

Literary Transitions, 1300–1500: From Late Medieval to Early Modern

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A Period of Flux?

A POPULAR IF UNINFORMED MANNER of speaking refers to the medieval period as “the dark ages.” If there is a dark age in the literary history of Germany, however, it is the one that follows: the fourteenth and early fifteenth century, the time between the Middle High German *Blütezeit* and the full blossoming of the Renaissance. It may be called a dark age, not because literary production waned in these decades, but because nineteenth-century aesthetics and twentieth-century university curricula allowed the achievements of that time to fade into obscurity.¹ If we compare the high medieval writings of Walther von der Vogelweide or Wolfram von Eschenbach with the Reformation writings of Martin Luther or Ulrich von Hutten, the cultural gulf that opens up before us seems enormous, leaving the impression that the intervening years were ones of rapid transition. But when we acknowledge that a full three centuries lie between these two familiar landmarks, we realize that the rate of change was doubtless no faster than in any other literary epoch. If the period from the mid-thirteenth century to the end of the fifteenth may be called a transition, it is because the early thirteenth and early sixteenth centuries are established coordinates in the discipline of literary history. There are good reasons for this: the *Blütezeit* produced Middle High German poetics of particular genius, the Reformation intellectual exchanges of an extremely high caliber. If we define the former as medieval and the latter as early modern, it can be useful to see the gradual dawning of modernism as the years “between.” But it is important to recognize that all such constructs are arbitrary.

What characterizes the literature of the transition? In the late medieval period the forms and aspirations of literary endeavor stood in clear continuity with those of the High Middle Ages; but they were also rapidly expanding in scope, with many innovations that would become important for the Renaissance and the Reformation. The bulk of chirographic² production continued to be written in Latin, but the German language was quickly gaining ground. The student approaching the period for the first time will be struck by obvious linguistic developments.³ Diphthongization (*hüt* > *Haut*) set in from the late thirteenth century, though the monophthongization that filled the gap

left by the splitting of the long vowels (*huot* > *Hut*) had yet to occur. The lengthening of short vowels, the disappearance of the preterit singular grade of ablaut, and various other forms of leveling also fell in these centuries. Late Middle High German had become Early New High German. However, for literary historians the transition from late medieval to early modern is above all defined by the emergence of intellectual, social, political, and aesthetic developments that lie at the heart of our conception of modernity. In particular, the evolution of new types of writing was driven by changes in the milieu that fostered literature, the rise of new literate classes of society, the spread of printing, and a redefinition of the role of writing. A decisive development of the fifteenth century was the importation to Germany of Italian humanism, for which reason the phrase “Northern Renaissance” has been used to sum up the spirit of the age. Equally, several new forms of religious awakening can be characterized as typically late medieval. Bringing all these elements under a common denominator we may say that the intellectual life of the centuries of transition showed a great openness to new ideas — an openness that stands in contrast both to the more rigid cognitive hierarchies of the High Middle Ages and to the entrenched positions of the Reformation.⁴ The resulting diversification of German literature reveals itself in the new forms of writing pioneered by new classes of writers for ever-widening circles of readers. We shall observe this increased diversity in the traditional centers of literary production, the court and the cloister, but even more so in the new literary world of the cities. And we shall see the parallel rise of Jewish literary awareness as belonging in the same broad context.

Courtly Life in Transition

What we call the Middle High German *Blütezeit* (1170–1230) was the zenith of a specifically courtly literature at a time when the great courts were able to provide a level of patronage unknown elsewhere in society. This tradition of poetics sponsored by powerful princes continued throughout the later Middle Ages and well into the early modern period, though it represented an ever-diminishing proportion of the total output of new writing in German. Geographically speaking, courtly patronage of literature continued to spread, northward and eastward; where thirteenth-century German literature had been practiced most actively, in the Austrian and Bavarian courts and to a lesser extent in the Rhineland, we now find courts such as at Prague or Braunschweig becoming literary centers. In the first instance it was the old forms of courtly literature that were promulgated. The courts in this period were, after all, probably the most conservative part of society; at a time when the urban societies and even the peasantry were looking for new ways to define themselves, the nobility wanted to maintain the identity it had enjoyed in the age of chivalry. The main concern of the great territorial princes, whose status was enhanced by the increased privileges granted by the Golden Bull of Charles IV (1356), was to consolidate their power in the face of the rise of

urban society. Meanwhile the lower nobility was losing power to the great nobles above them and the cities below them. More than ever, courtly literature celebrated a world view rooted in an idealized past; and as the discrepancy between this ideal and the realities of courtly life widened, nostalgic calls for restoration of the good old days became more urgent. In view of this conservatism it is no surprise that we seldom find radically new perspectives, or that the “post-classical” courtly novel — everything after Konrad von Würzburg (ca. 1230–87) — turned into an epigonal, tired imitation of the romance of the golden age.

Nevertheless, certain courtly novels of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries became highly successful. At the beginning of the period of transition Johann von Würzburg⁵ wrote an extremely well-received novel, *Wilhelm von Österreich* (1314). Its popularity is attested by the survival of seventeen manuscripts, ten of which are complete, and by the reception of the protagonists Wilhelm and Aglye as ideal lovers in the anonymous mid-fourteenth-century novel *Friedrich von Schwaben*. Johann records that his *Wilhelm von Österreich* was commissioned by the dukes Friedrich and Leopold of Austria — a poignant example of literature serving the purposes of princely legitimacy, in that the eponymous hero, though fictitious, is cast as the patrons’ forebear. The novel tells of the love of young Wilhelm of Austria for the “heathen” princess Aglye, which is frustrated when her father betroths her to King Walwan of Phrygia. Walwan is in conflict with Melchior of Marocco, and Wilhelm joins his expeditions, excelling in all kinds of adventures. In essence a typical *Minne* (love) and *Aventiure* (adventure) romance, *Wilhelm von Österreich* contains much that is traditionally courtly, combining the familiar chivