the thirteenth century. The two poems are transmitted in the same manuscripts and may have been worked over by a single redactor, though they were probably not written by the same author.¹¹⁹ My focus will be on *Dietrichs Flucht*, which appears to deal with questions of historicity more directly. The third poem of the historical epics, *Alpharts Tod*, has been transmitted fragmentarily,¹²⁰ so that I will leave it out of my analysis. I will discuss the ways in which the epics appear to react to the general debate surrounding the historicity of the exile-saga.

The two poems, *Dietrichs Flucht* and *Die Rabenschlacht*, form an important counterpoint to my later discussion of the *aventiure*-like poems the *Eckenlied* and *Virginal*, as their narratives seem more firmly rooted in historical events: the poems' geography and plot make a vague connection with the historical Theoderic apparent to modern readers.¹²¹ Furthermore, they handle material that learned sources had directly attacked for over a hundred years before the poems were written down, whereas the *aventiure*-like poems are only attacked later. I will thus examine how the historical Dietrich-poems make their own historicity and credibility a topic, both through their truth-claims and through the ways in which they seem to respond directly to criticism of the saga. These responses are found both in the mouths of characters and in the mouth of the narrator.

¹¹⁹ The earliest possible date for the composition of *Die Rabenschlacht* (thought to be the older of the two) is 1220. The earliest manuscript of both epics is from c. 1280. See Joachim Heinzle (1999). *Einführung in die mittelhochdeutsche Dietrichepik*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 72-75.

¹²⁰ Heinzle (1999), 89-91.

¹²¹ Cf. Florian Kragl (2007b). "Mythisierung – Heroisierung – Literarisierung: Vier Kapitel zu Theoderich dem Großen und Dietrich von Bern" in *PBB* 129.1, 93.

Much has been written about the historical *Dietrichepik*'s engagement with the tradition or "genre" of German heroic poetry, its status as "poetry about heroic poetry" (*Dichtung über Heldendichtung*) in Michael Curschmann's iconic phrase.¹²² Curschmann is referring to the ways in which the poets of these texts appear to alter and 'play with' the traditional saga-material by incorporating elements from other genres, primarily courtly romance, into their texts, creating a tension and competition between what is "romance-like" (*romanhaft*) and what is heroic. While this tension is obvious to researchers intent on either reclaiming the *Dietrichepik* for "pure" heroic poetry or else on severing that connection, I am not sure that it was so obvious to medieval audiences. Similar investigations have recently been done into the intertextuality of the historical poems by Sonja Kerth and Elisabeth Lienert, with Lienert focusing primarily on the dialog between the historical *Dietrichepik* and the *Nibelungenlied*, which undoubtedly is present in some form.¹²³

I intend to investigate *Dietrichs Flucht* and *Die Rabenschlacht* as "poetry about heroic poetry" in another way: through their apparent reflections, both within the story and by the narrator, on their own historical status, specifically through their reactions to the historiographic tradition. Such an investigation has rarely been attempted,¹²⁴ but reveals a dialog that is important for understanding the texts' position between *historia* and *fabula*: it shows that, for the narrators of the historical *Dietrichepik*, the saga's authority still elevated the text above the status

¹²² See Michael Curschmann (1976a) "Dichtung über Heldendichtung: Bemerkungen zur Dietrichepik des 13. Jahrhunderts" in *Akten des V. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses (1975 Cambridge)*, eds. Leonard Wilson Forster et al. Bern: H. Lang, pp. 17-21. Of course, the tradition that the poems are supposedly playing with does not exist (for the most part) in any literary form and is thus to some degree the invention of modern scholars.

¹²³ Most recent is Sonja Kerth (2008). *Gattungsinterferenzen in der späten Heldendichtung*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag. See also Sonja Kerth (2000). "Die historische Dietrichepik als 'späte' Heldendichtung" in *ZfdA* 129.2, pp. 154-175; Elisabeth Lienert (1999). "Dietrich contra Nibelungen: Zur Intertextualität der historischen Dietrichepik" in *PBB* 121.1, pp. 23-46.

¹²⁴ One exception is Carola L. Gottzmann (1987). *Heldendichtung des 13. Jahrhunderts: Siegfried – Dietrich – Ortnit*. Frankfurt a.M./Bern/Paris. especially pages 109-136. Gottzmann attempts to show that Dietrich's portrayal in the historical epics does not contradict the ecclesiastic tradition and that Dietrich is thus an unjust, unworthy king.

of a mere *fabula*. I will also discuss the other means (assertions of truth/authority made by the narrator, etc.) by which the poems reflect on their own status.

First, I will briefly sketch the plot of the two epics discussed in this chapter: *Dietrichs Flucht* begins by telling of Dietrich's ancestors in Italy (*ræmisch lant*), who all live supernaturally long lives (generally four hundred years!) and have many sons, of whom only one is ever left alive to succeed the father. Dietrich's grandfather Amelung is the first to have more than one successor: upon his death, he divides his kingdom between three sons, Ermenrich, Dietmar, and Diether (I). They in turn have several children: Ermenrich is father of Friedrich, Dietmar of Dietrich and Diether (II), and Diether (I) of the Harlung. Following Dietmar's death, and presumably also that of Diether (I), Ermenrich is advised by his evil vassal Sibeche to steal the Harlung's land: he has his nephews hanged. After this, Sibeche advises him to also seize Dietrich's part of the kingdom. Dietrich successfully repulses his uncle in battle at Milan and takes his cousin Friedrich as prisoner, but Ermenrich manages to capture Dietrich's twelve best warriors, indifferent to his son's fate and refusing to release Dietrich's vassals unless Dietrich goes into exile and leaves his land to Ermenrich. Dietrich thus leaves with his educator, Hildebrand, and goes to the court of King Etzel, where several of his loyal vassals have already fled. There he receives Etzel's support to reconquer his own kingdom through the mediation of Etzel's vassal Rüdiger and Etzel's wife Helche. Dietrich then successfully campaigns against Ermenrich, retaking part of his kingdom in a battle at Ravenna, but is betrayed by one of his vassals, Witige, who had also previously betrayed him but had been forgiven on the advice of Dietrich's advisors. Dietrich returns for a third campaign, during which he once again defeats Ermenrich, but at the cost of his best warriors. Dietrich returns once more in sorrow to Etzel.

In *Die Rabenschlacht*, Dietrich once again wins Etzel's support for a new campaign. This time, however, Etzel's two sons, Orte and Scharpfe, and Dietrich's younger brother, Diether, want to accompany the army to Italy. Despite Helche's misgivings, Dietrich convinces her that he will take responsibility for the teenagers. The army sets off for Italy and recaptures Verona. From there, Dietrich takes his army to Ravenna (Raben), where Ermenrich's army is waiting, but leaves Etzel's sons and his brother at Verona in the care of the master of arms, Ilsan. The boys trick their caretaker and set off to follow the army, quickly becoming lost in a thick fog. Eventually, they come to the sea, where they see Witige riding towards them. Witige tries to dissuade them from fighting with him, but the teenagers insist and are slain. Meanwhile, Dietrich's army fights a grueling twelve day battle at Ravenna, at the end of which Ermenrich is forced to flee. Following Dietrich's victory, Ilsan appears and informs Dietrich of his charges' disappearance. Dietrich quickly finds their bodies on the coast and runs across Witige, who is so frightened of Dietrich's rage that he flees into the sea and is rescued by a mermaid. Dietrich then uses Rüdiger to arrange for his reconciliation with Etzel and Helche, and returns once more to the Hunnish court.

3.1 Truth-Claims and Signs of Self-Reflexivity in *Dietrichs Flucht*

The focus of this chapter is *Dietrichs Flucht*, with occasional comparisons made to *Die Rabenschlacht*: this is because *Dietrichs Flucht* differentiates itself from other poetry in the heroic genre, most clearly in the poet's choice of rhyming couplets over the normal strophic form. According to Joachim Heinze:

Generell wird man annehmen dürfen, daß sie [the use of couplets rather than strophes] eine Distanzierung von dieser Tradition zum Ausdruck bringt, und zugleich auf eine Eingemeindung der heroischen Überlieferung in die von der Reimpaar-Form beherrschten Gattungen der volkssprachigen Literatur hinwirkt: das sind vor allem der

höfische Roman und die Reimchronik, die in der zweiten Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts eine blühende Gattung war.¹²⁵

That *Dietrichs Flucht* resembles the style of a vernacular chronicle has often been noted.¹²⁶

Norbert Voorwinden remarks on the detailed geography of Italy given in the poem – there are more Italian place names in *Dietrichs Flucht* than in any other Middle High German poem – and argues that both it and *Die Rabenschlacht* “were intended from the very beginning as imitations of historiography.”¹²⁷

Voorwinden’s argument gains force from the fact that, as Jan-Dirk Müller comments for Hagen’s story of Siegfried’s youth in the *Nibelungenlied*:

Räumliche Unbestimmtheit ist alles andere als ungewöhnlich in Heldenepik: ‘der’ Berg, ‘der’ Baum, ‘der’ Brunnen genügen als Kulisse, ohne daß sie in ihrem Verhältnis zueinander näher bestimmt werden müßten; es kommt auf die Bedeutung derartiger Segmente und Requisiten an, die sie dem Geschehen verleihen, nicht auf ihren Platz in einem raumzeitlichen Kontinuum.¹²⁸

This means that the detailed geography must at the very least aim to improve the believability of the narrative. Furthermore, Voorwinden notes geographic errors in *Dietrichs Flucht*,¹²⁹ and the nineteenth-century philologist Ludwig Ettmüller, in his misguided attempt to rescue “das Echte”

¹²⁵ Heinzle (1999), 64. “Generally, one can assume that [the use of use of couplets rather than strophes] accentuates a distancing from this tradition, and at the same time causes the incorporation of the heroic transmission into the vernacular genres dominated by the use of couplets: these are first and foremost the courtly romance and the rhymed chronicle, which was a flourishing genre in the second half of the thirteenth century.”

¹²⁶ Cf. for instance Heinrich Joachim Zimmermann (1972). “Theoderich der Große – Dietrich von Bern: Die geschichtlichen und sagenhaften Quellen des Mittelalters.” Diss. Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, 172. Cf. also Norbert Voorwinden (2007). “Dietrich von Bern: Germanic Hero or Medieval King? On the Sources of *Dietrichs Flucht* and *Rabenschlacht*” in *Neophilologus* 91, pp. 243-259.

¹²⁷ Voorwinden (2007), 244-245. Realistic geography is a hallmark of other German heroic poems as well though, for instance, the *Nibelungenlied*. See Elisabeth Lienert (1997). “Raumstrukturen in ‘Nibelungenlied’” in *4. Pöchlarnner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldendichtung in Österreich – Österreich in der Heldendichtung*, ed. Klaus Zatkoukal. Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 103-122.

¹²⁸ Jan-Dirk Müller (1998). *Spielregeln für den Untergang: Die Welt des Nibelungenlieds*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 130. “Spatial indefiniteness is anything but unusual in heroic poetry: ‘the’ mountain, ‘the’ tree, ‘the’ spring are satisfactory as a backdrop, without specifying their relation to each other more precisely; importance lies in the meaning which such segments and props give to the story, not in their place in a spatial continuum.”

¹²⁹ Voorwinden (2007), 247-248. “...it is quite remarkable... that Dietrich marches from King Etzel’s court straight to Verona. On a journey from Hungary to northern Italy one would expect other places...”

from the corrupted morass he perceived in the transmitted version of *Die Rabenschlacht*, based many of his textual amputations on unclear or “unrealistic” spatial and temporal relations:

Dass die grosse, eilftägige schlacht vor Raben... zu unserm gedichte nicht ursprünglich gehörte, geht schon daraus vor, dass Ilsân, der den kindern zum heere nachreitet, nicht eilf oder gar zwölf tage brauchen kann, bis er zum heere kommt, da ja die kinder schon am ersten tage nach ihrem ausritte früh dahin gelangen, wo sie Witige erschlägt ; dass dieser ort aber nicht weit von Raben und dem schlachtfeld gewesen sein kann, ergibt sich daraus, dass der eben aus dem kampf kommende Helferîch die leichen liegen gesehen hat und diess dem Berner meldet. Auch ist davon keine rede, dass Dietrich vom walfelde aus tage lang reiten musste, ehe er bis zum orte kam, wo die erschlagen lagen.¹³⁰

This, from a modern standpoint, illogical state of affairs points to the sort of indefinite relations that Müller notes for Hagen’s narrative. It is indeed unclear why Witige is on the coast where the children come to begin with; he does not seem to be going anywhere. He is there simply because the narrative, and behind it the saga, demands it. Such unclear spatial and temporal relations may come from an earlier stage of the narratives’ existence, in whatever form that may have been. The time the battle takes is better understood in symbolic terms, marking its destructive power and fierceness.¹³¹ As a further sign of a historiographically minded “reworking” of the text, Michael Müller remarks that *Dietrichs Flucht’s* catalogs of names resemble the use of such devices in medieval chronicles.¹³² Lastly, the poem was used as a source for Heinrich of Munich’s *World Chronicle*: it appears to be the only heroic epic cited in this way in all of

¹³⁰ Ludwig Ettmüller (1846). *Daz mære von vroun Helchen sînen, aus der Ravennaschlacht ausgehoben*. Zürich: Verlag von Meyer und Meyer, 13. “That the large, eleven-day battle at Raben... did not originally belong to our poem is evident in that Ilsân, who rides after the children to the army, cannot need eleven or even twelve days to reach the army, since the children already arrived where Witige slays them early on the first day after their departure; however, that this place cannot have been far from Raben and the battlefield is evident in that Helferîch, coming directly from battle, has seen the bodies and reports this to the Berner. There is also no talk of Dietrich needing to ride all day from the battlefield in order to come to the place where they lay slain.”

¹³¹ Müller (1998), 115.

¹³² Michael Müller (2003). *Namenskataloge: Funktionen und Strukturen einer literarischen Grundform in der deutschen Epik vom hohen Mittelalter bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit*. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 317-18. This is in opposition to the conclusion of Holger Homann, who saw a reflection of orality in the catalogs. See Homann (1977). “Die Heldenkataloge in der historischen Dietrichepik und die Theorie der mündlichen Dichtung” in *MLN* 92.3, pp. 415-35.

German medieval historiography.¹³³ *Dietrichs Flucht* thus assumes a special status in German heroic poetry.

Evidence of *Dietrich's Flucht's* reflection on the saga is further provided by direct references in the poem itself to the oral tradition around Dietrich. When Dietrich is first introduced, the audience is told:

*Daz ist der Bernere,
der mit maniger manheit
elleu diu wunder hat bejeit,
da von man singet unde seit
wand er leit michel arbeit.*
(DF 2487-2491)¹³⁴

(That is the Berner, who accomplished with great prowess all the wonders of which one sings and tells, for he suffered great trials.)

This introduction of Dietrich does not differ substantially from his mentions in chronicles: the figure of Dietrich is brought into the work as the famous figure known from the saga. The saga's events are furthermore characterized as *res factae*: he has accomplished *all* the wonders.¹³⁵ In a similar passage, as Dietrich fights the epic's final battle near Bologna, the audience is told: *Da ergie ein urteil,/ da von man immer sagen müz* (There a slaughter took place, of which one must always tell; DF 9303f.), and again: *Des starchen Dietriches hant/ rach da schaden unde leit,/ da von man noch hiute seit* (The hand of strong Dietrich there avenged his pains and sorrow, of which one still tells today; DF 9083ff.).

In these passages, the poem directly relates the events of its own narrative to an unbroken chain of transmission via *sagen* from those events' occurrence, while apparently placing itself

¹³³ Gisela Kornrumpf (1985). "Heldenepik und Historie im 14. Jahrhundert: Dietrich und Etzel in der Weltchronik Heinrichs von München" in *Geschichtsbewußtsein in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Tübinger Colloquium 1983*, eds. Christoph Gerhardt et al. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 102

¹³⁴ I have chosen to represent the superscripted a of Lienert's edition with an umlaut, as it seems to appear in place of the usual superscripted e, which I have also replaced with an umlaut. Similarly, I have used ö for o with superscripted v, and ŵ for w with a superscripted o.

¹³⁵ This general declaration would seem to also include the battles with supernatural opponents related in the *aventure*-like *Dietrichepik* and Old English *Waldere*. Cf. Kerth (2008), 130. Cf. also Lienert's commentary to vv. 2488-2490, in which she relates the statement exclusively to the *aventure*-like poems.

next to that tradition rather than inside it. A similar instance also occurs in *Die Rabenschlacht*, in which the character of Vruote is made into an eye-witness source for the epic: *Er [Dietrich] het den chunich here [Vruote]/ so sere nider geslagen,/ daz er [Vruote] dar nach immer mere/ muste mære da von sagen* (He [Dietrich] defeated the powerful king [Vruote] so completely that afterwards he [Vruote] always had to tell *mære* about it; RS 793,1-4). The defeated Vruote is thus imagined as spreading the narrative of his own defeat: this is more specific than the *man* found in *Dietrichs Flucht*, and can be related back to the principle of eyewitnessing found in Isidore and explained above.¹³⁶

A similar reflected position in relation to the saga is also found twice in *Dietrichs Flucht*, in the mouth of Dietrich's vassal Wolfhart. Lienert comments that there is very little difference between the speech of the narrator and the speech of characters in the poem,¹³⁷ so that it is not difficult to see Wolfhart's statements as considerations made by the narrator himself.¹³⁸ However, unlike the references to the saga made directly by the narrator, these references are to the future development of the saga around events that have not yet happened in the epic: Wolfhart uses the premise of future *mære* to motivate Dietrich's soldiers before battle.¹³⁹ Just one of his speeches will serve to illustrate this point:

*'Wir sulnz also schaffen,
daz laien unde phaffen
von dirre vreise mær sagen,
als iz noch hiute welle tagen,
daz man so vil der toten,
der veinde nider schroten.'*

¹³⁶ Cf. Sebastian Coxon (2001), *The Presentation of Authorship in Medieval German Narrative Literature 1220-1290*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 168-172, on Helferich von Lutringen in the *Eckenlied*.

¹³⁷ Lienert (2003). "Rede und Schrift: Zur Inszenierung von Erzählen in mittelhochdeutscher Heldenepik" in *Eine Epoche im Umbruch: Volkssprachige Literalität 1200-1300*, eds. Christa Bertelsmeier-Kierst and Christopher Young. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 129. Despite this, different verbs are generally used to characterize the speech of the narrator and that of characters within the epic. Lienert devalues the speeches made by Wolfhart against her own assertion. See eadem (2003), 127.

¹³⁸ Cf. Kerth (2008), 145-146.

¹³⁹ Not coincidentally, *mære* means 'famous' when used as an adjective.

(DF 6428-6433)

(‘We shall cause it so that laymen and clergy will tell *mære* about this slaughter, when it will dawn later today, because one struck down so many of the dead, so many of the enemy.’)

Wolfgang imagines the narrative of the battle to be fought that day as coming into being after the men have fought it. This narrative is, of course, a narrative portrayed in *Dietrichs Flucht* itself. A similar speech also occurs in *Die Rabenschlacht*, again spoken by Wolfgang (RS 518,5f.). Such considerations underscore the poems’ status as “poetry about heroic poetry,” even without the deliberate collision of genres which Curschmann and others assume.

With the reflective, differentiated status of *Dietrichs Flucht* in mind, one can begin to pick out other moments where the poem may be reflecting on its own historicity and responding to learned criticism of the saga. The first of such possible instances is only a few lines into the poem:

*Last euch nicht wesen schwäre,
ob ich euch sage die warhait
(das habt nicht verlait)
von ainem edlen künige heer
(DF 4-7)¹⁴⁰*

(Do not be concerned whether I tell you the truth [do not be upset about it] about a noble king.)

While not actually stating that the narrative is false, these lines suggest that it is unimportant whether or not the epic is true. Naturally, if the narrative were intended to contain *historia*, it would have to claim to be true. This opening passage could thus be viewed as a sort of capitulation to the critics who decry the saga as lies. However, if the context is more closely examined, it becomes clear that the statement is limited to the truth about *ainem edlen künige*

¹⁴⁰ The opening lines with their perhaps programmatic use of *die starchen newen mære* is not entirely relevant to our discussion, and I furthermore believe that its importance has been overstated as this same formula is mostly associated with the news provided by messengers. Thus *die starchen newen mære* might mean nothing more than “an exciting story”, without any particular reference to the *alte mære* of the *Nibelungenlied*. Furthermore, the narrator expressly refers to the poem as an *altez mære* on at least one occasion (DF 8002). Against this position see Elisabeth Lienert (1999).

heer. This king is not Dietrich, but his ancestor Dietwart. Therefore, the lack of care about the truth of the epic could be limited to the section about Dietwart; this assumption is undermined in turn by the assertions of truth which quickly follow, first through a mention of *die weysen* (the wise) as spreaders and authorizers of the tradition about Dietwart (DF 26). Ambivalence towards the narrative's truth then seems to be abandoned completely slightly later by a definitive *Daz ich euch sage, das ist war* (What I tell you is true; DF 252). It is therefore not clear what is meant: if the opening declaration is meant to appease critics of the saga, it is very quickly discarded.¹⁴¹ Only one additional line of the epic shows the same ambivalence to its material, this time referring to Dietrich's grandfather Amelung: *uns welle daz mæer triugen* (if the *mære* does not want to deceive us; DF 2387). If the ambivalence of these lines is meant to contrast with the assertions of truth made in other lines, the two disqualifications might serve to disarm critics of the saga before the narrator attempts to make his epic seem historical.

In all other instances, the narrator insists upon the truth of his narrative. At its most basic level, he does this by frequent and unambiguous assertion: *Ez ist war, daz ich iu sage* (what I tell you is true; DF 5445). Such assertions, particularly when combined with the ambiguous statements discussed above, may have served a playful or a serious purpose. In and of themselves, they are not remarkable for the literature of the later thirteenth century.¹⁴² They are made remarkable only by their extreme frequency and by the often seemingly unimportant and formulaic position they occupy in the text, so that they seem almost to be 'filler,' used to stop gaps in the meter and provide convenient rhymes. However, one must keep in mind that such frequent assertions may serve some purpose, and that their frequency suggests that the unquestioned authority of the tradition as presented by the poem and the saga is no longer taken

¹⁴¹ Cf. Lienert (1999), 33-34: "'Dietrichs Flucht' scheint durchaus Konzeptionen zu entwerfen, entwertet sie jedoch gleich wieder durch Banalisierung oder interne Widersprüche."

¹⁴² Lienert (2003), 127.

for granted. The narrator thus feels the need to continually reinforce the poem's truth-claim for the benefit of waverers in his audience.¹⁴³ Such assertions are even more frequent and more formulaic in *Die Rabenschlacht*: in strophe 903 alone, there are three. Volker Mertens estimates that, throughout the whole poem, the narrator asserts the truth of the narrative every four strophes. This is despite the apparent greater "oralization" of the text, which should decrease the need to reinforce the narrative's truth.¹⁴⁴ Such assertions of truth are not nearly as frequent in the *aventure*-like texts.

Continuing this examination of unambiguous assertions of truth, if the references to sources and guarantors in the text are examined, a seeming interchangeability of terms quickly becomes apparent.¹⁴⁵ In at least one case, the text might allude to a redactor: *Der unns das máre zusammen sloss,/ der tût unns an dem pûche kundt* (He who put the *mære* together informs us in the book; DF 1843f.). In other cases, oral transmission is mentioned, e.g. *als wir die weysen horen sagen* (as we hear the wise men say; DF 26). Still other times, oral and textual transmission are mixed, e.g. *als ich fur war han vernomen/ und an den bûchen gelesen* (as I have truly heard and read in the books; DF 6331f.).¹⁴⁶ This strategy seems designed to mix the authorization practiced in the oral tradition with the authorization practiced in learned sources. The oral sources provide the dignity and authority of tradition to the poem, while the written sources provide the legitimacy of book learning.¹⁴⁷ It might further be noted that written texts

¹⁴³ Cf. Lienert (2003), 128-129.

¹⁴⁴ Volker Mertens (1997). "Der Erzähler des Heldenlieds: Ossian – Nibelungen – Dietrich" in *4. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldendichtung in Österreich – Österreich in der Heldendichtung*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal. Vienna: Fassbaender, 447.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Lienert (2003), 133-134.

¹⁴⁶ For further examples see Armin Schulz (2002), "Fragile Harmonie: 'Dietrichs Flucht' und die Poetik der 'abgewiesenen Alternative'" in *ZfdPh* 12.3, footnote to p. 395, and Lienert (2003), 133-134. The use of *ich* or *wir* is similarly unimportant.

¹⁴⁷ Lienert (2003), 136. This seems to some extent applicable to the passage from the *Historia Regum Britanniae* discussed above.

were often transmitted through performance (recitation or otherwise), thus making the mixture of terms plausible.

Lienert comments that the narrator's position in relation to his "written" source(s) resembles in many ways that of the audience to the narrator.¹⁴⁸ Actual authorship, and thus authorization, for the content of the poem remains entirely with the amorphous source(s): the author takes no responsibility for his own text.¹⁴⁹ In effect, this transfers a concept found in oral story-telling to also include supposedly written guarantors. As Müller notes:

Angesichts einer übermächtigen Tradition ist die Instanz des Autors [in heroic poetry] schwächer ausgebildet als in neuzeitlicher Dichtung, schwächer auch als die des höfischen Erzählers. Aber dafür hat sie höhere Autorität, denn sie kann sich auf etwas berufen, das man von alters her sagt.¹⁵⁰

The references to sources seem calculated to reinforce the truth-claim of the narrative and disabuse the audience of the idea that the author may have altered anything: this could serve both to deny the charge of having made anything up (*falsa vel adulatoria fingere*) from a literate standpoint, and could also serve to reinforce the narrative's connection with the oral tradition. By emphasizing that nothing has been changed, the narrator reinforces his narrative's claim to truth by making it appear that it has *always* been told as he is telling it. The many instances of assertions of truth and the invention of written sources show an awareness of problems in the saga materials' credibility which caused the narrator to defend the narrative, despite its derivation *von alters her*.

¹⁴⁸ Lienert (2003), 132.

¹⁴⁹ See Coxon (2001), especially pages 145-174.

¹⁵⁰ Müller (1998), 59. "In the face of an overpowering tradition, the entity of the author (in heroic poetry) is less fully developed than in modern poetry, and less fully than the entity of the courtly narrator. Instead it has higher authority, for it can invoke what has been said from time immemorial."

2.2. Dialog between *Dietrichs Flucht* and the Learned Tradition: The Poem's Credibility

Now that the more direct assertions of truth have been discussed, I can begin to look at passages in which *Dietrichs Flucht* appears to be in dialog with the learned tradition. The most striking of such passages occurs not through the remarks of the narrator, but rather takes place on the level of the story: when Dietrich first meets Helche and then Etzel. Here, characters refer again and again to *seeing* each other, what I refer to as the *sehen*-motif. Rüdiger, after meeting Dietrich, tells him that he would like to tell Helche, Etzel's wife, of Dietrich's arrival, '*wan si gesah nie cheinen man/ so rehte gern also dich*' ('for she never saw another man as happily as you'; DF 4829f.). Then, after Rüdiger informs Helche of Dietrich's presence, she interrogates him:

"Herre Rudeger, seist du mir war?"

Er sprach: "Vrowe, ich leug niht umb ein har."

"Hastu in ernstlich gesehen?"

"Vrō, ich sol anders niht jehen

niwan der rehten warheit."

(DF 4868-4872)

("Sir Rüdiger, are you telling me the truth?" He said, "My Lady, I am not lying a bit.")

"Did you really see him?" "My Lady, I cannot say anything except the proper truth.")

Following this exchange, Rüdiger and Helche go to where Dietrich is staying. After the curious detail that Helche needs Rüdiger to point out which of the knights is Dietrich (DF 4915-4927), Helche quickly befriends the exiled king. She tells him that Etzel will soon arrive and '*Ich weiz wol, daz er iuch gerne siht,/ des missage ich niht*' ('I know well that he would like to see you, I don't say that falsely'; RS 5042f.). Etzel's words upon meeting Dietrich are then '*Daz ich iuch nu gesehen han,/ daz ist ze vreuden nu bechant/ und ze hohen sælden gewant*' ('That I have now seen you is now joyously known and brought to great happiness'; DF 5225ff.) The two heroes then hold each other's hands.

These passages almost assuredly represent a reaction to the *Kaiserchronik* and other similarly phrased criticisms of the exile-saga: *Swer nû welle bewæren,/ daz Dieterîch Ezzelen sæhe,/ der haize daz buoch vur tragen* (Whoever wants to claim that Dietrich saw Etzel, let him have the book brought forth; *Kaiserchr.*, 14176ff.); according to *Dietrichs Flucht*, Dietrich has seen Etzel, and this is emphasized several times. It is true that the *sehen*-motif itself found in these passages is not unusual, and appears in many other poems.¹⁵¹ It is also true that Dietrich is referred to as having seen a number of people in this section, and that other people also want to see him, among them Ekkehart, Wolfhart and Rüdiger (DF 4693-4727), and later Amelolt (DF 5456f.). What is unusual is that, compared to these other instances, the encounters between Dietrich, Etzel, and Helche are reinforced with such vehemence: Helche asks Rüdiger twice whether Dietrich is really there and makes a point that she is telling the truth when she says that Etzel would like to see Dietrich. This suggests a direct rebuke of criticism of the saga's chronology. Examining the text further in this vein, it is tempting to see *Dietrichs Flucht* itself as an answer to the *Kaiserchronik*'s demand for *daz buoch*, as the text is referred to twice as the *bûch von Berne* (book of Verona; DF 10080; 10106). However, the different terms for the text itself, just as for its sources, seem to be largely interchangeable,¹⁵² so that no definitive conclusion in this direction can be made. The connection to the criticism expressed in the *Kaiserchronik*, on the other hand, remains unmistakable.

This passage strongly suggest that the narrator/redactor of *Dietrichs Flucht* was aware of ecclesiastical criticism of the exile-saga's chronology and has transferred any resistance to the idea of Dietrich as Etzel's contemporary onto the characters themselves, most notably Helche. It is as though Helche cannot believe that Dietrich could really be there, and then upon meeting

¹⁵¹ The desire of Seburg to see Dietrich in the *Eckenlied* is perhaps also comparable. Comparable lines also occur in the *Virginal*.

¹⁵² Lienert (2003),133-134.

him needs also to reassure Dietrich that it is possible for him to see Etzel. Etzel himself, meanwhile, makes the curious statement that it is now *bechant* that he has seen Dietrich.¹⁵³ *Bechant* to whom? It is easiest to assume that it is now *bechant* to naysayers in the audience. Immediately afterward, the two make physical contact by holding hands, thus confirming that they are contemporaries in the most concrete way possible: not only have they *seen* each other, they have *touched* each other. The barrier established by historiographic chronology is thus stripped away in a process requiring several steps, leading from hearsay to touch. Etzel and Dietrich cannot, as in *Die Rabenschlacht*, simply appear together. Their existence as contemporaries must be introduced into the text, slowly breaking down resistance and narrowing the gap between them.

Another possible reaction to the learned tradition can be found in the character of Ermenrich. Armin Schulz remarks that the narrator ascribes all good to the protagonists of *Dietrichs Flucht*, while all evil is ascribed to Ermenrich, who is the most treacherous man ever born (DF 2417f. and DF 2467f.).¹⁵⁴ Even more caustically, the audience is told:

*...er ist ewichlich verlorn.
Ist er ze helle geboren,
daz dunchet nieman unbillich.
Untriwe ist von im in diu rich
leider alreste chomen.
(DF 3510-3514)*

(...he is damned forever. If he has been born to go to hell, that would not seem a shame to anyone. Treachery first came into the kingdom because of him.)

¹⁵³ In some other manuscripts and in the older edition of Martin the line in question instead reads: *Daz ist zu freuden m i r bekant*. This reading does not make especial sense, but perhaps shows that the meaning of the verse was not obvious to contemporaries.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Schulz (2002), 394-395.

Ermenrich is made into a figure of mythic evil, so that the idealized *Vorzeit* of Dietrich's ancestors can be seen as having ended because of him.¹⁵⁵ For our purposes, however, it is of greater interest that he is explicitly described as *ewichlich verlorn*. In the ecclesiastical tradition, including the vernacular *Kaiserchronik*, it is Dietrich who is damned: *vil manige daz sâhen,/ daz in die tievel nâmen,/ si vuorten in in den berch ze Vulkân/ ... dâ brinnet er unz an den jungsten tac,/ daz im niemen gehelfen nematic* (Many people saw devils take him; they led him to the mountain Vulkan... there he will burn till the end of days, and no one can help him; Kaiserchr. 14170-14173, 14174f.).¹⁵⁶ The damnation of Ermenrich could thus be seen either as a subtle defense of Dietrich against these accusations by portraying his opponent in the worst possible light, and placing him, instead of Dietrich, in hell, or as an intertextual game distinguishing the Dietrich of the epic from that known from the chronicles. A similar purpose might be fulfilled by Dietrich's extended genealogy (DF 1-2486): it leaves no room for Dietrich to be the son of a devil or concubine, as was alleged by certain ecclesiastical sources.¹⁵⁷

The narrator of *Dietrichs Flucht* makes the believability of the epic a topic in more ways than one. I have already shown above that characters are used to "refute" the idea that Dietrich never saw Etzel and to make considerations on the development of the saga. Another example of characters used in this way can be found following Dietrich's victory at Ravenna and subsequent betrayal by Witige. This series of events is often viewed as the invention of *Dietrichs Flucht's*

¹⁵⁵ See Walter Haug (1979). "Hyperbolik und Zeremonialität: Zu Struktur und Welt von 'Dietrichs Flucht' und 'Rabenschlacht'" in *Deutsche Heldenepik in Tirol – König Laurin und Dietrich von Bern in der Dichtung des Mittelalters (Beiträge der Neustifter Tagung 1977 des Südtiroler Kulturinstitutes)*, ed. Egon Kühebacher. Bozen: Verlagsanstalt Athesa, 116-134. Cf. also Schulz (2002), especially pages 403-406.

¹⁵⁶ It may be significant that Dietrich only burns *unz an den jungsten tac* in the *Kaiserchronik* rather than *ewichlich*. It is perhaps connected to the *Kaiserchronik's* largely positive portrayal of Dietrich up until right before his death, cf. Ernst Hellgardt (1995). "Dietrich von Bern in der deutschen 'Kaiserchronik': Zur Begegnung mündlicher und schriftlicher Tradition" in *Deutsche Literatur und Sprache von 1050-1200*, eds. Annegert Fiebig and Hans-Jochen Schiewer. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 93-110.

¹⁵⁷ Kerth (2008), 137. Kerth sees this as one of the few direct influences of historical poetry on the *Dietrichepik*.

poet himself,¹⁵⁸ meaning that the poet might have extra reason to make its believability a topic. In this section, news reaches Dietrich at the Hunnish court that Ermenrich has gathered a new army of nearly two hundred thousand men, despite having had his army completely destroyed in the last battle. Ekwart, the messenger and, accordingly, the conveyer and guarantor of this information, voices his own incredulousness: *‘Mich müz immer wnder han,/ wa er si alle hab genomen/ od von welhem tivel si sint chomen’* (‘I remain shocked; from where did he get them all, or from what devil did they come?’; DF 7833ff.). Ekwart’s amazement might resemble that found in the audience. First Dietrich responds: You are surprised? *‘Swaz hordes zwen chunige rich/ heten von golde und von gesteine,/ daz hat er alterseine’* (‘As much of a treasury of gold and jewels as two rich kings would have, he has alone’; DF 7837ff.). Dietrich explains that Ermenrich has acquired this vast fortune by stealing the gold of the Harlungs and Dietrich’s own inheritance. Immediately afterwards, Etzel concurs by saying *‘Daz ist niht ein wnder’* (‘This is not surprising’; DF 7847). According to Dietrich and Etzel, Ermenrich can simply buy a new army with his inexhaustible fortune. In this way the fairly unbelievable fact that Ermenrich has gathered yet another army to fight against Dietrich is made believable through the assertions of characters, and, furthermore, through the assertions of two characters who were not themselves party to the original information.¹⁵⁹ All of these passages, but especially this last, show a great degree of reflection on the credibility of the text’s narrative, and also show that the narrator felt free to intervene in subtle and not so subtle ways where that credibility was threatened.

¹⁵⁸ See, for instance, Curschmann (1976a). I will return to the idea of the whole as somehow against the saga later.

¹⁵⁹ This would appear to undermine Lienert’s assertion that *Dietrichs Flucht* reserves all narrative functions for the narrator. While it may not be as obvious as the *Klage*, the above shows that characters are used to comment on the progression of the narrative. Against this, see Lienert (2003), 129.

3.3. The Lack of Fantastical Elements in *Dietrichs Flucht*

There is one more issue that I would like to discuss concerning the believability of *Dietrichs Flucht* to the poem's contemporaries, and that is its apparent lack of fantastical elements and, similarly, its lack of connection to the *aventiure*-like poems. The absence of this connection is thought to be conspicuous because *Dietrichs Flucht* sets Dietrich's exile in his youth, when he is said to be fighting dragons, dwarves, and giants in the *aventiure*-like poems, and the epic would thus contradict the public's knowledge of the saga.¹⁶⁰ I dispute this assumption on two points: the nature of Dietrich's "youth" and the nature of the Dietrich's *aventiure* as *enfances*. I find support for my first doubt from Jan-Dirk Müller, who suggests that references in *Dietrichs Flucht* to Dietrich's age have less to do with his biography and more to do with the relationship between the prince and his vassals, an idealized relationship in which the vassals exercise more power than the central authority. Such a vision of power can be connected with the historical struggles of the nobility in Austria at the time.¹⁶¹ I might add that Ermenrich's title of Emperor (*keiser*) might be part and parcel of this anti-central authority message. That being the case, Dietrich's "youth" need not exclude previous adventures and assuming that Dietrich's youthful exploits are noticeably absent from the *Dietrichs Flucht* narrative becomes questionable.¹⁶²

Now to my second doubt: the identification of the *aventiure*-like poems as *enfances* is also suspect, namely because it relies on the Old Norse *Piðrekssaga*'s placement of some of

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Curschmann (1976b). "Zu Struktur und Thematik des Buchs von Bern" in *PBB* 98.3, 363-364; also Volker (1997), 143; Lienert (1999), 33-34; Kragl (2007b), 94-96; Harald Haferland (2007). "Poesie des Synchronismus: Historizität, Konfabulation und Mythisierung in der Heldendichtung" in *9. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldenzeiten – Heldenräume: Wann und wo spielen Heldendichtung und Heldensage?* eds. Johannes Keller et al. Vienna: Fassbaender, 22-25.

¹⁶¹ Jan-Dirk Müller (1980). "Heroische Vorwelt, feudaladeliges Krisenbewußtsein und das Ende der Heldenepik" in *Adelsherrschaft und Literatur*, ed. Horst Wenzel. Bern/ Frankfurt am Main/ Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 221-222.

¹⁶² Cf. Michael Kern (2000). "Das Erzählen findet immer einen Weg: 'Degeneration' als Überlebensstrategie der x-haften Dietrichepik" in *5. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Märchenhaft-aventiurehafte Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal. Vienna, Fassbaender, 94.

Dietrich's more fantastical exploits in his youth and on statements in a few of the poems, such as the *Virginal*, that Dietrich is young or inexperienced. It can also be assumed from Witige's mention as one of Dietrich's vassals that certain poems like the *Laurin* take place before the exile-saga – this is made more explicit in the *Dresdner Laurin*. However, against any categorical assignment of the *aventure* to Dietrich's youth stands the fact that other *aventure*-like poems make no mention of age, and one, the *Eckenlied*, specifically situates itself after the events of *Die Rabenschlacht*.¹⁶³ That the *aventure*-like poems are only to be understood as *enfances* is made even more unlikely by an inconsistency of chronological placement vis-à-vis other Dietrich-narratives noticed by Kerth and Heinzle in many of the poems, including *Dietrichs Flucht*. Most strikingly, in the *Virginal* and *Dietrichs Flucht*, which make Dietrich out to be inexperienced, he is still famous.¹⁶⁴ The *Virginal*, furthermore, allows Heime, one of Dietrich's vassals – who betrays him in the historical poems – to appear as Dietrich's ally with a banner that was given to him by Ermenrich at the Battle of Ravenna, which logically ought to take place after Dietrich's first adventures in the *Virginal* and after Heime's betrayal.¹⁶⁵

From a contemporary perspective, this seems like sloppy editing and is confusing. That some *aventure*-like poems might take place before the exile-saga and some after – and some simultaneously both before and after – needs explaining. Jan-Dirk Müller notices the same phenomenon in the *Nibelungenlied* for Siegfried: “Sivrit wird von Anfang an also als der Held identifiziert, der er doch eigentlich erst noch durch eine heroische Tat werden müßte. Vorher und

¹⁶³ This is noticed and commented on by Lienert (1999), 38; Knapp (2005), 54; and Kerth (2008), 203-204. Knapp refers to it as “gegen alle Sagenlogik”, while Lienert uses the presence of Wolfhart in the *Eckenlied* to demonstrate that not all of Dietrich's vassals die in the *Burgundenuntergang*. Kerth instead interprets Wolfhart's presence as confused chronology.

¹⁶⁴ Kerth (2008), 173-174. “Apparently it seemed unthinkable to the composers/reworkers to introduce a consistently inexperienced Dietrich to an audience that knew the Berner as the greatest hero of the Middle Ages.” Also Heinzle (1999), 34.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Kerth (2008), 172-173.

Nachher haben keine Bedeutung.” He concludes that this is a general trait of oral story-telling.¹⁶⁶ Florian Kragl similarly argues that “[d]ie Aventiuren sind... nicht zyklisch, sondern iterativ geordnet; sie stehen parallel zueinander.”¹⁶⁷ It is thus not of any importance in which order they occur. Certain epics arranging themselves chronologically before or after the exile-saga is more likely a symptom of the creation of an epic cycle, which strings poems together at their beginnings and ends without affecting their content, than a part of general knowledge of the saga.¹⁶⁸ Given this unsteady and inconsistent chronological ordering of the *aventiure* and exile-saga, there is no reason to assume that the lack of Dietrich’s fantastical *enfances* in *Dietrichs Flucht* represented any noticeable departure from the saga-tradition to the poem’s contemporaries, since the order of events would have been highly variable.¹⁶⁹

Still, perhaps there is a reason that *aventiure* is missing from the main part of the poem. Heinzle has hypothesized that *aventiure*-like material might have been excluded because it was “historically suspect” to the author.¹⁷⁰ In contrast, I would like to advance a more nuanced view. Dragons, giants, and dwarves, all things which we today categorically believe not to have ever existed, were thought of as having existed during the Middle Ages, in a distant *Vorzeit*.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, if there was an attempt to avoid fantastic material in *Dietrichs Flucht*, it is clear

¹⁶⁶ Müller (1998), 132. “Sivrit is identified as the hero which he could only become after having first accomplished a heroic deed. Before and after have no meaning.”

¹⁶⁷ Kragl (2007b), 94-96. “the *aventiuren* are... not order in a [heroic] cycle, but are iterative; they are parallel to each other.” I take issue, however, with his statement that the historical *Dietrichepik* is linear, especially given the repeated exiles and battles of *Dietrichs Flucht*. Cf. also Kern (2000), 103.

¹⁶⁸ See Haferland (2007), 10-16.

¹⁶⁹ The repeated assertions of Dietrich’s youth by both the narrator and characters in the poems noted by Curschmann (1976b), 364-365, could also be used to explain why Dietrich is successfully forced into exile by Ermenrich (because of his inexperience), or else to reinforce the cruelty of Ermenrich rather than be a deliberate and noticeable deviation from the established saga.

¹⁷⁰ Heinzle (1999), 81. “historisch suspekt”

¹⁷¹ A fuller discussion of this will be occasioned by the *aventiure*-like poems. Cf. Kragl (2007b), 93; Knapp (2005), 151-168; also Wolfgang Haubrichs (2000). “Ein Held für viele Zwecke: Dietrich von Bern und sein Widerpart in den Heldensagenzeugnissen des frühen Mittelalters” in *Theodisca: Beiträge zur althochdeutschen und altniederdeutschen Sprache und Literatur in der Kultur des frühen Mittelalters*, eds. idem et al. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 330-335.

that it was not applied to the entire poem: there are, after all, battles with dragons fought by Dietrich's ancestors Dietwart (DF 1547-1672), Ortnit (DF 2223-2245), and Wolfdietrich (DF 2282-2285). Significantly for our understanding of the poem's claims to historicity, Ortnit's death at the hands of dragons is taken up completely unchanged in Heinrich of Munich's *World Chronicle*.¹⁷² The Methuselah-like lifespans of Dietrich's ancestors, on the other hand, were apparently not so believable, and were reduced in the chronicle.¹⁷³ If Heinrich of Munich (or his redactors) had no problem with the existence of dragons, clearly another explanation is needed as to why fantastical elements are missing from the main plot of *Dietrichs Flucht*.¹⁷⁴

This explanation might be provided by a theory of Curschmann: he has postulated that the lack of fantastical features was meant to make the narrative seem more current to its medieval audience. This effect would be strengthened by the fact that Dietrich's ancestors appear to have lived in a timeless *Vorzeit*, whose harmony abruptly ruptures into discord with the coming of Ermenrich.¹⁷⁵ The lack of fantastical creatures in the exile narrative would thus bring its world closer to the world familiar to a medieval audience, without necessarily suggesting that the poet felt the poem's truth-claim was damaged by the inclusion of, say, dragons. Rather, the intention would be to increase the poem's claim to relevance in the medieval present. This of course assumes that a conscious decision was made to avoid such fantastic material after the death of Dietmar rather than that simply being the natural progress of the narrative.¹⁷⁶ Evidence for a conscious decision might be provided by the figure of Wate: a character of that name, the

¹⁷² Kornrumpf (1985), 103.

¹⁷³ Kornrumpf (1985), 100-101.

¹⁷⁴ Interestingly, it is precisely in this section of the poem, with its battles with dragons and biblical lifespans, that the narrator makes (occasional and inconsistent) mention of his narrative's questionable truth. In the rest of the epic fantastic elements play no part, and there are no similar questionings of its true status by the narrator.

¹⁷⁵ Curschmann (1976a), 18.

¹⁷⁶ We might also consider Voorwinden's theory that the author of *Dietrichs Flucht* was mostly unaware of the oral tradition, though I do not find this argument especially convincing. See idem (2007), 244-245.

grandfather of Witige, is often, though not always, portrayed as a giant in other texts.¹⁷⁷ To this might be objected that a kinship-relationship between Wate and Witige is not established in the epic; nevertheless, they do appear together, making kinship plausible.

Unlike *Dietrichs Flucht*, *Die Rabenschlacht* very prominently includes fantastical elements. During Dietrich's pursuit of Witige following the death of Etzel's sons and Diether, Witige escapes into the sea with the help of Wachilt, a mermaid (RS str. 963-973), and during and after Witige's escape, Dietrich's ability to breathe fire is alluded to, though not directly stated (RS 945,5f.; 972,4ff.). The poet of *Die Rabenschlacht* thus seems to have had fewer qualms about the incorporation of fantastic material, although in that poem the *aventure*-like *Dietrichepik* is still not directly referenced. It remains questionable to state that this was done for reasons of historical believability. At any rate, since the poet of neither epic makes any actual attempts to place the epic within established historical chronology, there is no reason to suppose that he would feel the need to eliminate elements from his story, i.e. references to Dietrichs *aventure*, that would not likely have aroused suspicions of ahistoricity in his audience.¹⁷⁸

3.4. Defended Historicity in *Dietrichs Flucht*

In this chapter I have shown evidence for a dialog between chroniclers and the exile-saga, represented by the efforts of *Dietrichs Flucht*, and to a lesser degree, *Die Rabenschlacht*, to respond to the accusations of lying and invention made by chroniclers. *Dietrichs Flucht* may also make its believability a topic through the elimination of less believable fantastic elements, though I dispute this conclusion for the reasons listed above. The text does not clarify the intent

¹⁷⁷ See McConnell, Winder (1977). „Wate and Wada“ in *MLN* 92.3, pp. 572-577.

¹⁷⁸ A counter-example to this might be the “Entheroisierung” of Siegfried's youth in the *Nibelungenlied* – the poet still included the more heroic (that is, fantastic) version through the character of Hagen, however. See Mertens (1997), 43; Knapp (2005), 153-154.

of the author when he made the historicity of his text a topic: he may have been attempting to secure that historicity in the face of the assault on the exile-saga by some learned writers, or he may have merely been playing with the possibility that his narrative is untrue. The inclusion of parts of the poem in Heinrich of Munich's *World Chronicle* would seem to speak for the first possibility, but one should keep in mind Knapp's statement "daß im Mittelalter von Literaturproduzenten und -rezipienten dieselben Erzählungen als *historia* oder als *fabula* aufgefaßt werden konnten."¹⁷⁹

That *Dietrichs Flucht* appears to be in dialog with the chronicle tradition is significant: it shows that, contrary to established wisdom amongst scholars, criticism of the saga by learned sources noticeably affected the poems of the *Dietrichepik*. This effect is most obvious in the poem's reflexivity regarding its own subject-matter, thus making it "poetry about heroic poetry" in more ways than one. I do not mean this in the sense that the poem reflects on the form of its content, but in the sense that it reflects on the content within that form and therefore its function as *Vorzeitkunde*. Although the *aventiure*-like poems were not originally targeted for criticism, the ones that I will discuss, the *Eckenlied* and the *Virginal*, may in fact show an even greater reflexivity on the relationship of truth and falsehood than the historical poems, and so still more insistently "poetry about heroic poetry."

¹⁷⁹ Knapp (2005), 26. "that in the Middle Ages the same narratives could be considered *historia* or *fabula* by the producers and recipients of literature."

4. The *Aventiure*-Like Poems: the *Eckenlied* and the *Virginal*

The *aventiure*-like Dietrich-poems present a special obstacle to an interpretation of the *Dietrichepik* as *Vorzeitkunde*: they do not appear to be in any way historically based, and they are mostly centered on fantastic elements which might cause a modern reader to assume that these poems are “fictional.” As was discussed above, however, features which modern readers find fantastic appear regularly in narratives about the *Vorzeit*. While certain parts of such narratives may still have appeared “fictional” or at least “fictionalized” to medieval audiences – the reader will recall Wace’s use of *fable* to mean “narrative of questionable truth-content”, there is ample evidence that the basic truth of these poems, and thus their position as *historia/Vorzeitkunde*, was accepted, if sometimes with ambivalence, by the majority of listeners and readers from the High Middle Ages into the early modern period.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, there exists a tension between the claimed truth of the poems and their believability, the ways in which they use fantastical elements and at the same time attempt to make their narratives believable. This chapter will examine the ways in which this tension is brought to the surface in the attempts to shore up the believability of the narrative of two of the *aventiure*-like Dietrich-poems, the *Eckenlied* and *Virginal*.

An additional issue which complicates interpretations of the *aventiure*-like *Dietrichepik* is the existence of various versions (*Fassungen*) of the text. This is the result of what is referred to by Karl Stackmann as “open transmission” (*offene Überlieferung*),¹⁸¹ also known as text *en mouvance*.¹⁸² It is referred to as “open transmission” because the transmitters of the poems seem

¹⁸⁰ These are briefly discussed in chapter 3, and will be discussed in more depth at the end of this chapter.

¹⁸¹ Summarized in Joachim Heinzle (1978). *Mittelhochdeutsche Dietrichepik: Untersuchungen zur Tradierungsweise, Überlieferungskritik und Gattungsgeschichte später Heldendichtung*. Zürich/Munich: Artemis Verlag, 100-101.

¹⁸² Cf. Sonja Kerth (2003/4). “Helden *en mouvance*: Zur Fassungsproblematik der *Virginal*” in *JOWG* 14, 141-142. The term *en mouvance* is credited to Paul Zumthor. I prefer the Germanized/Anglicized term.

to have felt free to alter the text rather than attempt to transmit it unchanged from a previous exemplar, as is the case in conservative, or “closed,” transmission. Texts which are transmitted openly tend to have a general societal function in which their content is more important than the exact words used. In almost all cases, the differences between versions do not manifest themselves as a completely new conception of the text, but rather as slightly altered emphases made by the removal of old and/or the insertion of new material.¹⁸³ Such changes can be seen as the reworking of the text by its transmitters to address perceived problems and issues, which then give rise to new questions and can be reworked again.¹⁸⁴ This phenomenon is not found in the historical poems. “Open transmission” is not, however, unique to the *aventiure*-like *Dietrichepik*, being shared by certain other texts in the vernacular, such as the so-called *Spielmannsepik* (minstrel-epics), Heinrich of Munich’s *World Chronicle*, the legal *Schwabenspiegel*, and certain ecclesiastical texts.

Texts transmitted openly appear to have possessed little authority in and of themselves, in that no effort was made to transmit them without changes: the redactor of the *Dresdner Virginal*, for instance, refers to having cut out *vil unnützer wort* (many useless words; V₁₁ 130,13) from a longer exemplar of the same text.¹⁸⁵ Joachim Heinzle suggests the freedom exercised in reproducing the texts may be connected with the absence of named authors for the texts, although texts like Heinrich of Munich’s chronicle are also found in “open transmission.”¹⁸⁶ If there is an authority associated with the texts of the *aventiure*-like *Dietrichepik*, it is not found in authorship, but rather in the saga itself. In other words, the saga, which was believed to have

¹⁸³ Georg Steer (1979). “Das Fassungsproblem in der Heldenepik” in *Deutsche Heldenepik in Tirol – König Laurin und Dietrich von Bern in der Dichtung des Mittelalters (Beiträge der Neustifter Tagung 1977 des Südtiroler Kulturinstitutes)*, ed. Egon Kühebacher. Verlagsanstalt Athesa: Bozen. pp. 107-108.

¹⁸⁴ Jan Dirk Müller (1999). *Spielregeln für den Untergang: Die Welt des Nibelungenlieds*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 46-47.

¹⁸⁵ Steer (1979), 113.

¹⁸⁶ Heinzle (1978), 93.

been repeated from time immemorial and was itself variable, granted each variously authored and redacted iteration of a poem legitimacy and authority.¹⁸⁷ The *Vorzeitkunde*, rather than its packaging, was important: due to the traditional nature of the poem's material, "jeder konnte es nach-, weiter- und umerzählen."¹⁸⁸ An examination of all versions of a single text therefore results in seeing the spectrum of strategies employed regarding that text's historicity.

In this chapter I will discuss the *Eckenlied* and the *Virginal*. I have selected these two poems because both offer interesting perspectives on believability and historicity through their characterization of the transfer of knowledge within their own narratives. Statements found in the *Eckenlied* and the *Virginal* regarding both their own believability in toto and the believability of information on the level of the story and its characters can be read as commentaries on the historicity of the *Dietrichepik*. That is to say, how characters gain information and whether or not they find that information to be believable provides insights into the relationship between the poems' producers, audiences, and the saga-tradition itself. As in *Dietrichs Flucht*, not all information and not all narrative developments will be accepted immediately by the characters themselves: the ways in which the poems defuse such situations make manifest the efforts of their narrators to overcome perceived problems of credibility.¹⁸⁹

Scholarship on the *Eckenlied* and *Virginal* has noticed the complex of issues mentioned above, although much more has been written about their position between the "genres" of heroic poetry and Arthurian romance. I question this state of affairs for the reasons stated at the beginning of chapter 3. There has been, until very lately, little secondary literature written on the

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Müller (1999), 23-24; 59. Whether or not, as Harald Haferland suggests, the differences between the various versions are primarily the result of oral memorization cannot be discussed here. See idem (2004). *Mündlichkeit, Gedächtnis und Medialität: Heldendichtung im deutschen Mittelalter*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

¹⁸⁸ Heinzle (1978), 93-94. "everyone could imitate it, retell it, and alter it."

¹⁸⁹ A fuller investigation would also take into account the many other poems in the *Dietrichepik*, as well as possibly those in the *Ornit-Wolfdietrich* complex and the *Nibelungenlied*. Such an investigation is beyond the purview of the current thesis, but could be the subject of further work in the future.

Virginal. The *Eckenlied*, in contrast, has attracted considerable scholarly attention for some time. My analysis will continue current trends in research while redirecting conclusions away from the study of “genre” toward the strategies of believability employed within the poems and the ways in which they provide commentary on the *Dietrichepik*. By leaving behind the modern construct of “genre,”¹⁹⁰ these considerations can provide a better understanding of the poems in the eyes of their medieval producers and readers/listeners, and give a more nuanced view of their position between *historia* and *fabula*.

4.1. The *Eckenlied* and the Debate surrounding Dietrich von Bern

The *Eckenlied*, due to its popularity from the Later Middle Ages into the early modern period, is a particularly important representative of the *aventure*-like *Dietrichepik*. This was already made clear in chapter 2 by the fact that Jakob Twinger von Königshofen mentions Dietrich’s battle with Ecke as one of several *lügen* in circulation about the Gothic king. The learned Austrian monk Engelbert of Admont also mentions this same narrative as an example of *fabula* in his mirror of princes, *Speculum Virtutum* (c. 1300). As Ecke garnered attention in learned quarters, one can expect an awareness of questions about the *Eckenlied*’s status as *historia* or *fabula* in the poem itself. Indeed, already in the earliest transmitted strophe of the poem, found in the famous *Codex Buranus*, a degree of reflexivity on the truth and authority of

¹⁹⁰ A better word for referring to medieval “genres” might be “traditions.” This is because medieval producers of literature and their audiences appear to have differentiated their stories by material, i.e. the characters and basic situations that appear in them, rather than by any concept like modern “genre.” Cf. Jean Bodels *matière de France, matière de Romme, matière de Bretagne*. Proposals by modern scholars to fit German heroic poetry into this scheme include Hartmut Kugler’s *matière de la Germanie* (cited in Kerth (2008), 11-12) and Ulrich Wyss’s *matière de Verone* and *matière de Théodéric* (see Ulrich Wyss (1992). “Unterwegs zum Amelungenlied” in 2. *Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Die historische Dietrichepik*. Vienna: Fassbaender, 156). The truth of the matter is, however, that medieval Germans do not appear to have seen the need to define the “genre” of heroic poetry at all. If it was unimportant to them, why should we now assume that they spent vast amounts of energy constructing “genres” only to mix them? Heroic poetry rather shows an ability to adapt and adopt new situations and elements into its repertoire while keeping its characters the same. Modern readers cannot know whether this was felt to be “*Gattungsinterferenz*” or not.

the poem's narrative is already present. Furthermore, the poem sets up Dietrich's reputation as something questionable which must be investigated by its characters, and thus its audience: it is a poem that explores concepts such as the reliability of oral hearsay and the saga tradition.¹⁹¹

The *Eckenlied* is also a particularly prominent example of "open transmission," with seven varying manuscript and eleven printed versions in circulation. A single strophe, E₁, is transmitted in the *Codex Buranus* (from the first half of the thirteenth century); the *Eckenlied* is thus among the oldest written representatives of the Dietrich-saga in Germany. The first extant "full" version of the text, E₂, dates from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, but is missing its ending. A second, fragmentary version, E₃ (late thirteenth/early fourteenth century), will also be analyzed because it contains the first strophe of the poem, which seems specifically to establish the *Eckenlied* as *Vorzeitkunde*. Similarly, I will briefly discuss the fragmentary E₄ (1455) in relation to the preserved ending of the poem. Two other versions are complete: E₇, from the *Dresdner Heldenbuch* (1472), and e₁ (1491), the first printed edition.¹⁹² Despite the late date of these two complete versions, fragments of earlier manuscripts, as well as graphic depictions, show that at least some parts of both E₇ and e₁'s versions of the narrative already existed in the late thirteenth century. It appears, furthermore, that it was possible for medieval writers and audiences to know more than one version of the text, and that graphic depictions from one version of the *Eckenlied* might end up in manuscripts of another.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Carola L. Gottzmann argues that this debate may be directly related to the debate between the Latin and vernacular traditions about Dietrich's image. This does not need to be true for the poem to have a meta-literary aspect, however, and cannot really be proven. Precisely why will be discussed later. See eadem (1987). *Heldendichtung des 13. Jahrhunderts: Siegfried – Dietrich – Ornit*. Frankfurt am Main / Bern / New York / Paris: Peter Lang Verlag, especially pages 138-163.

¹⁹² Francis B. Brévard (ed.) (1999). *Das Eckenlied: Sämtliche Fassungen*, Volume One. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, IX-XVII.

¹⁹³ Joachim Heinzle (1999). *Einführung in die mittelhochdeutsche Dietrichepik*. Walter de Gruyter: Berlin/ New York, 117-118.

Despite the differing (or lacking) endings found in the poem's various versions, the events of each are largely the same: the giant Ecke, wishing to cement his own fame, is given the task by Queen Seburg, the highest of three queens at Jochgrimm, to find Dietrich and bring him back to her, so that she may discover his true nature. Ecke refuses to be given a horse when he sets out on the quest, possibly because of his large stature, for which he is lambasted by several people he encounters, but which ultimately plays no role in the plot.¹⁹⁴ After tracking Dietrich for several days, Ecke finds him in Tyrol. The giant forces Dietrich into a fight against his will which is extremely long and difficult, but which in the end is squarely won by the Berner. With the battle clearly decided, Ecke refuses all of Dietrich's generous offers of clemency and must be slain. This causes Dietrich to mourn his opponent for several strophes, as well as his own fame, which Dietrich believes is now blemished. Dietrich then takes Ecke's head (which he cut off at Ecke's request) and rides to Jochgrimm to castigate Seburg for sending Ecke to his death. Along the way, he encounters Ecke's brother Fasold, who surrenders to the Berner after a fight but repeatedly and treacherously attempts to have Dietrich killed. As a result, both Fasold and several of his family members, whose names and relationship to Ecke vary by version, are eventually slain. Dietrich then arrives at Jochgrimm. In E₇, he throws Ecke's head at the feet of a horrified Seburg before riding back to Bern. In e₁, however, it is revealed that the queens sent Ecke to his death on purpose because he and Fasold were forcing them into marriage. Dietrich is celebrated at Jochgrimm as a hero and then returns to Bern.

At first glance, the *Eckenlied* does not appear to provide much illumination on the subject of historicity or fictionality: the poem sounds like a gruesome fairytale. However, the poem's focus on discovering Dietrich's true nature makes it into a commentary on the saga. In addition to questions about oral hearsay in general, the attempts of the different versions to make their

¹⁹⁴ Most recent on Ecke's horselessness, see Christoph Fasbender (2003/4). "Eckes Pferd" in *JOWG* 14, 41-53.

own believability an issue also point to a complex understanding of “fact” and “fiction.” Each version addresses these concerns in different ways, meaning that an investigation of the *Eckenlied* is fruitful for a larger understanding of these issues.

Oral Hearsay: Praising nach wane

The *Eckenlied* establishes Dietrich’s reputation as one of its central topics at its very beginning, a conversation about heroes which takes place between the three brothers Ecke, Ebenrot, and Fasold: *si retont al geliche,/ das nieman küner wär ze not/ den von Bern Dietheriche:/ der wär ain helt úber allú lant* (They all alike said that no one was braver in danger than Dietrich von Bern: he was a hero in all lands; E₂ 2,8-11).¹⁹⁵ The brothers’ consensus is misleading: Ecke is frustrated by Dietrich’s universal praise because he feels that his own deeds have been ignored. This leads him to the conclusion that he must fight with Dietrich, both to decrease Dietrich’s fame and also to discover ‘*ob er ain helt wär wandels fri,/ als man gihit*’ (‘whether he is a hero without flaw, as is said’; E₂ 4,9f.). Having now established his intention of finding Dietrich, Ecke attacks those who praise the hero: ‘*käm ainr dort her gekrochen,/ der lobt in öch mit worten gút... vil menger in nach wäne lobt,/ und etswer nach liebe:/ dú welt wol halbú tobt*’ (‘If just about anyone came crawling here, he too would praise him [Dietrich] with good words... many praise him according to supposition [*nach wane*], some according to love: half the world is crazy’; E₂ 6,6f.; 6,11ff.). Ecke thus implies that many people praise Dietrich without knowing what his deeds really are.¹⁹⁶

Ecke’s attacks on those who praise Dietrich *nach wane* resemble the attacks of the *Kaiserchronik* on the spreaders of vernacular, probably oral, tradition: *sô lêret man die luge diu*

¹⁹⁵ I have chosen to represent superscripted i with an acute accent, superscripted e with umlauts, and two dots above a vowel at different heights with two acute accents, e.g. ú.

¹⁹⁶ Michael Egerding (1991). Handlung und Handlungsbegründung im Eckenlied” in *Euphorion* 85, 399.

chint:/ die nâch uns chunftich sint,/ die wellent si alsô behaben/ und wellent si iemer fur wâr sagen (thus one teaches lies to the children: in this way those who come after us will always want to claim that they [the lies] are true; Kaiserchr. 35ff.). They also show a certain affinity to Jakob Twinger's statement that *[e]tliche leigen lobent disen Dieterich gar vaste, und hette doch einen bösen anevang und usgang* (certain laypeople greatly praise this Dietrich, but he had an evil beginning and end; Stras. Chron, p. 381). However, Ecke never goes so far as to deny Dietrich's virtue altogether, he merely questions it. Ebenrot, on the other hand, now responds to Ecke, claiming that Dietrich's reputation is a sham because Dietrich slew the giants Hilde and Grim in a shameful way: *'es wart so frúmic nie die tat/ hern Dietherichs von Berne,/ als ir e von im hant vernomen'* ('The deeds of Dietrich von Bern were never as honorable as you have heard'; E₂ 7,9ff.). Ebenrot thus provides the doubting Ecke with a counter-image to Dietrich's established fame. He not only attacks Dietrich's oral reputation as a lie, he suggests that Dietrich is in fact a dishonorable murderer.¹⁹⁷

Ebenrot's searing attack on Dietrich prompts the third brother, Fasold, to intervene in the conversation. He claims to be a neutral party: *'ich bin im weder vrient noch holt, / ich gesach in nie mit ögen'* ('I am neither his friend nor his enemy, I never saw him with my own eyes'; E₂ 8,2f.). However, Fasold is anything but impartial, as his next lines show: *'die aber den helt ie hant gesehen,/ die hör ich im ie das beste jehen./ dú red ist ane lögen,/ das er der künste ist ze not/ der ie den töf emphienge'* ('but I hear those who have seen the hero always say the best about him. Their speech is not false: he is the bravest man who was ever baptized'; E₂ 8,4-8).¹⁹⁸

Fasold places the burden of proof on Ebenrot, asking him: *'nu sagent mir, her Ebenrot,/ wa im ie*

¹⁹⁷ Uta Störmer-Caysa understands this as Ebenrot pointing out that, according to the rules by which Dietrich has won his fame, it is alright to kill giants in their sleep. See eadem (2000). "Kleine Riesen und große Zwerge? Ecke, Laurin und der literarische Diskurs über kurz oder lang" in *5. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Aventure-märchenhafte Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal Vienna: Fassbaender, 159-160.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Gottzmann (1987), 142.

missegienge/ ald ir zaigent mir noch ainen man,/ der im bi sinen ziten/ noch ie gesigte an ('now tell me, Sir Ebenrot, where it ever went badly for him, or show me just one man who has ever defeated him in combat'; E₂ 8,9ff.). Fasold concludes by saying that there is no reason to accuse Dietrich of *mordes gros* (blatant murder; E₂ 9,7), as Ebenrot does.

Ebenrot's responds to Fasold by pointing out the major defect in Fasold's argument: *'ir sprechent doch, des müs ich jehen,/ das ir in seltan hant gesehen* ('You say, I have to point this out, that you have never seen him'; E₂ 11,4f). Ebenrot thus employs the same arguments used by Ecke against Dietrich's "fans," explicitly accusing Fasold of praising Dietrich *nach wane* (E₂ 11,12). He furthermore suggests that high esteem for Dietrich is not universally shared. Rather, Dietrich's vice *'ist erschollen wite* ('is widely known'; E₂ 11,6ff.), a picture which is later confirmed by Queen Seburg: *'genüge herren valschent in / und hant es zainer swäre,/ das man dem helde sprichet wol* ('Many lords slander him and are grieved that the hero [Dietrich] is spoken well of'; E₂ 18,5ff.). Fasold's answer is stubborn: *'sit ir mirs niht gelöben welt,/ das ist mir gar unmäre;/ so sprich ich doch, sam mir min lip,/ das er Grinen und sin wip,/ der edel Bernäre/ so lasterlichen niht überwant* ('I am unhappy since you do not want to believe me. But I still must say, by my life, that the noble Berner did not defeat Grim and his wife so dishonorably'; E₂ 12,2-7). He then explains exactly how Dietrich killed Hilde and Grim in an honorable way – but without providing a source. Since Fasold comments that Ebenrot will not believe *him*, it seems that he is lending his own personal authority to the tale.

Fasold's and Ebenrot's positions are both based on oral hearsay: neither has seen the hero, and neither bothers to provide a source when they discuss the specific case of Hilde and Grim. This leaves the question of Dietrich's true nature open for investigation.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore,

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Gottzmann (1987), 139-40, 142.

Dietrich's position in the conversation strongly resembles his position as a figure of oral saga.²⁰⁰ This is made especially clear by the use of the Hildegrim-saga, a narrative which is only found in the *Dietrichepik* through allusion: it is a poem without an extant written version, and may not have been written down.²⁰¹ Enhancing this picture, Fasold's speech exculpating Dietrich for the giants' deaths varies in its details from version to version of the *Eckenlied* itself. The only constant elements are that Dietrich killed the two giants, and that he did it honorably.²⁰² This reflects a more general truth: a person who knows the saga will often know *what* happens, but may not know exactly *how*.²⁰³ Following Harald Haferland's concept of confabulation, the principle that a story-teller in the saga tradition could invent details or even new narratives without being aware that he is their inventor, it would thus be both possible and valid for Fasold, as for other defenders of Dietrich, to simply invent the specific circumstances of Hilde and Grim's deaths in such a way that they correspond to the accepted outcome: that Dietrich slew the giants in an honorable way.²⁰⁴ It seems to be precisely this action that Ecke and Ebenrot object to. It is a question of authority.

Besides this connection to the saga tradition, it is important to realize that a persons' reputation, passed from mouth to mouth, played an important role in determining guilt in judicial

²⁰⁰ Cf Matthias Meyer (1994b), *Die Verfügbarkeit der Fiktion: Interpretationen und poetologische Untersuchungen zum Artusroman und zur aventiurehaften Dietrichepik des 13. Jahrhunderts*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 191; Hartmut Bleumer (2000). "Narrative Historizität und historische Narration: Überlegungen am Gattungsproblem der Dietrichepik mit einer Interpretation des 'Eckenliedes'" in *ZfdA* 129.2, 139.

²⁰¹ A written version of the story is given in the Old Norse *Piðrekssaga*. Besides in the *Eckenlied*, Hilde and Grim are also mentioned in the *Sigenot*.

²⁰² Cf. Ursula Hennig (2000). "Dietrichs Ruf in der aventiurehaften Dietrichdichtung" in *5. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Aventiure-märchenhafte Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal Vienna: Fassbaender, 80-81.

²⁰³ Bleumer (2000), 151-152.

²⁰⁴ Harald Haferland (2004), 213-214; idem (2007). "Poesie des Synchronismus: Historizität, Konfabulation und Mythisierung in der Heldendichtung" in *9. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldenzeiten – Heldenräume: Wann und wo spielen Heldendichtung und Heldensage?* eds. Johannes Keller and Florian Kragl. Vienna: Fassbaender, 18-19. See also the definition in Chapter 1.

processes contemporary to the poem.²⁰⁵ Indeed, this is precisely the light into which Fasold casts Ebenrot's accusations: '*was wolt ich an im rechen,/ das ich in zige mordes gros? /... sit man im gihet das beste,/ das las ich ane has*' ('what would I want to avenge on him by accusing him of bloody murder?... Since he is spoken very well of, I will gladly abstain from that'; E₂ 9,6f.; 9,11f.). According to Fasold, Dietrich must be innocent because his reputation is spotless, a legitimate argument in contemporary medieval Germany. However, Dietrich's battles, which, in the *aventiure*-like poems, mostly take place beyond the bounds of society in the woods, generally do not have witnesses besides the hero himself. The people who praise Dietrich thus really are praising him *nach wane*: they only have the hero's word. In this way, Dietrich's good reputation is made precarious, because it is built on the very same battles in the woods which no one can prove were conducted honorably.²⁰⁶ Ecke, by questioning the way in which Dietrich's reputation has been spread *nach wane*, enables the arguments of Ebenrot and provides them with force.²⁰⁷

It is tempting to see the above conversation as establishing Ecke's desire to verify Dietrich's reputation. However, Ecke only mentions wanting to prove whether or not Dietrich is *ain helt... wandels fri* once in the whole conversation in E₂, and not at all in E₃, E₇, or e₁. This suggests that this facet of Ecke's motivation was not first and foremost in the minds of the *Eckenlied*'s narrators. Furthermore, Ecke appears convinced by Fasold's story of Hilde and Grim's deaths, for at the end of the conversation he says: '*das ist war, / her Dietherich ist vollekomen gar / an fürsteclichen eren/... wan sol sin lob vol meren*' ('It is true, Sir Dietrich is perfect in princely virtues... one ought to increase his praise'; E₂ 1,3ff.). Ecke's acceptance of Dietrich's praise comes from no love of the Berner, however: '*Doch red ich es darumbe niht,/ sit*

²⁰⁵ Hildegard Elisabeth Keller (2003/4). "Dietrich und sein Zagen im *Eckenlied* (E₂): Figurenkonsistenz, Textkohärenz und Perspektive" in *JOWG* 14, 61.

²⁰⁶ Marie-Luise Bernreuther (1988). "Herausforderungsschema und Frauendienst im 'Eckenlied'" in *ZfdA* 99.3, 178-180.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Egerding (1991), 399-401.

man im gar das beste giht/... das ist war, wan ich bestan öch in' ('But I do not say this because everyone calls him the best... that is true, except that I am going to defeat him'; E₂ 14.1f.; 14,4).²⁰⁸ It is thus made clear that Ecke's true purpose is merely to increase his own stature and fame.

Despite Ecke's battle-driven motivation, verifying Dietrich's fame is still brought prominently into the story: Queen Seburg asks pointedly in all complete versions: *'wer ist der Bernäre,/ dem nu so hohes lobes giht/ vil menig helt vermessen?'* ('Who is the Berner whom so many noble heroes praise?'; E₂ 17,6ff.; similarly E₇ 14,6ff.; e₁ 12,6ff.). This establishes Seburg's wish to see Dietrich as a desire to understand who Dietrich is and how he is Dietrich. Though she knows that others question Dietrich's praise, she does not seriously question it herself. Rather, she is motivated by a capricious²⁰⁹ and obsessive interest in the hero's fame: *'sin hoher nam der tötet mich./ es kām mir liht ze gūte,/ säh ich den fürsten lobes rich:/ ich lies in us dem mūte'* ('His great fame is killing me. It would be good for me to see him: I could get him out of my mind'; E₂ 26,7ff.).²¹⁰ It is thus she and not Ecke who wishes to verify Dietrich's reputation, and this is supported by Ecke's repeated statements that *schöne vrōwen* want to see Dietrich, not that he himself does. Ecke's desire to see whether Dietrich is *ain held... wandels fri* is merely his belief that Dietrich has at least one fault: he is inferior to Ecke, who has killed nearly a hundred men and is only twenty years old (E₂ 15,1ff.). Ecke is thus the vehicle through which the queen hopes to achieve this goal. His goal and her goal are made one by a correspondence of separate interests, not by a union of the same interests.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Cf. Gottzmann (1987), 142.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Egerding (1991), 403. It seems capricious regardless of whether or not the queen deems it an "Existenzfrage", as Bernreuther puts it: eadem (1991), 186.

²¹⁰ e₁ shows the variation: *'sein hoches lob das fröwet mich'* (e₁ 25, 7).

²¹¹ Heinzle (1999), 124. Cf. also Bernreuther (1991), 183-184: "[D]er Absolutheitsanspruch, Dietrich persönlich kennenlernen zu müssen, macht Eckes und Seburgs Interessen identisch."

Regardless of Ecke's and Seburg's motives, it is clear that Dietrich's true character is still uncertain. This is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that the argument between the brothers has not yet been settled when Ecke makes his decision in favor of Dietrich:²¹² neither position can be proved definitively so long as none of those involved has actually seen the Berner.²¹³ This allows the narrative to paint Ecke's search for Dietrich, and Dietrich's adventures afterwards, as providing a final answer to the undecided opening conversation.²¹⁴ Furthermore, as many of the accusations that Ebenrot makes about Dietrich's killing of Hilde and Grim resurface in relation to the death of Ecke,²¹⁵ it is possible to view the *Eckenlied* itself as an exculpation for Dietrich's role in that story as well, a belief which is reinforced by Dietrich's referring to future stories told about his battle with Ecke as *sunder wan*, i.e. the opposite of *nach wane* (E₂ 141,11).²¹⁶

This picture I have just painted is made more complicated by the further development of the story after Ecke's inevitable death. Whereas during the opening Ebenrot is called *der wilde Ebenrot* (E₂ 2,7; 7,1), perhaps suggesting pooh-pooing of his attacks on Dietrich, and Fasold is Dietrich's staunch defender, a fact of which the audience is explicitly reminded during Dietrich's battle with Ecke, "wild" Ebenrot never reappears in the story,²¹⁷ and Fasold reveals himself to be Dietrich's treacherous opponent, who hunts women with hounds in the woods.²¹⁸ It is Fasold who will, having excused Dietrich of all blame in the case of Hilde and Grim, make the exact same accusations following Ecke's death. Fittingly, he is compared with the traitor Witige, another former supporter of Dietrich's who changes positions, through allusions to *Die*

²¹² Cf. Francis B. Brévert (1984). "Der Männervergleich im 'Eckenlied'" in *ZfdPh* 103.3, 401.

²¹³ Cf. Gottzmann (1987), 142.

²¹⁴ Cf. Gottzmann (1987), 145.

²¹⁵ Cf. Brévert (1994), 403.

²¹⁶ For an analysis of the context of this assertion, see section 4.1.4. below.

²¹⁷ Unless, as suggested by Gillespie, his name is a corruption of Eckenot or vice versa, another kinsman of Ecke who appears in all versions of the Eckenlied after Ecke's death. See George T. Gillespie (1973). *A Catalogue of Persons named in German Heroic Literature (700-1600): Including Named Animals and Objects and Ethnic Names*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 32.

²¹⁸ Gottzmann (1987), 144-145, 161.

Rabenschlacht.²¹⁹ The characterization of Fasold is problematic in that it breaks the battle lines which were drawn in the opening conversation, and may suggest a more nuanced view of oral hearsay than simply avowing or disavowing Dietrich's good reputation. Fasold, through the death of Ecke, is personally connected to the Berner's actions, and thus finds himself in league with those who slander Dietrich. He has something to avenge on him by accusing him of murder.

Dietrich's Ride to Hell Mirrored in Eckenlied E7?

One question that I have not so far addressed is whether the negative opinion of Dietrich voiced by Ebenrot might be connected with the ecclesiastical critique of Dietrich/Theoderic. That the Church itself is symbolized by one of the brothers cannot be proven and does not seem especially likely: if it were, why not have the brothers argue about the death of an ecclesiastical figure, possibly even about the death of Pope John? Despite the unlikelihood of a direct connection, the fact that Latinate, clerical writings were the main source of opposition to the stories circulating about Dietrich makes it likely that church criticism would have had some effect on his portrayal in vernacular literature.²²⁰ I have already provided evidence for such an influence in my discussion of *Dietrichs Flucht*.

Concrete evidence in favor of the *Eckenlied's* interaction with learned writings might be provided by the frequent diabolization that Dietrich undergoes in the text, particularly in E7. Bishop Otto of Freising mentions in his *Historia sive Chronica de duabus Civitatibus* (c. 1143-1146) that, in addition to the report of Pope Gregory that Dietrich was thrown into Mount Aetna by Symmachus and Pope John's souls, there was a popular story in which Dietrich rode to hell on a horse while still alive (Hist. de Du. Civ., V. III, p. 232). However, outside of a reference to

²¹⁹ Bleumer (2000), 151.

²²⁰ Cf. Gottzmann (1987), 163. Against this assumption see Meyer (1994b), 185, who instead sees the text as showing "die Freiverfügbarkeit der Dietrich-Figur".

the ride to hell as a trick to fool Viðga (Witige) in the *Piðrekssaga*, a similar trick reported in a version of the *Wartburgkrieg*,²²¹ and a vague reference in the late *Der Wunderer*, most references to the ride to hell are found in Latin texts, not in the vernacular.²²² Statements connecting Dietrich to hell or the devil might thus indicate knowledge of this primarily Latinate tradition.

Two references to Dietrich either riding to hell or as a hellish rider will serve to provide a more extensive background to this tradition than is done by Otto of Freising. These are the anonymous *Chronica Regia Coloniensis* (Royal Cologne Chronicle; c. 1197) and Deacon John of Verona's *Historiae Imperiales* (Imperial Histories; c. 1320). According to the *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, in the year 1196:

...quibusdam iuxta Mosellam ambulantis apparuit fantasma mirae magnitudinis in humana forma equo nigro insidens. Quibus perterritis, ad eos accedens, ne terreantur, hortatur. Theodericum Bernensem se nominat et in brevi per totum imperium causam adventus sui debere innotesci. Cumque plura eis referret, equo quo sedebat Mosellam transivit, quosdam nobiles illic habitantes ad quendam locum, dicens se in ascensione Domini illuc venturum et quae ventura erant eisdem pronuntiaturum.

(...to certain persons walking along the River Mosel there appeared a phantom of incredible size, in human form sitting on a black horse. Coming toward them, it exhorted the terrified observers not to be afraid. It called itself Theoderic of Bern and said that the cause of its coming needed to be known quickly throughout the whole empire. When it had said several things to them, it crossed the Mosel on its horse, and told certain nobles living in the area to go to a certain place, saying that it would return there on the Day of Ascension and would announce the things that were to come.)²²³

Dietrich appears as a phantom and predictor of (presumably bad) things to come, though he is not explicitly connected with hell. A second recension of the chronicle has Dietrich explicitly mention *calamitates* and makes him more ghostly, vanishing in front of the onlookers' eyes.²²⁴

Writing later, Deacon John adds at the end of his section on Theoderic:

²²¹ This is, in my opinion, itself probably a sign of interaction with learned sources.

²²² See Hugo Kuhn (1980) "'Dietrichs Flucht' und 'Rabenschlacht'" in *Verfasserlexikon*, 120.

²²³ Text quoted and summarized in Elisabeth Lienert et al. (eds.) (2008). *Dietrich-Testimonien des 6. bis 16. Jahrhunderts*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 89-90.

²²⁴ Text in Lienert et al. (eds.) (2008), 89-90

Hic est theodoricus... de quo fabulose fertur a personis vulgaribus, quod fuit genitus a diabolo: ...misso nuntio ad infernum, recipit a patre suo dyabolo equum unum et canes, et [cum] haec munera theodoricus accepisset, tanto gaudio repletus est, quod de balneo in quo laubatur solum inuolutus linteamine exiens, equum ascendit, et statim numquam camparuit, sed per siluas adhuc de nocte uenari dicitur et persequi nimphas.

(This is Theoderic... of whom fabulous things are said by commoners, [namely] that he was born of the devil: having sent a message to hell, he received from his father the devil a horse and [some] dogs, and [when] Theoderic received these gifts, he was so filled with joy that he left the bath where he was washing himself wrapped only in a linen cloth, mounted the horse, and never reappeared, but he is said to this day to come through the woods at night chasing young women [or nymphs].)²²⁵

Before I even turn to analyzing connections between Dietrich and the devil in the *Eckenlied*, it is worth noting that the picture of Dietrich's nocturnal activities painted by John is in fact precisely what Fasold will be shown to do: chasing a *wilde vrouwe* through the woods.²²⁶ It can thus be argued with John Flood that "it is by no means inconceivable that when Dietrich is shown, not as a hunter or at least a man astride a diabolical mount (as some Church traditions would have it), but instead as a protector from this hunt, this is nothing but a further manifestation of... pro-Dietrich feeling."²²⁷

Beyond the possible references to the hunt, Dietrich is specifically connected to the devil in the *Eckenlied*, first while he is fighting Ecke. In order to convince Dietrich to fight with him, Ecke has renounced God's help for himself. In E₇, the giant additionally says '*der tauffel sey gehilffe mein,/ das ich nit von dir schaide!*' ('Let the devil be my help, so that I don't part from you!'; E₇ 102,5f.). In all versions, Ecke believes that the devil is fighting in Dietrich's body when the Berner suddenly regains his strength during the struggle: '*von wem hastũ die kraft genũm?/ pistũ nit geporn von weibe?/ ein teuffel der ist in dich kum,/ der vicht aus deinem leibe*' ('From whom did you get this strength? Were you not born of a woman? A devil has come into you, he

²²⁵ Text in Lienert et al. (eds.) (2008), 151-152. I have added the [cum] to explain the subjunctive verb in that clause, assuming that, as Lienert appears to have derived her text from Zimmermann rather than the unprinted manuscript, the transcript may be defective.

²²⁶ Cf. Gottzmann (1987), 161.

²²⁷ John L. Flood (1973). "Dietrich von Bern and the Human Hunt" in *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 17, 38.

is fighting from your body'; E₇ 146,7ff.). Dietrich responds that he is simply receiving God's help against the blaspheming Ecke.

Following the battle, the allusions in E₇ become more pointed, and suggest a sort of metaphoric ride to Hell. First, Dietrich wishes in his despair '*das ich in der helle were!*' ('If only I were in hell!'; E₇ 182,10). Later on, as Dietrich approaches Jochgrimm, a group of terrified knights comment: '*das ist nit ein man!/ er hot denn teuffel freyssan,/ der in das vechten larte,/ her auß der tyffen hel gesant*' ('That is not a man! He has sent the fearsome devil, who taught him how to fight, out of deepest hell'; E₇ 297,4ff.). This reaction is not dissimilar to the fear of the *ambulantes* described in the *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*. Besides Dietrich's fearsome fighting abilities, Ecke's spectacularly shiny armor (which Dietrich has taken) reinforces the Berner's hellish appearance: *er laucht, sam er sey entprant/ mit fauer auf ertreichen* (he glowed, as if he were burning with fire on earth; E₇ 297,8f.). The citizens of Bern had similarly remarked about Ecke in E₇ (but not in E₂ or e₁), after asking '*ach herre got, wer ist der man,/ der dort stet in dem fewre?*' ('O God, who is that man who is standing in the fire?'), that '*er mag wol auß der helle gan,/ er ist so ungehaüre*' ('He might very well come from Hell, he is so monstrous'; E₇ 39,7ff.). Finally, as Dietrich returns home, Hildebrand and Wolfhart catch sight of him, prompting Hildebrand to exclaim: '*der reitet auß der helle/ her gegen uns wol in den than!*' ('He is riding out of hell towards us in the forest!'; E₇ 302,12f.) Afterwards, Hildebrand recognizes Ecke's armor, prompting him to ascertain Dietrich's identity. Dietrich does indeed ride to Hell, but only metaphorically, and he reemerges in the end.

It might be objected, as Sonja Kerth does, that diabolization is a frequent insult and device in medieval German literature.²²⁸ Such insults can be found in great numbers in the *Heidelberger Virginal*: when referring to someone's ability or wish to fight well (Wolfhart: '*ir*

²²⁸ Sonja Kerth (2008). *Gattungsinterferenzen in der späten Heldendichtung*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 203-4.

wellent gar der tiuvel wesen ‘You want to be the devil’; V₁₀ 646), but especially when referring to giants (e.g. V₁₀ 522,5; 522,9; 719,12f., etc.).²²⁹ There is some corresponding usage in the *Eckenlied* as well (e.g., E₇ 283,1; e₁ 204,12), meaning that similar factors could play into the diabolization Dietrich undergoes in the *Eckenlied*. However, the passages discussed above, especially those that refer to Dietrich emerging from hell, seem rather to allude to the tradition of Dietrich’s ride to hell when considered in their totality. In E₇, Dietrich could be said to ride to hell and back in the eyes of his observers, just as Ecke appears to have emerged from hell in their eyes. Of course, Dietrich claims the support of God throughout the whole poem, and in the end Hildebrand realizes that a mortal rider is coming towards him. The exact role of these allusions thus remains unclear. Nevertheless, they could indicate that E₇ engages with ecclesiastical writings or their vernacular offshoots and that those in the audience aware of this Latinate tradition could have observed allusions to the ride to hell.

Bringing Dietrich into Focus: Ecke’s Search for Dietrich; Dietrich’s Ride to Jochgrimm

Whether it is connected to ecclesiastical criticism or no, the *Eckenlied* presents two images of Dietrich, whose conflicting natures it then proceeds to resolve through the remainder of the plot. Ecke is shown getting closer and closer to Dietrich, who remains elusive but leaves witnesses and clues behind. The first person in the poem who has actually seen Dietrich is an old traveler (*ain alter varnder man*; E₂ 28,1) who happens to overhear Ecke and Seburg at Jochgrimm. He warns Ecke that *‘welt ir den Bernäre/ bestan durch úwern úbermût,/ úwer ende wirt niht gût*’ (‘If you want to fight the Berner in your arrogance, your end will not be good’; E₂ 28,3ff.). Ecke responds dismissively to the traveler’s descriptions of Dietrich’s virtue and

²²⁹ The Wiener Virginal also contains one instance where a giant claims that the devil is fighting him with Dietrich (V₁₂ 471): due to other similarities, I would say that this motif has probably been loaned out of the *Eckenlied*.

prohess, disregarding the fact that the man has just confirmed what Ecke himself has been saying (E₂ 29,10).²³⁰ He sets out despite the warnings, and eventually comes upon a hermit twelve miles (*noch zwelf mile*; E₂ 38,12) from Bern, with whom he decides to spend the night. However, upon Ecke's question whether his host is often in Bern and knows its ruler, the hermit replies: *'herre, ich was nähtint spate da,/ do sach ich in da haime:/ er ist niht anderswa'* ('Sir, I was there late last night and saw him there at home: he is not anywhere else'; E₂ 39 11ff.). After this, with Dietrich so near, Ecke decides that he cannot wait and leaves immediately.

Ecke seems close to his goal, but he will soon be disappointed. He arrives in Bern early the next morning, clunking around the streets and terrifying the townspeople while yelling *'wa ist von Bern her Dietherich?'* ('Where is Sir Dietrich von Bern?'; E₂ 43,2), before he is finally confronted by Hildebrand, who upbraids the giant for his uncouthness. Eventually, he tells Ecke: *'min herre ist hie haime niht;/ ...er rait, als man ú hie vergiht,/ ze Tirol gen dem walde'* ('My lord is not at home;... he rode, as one will tell you here, into the forest of Tyrol'; E₂ 48,7; 48,9f.). Ecke immediately sets out towards Tyrol, arriving in Trent in the evening where *si wistont in uf des berges sla/ der Nones was genennet* (they directed him to a path on the mountain named Nans; E₂ 51,9f.). He spends the night in Trent and climbs the mountain, quickly slaying a centaur before coming across *ainen wunden man* (a wounded man; E₂ 55,5), Helferich, who provides the first physical proof of Dietrich's prowess. Once Ecke learns that Dietrich was Helferich's opponent, he measures Helferich's wounds with his own hands. The battle-experienced Ecke is astounded by their size and exclaims finally: *'enkain swert es getûn enmak:/ es hat getan von himel/ der wilde dunrslak'* ('No sword could have done it: it was done by a wild thunderbolt from heaven'; E₂ 56,11ff.). Ecke, in that he places his hands in Helferich's wounds, plays a role similar to that of the Apostle Thomas. However, unlike Thomas, Ecke still does not believe after

²³⁰ Cf. Gottzmann (1987), 149.

touching the proof.²³¹ This similarity serves to cast Ecke's disbelief in a bad light: the other apostles (and Fasold) all believe without physical proof, which is specifically described as the better form of belief by Jesus.

By touching Hilferich's wounds, Ecke has almost touched Dietrich. While he is still merely an "ear-witness," for the first time he both sees evidence of Dietrich's actions and can get a first-hand description of the Berner in combat.²³² However, Helderich is only so useful as a witness. To Ecke's question whether he saw Dietrich unarmored, Helderich first responds yes, but then says: *'sin heln glast úns durch die gesiht,/ den blik wir müssen vliessen./ ich kund sin niendert blöse niht/ won da zen ögen kieser'* ('His helmet shone in our faces, it befuddled our sight. I could not see him unarmored anywhere except at his eyes'; E₂ 61,7ff.). In this way, Dietrich remains blurry and distant even in Helderich's firsthand account. Despite Helderich's warnings, Ecke vows to find Dietrich and avenge the wounded knight. Reluctantly, *der wunde degem märe/ wiset in vil rehte uf das phat,/ da vor im geritten hat/ der edel Bernäre* (the wounded warrior pointed him directly to the path that the noble Berner had ridden before him; E₂ 68,3ff.). By promising to carry on the strand of story left off by Helderich, Ecke foreshadows his own demise.²³³

After leaving Helderich, Ecke finally encounters Dietrich as the sun is setting; the Berner does not want to fight Ecke and Ecke shows himself to be unable to comprehend the heroic code by which Dietrich lives. The two heroes repeatedly talk over each other's heads.²³⁴ First, Ecke attempts to entice Dietrich to battle through the promise of his costly armor as booty, but is rebuffed. This prompts Ecke to say: *'ich sih wol, dir ist fehten lait,/ din lip vil tugende midet/*

²³¹ Keller (2003/4), 63-64.

²³² Keller (2003/4), 63: "Ohrenzeuge."

²³³ Bleumer (2000), 143-145.

²³⁴ Cf. Bleumer (2000), 145-149; Keller (2003/4), 65-66.

...*verwassen müse sin, der mir/ dich lobt ze kainen stunden!*' ('I can see that you don't like fighting, you avoid much virtue... cursed be he who ever praised you in front of me!'; E₂ 85,5f; 85,9f.). Dietrich then says he will fight Ecke in the morning, but the giant continues to insult the Berner, saying: '*und öwe, wie han ich ertobt,/ das ich dich zagen han gelobt!/ ...das du ain zage wäre,/ das het ich wol versworn*' ('And woe! how I raved when I praised you, a coward!... I would have sworn that you were not a coward'; E₂ 87,4f.; 87,12f.). Here he borrows language, specifically the verb *toben*, from his earlier attack on those that praise *nach wane* to refer to his own praise of Dietrich. Dietrich reiterates his wish to fight in the morning, but Ecke continues to insult and taunt him, finally saying that Dietrich can have all of God's help whereas Ecke will not have any. This prompts Dietrich to enter into combat immediately.

Dietrich's apparent cowardice (*zagheit*) is a leitmotif throughout the *aventure*-like poems. However, it appears to be based on different factors in each poem, so that the only general factor is the narrative function of delaying the battle to increase tension for the audience: if Dietrich refuses to fight initially, it shows that the opponent must be a difficult one.²³⁵ In this case, although Dietrich's behavior seems cowardly to Ecke, and may also seem cowardly to us, it is important to notice that the narrator does not characterize it as such. Rather, Dietrich is referred to as *unverzait* (literally, un-cowardly; E₂ 76,1), and later the combat between Dietrich and Ecke is characterized as so fierce that *ien törst ain zagehafter man/ niemer mit den ögen schöwen* (a cowardly man would never dare to watch it with his eyes; E₂ 107,2f.). In the eyes of the narrator, at least, Dietrich is behaving in an honorable way, the first step in confirming his reputation.²³⁶ During the confrontation with Ecke, Dietrich repeatedly discards Ecke's reasons

²³⁵ Jens Haustein (1998). "Die 'zagheit' Dietrichs von Bern" in *Der unzeitgemäße Held in der Weltliteratur*, ed. Gerhard R. Kaiser. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 54-56. Haustein suggests that it may serve as an "Annäherung zum Artusroman."

²³⁶ Keller (2003/4), 64-65.

for fighting as not providing a satisfactory *casus belli*, which may suggest a pragmatic heroism rather than cowardice.²³⁷ Furthermore, Dietrich's final wish to fight with Ecke without delay appears to be motivated by Ecke's blasphemy, which thus serves to free him from any last suspicion of cowardice.²³⁸

Despite showing that Dietrich is not a coward, Dietrich's victory over Ecke is made problematic for Dietrich's reputation by two factors: the lack of witnesses and Ecke's indestructible armor. The latter of the two forces Dietrich to kill Ecke in what would normally be considered a dishonorable way, stabbing him through a gap in his armor.²³⁹ Meanwhile, the lack of witnesses to the battle is emphasized by the combatants, first by Dietrich: *'hie ist nieman, der úns schaide,/ es tû des ainen tot'* ('There is no one here to separate us except death'; E₂ 88,12f.). Later, Ecke will also pick up this theme: after Dietrich deals Ecke a particularly hard blow, the giant takes comfort in the fact *'das bi úns hie nieman was,/ der es gesagen kunne'* ('that there is no one here with us who could talk about it'; E₂ 114,7f.). In E₇, the narrator characterizes this isolation even more explicitly: *si vachten von den lauten dan,/ das sie do niemant weste* (they fought away from other people, so that no one knew they were there; E₇ 115,7f.). On the one hand, this leaves Dietrich's problematic victory without witnesses, so that no one must know that Dietrich was forced to kill Ecke dishonorably; on the other, the lack of witnesses will give rise to a completely different accusation, that Dietrich killed Ecke in his sleep. In E₇ and e₁, this charge is explicitly refuted for the public by having Dietrich watch over Ecke in the night after they have taken a break from fighting. However, such exemplary behavior is rendered useless to Dietrich by the fact that no one outside of the narrator and the audience knows about it.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Bernreuther (1988), 191-192.

²³⁸ Keller (2003/4), 65-66.

²³⁹ Cf. Bernreuther (1988), 191; 195-6.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Hennig (2000), 85.

Dietrich is fully aware of the issues inherent in his victory. Once he has killed Ecke, he characterizes himself as now without honor and decides to take Ecke's armor: *'so han ich rerop dir genomen'* ('Thus I have committed *reroup*'; E₂ 146,11). *Reroup*, the crime Dietrich here accuses himself of, means the robbery of a corpse, with an implication that the corpse was murdered in order to be looted. The audience knows from Ecke's taunts before the battle that this is not the case. When Ecke offers Dietrich his golden armor as plunder, Dietrich angrily exclaims: *'ich fiht umb niemans golt!'* ('I fight for no one's gold!'; E₂ 92,1). Nevertheless, Dietrich accuses himself of the very same crime as Ebenrot, taking up the position of his detractors: *'er slûg vil lasterlichen tot/ vro Hilten und hern Grinen/ umb aine brúne, die er nam'* ('He treacherously slew Lady Hilde and Sir Grim for a suit of armor, which he took'; E₂ 7,2ff.).²⁴¹ Dietrich predicts that this very same accusation will be made against him now (E₂ 148,6ff.), and he seems to want the accusation to be made. Indeed, in e₁ the undamaged state of Ecke's armor is the cause of Fasold's accusation that Dietrich killed Ecke in his sleep: *'hetst du in ritterlich erschlagen,/ die brinn wer ser verhawen'* ('If you had slain him chivalrously, the armor would be cut to pieces'; e₁ 168,2f.). Dietrich, by agreeing with the negative opinions about himself, will serve to disprove them.²⁴²

Dietrich makes a further decision, one which will spread the story of what has happened to Ecke: *'ich sage laidú mære/ von dir den kúneginnen fin,/ die dich ze kenpfen walten'* ('I will tell your sorry *mære* to the queens who wanted you to fight'; E₂ 150,6ff.). Through his journey to Jochgrimm, Dietrich will serve to make the witnessless battle known.²⁴³ Correspondingly, Dietrich never tries to hide that he slew Ecke, despite the warnings of others that this would be a wise course of action. This honesty will entwine him in a series of battles, first with Fasold and

²⁴¹ Brévard (1984), 404-406; Hennig (2000), 81; Gottzmann (1987), 154-157.

²⁴² Gottzmann (1987), 157.

²⁴³ Kerth (2008), 200.

then with the rest of the giant's family, whom he must slay one by one as they attempt to avenge Ecke's death.²⁴⁴ In E₇, the theme of spreading his narrative is taken to its logical conclusion by having Dietrich recount the whole tale to the assembled court at Bern at the very end of the poem (E₇ 307-311).²⁴⁵ e₁, meanwhile, provides a particularly striking counterpoint to the battle without witnesses between Dietrich and Ecke: Dietrich's final battle with Fasold is conducted in front of a full courtly audience at Jochgrimm. It is the presence of this audience that leads to his victory:

*Hört, wie dem Berner laid geschah,
als er nach strauchen umbe sach,
das man unnd auch die maide
von im hetten gesehen hie,
das er was kummen auff die knie.
sein hercz war im do grimmig genüg,
das er do zû den stunden
herr Fasolt durch sein helme schlug
ein sollich tieffen wunden,
darvon der held nymmer genaß.
man sayt Fasolten todten,
ee er gefallen was.*

(e₁ 249,1-13)

(Hear how shamed the Berner was when he looked around after stumbling and saw that men and damsels had seen him fall to his knees. His heart became so fierce that he struck Sir Fasold such a deep blow through his helmet that the hero never recovered. They say that Fasold was dead before he hit the ground.)

Dietrich slays Fasold in an exemplary fashion in front of many witnesses, confirming his honor and ability. He is in this way exculpated from any hint of dishonorable conduct with Ecke, and thus also with Hilde and Grim. The other versions are less dramatic on this point, but allow at least the audience to see Dietrich's honorable conduct following Ecke's death. By the end of the poem it is clear that he is blameless and furthermore in every way deserving of his reputation.

²⁴⁴ Gottzmann (1987), 158-161.

²⁴⁵ Cf. the many summaries found in the *Heidelberger Virginal*.

Truth-Claim, Irony, and Further Signs of Self-Reflexivity in the Eckenlied

The *Eckenlied*'s narrator makes the poem's truth-claim an issue in its first strophe. According to E₂: *Ain lant, das hies sich Gripiar, / - das ich ú sag, das ist war – / bi haidenschen ziten* (A country was named Gripiar – what I tell you is true – in heathen times; E₂ 1,1ff.). In E₃, the country's name is Copian, which is rhymed with *alz wir ez an den bûchen han* (as we have it in the books; E₃ 1,2). In E₇ and e₁, the country is named Kryspian and Agripinan respectively, and the second line's assertion of truth is lacking. All versions except for E₃, however, contain lines similar to these: *swer das fûr aine luge hat, / der frag es wise lûte, / won es wol gesriben stat, / als ich úch hie betûte* (Whoever holds this for a lie, let him ask wise people, for it is written as I tell you here; E₂ 1,7ff.). All four versions make a claim of written authority for the text, and all four place the action *bi haidenschen* or *der helden ziten*, thus establishing the poems' nature as *Vorzeitkunde*, with an exact placement in historical time unclear.²⁴⁶ The claims of written authority are, as has already been seen for *Dietrichs Flucht*, combined with a use of orally transmitted sources, for instance: *das wissint von den lieden, / sich brûft ir baiden herzelait, / davon man noch singet unde sait* (you know this from the songs: they both felt anguish, of which one still sings and tells; E₂ 106,3ff.). Assertions of truth do not occur as frequently as in the historical poems: this may reflect the fact that the truth-claims of the *aventure*-like poems were not as frequently attacked. Interestingly, the later versions of the *Eckenlied* seem to claim an increasing, though not exclusive, amount of their authority from written sources.

Of special interest are the final strophes of e₁. In them, the text returns to its role as *Vorzeitkunde*. The poet states the Dietrich never used Ecke's sword in combat again:

*Wenn do der groß krieg zû Rom wart
von Octaheren in Lampart
bey keyser Zenos zeyte,*

²⁴⁶ Bleumer (2000), 139.

*der zû Constantinopel saß.
 Augustulus zû Rome waß
 künge des reychs so weite.
 ja den vertraib her Octaher
 unnd thet auch Rom besiczen.
 do erbat man den Berner,
 des manheit, krafft unnd wiczen
 was allenthalben wol erkand.
 der zoch wider die feinde
 unnd schlug sy auß dem landt,*

*Ich glaub ja mit her Ecken schwert,
 dadurch sich wol sein lobe mert.
 zRom ward er künig unnd herre.
 er regniert einß und dreyszig jar
 bey Felix unnd Galasius gar;
 und Anastasius dere
 ward babst bey im; noch diser tod
 - der starb darnach behende -
 do hûb sich umb das babstum not.
 der Berner nam sein ende
 zû Rom nach Cristus burt für war,
 als man zölet vier hundert
 syben unnd nainczig jar.*

(e₁ 283-284)

(Except when there was a big war in Rome because of Odoacer in Lombardy at the time of Emperor Zenon, who was in Constantinople. Augustulus was the king in Rome of the wide empire. Odoacer drove him away and occupied Rome. Then the Berner was called for, whose bravery, strength and intelligence were known to all. He went against the enemies and drove them from the land/slew them with Sir Ecke's sword, I think. Thereby he increased his praise. He became king and lord in Rome and reigned thirty-one years in the time of Felix and Galasius; and Anastasius was the pope; after his [the pope's] death – he died suddenly thereafter – the papacy was in danger. The Berner died in Rome in 497 after Christ's birth, as one counts.)

In this ending Dietrich is reinserted from the vague *haidenschen ziten* of the poem's beginning into historical chronology, despite incorrect dates and only partially correct personnel.²⁴⁷

Moreover, the – in e₁, somewhat confused – allusions to *vron Helchen kint* and Witige's escape into the sea, as well as the presence of Herrat, Dietrich's wife from *Dietrichs Flucht* and *Die*

²⁴⁷ Cf. Jan-Dirk Müller (1985). "Wandel von Geschichtserfahrung in spätmittelalterlicher Heldenepik" in *Geschichtsbewußtsein in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Tübinger Colloquium 1983*, eds. Christoph Gerhardt et al. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 84.

Rabenschlacht, mean the Dietrich of the exile-saga is explicitly included in this historical context. Dietrich's defeat of Odoacer appears to be thought of as a completely separate episode following the exile-saga, unlike the way it is integrated into other, learned, sources.²⁴⁸ The vague reference *do hūb sich umb das babstum not* seems to indicate Dietrich's status as a heretic and role in the death of the pope, though this is not explicit. It could only portray Dietrich as a protector of the papacy, as Gottzmann asserts, if *nach diser tod* is taken to refer to Dietrich's rather than the pope's death.²⁴⁹ Rather, it seems to indicate that the historical Theoderic, with his misdeeds, is being sutured to the hero of saga.

This suturing of the historical Theoderic to the Dietrich of saga is done cautiously. The exact connection to the story of the *Eckenlied*, the use of Ecke's sword, is asserted through the use of *[i]ch glaub*. In doing this, the narrator acknowledges that others may disagree with him, but affirms that he personally believes that the same sword was used. This is interesting in and of itself, because, as Bleumer asserts, “[d]as ‘Eckenlied’ nimmt auf das historische Feld Bezug, führt sogar das hier angesiedelte Kriterium der historischen Zeit ein, aber dazu paßt die Geschichte des Textes nicht.”²⁵⁰ With the narrator's careful *[i]ch glaub*, a certain awareness of this incompatibility might be noted. At the same time, it is clear that the narrator must have thought there was a connection: otherwise, he would not have hazarded this guess. If a comparison is made with the last lines of the closely related manuscript version E₄, some light can be shed on how these last two strophes might have come into being. There, the text ends just before the two strophes quoted above, talking about Ecke's sword: *doch hortt man ymmer mere sagen,/ das er mit Eggen swerte/ habe yemannt seydt erschlagen* (but one always hears it said

²⁴⁸ This is against Heinzle's assumption that the later battle with Odoacer must equal or parallel the exile-saga. See idem (1999), 34.

²⁴⁹ Gottzmann (1987), 163.

²⁵⁰ Bleumer (2000), 152. “The ‘Eckenlied’ refers to the historical field, it even introduces the criterion of historical time which goes with it, but the story of the text does not fit in with this.”

that he [Dietrich] slew someone with Ecke's sword afterwards; E₄ 75,11ff.). If Dietrich is the same person as the historical Theoderic, it takes no great feat of imagination to think that this unnamed other person might be Odoacer, whose death at Theoderic's hands was widely reported in chronicles. The redactor of e₁ thus concluded that Dietrich slew just *one* more person with Ecke's sword, decided that it was probably Odoacer, and inserted his interpretation onto the ending. Historiography and saga are thus connected by confabulation, which is then somewhat cautiously included in the work.

Besides at its beginning and end, the poem takes other steps to ensure the believability of its narrative. For instance, the narrative is carefully given many witnesses as it progresses from Jochgrimm. This is because, in German heroic epic, an action must be seen to be told: this reinforces the existence of an accurate chain of transmission between the events and their narration.²⁵¹ Someone, it seems, observes Ecke in the woods: *alsam ain lebart in dem walt/ sach man in wite springen* (he was seen making wide strides like a leopard in the forest; E₂ 36,7f.). Afterwards, Ecke is provided with a more specific witness in the form of the hermit, before coming into Bern and being seen by the townspeople. These same townspeople *kaften alle nach,/ unz si in forrost sahen./ war er des landes kerte hie,/ des braht er sú wol innan./ die Etsch er hin ze berge gie;/ das sahens ab den zinnan* ([they] followed him with their eyes until they saw him far away. Where he was going in the country was made well known to them. He went up the river Etsch [Adige] into the mountains; they saw that from the ramparts; E₂ 50,5-10). The townspeople are made into eyewitnesses of Ecke's journey, confirming the way he took from Bern/Verona to Trent.

Once Ecke has arrived in Trent, he is directed to the path on Mount Nans that Dietrich took earlier. This leads him to the most important eyewitness of the whole *Eckenlied*, Helferich.

²⁵¹ Cf. Müller (1998), 249-252.

In the single strophe transmitted in the *Codex Buranus*, and strophes 69 of both E₂ and E₇, Helferich is made into the authority for the following battle: *Uns seit von Lutringen Helferich,/ wie zwene rechen lobelich/ zesæmine bechomen,/ her Ekke und ouch her Dieterich* (Helferich von Lutringen tells us how two noble warriors came together, Sir Ecke and Sir Dietrich; E₁ 1,1ff.).²⁵² Through this use of Helferich, “[t]he tale is... presented as an eye-witness report,” one of the criteria that Isidore mandated for the writing of *historia*.²⁵³ Because of the standing afforded to Helferich as a named authority for the tradition, both E₇ and e₁ take special steps to make it clear that he recovers from his wounds: in E₇, a dwarf appears and heals the knight, allowing him to ride off. e₁, meanwhile, which does not mention Helferich directly as the source of the current narrative but says rather *Wir finden hie geschriben stan* (we find it written here; e₁ 63,1), states in the immediately proceeding strophe that Helferich has bound his wounds and followed Ecke. He thus hears the conversation between Ecke and Dietrich and observes the battle directly. Afterwards, Dietrich comes across Helferich and, despite their earlier animosity, friendlily greets him and asks him to bring back news to Hildebrand in Bern. His profile in the story is thus increased dramatically.²⁵⁴ Similarly, in E₄, Helferich reappears in Bern at the very end of the story (E₄ 75,7), which would allow him to tell others what he has seen.

Another method of making the narrative believable is the use of accurate and precise geography during Ecke’s search for Dietrich; the giant’s travel-times are all fairly correct and the geography is connected with real place names.²⁵⁵ This, as in *Dietrichs Flucht* and *Die*

²⁵² Meyer (1994b), 203; Udo Friedrich (2004). “Transformationen mythischer Gehalte im *Eckenlied*” in *Präsenz des Mythos: Konfigurationen einer Denkform im Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Udo Friedrich and Bruno Quast. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 294

²⁵³ Sebastian Coxon (2001). *The Presentation of Authorship in Medieval German Narrative Literature 1220-1290*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 168-72.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Kerth (2008), 213-214.

²⁵⁵ Kurt Ruh (1979). “Verständnisperspektiven von Heldendichtung im Spätmittelalter und Heute” in *Deutsche Heldenepik in Tirol – König Laurin und Dietrich von Bern in der Dichtung des Mittelalters (Beiträge der Neustifter Tagung 1977 des Südtiroler Kulturinstitutes)*, ed. Egon Kühebacher. Verlagsanstalt Athesa: Bozen, 15. Against this

Rabenschlacht, probably represents a deliberate attempt to make the narrative more believable.²⁵⁶ However, after Ecke has gone into Tyrol and found Dietrich on the mountain, in precisely the part of the narrative that exculpates Dietrich from any wrong-doing, the geography becomes vague and similar to that of an Arthurian romance or myth.²⁵⁷ This is the sort of geography that one might expect in a traditional heroic epic. The sudden change from precise to vague geography is reflected on most explicitly in E₇ and e₁: *Her Diterich in dem wald umb rait/ des tages dreyer maille prait,/ er fandt nynder kein strossen./ do reit er her, do reit er hin;/ er sprach: 'ich weiß nit, wo ich pin'* (Sir Dietrich rode around in the forest all day for three miles, he never found a street. He rode back and forth; he said 'I do not know where I am'; E₇ 192,1-5, cf. e₁ 137,1-5). With the accurate geography suspended, the hero is himself confused, mirroring the sudden change of affairs. This shows that Meyer is not correct in stating that “[d]ie Spannung zwischen geographischem definiertem Ort und wunderbarem Geschehen, das prompt einsetzt, ...wird nicht aufgelöst, nicht einmal thematisiert.”²⁵⁸ It was clearly a problem of which the public and the various redactors of the text were aware. Dietrich's own confusion before he finds the road to *aventiure* mirrors the sudden befuddlement of the poem's previously very accurate geography. The text will never return to the precise geography of its opening; however, the mountain of Jochgrimm where Seburg and the other queens make their home is a real place,

Jan-Dirk Müller asserts that “Es stellt sich heraus, daß man nahezu auf Rufweite agiert und das Nennen von Räumen durchaus keine geographische Bedeutung hat.” See idem (1992). “Woran erkennt man einander im Heldenepos? Beobachtungen an Wolframs ‘Willehalm’, dem Nibelungenlied, dem ‘Wormser Rosengarten A’ und dem ‘Eckenlied’” in *Symbole des Alltags, Alltag der Symbole: Festschrift für Harry Kühnel zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Gertrud Blaschnitz et al. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 103.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Müller (1998), 130.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Meyer (1994b), 184; Friedrich (2004), 278-279: According to him, the *Eckenlied* “spielt... in heterogenen Räumen, die historisch-geographische und mythische Koordinaten verbinden.”

²⁵⁸ Meyer (1994b), 201. “The tension between geographically defined location and fantastical occurrence which promptly begins... is never resolved, never even once made an issue.”

though it seems to be doubled with Jockgrim, a city along the Rhine, at least in the prologue strophe.²⁵⁹ The poem's geography is thus never wholly invented.

Besides befuddled geography, there is also unclear identity throughout the second half of the poem, beginning once Ecke finds Dietrich. Upon becoming aware of Ecke, Dietrich asks what the giant wants; once Ecke has told him that he is looking for Dietrich von Bern, Dietrich responds: *'mänik Dietherich mag ze Berne sin;/ mänt ir den Dietheriche,/ dem Diethmar da Berne lie/ und ändrú sinú aigen,/ den fint ir an mir hie'* ('There are many Dietrichs in Bern; if you mean the Dietrich who was left Bern by Dietmar, along with other lands, then you have found him in my person'; E₂ 73,9ff.). Although for the reader/hearer of the text Dietrich's identity is never really in question, Dietrich's speech introduces a new theme: having now established Dietrich's great fame, the *Eckenlied* plays with his identity.²⁶⁰ After Dietrich's own clarification of his person, Ecke becomes increasingly frustrated that Dietrich will not fight with him: *'du maht wol haissen Dietherich,/ dem fürsten da von Berne/ tust aber niht gelich'* ('You may well be named Dietrich, but you do not act like the prince of Bern'; E₂ 85,11ff.), and again: *'Sit ich dich sih so gar verzagt,/ bistu, von dem man mære sagt/ den rittern und den vröwen?'* ('Since I find you to be so cowardly, are you he of whom one tells *mære* to knights and ladies?'; E₂ 97,1ff.). Later, after Ecke's death, Dietrich will wish that he had another name (E₂ 143,1-8). Correspondingly, Dietrich is from then on constantly mistaken either for Ecke or for a hellish rider. Meanwhile, the topos of uncertain identity spreads from Dietrich to the recently slain Ecke. Once Fasold mentions his brother, Dietrich says in E₂: *'ich wän.../ das zwen Eggen sint'* ('I think there are two Eckes'; E₂ 191,12f.). In E₇ and e₁, meanwhile, there actually *are* two Eckes. During Dietrich's battle with Fasold, furthermore, the two heroes each ascribe their growing strengths to

²⁵⁹ This doubling of location is common in the Dietrichepic and may reflect the interference of competing local traditions. See Meyer (1994b), 190; Heinzle (1978), 159-160.

²⁶⁰ Keller (2003/4), 72.

the presence of the slain Ecke and Diether, Dietrich's brother, in their respective bodies, making the boundaries of heroic identity even more fluid. Dietrich and Fasold are both described as two people.²⁶¹

In addition, a certain amount of irony may be detected in the text; that is, passages which read as serious within the context of the narrative, but which contradict what the audience knows has or will happen. This is best displayed in the character of Ecke, who says that he wants to fight Dietrich because *'es wais noch nieman, wer ich bin:/ wan mûs ûch mich erkennen'* ('Nobody knows who I am yet: I must be known as well'; E₂ 14,5f.). Since some form of oral tradition presumably existed before and in concurrence with the text, and given the poem's popularity, everyone in the audience of course *does* know who Ecke is. Ecke's claim of anonymity may be true within the text, but certainly is not true outside of it, creating a situation of irony. Even more ironic seems the imagined *mære* that will spread after Ecke's future victory: *'so hört man in den landen sagen/ und sprechent: "seht, her Egge/ hat den Berner erslagen!"'* ('Then people will say everywhere: "Look! Sir Ecke has slain the Berner!"; E₂ 14,11ff.). Given that the *Eckenlied* itself is the story of Ecke's defeat by Dietrich, Ecke's dream of an exactly opposite *mære* being circulated can only be called ironic.²⁶²

A similar irony can be seen in Ecke's statement that no one is around to tell of a powerful blow Dietrich has delivered during their fight: the blow has been narrated to an audience and is part of the narrative, so that Ecke's statement that no one will know about it rings false. It can be compared to what Dietrich thinks people will say about him in the future: *'swar ich in dem lande var,/ so hat dú welt ir zaigen/ uf mich und sprechent sunder wan:/ "seht, dis ist der Bernäre,/ der*

²⁶¹ Jan-Dirk Müller (1992). "Woran erkennt man einander im Heldenepos? Beobachtungen an Wolframs 'Willehalm', dem Nibelungenlied, dem 'Wormser Rosengarten A' und dem 'Eckenlied'" in *Symbole des Alltags, Alltag der Symbole: Festschrift für Harry Kühnel zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Gertrud Blaschnitz et al. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 108-109.

²⁶² Cf. Friedrich (2004), 294-295.

künge stechen kan!” (“Wherever I will go, people will point at me and say based on certain knowledge [*sunder wan*]: “Look, this is the Berner who can slay kings!”; E₂ 141,9ff.). While Dietrich imagines this as a shameful future, it is in fact more or less what is contained in the stories about him, but in a positive way. The irony is thus contained in Dietrich’s expectation of shame for his deed when the audience knows that the Berner will in fact win honor. Further irony on the part of Dietrich can be observed in the *zagheit*-motif: Dietrich’s complaints about not wishing to fight or about unfair advantages held by his opponents show that, for Dietrich, victory never seems assured: “Dietrich weiß offenbar nicht, daß er als Zentralgestalt der jeweiligen Heldendichtung gar nicht verlieren kann.”²⁶³ Dietrich’s claim that there might be other Dietrichs in Bern is similarly ironical, because it is unthinkable that Ecke would have found one of them instead of him in a poem of the *Dietrichepik*.²⁶⁴ These ironic passages, where the knowledge of the public is played against the knowledge of the characters, clearly demonstrate reflexivity on the *Eckenlied*’s status as a narrative between *fabula* and *historia*.

The Eckenlied as Self-Aware

The *Eckenlied* shows a great deal of awareness of its ‘literary’ nature. First and foremost, this is through its homing in on and discussion of Dietrich himself: the poem specifically makes his reputation a subject, and in its course a positive picture of Dietrich emerges. Whether the negative picture of Dietrich represented by Ebenrot and others is specifically connected with ecclesiastic criticism of Dietrich/Theoderic is not clear: there is, however, evidence of engagement with ecclesiastic sources in E₇ through the diabolization of Dietrich. Despite an awareness of its “literary” status, the poem shows efforts to make its narrative believable through

²⁶³ Haustein (1998), 55. “Dietrich apparently does not know that as, the central figure of each heroic poem, he can never lose.”

²⁶⁴ Müller (1992), 105-106.

eyewitnessing and correct geography, and also a direct awareness of and engagement with problems in that credibility. The whole poem thus can be said to address problems of hearsay and its own written nature. This should not be seen as negating its status as *Vorzeitkunde*, but rather as complementing it.

4.2. The *Virginal* and the Flow of Information

The second *aventiure*-like poem I will discuss is the *Virginal*, one of several stories of Dietrich's first adventures. Due to its highly fantastical nature, the narrative represents much more of a challenge, from a contemporary perspective, to an appraisal of *Vorzeitkunde* than the *Eckenlied*, meaning that an investigation of its strategies for creating credibility can shed a great deal of light on the *aventiure*-like poems status between *historia* and *fabula*. It, like the *Eckenlied* and the historical poems, will be shown to be concerned with establishing and maintaining credibility with its audience.

Fragments of the *Virginal* date to the first half of the fourteenth century, but the three extant complete versions of the poem are all from the fifteenth century: the *Heidelberger Virginal* (V₁₀; c. 1440); the *Dresdner Virginal* (V₁₁; 1472); and the *Wiener Virginal* (V₁₂; 1480/90). The *Heidelberger* and the *Wiener Virginal* offer competing versions of the narrative, whereas the *Dresdner Virginal* is a highly truncated version which combines events found in both other versions into a single narrative. Most of the earlier fragments appear to show versions closer to the *Heidelberger* text.²⁶⁵ I will focus my investigation on the *Heidelberger Virginal*, not because the text is more "original," but because it is characterized by a constant flow of information: letters and messengers are sent back and forth between the various protagonists in an attempt to keep each other informed, a feature already discernable in the fragmentary

²⁶⁵ Heinzle (1999), 44; 135-137.

fourteenth-century V₃. The other two complete versions lack the feature of letters,²⁶⁶ but still will be dealt with to provide a comparison to the *Heidelberger Virginal* and to show a fuller spectrum of the strategies employed by the poem's narrators. The use of letters allows an investigation not only of the ways that the poem seeks to assure its audience of its truth, but also of the ways that characters within the text attempt to assure each other of truth. The text thus provides a commentary on one of the most important features in Middle High German heroic poetry, namely under what circumstances a narrative is believable, and how that believability is established and maintained. The transfer of information, in the form of *aventure*, forms an important part of the poem which lends itself to investigation.

The plot of the *Heidelberger Virginal* is as follows: Dietrich is eating with beautiful women when they ask him to tell them of *aventure*. Dietrich does not know what *aventure* is and is embarrassed: he goes to Hildebrand for advice. Hildebrand tells Dietrich that they can ride to save Queen Virginal from the heathen Orkise, who is destroying her kingdom in Tyrol, and that Dietrich will thus learn what *aventure* is. The two set off alone, and hear a cry once they have entered Tyrol's forests. Hildebrand leaves Dietrich while he investigates, and finds a maiden tied to a tree: a sacrifice for Orkise. Hildebrand fights and defeats the heathen king, freeing the maiden. Dietrich, meanwhile, is attacked by the heathen's retinue, which has heard of its lord's death. He successfully defends himself before Hildebrand returns. The duo then fights against dragons while the maiden tells Queen Virginal of Dietrich's coming. During the battle with the dragons, Hildebrand rescues the knight Rentwin, his kinsman, from the mouth of a dragon. As a result, Rentwin's father, Helferich von Lune, invites the heroes to stay with him. At

²⁶⁶ See Dietmar Penschel-Rentsch (1997). "Schwarze Pädagogik – oder Dietrichs Lernfahrt: *er weste umb âventiure niht*; Hildebrants Erziehungsprogramm und seine Wirkung in der *Virginal*" in *4. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldendichtung in Österreich – Österreich in der Heldendichtung*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal. Vienna: Fassbaender, 205.

his castle, Arone, they receive word from Virginal through her trusty dwarf Bibung that the queen wishes to see Dietrich at her castle of Jeraspunt.

Dietrich is so eager to see the queen that he sets off alone, unarmed, and gets lost and instead arrives at the castle Muter, where he is captured by giants under the command of Duke Nitger. Hildebrand, Helferich and Rentwin thus arrive at Jeraspunt to discover that Dietrich is not there. Meanwhile, Dietrich is being starved by the giants but is befriended by Ibelin, the sister of the duke. At Dietrich's request, she secretly sends a messenger to tell Hildebrand of Dietrich's captivity. This causes Hildebrand to summon the bravest giant-slayers he knows, including King Imian of Hungary, Heime, Witige, Wolfhart, Dietleib, and Biterolf, to free Dietrich. The giants, meanwhile, grow increasingly unruly, showing themselves to be beyond Nitger's control, and repeatedly attempt to kill Dietrich. Finally, the army of rescuers arrives, and all the giants are killed. Duke Nitger becomes Dietrich's vassal and accompanies him as the heroes return to Jeraspunt. On the way, they successfully eradicate the last remaining dragons and giants in Tyrol. At Jeraspunt there is much celebration, but unexpectedly a messenger arrives from Bern telling Dietrich that his people believe he is dead and that they are going to surrender the city to an invader if he is not heard from in thirty days. Dietrich and Hildebrand immediately leave Jeraspunt for Bern, where Dietrich is received as a hero. However: *dô disiu arbeit ende nam,/ ein ander schiere ane vienc* (another trial began soon after this one; V₁₀ 1097,12f.).

The *Wiener Virginal* provides a more extensive back-story to the antagonism between Orkise (Orgeise) and Virginal, putting much greater emphasis on the battle with heathens than in the *Heidelberger* text.²⁶⁷ Dietrich's inexperience is also emphasized to a greater degree, but the theme of becoming acquainted with *aventure* is less thoroughly worked out. Following the initial battle against Orkise and invitation to Arone, the heroes go hunting in the woods on their

²⁶⁷ Cf. Kerth (2003/4), 149-50.

way to Jeraspunt and come across the castle Ortneck, where the Orkise's son Janapas is lord. Janapas invites the heroes to stay with him in peace, but immediately turns on them once they are inside his castle. Subsequently, all the heathens are slain and three maidens who were being kept as prisoners are freed. At this point, Hildebrand notices that Dietrich is not with them – he is still hunting in woods! Before Hildebrand finds him, Dietrich becomes entwined in a battle with a giant, whom he defeats after a hard battle. The heroes then return to Arone rather than continuing to Jeraspunt. They set off again after several days and there follows a shortened version of the Muter episode along with the battles with dragons and giants on the way to Virginal. Dietrich falls in love with the queen after having arrived at Jeraspunt, and the two marry.

The *Dresdner Virginal* tells in one-hundred-thirty strophes what it takes the other two versions one-thousand-ninety-seven and eight-hundred-sixty-six respectively. The plot is reduced to its bare bones: Dietrich is inexperienced, sets off with Hildebrand to fight Orkise, defeats him, fights Orkise's son, and then fights dragons on the way to Virginal, whom he marries. Rather than the happy marriage of the *Wiener Virginal*, however, Dietrich is unable to consummate the marriage for three nights in a row, with Hildebrand hiding under the bed to observe his pupil's progress. When Dietrich leaves Jeraspunt for Bern, he is finally successful.

The opening strophes of the *Heidelberger Virginal* establish one of the central themes I will investigate in this chapter: Dietrich does not know what *aventiure* is, i.e. he lacks information, and in order to learn how to relay *aventiure*, he must experience it firsthand. Throughout the remainder of the *Virginal* this pattern will be repeated over and over: characters who do not know something will either go to discover the information firsthand or send a messenger. At other times, one character will need to make something known to the others.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ Timo Reuvekamp-Felber (2003). "Briefe als Kommunikations- und Strukturelemente in der 'Virginal': Reflexionen mittelalterlicher Schriftkultur in der Dietrichepik" in *PBB* 125.1, 65.

This theme is accentuated by the narrative structure of the *Virginal*, which keeps several plot threads in action at once. It is thus necessary that messengers and letters pass between the various characters and locations in the poem, both to show the concurrent action in two different places and also for other characters to know what is going on when they are not in the same location.²⁶⁹ In the concrete instance of *aventure*, it is Dietrich's own 'research,' i.e. his trials and travails throughout the *Virginal*, which will end his ignorance.

Finding and Defining aventure

The *Virginal* begins by telling of Orkise's invasion of Queen Virginal's kingdom in Tyrol: word of this reaches Hildebrand, who comes to the conclusion: '*mîn herre unde ich müezen dar:/ so wirt uns âventiure kunt*' ('My lord and I must go there: thus we will experience *aventure*'; V₁₀ 2,12f.). Despite this opening, the real impetus for action does not appear to be Orkise's invasion. Rather, the plot is motivated while Dietrich is eating *bî schænen vrouwen* (with beautiful ladies): *si sprâchen 'herre, tuont uns kunt:/ wizzt ir iht vremder mære?/ ist iu iht âventiure beschehen,/ die weln wir hæren gerne*' (they said, 'Sire, tell us: do you know any strange *mære*? We would like to hear about any *aventure* that has happened to you'; V₁₀ 7,5ff.). Dietrich cannot answer for *er weste umb âventiure niht* (he did not know what *aventure* was; V₁₀ 7,12). Embarrassed, Dietrich runs to Hildebrand, telling him: '*die vrouwen hânt gevraget sêr/ mich nâch dingen, der ich niht weiz*' ('The ladies have been asking me about things I do not know anything about'; V₁₀ 8,11f.). Hildebrand reminds Dietrich about Orkise's invasion and repeats: '*sô wirt uns âventiure erkant*' ('Thus we will learn of *aventure*'; V₁₀ 9,13). Dietrich eagerly agrees. *Aventure* itself is thus established as the goal of Dietrich's journey.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ Peter K. Stein (1982). "'Virginal': Voraussetzungen und Umrisse eines Versuchs" in *JOWG* 2, 76-78.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Kerth (2008), 160-162.

The poem has already made clear that Dietrich has no idea how to tell the *schæniu vrouwen* about *aventiure*, but precisely how little Dietrich knows only becomes apparent in the forest, where Dietrich remarks:

*'sô wilde gebirge ich nie gesach
noch ouch so hôhe lîten.
ist daz âventiure genant?
sprechent, meister Hildebrant.
sol ich mit wurmen strîten,
sô lêre ich daz ich niht enkan
und selten hân begunnen.
durch got, wie sol manz vâhen an?
diu kunst ist mir zerrunnen.'*

(V₁₀ 21,2-10).

(‘I never saw such wild mountains, nor such high cliffs. Is this called *aventiure*? Tell me, Master Hildebrand. If I am to fight with dragons, then I am learning something that I cannot do and have never even begun. By God, how should one start it? The skill has escaped me.’)

While Dietrich appears to have a vague idea of what *aventiure* entails, namely, fighting dragons, he seems to think that the very act of riding into the uncivilized forest constitutes *aventiure*.

In contrast to his ignorance in this instance, Hildebrand will later list all the things that he has already taught Dietrich, giving the audience an idea of just how comprehensive his education has been:

*'Ich lêrte 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 rehter næte kraft
alde man schatzes wielte.'*

(V₁₀ 361,1-10).

(‘I taught him to speak pure words, a treasure of virtue. I never let up on him. I taught him to honor the life of priests and to praise pure ladies, to play chess, to defend himself. I taught him to honor knighthood, how it is attained through trials, and how to use his money.’)

These are all highly sophisticated topics, but Dietrich is unlearned in the rough life of a hero: he seems only to have learned the “theoretical” points of being a knight – a reverse Percival. He is thus a “pretty boy” for much of the story, a fact which is all the more apparent when he is captured completely unarmed at Muter. His unpreparedness is especially emphasized in V₁₂: *kein waffen furt der helt gemeit,/ dan golt und licht gesteine* (the hero carried no other weapon than gold and bright jewels; V₁₂ 503,2f.). At Muter, the giants explicitly mock him and his desire to see Queen Virginal, calling him *her Vrouwenzart* (Sir Ladies’ Man; V₁₀ 338,2). Hildebrand makes similar mocking comments throughout the work, e.g. at strophe V₁₀ 113, and the assembled company at Arone laughs at Dietrich’s complaints at V₁₀ 206. Dietmar Penschel-Rentsch suggests that the ladies’ request that Dietrich tell of *aventiure* at the beginning of the poem is also meant insultingly, since they must know that Dietrich has no *aventiure* to tell.²⁷¹ Be that as it may, all of these insults and embarrassing occurrences serve to establish Dietrich’s need to learn.

Dietrich begins to discover what *aventiure* is during his battle with the heathens: this very same battle also deals with the theme of information in general. Hildebrand, during his fight with Orkise, repeatedly reminds the audience that Dietrich knows nothing about his present difficulties. First, Hildebrand says that Dietrich would be able to help him ‘*wist er diu mære, als ich sî weiz*’ (‘if he knew the *mære* as I do’; V₁₀ 41,7). Unfortunately, there is not enough time for Hildebrand to run and fetch the Berner and still save the maiden. Later, when Hildebrand is not doing well in the battle, he says to himself: ‘*wær dem von Bern mîn strît bekant,/ er möhte sîn wol spotten/...ich weiz wol, und bevunder/ daz sich mîn weret ein einec man,/ ich müeste sîn an mînen tôt/ und maneges ungespottet lân*’ (‘If the Berner knew about my battle, he would make

²⁷¹ Penschel-Rentsch (1997), 198. Against this might be objected that Dietrich already seems to be famous in the *Virginal*. See below.

fun of it... I know well that if he found out that a single man defended himself against me, I would never again be able to make fun of him or many others'; V₁₀ 61,2f.; 61,10ff.). Hildebrand has somewhat comic motivation for this utterance, but it is in fact very similar to Ecke's statement that no one would ever know of a mighty blow Dietrich gave him in the forest.

Despite Hildebrand's hopes that word will not reach Dietrich of his poor performance, the maiden he is rescuing has been observing the entire battle. Her role as an eyewitness is underlined by lines such as *Diu maget sach den heiden tot* (the maid saw that the heathen was dead; V₁₀ 67,1) and by her later informing Virginal of Orkise's death and of Dietrich's and Hildebrand's presence (V₁₀ 132). Not only the maiden is an eyewitness to the battle: the sounds of the fight attract the attention of ladies in a nearby castle,²⁷² who send a dwarf to investigate (V₁₀ 56,2). The dwarf speaks to the maiden and then reports back to the queen (V₁₀ 58). Only Dietrich does not yet know about the battle.

Although Dietrich is in the dark, the other heathens have gotten word of their lord's death. In the *Heidelberger Virginal*, it is not made clear how, only that '*daz mære wart geseit*' ('the *mære* was said'; V₁₀ 85,4); in the *Wiener Virginal*, they come across Orkise's corpse after Hildebrand and the maiden have left to look for Dietrich (V₁₂ 188). Similar to his lack of knowledge about the battle, Dietrich lacks knowledge of fighting: he has only been taught how to defend (*schirmen*) and not how to attack (*vehthen*; V₁₀ 55,1ff.). The *Wiener* text is more explicit about Dietrich's untested nature going into the battle: *nu horet, wis dem Perner gie,/ dem jungen fursten here,/ wie er sein ersten streit began* (Now listen to how the Berner, the noble young prince, began his first fight; V₁₂ 187,2ff.). Despite this inexperience, Dietrich learns "on the job" and makes quick work of the heathens. Afterwards, in the *Heidelberger Virginal*, he questions a

²⁷² This castle must be Jeraspunt, but this is not made clear and seems contradicted by the immense difficulties Dietrich has in getting to Jeraspunt. For more on the spatial aspects of the text, see below.

wounded heathen for information, one of many such interrogations throughout the poem: it is through this wounded heathen that Dietrich learns about the fight between Orkise and Hildebrand. Confirming the parallels between Dietrich's two states of unknowing, his lack of knowledge of *aventure* and his lack of knowledge about Hildebrand's fight, the heathen explicitly prefaces the story of how Orkise came to invade Tyrol with '*ich tuon dir âventiure kunt*' ('I make an *aventure* known to you'; V₁₀ 87,9). The battle and interrogation take Dietrich from a state of ignorance to one of knowledge, a fact which is reinforced afterwards when Hildebrand says: '*seht, diz sint âventiure*' ('Look, these [events] are *aventure*'; V₁₀ 110,8). It is made clear, however, by the further development of the plot that Dietrich still has not truly learned what *aventure* is.

It is during his captivity at Muter that Dietrich is first able to display his new found knowledge. Ibelin, the sister of Duke Nitger, seems to have fallen in love with the captive and takes it upon herself to care for him. She asks him how he happened to be captured in the first place, which prompts Dietrich to narrate everything that has happened in the poem up until that point. Ibelin interrupts Dietrich twice in this section: first, while Dietrich tells of his dramatic battle against the dragons, saying: '*ir hânt mir iuwer nôt gesaget,/ daz ich von sorge switze*' ('You have told me of your trials in such a way that I am sweating with worry/suspense'; V₁₀ 415,2f.); next, she simply asks for more information (V₁₀ 425). When Dietrich has finished his story, the audience is told:

*Der âventiur diu magt verjach
 'sô liebez ich nie mê geschach
 von kleinâte noch von mâgen.
 da vür, sæh ich hern Hildebrant,
 der in dem wald die maget vant
 diu in des tôdes wâgen
 was gegeben. d ô w a s i c h ,
 daz sî der helt erlôste,*

*bî den vrouwen wunnenclich:
sîn helpe se alle trôste.
dô hôrte ich ime vil lobes jehen.'*

(V₁₀ 431,1-11; my emphasis.)

(The maiden said this about the *aventiure*: 'Nothing better could ever happen to me because of jewelry or my relatives than if I saw Sir Hildebrand, who found the maiden in the forest who was to be killed. I w a s t h e r e when the hero freed her, with the lovely ladies. His help comforted them all: I heard them praise him.')

Not only has Dietrich now told an *aventiure*, but he has told it very well: Ibelin felt transported into the events, so that she heard and saw Hildebrand and the maidens. Dietrich's narration of his exploits elicits an imaginative and emotional response.²⁷³ His deficit of knowledge has begun to diminish.

Once Dietrich has finally arrived at Jeraspunt, he will once again be given the opportunity to impress women by speaking of his exploits. Hildebrand suggests that, as a culmination of the courtly festivities they are all enjoying: '*bêd âbent unde morgen/ wir suln von âventiure sagen,/ wes wir uns erneret hân,/ und der küneginne klagen*' ('Both in the evening and in the morning we should tell the *aventiure* [of] how we saved ourselves, and bewail it to the queen'; V₁₀ 1013,10ff.). The queen then says: '*ich hôrte von hern Dieterîch/ gern âventiure sagen*' ('I would gladly hear Sir Dietrich tell of *aventiure*'; V₁₀ 1014,2f.). Dietrich's response contrasts his current ability to tell an *aventiure* directly with his earlier ignorance: '*eins tages ich in vröuden saz,/ dâ vil schæner vrouwen was./ die bâten mich in sagen/ von âventiure, ich kunde ir niht:/ ich wart ir aller göude*' ('One day I was sitting joyfully with many beautiful ladies. They asked me to tell them about *aventiure*, but I could not: I was their laughingstock'; V₁₀ 1014,4ff.). The situation at the beginning of the poem has repeated itself exactly, but this time, Dietrich knows what to say and is not humiliated. He has learned from his experiences.²⁷⁴

²⁷³ Cf. Stein (1982), 76-78.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Kerth (2003/4), 148.

Besides through Dietrich's quest to discover *aventure*, information and its transfer are explicitly characterized in at least one other section of the *Heidelberger Virginal*. Queen Virginal, impressed by the completeness of her dwarf messenger Bibung's report of Dietrich's exploits, asks him: '*wer hât sô gar bescheiden dich?/ daz nimet iemer wunder./ wie unde wâ hât dûz vernomen,/ daz du bist ûf ein ende komen/ al ir nôt besunder?*' ('Who has informed you so well? I am very amazed. How and where did you perceive this all, so that you could learn about all of their trials?'; V₁₀ 295,2-6). The queen's question shows a concern not present during Dietrich's rendition of his own *aventure*: Virginal knows that Bibung himself was not there, and wants to know Bibung's source for the sake of authenticity. The dwarf responds: '*vrouwe, dâ hôt ich ez sagen/ Helerîches samenunge:/ gewonheit hânt se al vîretage/ die alten und die jungen,/ si enpflegen sanc noch seiten spil,/ die herrn von âventure sagen:/ des hant sî getriben vil*' ('Lady, I heard it in Helerich's household: they have the custom that on all holidays both the young and the old abstain from music, they talk about *aventure*. They did a lot of that'; V₁₀ 295,7-13.). Bibung then narrates the exact circumstances under which he came to know his information. His description of this *aventure*-custom, which was not mentioned while Bibung was actually at Helerich's castle, serves to substantiate and legitimize Bibung's detailed telling of Dietrich's battles up until that point.²⁷⁵ The episode shows a concern for the authenticity of information by the *Virginal*'s protagonists which can be transferred onto both its audience and its narrators. Significantly, despite Bibung's possession of a letter, here he refers to oral sources of information. *Aventure* is thus imagined not merely as the telling of exciting exploits, but also as containing an accurate account of those exploits.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Reuvekamp-Felber (2002), 65-66.

Messengers, Letters, and Summaries

The *Heidelberger Virginal* is one of only two Dietrich-poems in which letters play a role:²⁷⁶ the *Wiener Virginal* contains no letters, but twice references are made after the fact to characters having read letters (V₁₂ 530; 587), suggesting that letters have been purposely removed from an earlier version. The letters of the *Heidelberger Virginal* are sent by means of messengers, and serve to inform characters of events in different locations; the summaries most frequently occur upon the entry of a new character into the poem. All in all, there are eight letters, eight summaries, and messengers are sent twenty-six times. The summaries make up nearly twelve percent of the poem, a total of one-hundred-thirty strophes – the entire length of the *Dresdner Virginal!*²⁷⁷ In contrast, the *Wiener* and *Dresdner Virginal* only contain messengers. The unusual presence of letters and summaries allows for an investigation of the ways the poem deals with the authenticity of these various written reports; readers have already seen in the *Eckenlied* that eyewitnessing can play an important role both within the world of the narrative and for that narrative's authenticity in the contemporary medieval world. The explicit use of writing adds another layer to this process.

Literacy does not seem uncommon among the characters of the *Virginal*. Normally, reading and writing are done by a cleric in the court (the *kapellan*), but Ibelin writes a letter herself ('*den brief schrib ich mit mîner hant*'; V₁₀ 436,5) and appears to read the response herself, as does Dietrich, while Hildebrand also reads: his bad eyes cause Virginal to doubt his literacy (V₁₀ 455,4). Furthermore, Virginal's ladies are described as allowing their *salterbuoch* (psalters) to fall out of their laps in their excitement over the safe return of the maiden who was to be sacrificed to Orkise (V₁₀ 130,9f.). A psalter would most likely have been written in

²⁷⁶ Haferland (2004), footnote to page 180.

²⁷⁷ Uta Störmer-Caysa (2002). "Die Architektur eines Vorlesebuches: Über Boten, Briefe und Zusammenfassungen in der Heidelberger 'Virginal'" in *ZfG.NF* XII-1, 9-11.

Latin,²⁷⁸ and as many letters were written in Latin at this time, they too might have been written in Latin.²⁷⁹ The other two versions specifically mention reading as well: the *Wiener Virginal* as part of an inexpressibility-motif (*in kunstenreicher schule/ ward nie gesungen noch gelesen/ von so gar werden recken*; V₁₂ 448,6ff), in the *Dresdner Virginal* in relation to mass: many bells are rung [*w]en man wol(t) mes sing oder lesn* (when it was time to sing or read the mass; V₁₁ 45,1). This means that the *Virginal* forms a noteworthy exception to the general lack of writing in other Dietrich-poems. The uses of letters include recording information, making and maintaining contact between distant individuals, and authorizing the information conveyed by a messenger.²⁸⁰

The recording of information within the narrative can be related directly back to the authenticity of the *Virginal* itself. While there is no authority created quite so directly as in the Helferich-strophe of the *Eckenlied*, i.e. a statement that one of the poem's characters is himself a guarantor of the narrative, nevertheless the text provides both eyewitnesses and written documentation for its events. For instance, after Dietrich has been rescued from Muter, Hildebrand says:

*'morne sô man gezzen hât,
sô suln wir schrîben unser tât
mit wolberâtunge.
wir sullen schrîben einen brief
mit rîcher rede sinne
versigelt wol mit reden tief
der edeln küneginne,
daz wir bî ir wellen sîn
in aht tagen oder ê:
daz weln wir lâzen werden schîn.'*
(V₁₀ 830,1-13)

²⁷⁸ Störmer-Caysa (2002), 14-15.

²⁷⁹ See Dennis H. Green (1994). *Medieval Listening and Reading: The Primary Reception of German Literature 800-1300*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 15-16. Green is of course covering an earlier time period.

²⁸⁰ Störmer-Caysa (2002), 16.

(‘Tomorrow, after we have eaten, we shall write down our deeds with deliberation. We shall write a letter in fine style, sealed well, with profound words, to the noble queen, [saying] that we want to be there in eight days or earlier: we want to make that known’).

In addition to the goal of informing Virginal of the heroes’ coming, the letter also serves to catalog and preserve the heroes’ actions. Furthermore, the rhetorical aspects of the letter are emphasized both here and when Hildebrand advises Virginal to send a letter to Dietrich in captivity: that letter is described as *betrahtet und gemachet wol... als ein brief von rehte sol* (considered and well made... as a letter ought to be; V₁₀ 482,7; 482,9). In addition, the act of sealing the letter ensures the accuracy of its account.²⁸¹ The letter sent to Virginal, coupled with Dietrich’s grand telling of his escapades at the end of the poem, serves to spread the *mære* of the *Virginal’s* narrative: as an account written by an eyewitness, it also meets Isidore’s most stringent criteria for being considered *historia*.

A similar instance of writing as a source of information occurs during the Muter episode. When Dietrich has not yet arrived at Jeraspunt, Helferich immediately knows which path the Berner must have taken by mistaken, and where he must be as a consequence: *‘ich weiz wol.../ daz er den wec gên Mûter reit’* (‘I know well... that he rode the path to Muter’; V₁₀ 358,12f.). Hildebrand duly asks Helferich about Muter and its giants, is informed, and bewails his charge’s fate. A knight is sent to scout around the castle (V₁₀ 365); he hears the giants wailing after Dietrich kills the giant Wicram’s son, who had broken into Dietrich’s cell (V₁₀ 393), and hurries back to Jeraspunt. However, no attempt is made at a rescue until Dietrich has sent a letter through Ibelin informing Hildebrand of his whereabouts. In calling for help, Hildebrand specifically refers to the letter as his source of information: *des muoz er dâ gevangen lîn,/ daz hân ich hie gelesen* (‘Therefore he must be a prisoner there: I have read it here [in the letter]’;

²⁸¹ Reuvekamp-Felber (2002), 72.

V₁₀ 461,9f.).²⁸² The letter authorizes action in a way that the suppositions of Helferich and the report of the scout, who did not see Dietrich, could not. Hildebrand does not consider doubting the letter's written proof.

The text also provides a counterexample to the spread of information: when Hildebrand returns to Bern to collect more heroes with whom to free Dietrich from captivity, Wolfhart is so eager that he refuses to wait for the others and sets off for Tyrol immediately: *nieman reit im hinder nâch* (no one rode after him; V₁₀ 629,5). Predictably, Wolfhart encounters a dragon that he then dispatches in a difficult battle. After the fight, Wolfhart measures the dragon: its sheer size emphasizes the difficulty of the struggle and the size of the hero's accomplishment: *von dem houbete.../ ahtzec schuohe der lenge/ und dâ bî wol zwênzec hôch* (from its head [it was] eighty shoes long and about twenty high; V₁₀ 637,2f.). He then heads on his way and encounters a dwarf, with whom he stays briefly: in the *Wiener Virginal* the dwarf gives Wolfhart a gift '*das ir fur war wol müget jehn,/ wan ir gen Pern kumt wider heim,/ ir habet aventure gesehn*' ('so that when you go back home to Bern you can truly say that you have seen *aventure*'; V₁₂ 631,11ff.). The dwarf then directs Wolfhart back toward Bern. Upon his return home, however, he is not given a hero's welcome but rather is mocked by Hildebrand, who says: '*hâstu die wurme alle ervalt?/ du hâst gewüestet uns den walt*' ('Have you slain all the dragons? You have ruined the forest for us'; V₁₀ 645,12f.). When Wolfhart claims his single dragon, Hildebrand says: '*des ich kûme gelouben hân,/ du habest ir keinen nie gesehen*' ('I can barely believe that; you have never seen any of them [dragons]'; V₁₀ 647,12f.) Later, after Dietrich's rescue, the assembled heroes rest and tell their various *aventure* until it is time to eat. However, when Wolfhart once again brings up his battle with the dragon, they say to him '*tuo die rede hin./ wir hân alle gelîten nôt,/ biz daz wir her bekommen sîn*' ('Shut up. We have all suffered on our way here'; V₁₀ 921,11ff.).

²⁸² Cf Reuvekamp-Felber (2002), 71-72; Störmer-Caysa (2002), 15.

Thus, “[w]ann darüber kein Brief geschrieben, kein Bote geschickt und nicht einmal erzählt wird, ist Getanes wie nicht geschehen.”²⁸³ The text leaves open how *it* knows about Wolfhart’s dragon-slaying.

Despite the presence of writing in the text, the written does not overpower the oral transfer of information: it is important to recognize the ways in which oral and written reports complement each other. This is similar to *Dietrichs Flucht*, where both written and oral sources are used to guarantee the truth of the narrative. This can also be observed in the *Virginal*: in the use of a letter to inform Virginal of Dietrich’s adventures and then by Dietrich’s narrating them himself, for instance, or by Bibung’s use of oral sources and his possession of a letter. The chief emphasis of the story is still *sagen* and not *schriben*: written sources are being used to affirm the accuracy of the spoken narratives within the text.²⁸⁴ Further evidence for this dual usage is found in the questioning that messengers are usually subjected to when delivering a letter.²⁸⁵ In addition, in at least one instance the messenger is given priority over the written report: when Ruolant comes with urgent news from Bern, he offers Hildebrand a letter, but is told: ‘*swaz daran geschriben mac sîn,/ ervint ouch von dem munde*’ (‘Tell with your mouth whatever is written in it’; V₁₀ 1058,5f.). Despite this, Hildebrand will still refer to the letter as his source of information when telling Dietrich (‘*iu ist geschriben her gesant*’; ‘You have been written to’; V₁₀ 1060,2), and advises Dietrich to write a letter back.²⁸⁶ The two forms thus exist in symbiosis, neither wholly useable without the other.

²⁸³ Störmer-Caysa (2002), 15. “When no letter has been written, no messenger sent and something is never told, it is as if what has been done did not happen at all.”

²⁸⁴ Regardless of the possible metaphorical use of *sagen*, in the *Virginal* a situation of performance is stipulated. For the metaphorical uses of words of speaking, see Dennis H. Green (1994), 82-84. Our text is of course younger.

²⁸⁵ Reuekamp-Felber (2002), 65.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Reuekamp-Felber (2002), 73-75.

To turn then to “spoken” information: I have stated that summaries and reprisals of previous events in the narrative take up a large part of the *Heidelberger Virginal*. At least in the case of Dietrich, these narrations of things that the audience already knows enable the poem to show how he has gone from ignorance about *aventiure* to narrating it excitingly in front of Ibelin and Virginal. In the case of other characters, this motivation is absent. Uta Störmer-Caysa has suggested that the reprisals might have served to inform newly arrived members of the audience of previously narrated events;²⁸⁷ Timo Reuvekamp-Felber objects that they occur too frequently and too close together to have been inserted for this function:

Einer solchen Poetik des wiederholenden Erzählens geht es wohl vielmehr um die Differenzen und Variationen; in den Akzentuierungen, Verschiebungen und Aussparungen des schon Erzählten läßt sich der geschickte Informationstransfer der intradiegetischen Erzählinstanzen (Boten) erkennen. Das erneute Erzählen... stellt dem Rezipienten möglicherweise vor Augen, was durch einen idealen Boten mündlich und durch einen idealen Brief schriftlich überhaupt hervorgehoben werden muß und auf welche Art und Weise dies zu geschehen hat.²⁸⁸

I am not convinced that these summaries and letters are necessarily there to show the *most ideal* way that information might be transferred. Nevertheless, they certainly do show information being transferred, and in this way underline the overarching theme I have been discussing: the transition from ignorance to knowledge, especially on the part of Dietrich. New characters need to know what has already happened, and they are duly informed, and in such a way that questions of authenticity are raised and answered within the narrative.

As a final comment on the topic of the spread of information: throughout the *Virginal*, the messenger Bibung is in constant fear as he travels to deliver messages, encountering (or fearing

²⁸⁷ Störmer-Caysa (2002), 18.

²⁸⁸ Reuvekamp-Felber (2002), 72-73. “Rather, such a poetics of repetitious narration is about the differences and variations; in the accentuations, displacements, and omissions of what has already been narrated, a skilled transfer of information of the intradiegetic instances of narration (messengers) can be observed. The renewed narration... might have allowed the recipients to see what was to be emphasized orally by an ideal messenger and in writing by an ideal letter und in what way this was to occur.”

to encounter) dragons and other beasts along the way. It is only at the beginning and at the end of the *Virginal* that he seems eager to be sent on a mission (V₁₀ 142; 954). At this point Dietrich and his companions have slaughtered the last remaining dragons and giants in Tyrol. Thus, as Sonja Kerth observes, through their attempts to reach Jeraspunt, the heroes have made the free flow of information more secure: the messengers can now travel without fear to deliver their messages.²⁸⁹ In this way the *Virginal* successfully concludes with Dietrich knowing about *aventure* and the world being able to know as well. By virtue of the free flow of information within the story, the narrative of the poem does away with questions about its own authenticity by securing the lines of communication from the events of the *Virginal* to the present.

Truth-Claim, Politics, and märchenhafte Unbestimmtheit

If the beginnings of poems are often programmatic statements, then the *Heidelberger Virginal* is meant to be taken as the truth: *Daz ich iu sage, daz ist wâr* (What I tell you is true; V₁₀ 1,1). The *Dresdner* and *Wiener Virginal* have the truth-claim of the *Heidelberger Virginal*'s first strophe slightly later in the text (strophes 2 and 3 respectively); the first strophe of both other versions instead begins with an explicit establishment of the poem as *Vorzeitkunde*: *Hie vor ein alter haiden sas* (Long ago there was an old heathen; V₁₂ 1,1). Slightly later, V₁₂ makes reference to taking place *bei heidenischen fristen* (in heathen times; V₁₂ 2,6), mirroring the first strophe of the *Eckenlied*. The opening truth-claim of the *Heidelberger Virginal* is made all the more noticeable by the lack of such explicit claims in the rest of the poem: I only count one other occasion where this particular formula (*[d]az ich iu sage, daz ist wâr*) is used by the narrator (V₁₀ 664,9), and have found correspondingly few other formulae. Assertions of truth are, however, frequently employed by characters during summaries or when they are otherwise

²⁸⁹ Kerth (2008), 166.

transferring information, for instance, by Bibung (e.g. V₁₀ 580,2). One instance of a truth-claim by a character is especially notable because his statement is not true: when Hildebrand has returned to Bern to gather heroes to free Dietrich from Muter, he is asked by his wife Uote where Dietrich is. He responds: *‘vrowe, sol i’u die wârheit sagen,/ ein grîfe hât den hin genomen’* (‘Lady, if I am to tell the truth to you, he has been snatched away by a gryphon’; V₁₀ 595,12f.). Wolfhart is infuriated by this news at first, but something about Hildebrand’s demeanor must inform him and the gathering burghers that Hildebrand was being facetious, for both he and they question Hildebrand further until he finally tells the real story, once again with a reference to *wârheit* (V₁₀ 600,3). A passage such as this shows an awareness of lies, *res fictae*, disguised as truth, and relates back to the general topic of the transfer of information.

To return to the first strophe: following the assertion of truth, the poem proceeds to tell its audience the following:

*ez wuohs ein heiden zwelef jâr
ze schaden manegem manne.
dô der ze sînen tagen kam,
der lande er vil an sich gewan.
des reit er ie von danne
gein eime gebirge in einen tan
erwerben prîs und êre.
(V₁₀ 1,2-8)*

(A heathen grew up for twelve years to the detriment of many men. When he came of age, he conquered many lands. Therefore he always rode from there to a mountain range, into a forest, to acquire praise and honor.)

The first thing that can be noticed about this strophe is that it is unspecific and unclear. It is not clear what “twelve years” is referring to: it seems ridiculous to expect that a twelve-year-old heathen is much of a problem for anyone. It might refer to the time he has been conquering, but this is still unclear. As a sign of this being seen as a problem in the reception, the other texts make the time span longer (eighteen years in V₁₂ 3,2 and V₁₁ 2,2). It is also not clear where he is

riding to or riding from: there is *a* mountain-range and *a* forest, and he always reaches them by riding from *there*.²⁹⁰ This is very similar to the lack of specificity in Hagen's description of Siegfried's exploits in the land of the Nibelungs in the *Nibelungenlied*.²⁹¹ The *Virginal's* opening description only wins any sort of concreteness or immediacy with the next strophe: *Er reit gein Tirol alzehant* (He suddenly rode against Tyrol; V₁₀ 2,1). With this sudden invasion and mention of a known geographic name, the story is knocked into action.

The first two strophes display a recurring feature of the *Virginal*: similar to the *Eckenlied*, there exists a tension between accurate geography and a geography more similar to that of Arthurian romance. Unlike in the *Eckenlied*, however, there is no clear place in the text where the former ends and the latter takes over. Rather, real places appear almost as islands scattered throughout the text. Along with the fictional castle of Jerspunt, for instance, appears the real castle of Arona (*Arone* in the text), which, though located in the Alps, is nowhere near Tyrol.²⁹² Similarly, Muter could be one of two towns in present day Austria, Mautern an der Donau or Mautern in Steiermark. The distances between places appear variable: during the battle with Orkise, Jerspunt is within hearing distance. Afterwards, however, it no longer seems to be nearby, and the heroes instead go to Arone.²⁹³

Similar to Dietrich in the *Eckenlied*, Wolfhart is confused by the vague geography of the narrative's Tyrol, commenting to a dwarf after his fight with the dragon: *'Ich weiz niht rehte wâ ich bin'* ('I do not rightly know where I am'; V₁₀ 641,1). In V₁₂, even Helferich, a Tyrolean/Alpine native, is confused when he suddenly comes across the heathen Janapas' castle

²⁹⁰ Cf. Penschel-Rentsch (1997), 191-192.

²⁹¹ Müller (1998), 130.

²⁹² Kerth (2008), 160-162.

²⁹³ Cf. Julia Zimmermann (2007). "Anderwelt – mythischer Raum – Heterotopie: Zum Raum des Zwerges in der mittelhochdeutschen Heldenepik" 9. *Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldenzeiten – Heldenräume: Wann und wo spielen Heldendichtung und Heldensage?*, eds. Johannes Keller and Florian Kragl. Vienna: Fassbaender, 216-217.

of Ortneck during the heroes' hunting trip to Jerspunt (V₁₂ 420). Political relations are also unclear: in informing Dietrich of Orkise's attack on Tyrol, Hildebrand suggests that Tyrol belongs to Dietrich's domain: 'wir hân sîn iemer schande,/ daz man sus wüestet unser lant' ('We must always be ashamed that someone is ravaging our country this way'; V₁₀ 9,10f.). However, it is only near the end of the *Heidelberger Virginal* that Queen Virginal offers Dietrich her land as a fief – he does not appear to accept.²⁹⁴

Due to this geographic and political vagueness, we might conclude that the *Virginal* is not a political text. Indeed, Fritz Peter Knapp suggests:

Welche geographischen, politischen und religiösen Verhältnisse hier eigentlich vorausgesetzt werden, wird nie so klar, ohne daß man den Eindruck gewinnen könnte, sie wurden bewußt in märchenhafter Unbestimmtheit gelassen. Einzelne eindeutige Versatzstücke der Realität sagen nichts über das Ganze aus.²⁹⁵

It may in fact be so that the vagueness has been deliberately created – but what then is the purpose of the real locations? Knapp's position also ignores the fact that heroic poetry is by its very nature "unbestimmt":²⁹⁶ rather than seeing this *Unbestimmtheit* as a deliberate creation, might it not be more fruitful to look at where the geography becomes accurate as a sign of a reworking of the tradition, of an attempt at making the narrative credible?

Knapp also denies the plot of the *Virginal* any political aspect, due to the coincidental nature of Dietrich's *aventure*.²⁹⁷ However, politics seem to form a very concrete and important part of the *Heidelberger Virginal*: the poem opens with political matters, and it is political

²⁹⁴ Penschel-Rentsch offers a solution to this problem in that he suggests that the sentence refers to Dietrich's staying at home without knowing *aventure* as being what is destroying the country. See idem, (1997), 196.

²⁹⁵ Fritz Peter Knapp (2005). *Historie und Fiktion in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik (II): Zehn neue Studien mit einem Vorwort*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 54-55. "It is never made entirely clear what geographical, political or religious relationships are assumed, so that one could receive the impression they were deliberately left in fairy-tale-like indefiniteness. A few unquestionable elements of reality do not declare anything about the whole."

²⁹⁶ Müller (1998), 130.

²⁹⁷ Knapp (2005), 54.

matters which will bring it to its close.²⁹⁸ The political dimension of the poem is not so much represented through foreign affairs as through the concrete manner in which rule itself is addressed. This is part of the poem's function of *Vorzeitkunde*: the political discourses and information contained in the poem serve to explain how Dietrich became a just ruler, a narrative which has its place in "historical" writing. Regardless of whether it strikes us as the case, Hildebrand insists on the political nature of the *aventiure*-education which Dietrich is receiving. Before setting out, Hildebrand specifically refers to the point of their *aventiure* as to bring an end to *diu klage in ir lande* (the lamentation in her [Virginal's] land; V₁₀ 18,8), i.e. *aventiure* is a political/military act.²⁹⁹ Furthermore, at one point, when Dietrich complains about the dangers he is being exposed to, Hildebrand lectures him on his duties as a ruler:

*'wænt ir daz' sprach her Hildebrant
'daz iu got bürge unde land
gap durch iuch alterseine,
starken lîp und heldes muot,
golt, silber, hort, êr unde guot?
daz sult ir lân gemeine,
sît ir durch minneclîchiu wîp
süllent komen ze trôste,
obe kein sorge habe ir lîp
dâ sî nieman von lôste.
daz sult ir keiner slahte man
lân gwinnen, welt ir daz sî iuch
mit spilenden ougen lachen an.'*
(V₁₀ 239,1-13)

(‘Do you think’ said Sir Hildebrand, ‘that God gave you fortresses and lands for your own enjoyment, a strong body and a hero’s mind, gold silver, treasure, honor and property? You should let [all] that be useful, since you should come to comfort lovely women, so that they have no worry from which someone will not save them. You should not let any sort of man acquire that, if you want them to smile at you with playful eyes.’)

The connection between love service and political power may strike a modern reader as strange, and yet, for Hildebrand it is self-evident: perhaps it could be connected with a ruler's duty to

²⁹⁸ Cf. Kerth (2008), 155.

²⁹⁹ Cf. Cordula Krupik(2003/4). “Dietrich von Bern zwischen Minnelehre und Fürstenerziehung: Zur Interpretation der *Virginal h*” in *JOWG* 14, 162-163.

protect the weak.³⁰⁰ Dietrich's subordination to his educator confirms the importance of the education Hildebrand is giving him: "Dietrich kennt keine Aventure und Dietrich kann noch keine souveräne Entscheidungen als Herrscher treffen."³⁰¹ Dietrich is to use his political power and wealth to help ladies, with the added benefit of enjoying their company afterwards, a constant theme in the *Virginal*.

More political in modern eyes are the concrete mechanisms of state displayed in the poem, specifically, the mechanisms of state at Bern: it is not possible for Dietrich and Hildebrand to simply ride off into the woods, they must first find someone to take charge. This shows an added concern with the credibility of the story, as otherwise questions might be raised as to how the ruler and his educator were able to leave their city completely leaderless: appointments of governors to cities also form an important part of the narrative in *Dietrichs Flucht*. Upon Hildebrand's question 'wem empfiehlt ir iuwer lant,/ die stat und ouch die veste' ('Into whose charge do you put your land, the city and also the fortress?'; V₁₀ 11,7f.), Dietrich predictably defers, and Hildebrand finds *ein burger êren rîche:/ der was geboren von Meilân/ und was von art ein edel man* (an honorable burgher: he was born in Milan and was a noble man by nature; V₁₀ 12,3ff.). A concrete political act is thus connected with a man from a real place. Burghers play a fairly large role otherwise in the story: a second (or the same?) burgher offers to come with Dietrich and Hildebrand as they ride off to Tyrol and burghers are among those anxious about Dietrich's absence when Hildebrand reappears to gather Wolfhart, Witige and Heime. Finally, it is the burghers who summon Dietrich back to Bern when they believe he might be dead and the city will soon be besieged. This calls him out of the courtly world of

³⁰⁰ Cf. Kuprik (2003/4), 163-165.

³⁰¹ Penschel-Rentsch (1997), 198. "Dietrich knows no *aventure* and Dietrich cannot yet make any sovereign decisions as a ruler."

Jeraspunt and back into the political world of northern Italy.³⁰² Thus, although much of the poem seems to take place in “märchenhafte Unbestimmtheit”, the burghers represent a strong connection to a world with which the audience would have been familiar, making the poem more believable.³⁰³

The idea of the *Heidelberger Virginal* as politically oriented might seem to suffer from its “questing” nature, and does not appear tenable for the other two versions; their endings, rather than being political, involve Dietrich marrying the queen and then returning effortlessly to Bern. In all three, Dietrich does not face threats by raising an army, as he does in the historical *Dietrichepik*, but rather by setting off with a few companions. Thus, when Orkise invades Tyrol with his eighty heathens, only Dietrich and Hildebrand set out to stop him, rather than the military campaign that might be expected.³⁰⁴ Similarly, when Dietrich is captured and held in the impenetrable castle of Muter, Biterolf promises to bring two thousand men to his lord King Imian of Hungary (V₁₀ 552,7), and Imian himself brings a group of five hundred knights (V₁₀ 555,3) to aid the force gathered by Hildebrand. Their actions upon reaching Nitger’s territory remain what one would expect from a military campaign: *si stiften roup und ouch den brant* (they pillaged and burned; V₁₀ 664,4). However, this military atmosphere is diffused by Uote, who calls the army’s behavior unchristian (V₁₀ 665,4ff.). Consequently, the heroes withdraw with their army to Jeraspunt. When they return to rescue Dietrich, the battle is reduced to a one on one confrontation between each of the various heroes present and a specific giant. The military and political situation is reduced to an *aventiure*. Nevertheless, a political background remains in the motivation for the fight at Muter, Dietrich’s captivity being a significant event to be conveyed to the present.

³⁰² Kerth (2008), 155.

³⁰³ Cf. Stein (1982), 82.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Penschel-Rentsch (1997), 192.

I have commented above that assertions of the truth from the narrator are rare in the *Heidelberger Virginal* compared with the *Eckenlied* and especially compared with *Dietrichs Flucht* and *Die Rabenschlacht*. They are even rare in comparison with the *Wiener Virginal*. A similar peculiarity is the general lack of mentions of sources in the work. Aside from the strophe referring to Dietrich riding out of Bern (V₁₀ 16), I have only been able to find one location where oral sources are specifically cited to reinforce the narrative: following the heroes' final battle on their way to Jeraspunt, the audience is told: *Nu sint die wurme alle erslagen/ und die risen, als wir hæren sagen* (Now all the dragons and giants have been slain, as we are told; V₁₀ 919,1f.). The extermination of these dangerous – and mythical – inhabitants of Tyrol at the hands of the Berner is thus explicitly placed in the context of an oral tradition: one is reminded of St. Patrick driving all the snakes out of Ireland. The rest of the story does not necessarily give up its claim to be true: rather, there seems to be less urgency in defending that truth.³⁰⁵

By the same token, the lack of mention of oral sources does not mean that the rest of the poem does not see itself in relation to the oral tradition, merely that in this one instance the connection is explicitly reinforced. Indeed, the saga seems present in other ways, namely in the mouths of various characters. It manifests itself primarily in Dietrich's universal fame, which stands in opposition to his supposed inexperience.³⁰⁶ This is first evident in the burgher who offers his services to Dietrich and Hildebrand as they are leaving for Tyrol: *'mir ist vil von iu gesaget/ und von meister Hildebrande/ wie daz ir ie die besten sît:/ ir slahent tiefe wunden wît/ vil gar ân alle schande'* ('I have been told much about you and about Master Hildebrand, namely that you are the best: you strike deep, broad wounds in an honorable fashion'; V₁₀ 17,2ff.). The theme is again taken up by the maiden whom Hildebrand rescues from Orkise: *'mir ist sô vil von*

³⁰⁵ The *Wiener Virginal* has more frequent references to the oral tradition and lacks this special emphasis on the killing of the giants and dragons.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Müller on Siegfried. idem (1998), 132.

im gesaget,/ daz ich in gerne sæhe ('So much has been said to me about him that I would like to see him'; V₁₀ 71,2f.). The *sehen*-motif returns to a theme I discussed in the *Eckenlied* and a variation of which is present in *Dietrichs Flucht*: it will be taken up again by Virginal herself (V₁₀ 133).³⁰⁷ Dietrich's fame seems to be based on concrete deeds, which makes it hard to square with Penschel-Rentsch's suggestion that it is because of Dietrich's distinguished lineage.³⁰⁸ These deeds can be none other than those of the saga.

The giants in the Muter episode show an even more direct connection to the saga. Here, there can be no question of Dietrich's fame being based on his family: the giant Wicram specifically justifies his attempts to starve Dietrich to death through the *schade, schande und ungemach* (pain, shame, and discomfort; V₁₀ 377,2) that Dietrich has done unto him. As he explains to Nitger, Dietrich and several companions *'hânt mich gar verderbet/ und allez mîn geslehte vrî:/ die sint von in ersterbet,/ der vriunde mîn zwei hundert man./ zuo Britanje daz beschach* ('have ruined me and all my free race: they slew two hundred of my kin in Britanje [Brittany? Britain?]; V₁₀ 377,8ff.).³⁰⁹ Moreover: *'dar zuo hânts uns verbrennet/ ein lant und drîge vesten starc./ sî schatten uns ûf einen tac/ mê danne hundert tûsent marc* ('On top of that they burned our country and three strong fortresses. In one day they stole more than a hundred thousand marks from us'; V₁₀ 378,10ff.). Later on, during Dietrich's rescue, the hero Gerwart will taunt the giants with the memory of Ecke's death.

In the *Wiener Virginal*, Dietrich's fame is specifically contrasted with his inexperience: the narrator may have been bothered by this typical trait of saga literature as much as modern readers are. He thus chose to address the issue directly, which would serve to make the narrative

³⁰⁷ See chapter 3 for the *sehen*-motif in *Dietrich's Flucht*.

³⁰⁸ Penschel-Rentsch (1997), 195. This suggestion makes perfect logical sense, but does not seem to be what is going on in the poem.

³⁰⁹ This episode may be connected with an adventure reported in the *Piðrekssaga*, which in turn may be connected with the *Rosengarten zu Worms*.

more believable to others who may have noticed the discrepancy. When Hildebrand comes across the maiden to be sacrificed to Orkise, she tells him to flee the heathen because *'mit kampf turr underwinden sich,/ als uns die weisen han geseit,/ alein von Pern her Diterich'* ('only Sir Dietrich von Bern can defeat him in battle, as the wise have said'; V₁₂ 106,11ff.). After Hildebrand has won, she congratulates him while at the same time scorning Dietrich:

*'het ewre hant uns nit erlost
von jamerhaften dingen,
wir weren selten sorgen frei,
wie vil man uns nu singt und sagt,
wie kün der fokt von Perne sei'*

(V₁₂ 183,9-13)

('If your hand had not saved us from horrors, we would never have been free of worries, however much one sings and tells us that the lord of Bern is brave.')

Hildebrand defends Dietrich: *'mein her ist noch ein kint'* ('My lord is only a child'; V₁₂ 184,1).

Dietrich's fame is thus contrasted with the "reality" within the poem. Later on, the poem inserts a situation taken directly from the *Eckenlied*:³¹⁰ the knight Libertein will challenge Dietrich to a joust, saying: *'ich sech gar gern.../ ob es doch halbes were war,/ des man den Perner rümet'* ('I would like to see... if half the things for which one praises the Berner are true'; V₁₂ 376). Naturally, Dietrich wins the fight, and Libertein tells Dietrich: *'man sol euch preisen gerne'* ('one should praise you gladly'; V₁₂ 396,6). Dietrich somehow is inexperienced and at the same time celebrated for his deeds, but in the *Wiener Virginal* he still must prove himself.

Kerth comments on all of the above: "Offensichtlich schien es den Verfassern bzw. Bearbeitern undenkbar, einem Publikum, das den Berner ja als den größten Helden des Mittelalters kannte, einen konsequent unerfahrenen Dietrich vorzustellen."³¹¹ This may indeed be so, but it points to a deeper process going on in the literary horizon of the *Virginal*. Another

³¹⁰ This is one of several locations where the *Wiener Virginal* shows an especial similarity to the *Eckenlied*.

³¹¹ Kerth (2008), 173-174. "Apparently it seemed unthinkable to the composers/redactors to introduce a consistently inexperienced Dietrich to an audience that knew him as the greatest hero of the Middle Ages."

inconsistency noted by Kerth is that the hero Heime is described as carrying a banner *die gap im der Künec Ermenrîch,/ dô er streit vor Rabene* (which King Ermenrich gave him at the Battle of Ravenna; V₁₀ 654,7f.).³¹² Naturally, the Battle of Ravenna takes place after Heime has betrayed Dietrich and well after Dietrich's *first* adventure. Rather than seeing such knowledge of the saga as somehow anchoring the *Virginal* in the heroic tradition, I would see these chronological inconsistencies as symptomatic of oral story-telling. The events of the poem have only recently been given a fixed chronological position in relation to other events, and this position has not been consistently observed.³¹³

Despite this possible trace of orality, a strong indication of influence from literate sources may also be provided, besides by the ubiquity of writing in the text, by the absence of Etzel: that the Hungarian (and thus Hunnish) king in the text is named Imian, and has another name in the *Wiener Virginal*, has always attracted attention from scholars.³¹⁴ It could be a reaction to the criticism that Dietrich and Etzel were not contemporaries, another example of which I have already discussed in *Dietrichs Flucht*. Etzel is similarly missing from the *Eckenlied*, though his wife Helche is mentioned. This indicates a certain sensitivity to the credibility of the poems' narratives.

As a final comment, the endings of all three versions of the *Virginal* can help shed some light on the poem's position between *fabula* and *historia*. This is because each version appears to take a different strategy. The *Heidelberger Virginal* ends by a direct reference to performance:

*Nu hânt ir daz ende vernomen:
heizent ein mit wîne komen,
daz er uns alle schenke.*

³¹² Kerth (2008), 172-173.

³¹³ Cf. Meyer (1994b), 179-180; Haferland (2007), 10-16.

³¹⁴ George T. Gillespie (1987). "Hildebrants Minnelehre: zur 'Virginal h'" in *Liebe in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters (St. Andrews-Colloquium 1985)*, eds. Jeffrey Ashcroft et al. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 62-63; Kerth (2008), 166-167.

wir sullen hôhes muotes wesen,
 sît die herren sint genesen.
 ein ieglich man gedenke
 wie her Dieterich der degen
 mit ellenthafter hende
 herter sturme hât gepflegen:
 nu hât daz buoch ein ende.
 hærent wie ez dô ergienc:
 dô disiu arbeit ende nam,
 ein ander schiere ane vienc.
 (V₁₀ 1097,1-13)

(Now you have heard the end: order someone to come in with wine and pour us all a glass. We should be happy, since the lords have survived. Everyone should think about how Dietrich, the knight, has fought hard battles with his strong hand. Now the book is over. Listen to how it went then: when this labor was over, another one soon began.)

The text refers directly to a situation of performance and to itself as a book: the public is invited to participate in the festivities of the Berner's court.³¹⁵ These festivities are short-lived, however: an ominous new *arbeit* is mentioned at the very close of the poem. Besides seeing this as a sign of the *Fortsetzbarkeit* of the poem, its ability to be added on to and continued indefinitely,³¹⁶ the ending also serves to remind the audience of the historical and political situation of the poem: Dietrich has returned to Bern because someone is invading his country. Who this invader is is never made clear; it could very well be Ermenrich coming to initiate the exile-saga. The overshadowed happy ending, contrasted directly with the happy state of the audience, keeps the poem on a time-line, which serves to remind readers/listeners of its supposed place in history.

The *Wiener Virginal* offers an entirely different take on the events of the poem. As has been mentioned, this version ends with Dietrich marrying Virginal before returning to Bern. There is no invader, the burghers do not believe he is dead: in place of this, Dietrich has invited

³¹⁵ Reuvekamp-Felber (2002), 76-77. Reuvekamp-Felber believes, however, that “[d]ie Gebrauchssituation liegt jedoch nicht vor dem Text, sondern wird von diesem erzeugt und gehört zum plot. Ehe solche schriftliche Reflexion schafft Distanz zur beschriebenen Aufführungssituation des höfischen Festes, indem sie diese erst bewußt machen muß.”

³¹⁶ See Heinzle (1978), 222-223.

the crowned heads of Europe to his wedding. When the poem final comes to an end, rather than an ominous foreshadowing of future woe, the poet emphasizes the moral value of his story:

*Wer sich an schande woll ernern,
sein leben hie in eren zern,
der merk auf dise mere,
und wie dem jungen fursten wert
sein lob und er hie ward gemert:
er was so tugent here.
wer weisem rate folgen wil,
der warb umb gottes hulde,
der geit ewiger frewden vil
und nimpt uns ab die schulde.
es sei wie selig sei ein man,
wirbt er umb gottes hulde nit,
so mag sein end nit wol ergan.*

(V₁₂ 866,1-13)

(Whoever wants to be without dishonor and to decorate his life with virtue, he should pay attention to this *mære*, how the noble, worthy prince increased his honor and praise: he was so glorious in virtue. Whoever wants to follow good advice, he should seek to attain God's grace, who grants much eternal joy and takes away our sins. However happy a man might be, if he does not seek to attain God's grace, his end cannot be good.)

Rather than emphasize the historical status of his poem, the narrator of V₁₂ has chosen to emphasize Dietrich as an exemplum. Since both *historiae* and *fabulae* can be used as exempla, by making this decision, the narrator effectively abstains from making a final pronouncement on the historicity of his subject, while at the same time providing an argument for its value both to those who believe it to be factually true and to those who believe it to be a *fabula*.

Lastly, the *Dresdner Virginal*, which has even fewer assertions of truth than the *Heidelberger* text, makes no statement similar to either of the other versions. Rather, the poem's status as a written text is emphasized: *ein ent hat disses tichtes art./ got geb uns dort sein wune!/
des altenn vir hundert und echte ist;/ dis hie hundert und dreissigke sein:/ so vil unnützer wort
man list!* (This poem comes to an end: God grant us his joy! The old one had four-hundred-eight [strophes], this new one is one-hundred-thirty: one reads so many useless words!; V₁₁ 130,9ff.).

Besides the statement I have already made on what this says about the authority of the text, the narrator of the *Dresdner Virginal* appears to denigrate the length of his predecessors' work. It is probably significant that he uses the phrase *vil unnützer wort* to refer to the areas he has truncated: exactly this phrase would be used by church critics of the *Dietrichepik* less than a hundred years later.³¹⁷ The narrator clearly does not see the exemplum-value of text described in the *Wiener Virginal*, and does not share the concerns of the *Heidelberger Virginal* with the transfer of information and establishment of – vague – historical time. Regardless of whether the narrator believes there is a kernel of truth to his work, his careless reduction of the text, which makes the context of many events difficult to discern, and his addition of many burlesque elements to the story, suggest that his primary concern was making a poem *delectandi causa*.³¹⁸ This in itself shows the diversity of approaches and opinions towards the saga and the *Dietrichepik* which could be found in the fifteenth century. However, the three emphases of the three versions do not necessarily exclude one another. All three ways of reading might be employed for the same narrative.

The Virginal between the Saga and Literate Poetry

The *Virginal* occupies an odd place in the *aventure*-like *Dietrichepik*. Its fantastical narrative, its apparent inner-textual mistakes in chronology and motivation, and its unclear spatial and political relationships might make it seem that the poem is more fictional than real, more *fabula* than *historia*. Yet, despite these factors, the *Virginal* shows all the same concerns with the proper flow of information and credibility of narratives that have been observed in the other Dietrich-poems under investigation. The *Heidelberger Virginal* takes up and plays with its

³¹⁷ See John L. Flood (1967). "Theologi et Gigantes" in *MLR* 62.4, 655.

³¹⁸ Cf. Kerth (2003/4), 150.

own credible status through its considerations on written and spoken communication – in the end, it favors neither, with characters relying on both to ascertain the “truth.” Furthermore, despite its vague political constellation, the poem does concern itself with real actions of state and, unlike the *Eckenlied*, specifies who Dietrich has left in command of Bern, showing an additional concern with believability. Regardless of what we may think of the political message and education that Dietrich receives in the story, very little opposition to it is found in the text from anyone but Dietrich himself, whose constant complaints make him appear naïve. In fact, the *Virginal* never becomes completely vague and unbelievable, and its fantasticalness may not have been as disturbing to a medieval audience as it is to us.

4.3. *Apud Germanos perdurarunt gigantes* – On the *Vorzeit*

The Latin quotation above was made by the Italian Enlightenment scholar Giambattista Vico in 1721 and means “among the Germans giants continued to exist.” Vico’s statement embodies a common idea of his time, namely, that at some point in the past, in a distant *Vorzeit*, giants and other beings had been common. Based on his readings of Tacitus and Caesar, Vico concluded that these giants survived among the Germans for a longer period of time than elsewhere.³¹⁹ Vico’s opinion on this matter is relevant to the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries as well, perhaps even more so than to the eighteenth. Ancient authorities and the Bible both provided evidence for the existence of giants: Isidore of Seville mentions giants in a section in which he states: *Sicut autem in singulis gentibus quaedam monstra sunt hominum, ita in universo genere humano quaedam monstra sunt gentium, ut Gigantes, Cynocephali, Cyclopes, et cetera* (Just as certain persons are monsters [that is, deformed] in individual peoples, so too in all of mankind certain peoples are monsters, such as giants, cynocephali, cyclopes, and so on; Etym.

³¹⁹ Text quoted in Hans Fromm (1986). “Riesen und Recken” in *DVjs* 60.1, 42.

XI,3,1). Colossal statues from antiquity were often interpreted as evidence of the existence of giants, as well as newer statues such as those of Roland, which were erected in many northern German towns. Dragons, meanwhile, were found in educated medieval bestiaries and other sources (*Draco maior cunctorum serpentium, sive omnium animantium super terram*; Etym. XII,5,4), and Georg Agricola dedicated an entire chapter to the subject of dwarves in his tome *De Re Metallica*, a technical description of mining operations which appeared in 1556. The well-documented medieval discoveries of fossilized whale and mammoth bones only served to reinforce the belief in such beings: at one point, all of these creatures had existed.³²⁰

These attestations of belief in what are for us mythical beings are important for understanding the *Eckenlied's* and *Virginal's* position between *fabula* and *historia*. The exact chronology of most heroic poems is unclear: generally, they are simply “old,” part of the *Vorzeit*: “Alt, das ist eine unspezifische Vorzeit: Es verschwimmen die Kriterien für das, was man glauben mag und es tun sich deshalb Schlupflöcher auf für Fabelwesen wie Drachen.”³²¹ That such “Schlupflöcher” were already open at an early date is confirmed by the Old English epic *Beowulf*.³²² A connection between Dietrich and giants, and moreover, a reference to his being in their captivity, is found in a fragment of the Old English *Waldere* (c. 1000) – Dietrich’s captivity at the hands of giants is an important plot element of both the *Virginal* and the *Sigenot*, and is also referenced in *Alpharts Tod*.³²³ This certainly means that Dietrich’s *aventiure* had the support of age, though, as Knapp argues:

³²⁰ Knapp (2005), 50; 152; Christopher S. Wood (2008). *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 172-175; 177-184; Ernst Herwig Ahrendt (1923). “Der Riese in der mittelhochdeutschen Epik.” Dissertation, Rostock, 24.

³²¹ Haferland (2004), 76. “Old, that is an unspecific *Vorzeit*. The criteria blur for what one can believe and wholes open up for imaginary creatures like dragons.”

³²² Haferland (2007), 22-23; Klein, in his efforts to separate *Vorzeitsage* from *Heldensage*, wishes to see this is a uniquely Anglo-Saxon development. idem (1988), 145.

³²³ Heinzle (1999), 16-17.

Nach dem Alter einer fiktionalen Erfindung zu fragen und auf diese Weise zwischen Erzählungen zu unterscheiden, deren Stofftradition bis in germanische oder keltische Zeit zurückreicht, und solchen, die jüngeren Ursprungs sind, wäre dem Hoch- und Spätmittelalter nie eingefallen.³²⁴

The ability of someone familiar with the oral tradition to even be aware of the recentness of an “Erfindung” is questionable. Following Haferland, once a heroic narrative had once been uttered, its teller was already devoid of any responsibility for its creation: it entered the collective knowledge of the saga. Such practices only found criticism outside of heroic poetry itself.³²⁵

With the writing down of the epics, fantastic elements might be subjected to more scrutiny: in the *Wiener Virginal*, the burghers of Bern are confused and incredulous when Hildebrand says that giants have captured Dietrich, saying:

*‘Nun sagt uns, maister Hildeprant,
wis umb die risen sei gewant,
wo sint si aufgewachsen,
daz si so lange pertre tragn?
die warheit solt ir uns hie sagn
ob si sein her aus Sachsen
oder sein si von Troy her kumen?’*

(V₁₂ 614,1-7)

(‘Now tell us, Master Hildebrand, how it is with the giants; where did they grow up, so that they have such long beards? You should tell us the truth, are they from Saxony, or are they from Troy?’)

If the townsfolk do not question the existence of giants, they seem at the very least to imply that they do not belong in Tyrol. Ernst Ahrendt similarly notes that giants are only imagined in small numbers in locations which were not distant from Germany, such as the Orient.³²⁶ This could be compared with the marginalization of fantastical elements in the *Nibelungenlied*.³²⁷ Despite these

³²⁴ Knapp (2005), 52. “It never would have occurred to the High or Late Middle Ages to investigate the age of a fictional invention nor in this way to differential between narratives, the content of which reaches back into the Germanic or Celtic period and those which were of more recent origin.”

³²⁵ Haferland (2007), 17-18.

³²⁶ Ahrendt (1923), 93.

³²⁷ Haferland (2007), 22.

doubts, giants were seen as a part of history.³²⁸ Heroic poetry conveyed knowledge of history and had the force of tradition behind it; for this reason fantastical elements could not simply be thrown out. Indeed, Hans Fromm suggests that the poems may have derived legitimacy and authority through their narration of battles against giants.³²⁹

The entry of the saga into literacy had consequences for its believability and authority. It is thus important to realize that the belief in fantastical creatures did not equal an acceptance at face-value of the events as reported in the saga or its written counterparts. As a literate example, Isidore explains away the *gigantes* of the Vulgate Bible as simply very large and powerful men, while at the same time asserting that true giants exist: *quorum genus incertum est* (their origin is uncertain; Etym. XI,3,13). In a similar vein, the prologues of many Norse sagas which contain especially fantastical adventures ascribe some of the hyperbole of their narratives to poetic rhetoric.³³⁰ However, this cautious handling of some aspects of the tradition could serve to reinforce the truth of the whole: by pointing out and questioning those aspects which appear somewhat unbelievable, the narrative itself is established as containing truth beneath a thin layer of poetic embellishment, of being “fictionalized” but not “fictional.” The examples cited by Klein of doubts about the truth of some of the more fantastical narratives do not affect the basic fact that medieval audiences *did* believe that monsters once existed, regardless of their attitude toward the exact tellings of man’s encounters with them.

It is notable that the line between heroes and giants was blurred in the mind of the medieval and early modern public. Hans Fromm refers to a lack of differentiation particularly in

³²⁸ Cf. Knapp (2005), 51-52; 153-154.

³²⁹ Fromm (1986), 44.

³³⁰ See Thomas Klein (1988). “Vorzeitsage und Heldensage” in *Heldensage und Heldendichtung im Germanischen*, ed. Heinrich Beck. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 141-147.

the fifteenth century, during which time Martin Luther could translate the Greek *heros* as *rise*.³³¹ A similar instance can already be found in the tenth century *Waltharius*.³³² This blurring found its “scientific” basis in the Vulgate Bible, in which the heroes of legend before the Flood are described as *gigantes* (Genesis 6,4). This explanation was also applied to heroes living after the Flood, such as Nimrod, who is described by the theologian Honorius Augustodunensis (†1151) as *Nemroth gigas* (Nimrod the Giant).³³³ An explanation of this phenomenon in the context of heroic poetry might be found in narrative necessity. To demonstrate on an example: in the *Eckenlied*, there is no talk of giants, only of heroes (*helt*) at the beginning. That Ecke and Fasold are giants is only said later (strophes 60,4 and 165,12 respectively in E₂).³³⁴ Ecke’s gigantism is then only mentioned occasionally throughout the text, and is never remarked upon by anyone he speaks with except in E₇. It seems that he becomes gigantic through his gigantic task, namely, to defeat the undefeatable Dietrich.³³⁵ Similarly, Orkise is referred to as a giant after his death in the *Wiener Virginal*. In the *Eckenlied*, Dietrich himself is described as unusually large by Helferich: ‘*ze solcher lenge, so er hat,/ so kan im niht genossen*’ (‘No one can equal him in his height’; E₂ 60,7f.). Similarly, the *Dresdner Laurin* refers to Dietrich as having only five true *rechen*: *die andern waren cleine, als intzunt sein die leut* (the others were small like the people today; Lß 7,3). Störmer-Caysa refers to this gigantism as Dietrich’s “unentwickeltes Riesen-Selbst,” despite which Dietrich still sees himself as different from a giant.³³⁶ Much as Ecke’s gigantism may have come from the task set before him, Dietrich’s many extraordinary exploits may have required a more than ordinary man in the eyes of his audience. Dietrich’s – and other heroes’ –

³³¹ Fromm (1986), 44-46; See also Flood (1967), 655-660.

³³² *Ipseque* [Walther] *lorica vestitus more gigantis* (Waltharius, 333).

³³³ Cf. Knapp (2005), 47-48. Text quoted in Ahrendt (1923), 24.

³³⁴ Störmer-Caysa (2000), 159-160.

³³⁵ Fasbender (2003/4), 41; 49.

³³⁶ Störmer-Caysa (200), 160-161. “undeveloped giant-self.” The situation in the *Nibelungenlied* is similar, see Müller (1998), 337.

gigantic proportions and supernatural abilities would thus have been necessary to make their narratives credible. Not just any man could be imagined as defeating a dragon or giant, and not just any man could then be imagined giving other similar heroes difficulty in a fight.³³⁷ This is not a sign of fantasy, but of the effort to make these poems credible.

The *Heidelberger Virginal* offers a particularly interesting perspective on the belief in giants' and dragons in the High and Late Middle Ages. It was noted above that Dietrich's exploits are recounted in concrete detail by the giants during the Muter episode, and that Ecke's death is also referenced. In other locations in the text, Dietrich's fame is also based on his battles with giants: for instance, when he is questioning the wounded heathen, who describes the foes who slew his lord Orkise without realizing he is speaking to the Berner himself: *'ich kan dir anders niht gesagen:/ einer heizet der von Berne,/ mit dem sô rît ein grîser man./ der sleht die grôzen rîsen tôt'* ('I cannot tell you anything else: one is named the Berner, with whom an old man is riding. He strikes large giants dead'; V₁₀ 81,9ff.). Furthermore, I have found that the only clear use of the oral saga as a guarantor of the text's truth in the *Heidelberger Virginal* was when it is stated that *[n]u sint die wurme alle erslagen/ und die risen* (now all the dragons and giants are slain; V₁₀ 919,1f.). The importance of this action is emphasized several times: the heroes have liberated (*gevrîget*) Tyrol from monsters (V₁₀ 919,3; 929,7-13; etc.). Despite the fact that this liberation appears to happen almost on accident and that many encounters appear merely to have been caused by the ubiquity of dragons and giants in the *Vorzeit*,³³⁸ this emphasis suggests that a greater importance has been granted to the extermination of these creatures than mere accident would allow. Indeed, it seems to provide an answer to a question which is hinted at in the *Wiener Virginal*: why are there dragons and giants in Tyrol in heroic poetry, and why are

³³⁷ Cf. Klein (1988), 135,136.

³³⁸ Cf. Knapp (2005), 54-55.

they no longer there? The *Virginal* appears in this light as an aetiological poem, and through the fact that Dietrich himself was an unquestionably historical figure, it acquires a greater degree of believability: the poem takes place in the *Vorzeit*, but at the same time details Dietrich's exit from the *Vorzeit* into a more "contemporary" state of affairs, from the *Vorzeit* into history, one could say.

4.4. Historical *aventiure*

This chapter has shown that the *aventiure*-like poems the *Eckenlied* and the *Virginal* share many of the same concerns about believability as the historical poems *Dietrichs Flucht* and *Die Rabenschlacht*. Furthermore, certain topics, such as the believability of oral hearsay and the use of written and oral sources, are discussed in more detail in the two *aventiure*-like poems than in the two historical poems. Though they do not appear, like *Dietrichs Flucht*, to try to imitate the style of a chronicle, the poems still show some possible influences from Latin and historiographic writings. And though politics does not form as large a topic, the *Heidelberger Virginal* still contains elements of politics which prevent the poem from ever drifting off into truly "fairy-tale-like" territory. Accurate or partially accurate geography is shown with varying levels of detail in the two poems, and where this accuracy is lost, it is cause for comment. A differentiation of type between the historical and the *aventiure*-like poems is thus unjustified.

5. The *Dietrichepik* as “Probable” History

So which Dietrich was the real Dietrich? In the course of this thesis, I have looked at the ways in which four poems of the *Dietrichepik*, two “historical” and two “*aventure*-like,” attempt to make their narratives credible. I have argued that these efforts show an awareness of another picture of Dietrich von Bern/Theoderic the Great as a heretic and tyrant, a picture which was derived from mostly ecclesiastical, chronicle sources and which was, at its core, incompatible with the Dietrich presented in the poems. I have shown this to be likely by pointing to passages in all four texts that seem to indicate knowledge of this other, chronicle Dietrich/Theoderic – despite their incompatibility, all indications point to the two Dietrichs being viewed as the same individual by the *Dietrichepik*’s narrators and ecclesiastical chroniclers alike. Medieval recipients did not differentiate between Dietrich and Theoderic the way we might today: a narrative about Dietrich was about Theoderic, and a narrative about Theoderic was about Dietrich. In both cases, Dietrich von Bern was a historical figure. Now I want to return to the question posed at the outset: what does this mean for our understanding of “fictionality” and “historicity” in the Middle Ages?

It would be useful to return to the modern definition of fiction, as provided by Monika Otter:

A fiction is free to make up a world – coextensive with the text – with its own temporal and spatial structures, its own characters, its own boundaries, its own rules for plausibility, coherence and relevance, and these parameters may or may not resemble the everyday world we know.³³⁹

This is to be contrasted with historiographic writing, wherein every detail is expected to be verifiable: theoretically, a historian recreates the world of the past as it was. On the other hand, it is possible to write a historical novel, which freely ‘borrows’ elements of historical reality, but

³³⁹ Monika Otter (2005). “Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing” in *Writing Medieval History*, Nancy Partner (ed.). New York: Hodder Arnold, 115.

does not make this same claim of accuracy in that it invents characters, etc.³⁴⁰ Indeed, “real” elements taken into a fiction are generally overpowered by the narrative’s fictionality.³⁴¹ From a contemporary point of view, the differences between these two forms of narrative are clear: regardless of whether or not a historical and a fictional narrative are in fact constructions, we think we are able to distinguish between the two.³⁴² Therefore, if one were to assume, as Otter does, that “medieval readers, in practice, did understand the concept of fictionality in much the same way we do,” the status of the *Dietrichepik* as something approaching a historical novel would seem secured.

The problem is that medieval readers and listeners do not seem to have distinguished between “historicity” and “fictionality” in the same way we do.³⁴³ Whereas a modern historian might seek to write history using only verifiable facts in his narrative, a medieval *historiographus* might invent persons and events in order to make his *historia* more comprehensible, while at the same time being certain of – and reassuring his public of – the factual truth of his narrative.³⁴⁴ Under these circumstances, the categories of historical fiction and history cannot be clearly demonstrated to have existed in the Middle Ages: Fritz Peter Knapp points to the example of Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*, a work whose fictional intent almost no modern scholar disputes, being used, albeit with a certain reservation, either directly or indirectly as a source for a chronicle by John of Viktung, “der vielleicht bedeutendste

³⁴⁰ Otter (2005), 114-115.

³⁴¹ Cf. Walter Haug (2002). “Geschichte, Fiktion und Wahrheit: zu den literarischen Spielformen zwischen Faktizität und Phantasie” in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 121.

³⁴² Otter (2005), 112-113.

³⁴³ Cf. Haug (2002), 125.

³⁴⁴ See Gert Melville (2002). “Fiktionen als pragmetische Erklärung des Unerklärbaren: Mohammed – ein verhinderter Papst” in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, pp. 27-44; Haug (2002), 122.

Historiograph des Spätmittelalters.”³⁴⁵ If a clearly “fictional” work such as *Parzival* could be received as *historia*, how much more of a factor must this have been for the *Dietrichepik*, whose narrators go to great lengths to dissuade their audiences from viewing any part of their narrative as invented? In the *Dietrichepik*, whose “reality” is based on principles operative in oral transmission, that is, reduction, assimilation, and coordination/synchronism, the inventions that took place in the construction of the narrative did not result in “fiction.”³⁴⁶ In this, it is not dissimilar to the chronicles of the time, which also used certain “inventive” practices to construct their narratives. Since, in a medieval context, we can only refer to a narrative as fictional when its creator is aware of the fictionality of that narrative, as Knapp puts it,³⁴⁷ the *Dietrichepik* cannot be viewed as “fiction.” Or as Gabrielle Spiegel, writing from a somewhat modernizing perspective, refers to the *romans* of Wace and Benoît, it is “a fiction that purports to tell the truth about past facts, and thus a fiction implying that fiction is not simply a fiction.”³⁴⁸ Because of that claim of passing historical truth, the label “fiction” must be done away with altogether in our discussion of the *Dietrichepik*.

Very well. If the *Dietrichepik* is not “fiction,” then surely it is “history,” if not *fabula*, *historia*? After all, even if chroniclers frequently disputed the saga’s authority, this merely makes it all the more evident “daß in weiten Kreisen – und... auch in gelehrten Kreisen – die in den

³⁴⁵ Fritz Peter Knapp (2005). *Historie und Fiktion in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik (II): Zehn neue Studien und ein Vorwort*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 39-42. „perhaps the most important historian of the Later Middle Ages.” The actual reference to *Parzival* is completely undetailed: “De castro Celegi ab antiquo a Rugo Odovacro in Ythalicam eunte, ut creditur, destructo et cogente b[eat]i Maximiliani cla[more] sue dicionis titul[um] assequitur, sicque a[d] propria est reversus; ubi Arcturi re[gis] tempore mirabili[a] gesta refer[untur].” (As printed in Knapp).

³⁴⁶ Cf. Harald Haferland (2004). *Mündlichkeit, Gedächtnis und Medialität: Heldendichtung im deutschen Mittelalter*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 455.

³⁴⁷ Oral statement paraphrased in Benedikt Konrad Vollmann (2002). “Erlaubte Fiktionalität – die Heiligenlegende” in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 63.

³⁴⁸ Gabrielle M. Spiegel (1993). *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 62.

Heldensagen vorgetragenen Geschehnisse als historische Wirklichkeit angesehen wurden.”³⁴⁹ But while declaring the *Dietrichepik historia* “history” comes closer to recognizing the poems’ role as *Vorzeitkunde*, it still does not do the narratives justice. While medieval and traditional modern theory may only recognize two categories of narrative, one that is true/ seeks to reproduce outside reality, and one that is false/ does not seek to reproduce outside reality, it is not so simple as to say that what is not “fictional” is “factual,” or rather, it is not useful to do so.³⁵⁰ Modern historians have been made aware of the constructed nature of their works; the producers of the *Dietrichepik* also seem to have been aware of the constructed and confabulated nature of their narratives, even if they were not necessarily aware of alterations that had taken place previously in the tradition. This awareness is evident in the ways with which they seek to shore up the believability of their narratives, among them, having characters comment directly on issues. To me, this suggests something more nuanced is going on than simply conveying information: the narrators are ‘playing with’ the form of the narrative, they are deliberately altering their narratives but in such a way that they increase their believability. Such changes must have also been evident to at least some in the audience.

The *Dietrichepik* represents something which is not adequately explained by simply pigeon-holing its poems into either “fiction” or “history.” It, to borrow once more from Spiegel, “formulates its own reality, which exists somewhere in the interstices between fable and history.”³⁵¹ From the point of view of its supporters, it was surely *historia*; to its detractors in the church, it was *fabula*. But the sort of *historia* that the *Dietrichepik* was, vernacular *Vorzeitkunde*, was also meant to be amusing. This amusing element may have grown more important as the

³⁴⁹ Heinrich Joachim Zimmermann (1972). *Theoderich der Große – Dietrich von Bern: Die geschichtlichen und sagenhaften Quellen des Mittelalters*. Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, 103-104. “that in wide circles – and... also in educated circles – the events portrayed in heroic saga were seen as historical reality.”

³⁵⁰ Against Haug (2002), 120.

³⁵¹ Spiegel (1993), 62.

influence of challenges to the saga's authority spread into more social groups, but the claim of *Vorzeitkunde* does not seem to subside in later versions of the poems. The attempts to show the narrative to be true do not reduce in number, nor do the attempts to provide the narrative with both written and saga authority. *Aventiure* was exciting to hear about, but it also portrayed the "reality" of the *Vorzeit*, even if this portrayed "reality" did not correspond in all its details to the actual events of the *Vorzeit*. Regarding medieval scholarly writing, Otter states that "[d]espite its modern or even postmodern flavour, the notion that narrative history is a verbal construct, a textual artefact, with its own pacts rather than a direct, uncomplicated reflection on events, would have come as no surprise to medieval writers and readers."³⁵² I would suggest that this is not only evident in educated writings, e.g. in Isidore's definition of *historia*, which separates the narration from the *res gestae*; or in Engelbert of Admont's assertion that *fabulae* and metaphors are often inserted into *historiae* as exempla; it is also evident in the ways in which the *Dietrichepik* addresses its own "historical" status.

Rather than seeing the narration of *historia* as meaning the conveyance of unchanged, unmitigated truth, in the vernacular tradition of heroic epic, the narrators consciously filtered the past through confabulation. These narrators had the authority of the saga, the tradition which had been passed down from time immemorial, behind their words, which allowed them to confabulate what they did not know. This was portrayed as "true" by the narrators and was probably received in this way by the audience: "Dies gilt auch dann, wenn diese Wirklichkeit durch eigenes Hinzuerfinden miterschaffen wird." However, unlike Haferland, I do not view this as a symptom of "naiver Glaube an die Wirklichkeit des Geschehens."³⁵³ Rather, I believe that the texts show plenty of evidence that the "eigenes Hinzuerfinden" was appreciated as such in

³⁵² Otter (2005), 109-10.

³⁵³ Haferland (2004), 455. "This is also the case when this reality is created to include one's own additions." "naïve belief in the reality of the events."

many cases, particularly when the narrators had to make extra efforts to make it believable. What modern readers confront in the *Dietrichepik* is a *historia* of probability, a *historia* which intuits what it does not know and is not any less “true” for that fact, which represents the “reality” of the *Vorzeit*, despite an awareness that not everything that is told occurred in exactly the way in which it is being told. Such a *historia* could not be well received by chroniclers, who, besides the differences between the lives of the historical Theoderic and Dietrich, had ulterior reasons to oppose the narratives of the *Dietrichepik* due to Theoderic’s hostility to the Catholic Church. For the proponents of the *Dietrichepik*, there was, so I have argued, an awareness of this challenge, which can only have reinforced the perception that not everything was told exactly as it had happened. Nevertheless, in its own way, the *Dietrichepik* remained *historia*; it continued to accurately retell the past.

Abbreviations

Archiv = Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen
 Chron. Un. Chronicon Universale (Waitz edition: “Ekkehardi Uraugiensis chronica“)
 E₁₋₇ = Eckenlied, manuscript versions 1-7 (Brévaré edition)
 e₁ = Eckenlied, printed version 1 (Brévaré edition)
 Etym. = Etymologiae of Isidore of Seville (Lindsay edition)
 De Div. Phil. = De Divisione Philosophiae (Baur edition)
 DF = Dietrichs Flucht/ Das Buch von Bern (Lienert edition)
 DVjs = Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte
 Hist. de du. Civ. = Chronica sive Historia de Duabus Civitatibus (Hofmeister edition)
 JOWG – Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein Gesellschaft
 Kaiserchr. = Kaiserchronik (Schröder edition)
 LexMA = Lexikon des Mittelalters
 Lß = Dresdner Laurin (Kofler edition)
 MGH = Monumenta Germaniae Historica
 MLN = Modern Language Notes
 MLR = Modern Language Review
 PBB = Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur (Paul/Braune Beiträge)
 Qued. Ann. = Quedlinburg Annals (Pertz edition)
 RS = Rabenschlacht (Lienert edition)
 Sax. W. Chr. = Saxon World Chronicle (Weiland edition)
 Spec. Virt. = Speculum Virtutum (Ubl edition)
 Stras. Chr. = Strasbourg Chronicle (Hegel edition)
 V₁₀ = Heidelberger Virginal (Zupitza edition)
 V₁₁ = Dresdner Virginal (Kofler edition)
 V₁₂ = Wiener Virginal (Stark edition: *Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt*)
 Verfasserlexikon = Verfasserlexikon: Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters
 Waltharius = Waltharius (Langosch edition)
 ZfdA = Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und Literatur
 ZfdPh = Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie
 ZfG N.F. = Zeitschrift für Germanistik: Neue Folge

Bibliography

Primary Literature

- Baur, Ludwig (ed.) (1903). *Domincus Gundissalinus: De Divisione Philosophiae*. Munich: Aschendorffsche Buchhandlung.
- Brévar, Francis (ed.) (1999). *Das Eckenlied: Sämtliche Fassungen*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Hegel, Karl et al. (eds.) (1870, 1871). *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert, Bd. 8-9*. Leipzig: Hirzel.
- Hofmeister, Adolf (ed.) (1912). *Otonis episcopi frisingensis Chronica; sive, Historia de duabus civitatibus*. Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung.
- Kofler, Walter (ed.) (2006). „Laurin (Hs. L₁₁)“ in *Das Dresdener Heldenbuch und die Bruchstücke des Berlin-Wolfenbütteler Heldenbuchs: Edition und Digitalfaksimile*. Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, pp. 330-359.
- Kofler, Walter (ed.) (2006). „Virginal (Hs. V₁₁)“ in *Das Dresdener Heldenbuch und die Bruchstücke des Berlin-Wolfenbütteler Heldenbuchs: Edition und Digitalfaksimile*. Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, pp. 360-392.
- Langosch, Karl (trans. & ed.) (1956). *Waltharius; Ruodlieb; Märchenepen: Lateinische Epik des Mittelalters mit deutschen Versen*. Berlin: Rütten & Loening.
- Lienert, Elisabeth and Beck, Gertud (eds.) (2003). *Dietrichs Flucht: Textgeschichtliche Ausgabe*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Lienert, Elisabeth and Wolter, Dorit (eds.) (2005). *Rabenschlacht: Textgeschichtliche Ausgabe*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Lienert, Elisabeth et al. (eds.) (2008). *Dietrich-Testimonien des 6. bis 16. Jahrhunderts*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Lindsay, W.M. (ed.) (1911). *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarvm sive originvm libri XX*. 2 Volumes. Oxford/ New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pertz, Georg Heinrich (ed.) (1963). „Annales Quedlinburgenses“ in *MGH: Scriptores III*. Stuttgart: pp. 22-69; 72-90.
- Schröder, Edward (ed.) (1984). „Die Kaiserchronik eines Regensburger Geistlichen“ in *MGH: Deutsche Chroniken I*. Munich, pp.
- Stark, Franz (ed.) (1860). *Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt*. Stuttgart.

- Ubl, Karl (ed.) (2004). „Engelbert von Admont, *Speculum Virtutum*“ in *MGH: Staatsschriften des späteren Mittelalters I.2*. Munich.
- Waitz, C. G. (ed.) (1843). „Ekkehardi Uraugiensis chronica“ in *MGH: Scriptorum VI*. Hanover: pp. 1-267.
- Weiland, Ludwig (ed.) (1980). „Sächsische Weltchronik“ in *MGH: Deutsche Chroniken II*. Munich, pp. 1-384.
- Zupitza, Julius (ed.) (1968 [1870]). „Virginal“ in *Deutsches Heldenbuch: Fünfter Teil, Dietrichs Abenteuer von Albrecht von Kemenaten nebst den Bruchstücken von Dietrich und Wenezlan*, 2nd Edition. Frankfurt am Main: Weidmann, pp. 1-200.

Secondary Literature

- Ahrendt, Ernst Herwig (1923). „Der Riese in der mittelhochdeutschen Epik.“ Dissertation, Rostock.
- Bäumel, Franz (2000). „Kognitive Distanz zum Text: Zur Entwicklung fiktionalen Erzählens in der Rezeption des Epos im 13. Jahrhundert“ in *5. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Aventure-märchenhafte Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 23-38.
- Bernreuther, Marie-Luise (1988). „Herausforderungsschema und Frauendienst im ‘Eckenlied’“ in *ZfdA* 99.3, pp. 173-201.
- Bleumer, Hartmut (2000). „Narrative Historizität und historische Narration: Überlegungen am Gattungsproblem der Dietrichepik mit einer Interpretation des ‘Eckenliedes’“ in *ZfdA* 129.2, pp. 125-153.
- Breisach, Ernst (2007). *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern*. 3rd Edition. Chicago.
- Brévar, Francis B. (1983). „*won mich hant vrouwan usgesant* (L 43,4): Des Helden Ausfahrt im *Eckenlied*“ in *Archiv* 220, pp. 268-284.
- Brévar, Francis B. (1984). „Der Männervergleich im ‘Eckenlied’“ in *ZfdPh* 103.3, pp. 394-406.
- Breyer, Ralph (2000). „Dietrich cunctator: Zur Ausprägung eines literarischen Charakters“ in *5. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Aventure-märchenhafte Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 61-74.
- Coxon, Sebastian (2001). *The Presentation of Authorship in Medieval German Narrative Literature 1220-1290*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Curschmann, Michael (1976a) "Dichtung über Heldendichtung: Bemerkungen zur Dietrichepik des 13. Jahrhunderts" in *Akten des V. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses (1975 Cambridge)*, eds. Leonard Wilson Forster et al. Bern: H. Lang, pp. 17-21.
- Curschmann, Michael (1976b). "Zu Struktur und Thematik des Buchs von Bern" in *PBB (West)* 98.3, pp. 357-383.
- Curschmann, Michael (1989). "Zur Wechselwirkung zwischen Literatur und Sage: 'Das Buch von Kriemhilt' und Dietrich von Bern" in *PBB (West)* 111.3, pp. 380-410.
- Curschmann, Michael (1992). "Dichter *alter mære*: Zur Prologstrophe des 'Nibelungenliedes im Spannungsfeld von mündlicher Erzähltradition und laikaler Schriftkultur" in *Grundlagen des Verstehens mittelalterlicher Literatur: Literarische Texte und ihr historischer Erkenntniswert*, eds. Gerhard Hahn and Hedda Ragutzky. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlags, pp. 55-71.
- Egerding, Michael (1991). "Handlung und Handlungsbegründung im *Eckenlied*" in *Euphorion* 85, pp. 397-407.
- Ettmüller, Ludwig (1846). *Daz mære von vroun Helchen sünen, aus der Ravennaschlacht ausgehoben*. Zürich: Verlag von Meyer und Meyer.
- Fasbender, Christoph (2003/4). "Eckes Pferd" in *JOWG* 14, pp. 41-53.
- Flood, John L. (1967). "Theologi et Gigantes" in *MLR* 62.4, 654-660.
- Flood, John L. (1973). "Dietrich von Bern and the Human Hunt" in *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 17, pp. 17-41.
- Friedrich, Udo (2004). "Transformationen mythischer Gehalte im *Eckenlied*" in *Präsenz des Mythos: Konfigurationen einer Denkform im Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Udo Friedrich and Bruno Quast. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 275-297.
- Fromm, Hans (1986). "Riesen und Recken" in *DVjs* 60.1, pp. 42-59.
- Ghosh, Shami (2007). "On the Origins of Germanic Heroic Poetry" in *PBB* 129.2, pp. 220-252.
- Gillespie, George T. (1973). *A Catalogue of Persons named in German Heroic Literature (700-1600): Including Named Animals and Objects and Ethnic Names*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gillespie, George T. (1987). "Hildebrants Minnelehre: zur 'Virginal h'" in *Liebe in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters (St. Andrews-Colloquium 1985)*, eds. Jeffrey Ashcroft, Dietrich Huschenbett, and William Henry Jackson. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, pp. 61-79.

- Godzich, Wlad and Kittay, Jeffrey (1987). *The Emergence of Prose: An Essay in Prosaics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gottzmann, Carola L. (1987). *Heldendichtung des 13. Jahrhunderts: Siegfried – Dietrich – Ortnit*. Frankfurt am Main / Bern / New York / Paris: Peter Lang Verlag.
- Graf, Klaus (1992). “Heroisches Herkommen: Überlegungen zum Begriff der ‘historischen Überlieferung’ am Beispiel heroischer Tradition” in *Bild der Welt in der Volkserzählung: Berichte und Referate des fünften bis siebten Symposions zur Volkserzählung Brunnenburg, Südtirol 1988-1990*, eds. Leander Petzold, Siegfried de Rachewilt, Ingo Schneider, and Petra Streng. Frankfurt am Main/New York: Peter Lang, pp. 45-64.
- Green, Dennis H. (1994). *Medieval Listening and Reading: The Primary Reception of German Literature 800-1300*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grubmüller, Klaus (1995). “Das *buoch* und die Wahrheit: Anmerkungen zu den Quellenberufungen im *Rolandslied* und in der Epik des 12. Jahrhundert” in *bickelwort und wildiu mære: Festschrift für Eberhard Nellmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Dorothee Lindemann, Berndt Volkmann, and Klaus-Peter Wegera. Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, pp. 37-50.
- Gschwantler, Otto (1979). “Die historische Glaubwürdigkeit der Nibelungensage” in *Nibelungenlied – Ausstellungskatalog des Voralberger Landesmuseums* 86,2. Bregenz, pp. 55-69.
- Gschwantler, Otto (1984a). “Frutolf von Michelsberg und die Heldensage” in *Philologische Untersuchungen gewidmet Elfriede Stutz zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Alfred Ebenbauer. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, pp. 196-211.
- Gschwantler, Otto (1984b). “Zu Lautung und Herkunft der Heldensagennamen in den Quedlingburger Annalen” in *Linguistica et Philologica: Gedenkschrift für Björn Collinder (1894-1983)*, eds. Otto Gschwantler et al. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, pp. 135-181.
- Gschwantler, Otto (1988). “Zeugnisse zur Dietrichsage in der Historiographie von 1100 bis 1350” in *Heldensage und Heldendichtung im Germanschen*, ed. Heinrich Beck. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 35-80.
- Gschwantler, Otto (1992). “Heldensage als *Tragoedia*: Zu einem Brief des Domschulmeisters Meinhard an Bischof Gunther von Bamberg” in *2. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Die historische Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal. Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 39-67.
- Haferland, Harald (2004). *Mündlichkeit, Gedächtnis und Medialität: Heldendichtung im deutschen Mittelalter*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

- Haferland, Harald (2007). "Poesie des Synchronismus: Historizität, Konfabulation und Mythisierung in der Heldendichtung" in *9. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldenzeiten – Heldenräume: Wann und wo spielen Heldendichtung und Heldensage?* eds. Johannes Keller and Florian Kragl. Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 9-25.
- Haubrichs, Wolfgang (2000). "Ein Held für viele Zwecke: Dietrich von Bern und sein Widerpart in den Heldensagenzeugnissen des frühen Mittelalters" in *Theodisca: Beiträge zur althochdeutschen und altniederdeutschen Sprache und Literatur in der Kultur des frühen Mittelalters*, eds. Wolfgang Haubrichs et al. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 330-363.
- Haug, Walter (1971). "Die historische Dietrichssage: Zum Problem der Literarisierung historischer Fakten" in *ZfdA* 100, pp. 43-62.
- Haug, Walter (1979). "Hyperbolik und Zeremonialität: Zu Struktur und Welt von 'Dietrichs Flucht' und 'Rabenschlacht'" in *Deutsche Heldenepik in Tirol – König Laurin und Dietrich von Bern in der Dichtung des Mittelalters (Beiträge der Neustifter Tagung 1977 des Südtiroler Kulturinstitutes)*, ed. Egon Kühebacher. Bozen: Verlagsanstalt Athesia, pp. 116-134.
- Haug, Walter (2002). "Geschichte, Fiktion und Wahrheit: zu den literarischen Spielformen zwischen Faktizität und Phantasie" in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, pp. 115-131.
- Haustein, Jens (1998). "Die 'zagheit' Dietrichs von Bern" in *Der unzeitgemäße Held in der Weltliteratur*, ed. Gerhard R. Kaiser. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, pp. 47-62.
- Heinzle, Joachim (1978). *Mittelhochdeutsche Dietrichepik: Untersuchungen zur Tradierungsweise, Überlieferungskritik und Gattungsgeschichte später Heldendichtung*. München: Artemis Verlag.
- Heinzle, Joachim (1980). "Eckenlied" in *Verfasserlexikon*, 223-227.
- Heinzle, Joachim (1984). "Dietrich von Bern" in *Epische Stoffe des Mittelalters*, eds. Volker Mertens and Ulrich Müller. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, pp. 141-155.
- Heinzle, Joachim (1999). *Einführung in die mittelhochdeutsche Dietrichepik*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Heinzle, Joachim (2003/4). „Was ist Heldensage?“ in *JOWG* 14, pp. 1-23.
- Hellgardt, Ernst (1995). "Dietrich von Bern in der deutschen 'Kaiserchronik': Zur Begegnung mündlicher und schriftlicher Tradition" in *Deutsche Literatur und Sprache von 1050-1200*, eds. Annegert Fiebig and Hans-Jochen Schiewer. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, pp. 93-110.

- Hennig, Ursula (2000). "Dietrichs Ruf in der aventiurehaften Dietrichdichtung" in *5. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Aventiure-märchenhafte Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal Vienna: Fassbaender, 75-88.
- Hoffmann, Werner (1974). *Mittelhochdeutsche Heldendichtung*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag.
- Homann, Holger (1977). "Die Heldenkataloge in der historischen Dietrichepik und die Theorie der mündlichen Dichtung" in *MLN* 92.3, pp. 415-35.
- Johanek, Peter (2002). "Die Wahrheit der mittelalterlichen Historiographen" in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, pp. 9-25.
- Kellner, Beate (1999). "Kontinuität der Herrschaft: Zum mittelalterlichen Diskurs der Genealogie am Beispiel des 'Buches von Bern'" in *Mittelalter: Neue Wege durch einen alten Kontinent*, eds. Jan-Dirk Müller and Horst Wenzel. Stuttgart/Leipzig: S Hirzel Verlag, pp. 43-62.
- Keller, Hildegard Elisabeth (2003/4). "Dietrich und sein Zagen im *Eckenlied* (E2): Figurenkonsistenz, Textkohärenz und Perspektive" in *JOWG* 14, pp. 55-75.
- Keller, Johannes and Kragl, Fabian (eds.) (2007). *9. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldenzeiten – Heldenräume: Wann und wo spielen Heldendichtung und Heldensage?* Vienna: Fassbaender.
- Kern Manfred (2000). "Das Erzählen findet immer einen Weg: 'Degeneration' als Überlebensstrategie der x-haften Dietrichepik" in *5. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Aventiure-märchenhafte Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal Vienna: Fassbaender, 89-113.
- Kerth, Sonja (2000). "Die historische Dietrichepik als 'späte' Heldendichtung" in *ZfdA* 129.2, pp. 154-175.
- Kerth, Sonja (2003/4). "Helden *en mouvance*: Zur Fassungsproblematik der *Virginal*" in *JOWG* 14, pp. 141-157.
- Kerth, Sonja (2008). *Gattungsinterferenzen in der späten Heldendichtung*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag.
- Klein, Thomas (1988). "Vorzeitsage und Heldensage" in *Heldensage und Heldendichtung im Germanischen*, ed. Heinrich Beck. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 115-147.
- Kornrumpf, Gisela (1985). "Heldenepik und Historie im 14. Jahrhundert: Dietrich und Etzel in der Weltchronik Heinrichs von München" in *Geschichtsbewußtsein in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Tübinger Colloquium 1983*, eds. Christoph Gerhardt, Nigel F. Palmer, and Burghart Wachinger. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, pp. 88-109.

- Knape, Joachim (1984). *‘Historie’ in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit: Begriff und gattungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen um interdisziplinären Kontext*. Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner.
- Knapp, Fritz Peter (1997). *Historie und Fiktion und in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik: Sieben Studien und ein Nachwort*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.
- Knapp, Fritz Peter and Niesner, Manuela (eds.) (2002). *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot.
- Knapp, Fritz Peter (2005). *Historie und Fiktion in der mittelalterlichen Gattungspoetik (II): Zehn neue Studien und ein Vorwort*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.
- Kragl, Florian (2007a). “Gibt es eine Heldenzeit? Vergangenheitskonzeption in hoch- und spätmittelalterlichen Literatur” in *9. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldenzeiten – Heldenräume: Wann und wo spielen Heldendichtung und Heldensage?* eds. Johannes Keller and Florian Kragl. Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 61-65.
- Kragl, Florian (2007b). “Mythisierung – Heroisierung – Literarisierung: Vier Kapitel zu Theoderich dem Großen und Dietrich von Bern” in *PBB* 129.1, pp 66-102.
- Krupik, Cordula (2003/4). “Dietrich von Bern zwischen Minnelehre und Fürstenerziehung: Zur Interpretation der *Virginal h*” in *JOWG* 14, 159-173.
- Kühebacher, Egon (ed.) (1979). *Deutsche Heldenepik in Tirol – König Laurin und Dietrich von Bern in der Dichtung des Mittelalters (Beiträge der Neustifter Tagung 1977 des Südtiroler Kulturinstitutes)*. Bozen: Verlagsanstalt Athesia.
- Kuhn, Hugo (1980). “‘Dietrichs Flucht’ und ‘Rabenschlacht’” in *Verfasserlexikon*, 116-127.
- Lienert, Elisabeth (1997). “Raumstrukturen in ‘Nibelungenlied’” in *4. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldendichtung in Österreich – Österreich in der Heldendichtung*, ed. Klaus Zatkoukal. Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 103-122.
- Lienert, Elisabeth (1999). “Dietrich contra Nibelungen: Zur Intertextualität der historischen Dietrichepik” in *PBB* 121.1, pp. 23-46.
- Lienert, Elisabeth (2003). “Rede und Schrift: Zur Inszenierung von Erzählen in mittelhochdeutscher Heldenepik” in *Eine Epoche im Umbruch: Volkssprachige Literalität 1200-1300*, eds. Christa Bertelsmeier-Kierst and Chrisopher Young. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, pp. 123-137.
- Mecklenburg, Michael (2002). *Parodie und Pathos: Heldensagen rezeption in der historischen Dietrichepik*. München: Wihlhelm Finke Verlag.

- Melville, Gert (2002). "Fiktionen als pragmetische Erklärung des Unerklärbaren: Mohammed – ein verhinderter Papst" in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, pp. 27-44.
- Mertens, Volker (1997). "Der Erzähler des Heldenlieds: Ossian – Nibelungen – Dietrich" in *4. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldendichtung in Österreich – Österreich in der Heldendichtung*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal. Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 137-150.
- Meyer, Matthias (1994a). "Die aventiurehafte Dietrichepik als Zyklus" in *Cyclification: The Development of Narrative Cycles in the Chansons de Geste and the Arthurian Romances*, eds. Bart Besamusca, Willen P. Gerritsen, Corry Hogetoorn, and Orlanda S.M. Lie. Amsterdam/Oxford/New York/Tokyo: North-Holland, pp. 158-164.
- Meyer, Matthias (1994b). *Die Verfügbarkeit der Fiktion: Interpretationen und poetologische Untersuchungen zum Artusroman und zur aventiurehaften Dietrichepik des 13. Jahrhunderts*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter.
- McConnell, Winder (1977). „Wate and Wada“ in *MLN*, pp. 572-577.
- Müller, Jan-Dirk (1980). "Heroische Vorwelt, feudaladeliges Krisenbewußtsein und das Ende der Heldenepik" in *Adelsherrschaft und Literatur*, ed. Horst Wenzel. Bern/ Frankfurt am Main/ Las Vegas: Peter Lang, pp. 209-257.
- Müller, Jan-Dirk (1985). "Wandel von Geschichtserfahrung in spätmittelalterlicher Heldenepik" in *Geschichtsbewußtsein in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Tübinger Colloquium 1983*, eds. Christoph Gerhardt, Nigel F. Palmer, and Burghart Wachinger. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, pp. 72-87.
- Müller, Jan-Dirk (1992). "Woran erkennt man einander im Heldenepos? Beobachtungen an Wolframs 'Willehalm', dem Nibelungenlied, dem 'Wormser Rosengarten A' und dem 'Eckenlied'" in *Symbole des Alltags, Alltag der Symbole: Festschrift für Harry Kühnel zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Gertrud Blaschnitz, Helmut Hundsbichter, Gerhard Jaritz and Elisabeth Vavra. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, pp. 87-111.
- Müller, Jan-Dirk (1998). *Spielregeln für den Untergang: Die Welt des Nibelungenlieds*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Müller, Stephan (2000). "Helden in gelehrten Welten: Zu Konzeption und Rezeption der Heldensagenpassagen in den *Quedlinburger Annalen*" in *Theodisca: Beiträge zur althochdeutschen und altniederdeutschen Sprache und Literatur in der Kultur des frühen Mittelalters*, eds. Wolfgang Haubrichs et al. Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 364-386.
- Müller, Stephan (2002). "Datenträger: Zur Morphologie und Funktion der Botenrede in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters am Beispiel von 'Nibelungenlied' und 'Klage'" in

- Situationen des Erzählens: Aspekte narrativer Praxis im Mittelalter*, eds. Ludger Leib and Stephan Müller. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 89-120.
- Ong, Walter J. (1982). *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World*. New York: Methuen.
- Ott, Norbert H. (1985). "Kompilation und Zitat in Weltchronik und Kathedralikonographie: Zum Wahrheitsanspruch (pseudo)historischer Gattungen" in *Geschichtsbewußtsein in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Tübinger Colloquium 1983*, eds. Christoph Gerhardt, Nigel F. Palmer, and Burghart Wachinger. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, pp. 119-135.
- Otter, Monika (1996). *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Otter, Monika (2005). "Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing" in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner. New York: Hodder Arnold, pp. 109-130.
- Penschel-Rentsch, Dietmar (1997). "Schwarze Pädagogik – oder Dietrichs Lernfahrt: *er weste umb âventiure niht*; Hildebrants Erziehungsprogramm und seine Wirkung in der Virginal" in *4. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldendichtung in Österreich – Österreich in der Heldendichtung*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal. Vienna: Fassbaender, 189-216.
- Reichl, Karl (2000). *Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Reuvekamp-Felber, Timo (2003). "Briefe als Kommunikations- und Strukturelemente in der 'Virginal': Reflexionen mittelalterlicher Schriftkultur in der Dietrichepik" in *PBB* 125.1., pp. 57-81.
- Ruh, Kurt (1979). "Verständnisperspektiven von Heldendichtung im Spätmittelalter und Heute" in *Deutsche Heldenepik in Tirol – König Laurin und Dietrich von Bern in der Dichtung des Mittelalters (Beiträge der Neustifter Tagung 1977 des Südtiroler Kulturinstitutes)*, ed. Egon Kühlebacher. Bozen: Verlagsanstalt pp. 15-31.
- Schnell, Rüdiger (2008). "Text und Kontext: Erzählschemata, Diskurse und Imaginäre um 1200" in *Poetica* 40, 1-2, pp. 97-138.
- Schnitt, K. (1991). "Historiographie B. Westlich-abendländischer Bereich" in *LexMA*. München: Artemis Verlag, pp. 49-51.
- Schulz, Armin (2002). "Fragile Harmonie: 'Dietrichs Flucht' und die Poetik der 'abgewiesenen Alternative'" in *ZfdPh* 12.3, pp. 390-407.
- Schupp, Volker (1979). "Heldenepik als Problem der Literaturgeschichtsschreibung: Überlegungen am Beispiel des 'Buches von Bern'" in *Deutsche Heldenepik in Tirol –*

- König Laurin und Dietrich von Bern in der Dichtung des Mittelalters (Beiträge der Neustifter Tagung 1977 des Südtiroler Kulturinstitutes)*, ed. Egon Kühebacher. Bozen: Verlagsanstalt Athesia, pp. 68-96.
- Spiegel, Gabrielle M. (1993). *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Steer, Georg (1979). "Das Fassungsproblem in der Heldenepik" in *Deutsche Heldenepik in Tirol – König Laurin und Dietrich von Bern in der Dichtung des Mittelalters (Beiträge der Neustifter Tagung 1977 des Südtiroler Kulturinstitutes)*, ed. Egon Kühebacher. Verlagsanstalt Athesia: Bozen. pp. 105-115.
- Stein, Peter K. (1982). "'Virginal': Voraussetzungen und Umriss eines Versuchs" in *JOWG 2*, pp. 61-88.
- Störmer-Caysa, Uta (2000). "Kleine Riesen und große Zwerge? Ecke, Laurin und der literarische Diskurs über kurz oder lang" in *5. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Abenteuer-märchenhafte Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 157-175.
- Störmer-Caysa, Uta (2002). "Die Architektur eines Vorlesebuches: Über Boten, Briefe und Zusammenfassungen in der Heidelberger 'Virginal'" in *ZfG.NF XII-1*, pp. 7-24.
- Störmer-Caysa, Uta (2007). *Grundstrukturen mittelalterlicher Erzählungen: Raum und Zeit im höfischen Roman*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Vollmann, Benedikt Konrad (2002). "Erlaubte Fiktionalität – die Heiligenlegende" in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, pp. 63-72.
- von Moos, Peter (1977). "Poeta und Historicus im Mittelalter – Zum Mimesis-Problem am Beispiel einiger Urteile über Lucan" in *PBB 98*, pp. 93-130.
- Voorwinden, Norbert (1992). "Das intendierte Publikum von 'Dietrichs Flucht' und 'Rabenschlacht'" in *2. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Die historische Dietrichepik*, ed. Klaus Zatloukal. Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 23-38.
- Voorwinden, Norbert (2007). "Dietrich von Bern: Germanic Hero or Medieval King? On the Sources of *Dietrichs Flucht* and *Rabenschlacht*" in *Neophilologus 91*, pp. 243-259.
- Wisniewski, Roswitha (1986). *Mittelalterliche Dietrichdichtung*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Wenzel, Horst (1997). "Boten und Briefe: Zum Verhältnis körperlicher nichtkörperlicher Nachrichtenträger" in *Gespräch – Boten – Briefe: Körpergedächtnis und Schriftgedächtnis im Mittelalter*, ed. Horst Wenzel. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, pp 86-105.

- Wolf, Alois (2002). "Zum Problem der literarischen Fiktion in den Sagas" in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, pp. 73-89.
- Wolf, Jürgen (2008). *Buch und Text: Literatur- und kulturhistorische Untersuchungen zur volkssprachigen Schriftlichkeit im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Wolfzettel, Friedrich (2002). "Historizität und Roman: Zu einer alternativen Sicht der altfranzösischen Gattungsgeschichte" in *Historisches und fiktionales Erzählen im Mittelalter*, eds. Fritz Peter Knapp et al. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, pp. 91-114.
- Wood, Christopher S. (2008). *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Zatloukal, Klaus (ed.) (1992). 2. *Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Die historische Dietrichepik*. Vienna: Fassbaender.
- Zatloukal, Klaus (ed.) (1997). 4. *Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldendichtung in Österreich – Österreich in der Heldendichtung*. Vienna: Fassbaender,
- Zatloukal, Klaus (ed.) (2000). 5. *Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Aventure-märchenhafte Dietrichepik*. Vienna: Fassbaender.
- Zimmermann, Heinrich Joachim (1972). "Theoderich der Große – Dietrich von Bern: Die geschichtlichen und sagenhaften Quellen des Mittelalters". Dissertation, Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität.
- Zimmermann, Julia (2007). "Anderwelt – mythischer Raum – Heterotopie: Zum Raum des Zwerges in der mittelhochdeutschen Heldenepik" in 9. *Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch: Heldenzeiten – Heldenräume: Wann und wo spielen Heldendichtung und Heldensage?* eds. Johannes Keller and Florian Kragl. Vienna: Fassbaender, pp. 195-219.
- Zips, Manfred (1979). "Dietrichs Aventure-Fahrten als Grenzbereich spätheroischer mittelhochdeutscher Helden" in *Deutsche Heldenepik in Tirol – König Laurin und Dietrich von Bern in der Dichtung des Mittelalters (Beiträge der Neustifter Tagung 1977 des Südtiroler Kulturinstitutes)*, ed. Egon Kühbacher. Bozen: Verlagsanstalt Athesia, pp. 135-171.
- Zumthor, Paul (1990). *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*. Trans. Kathryn Murphy-Judy. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.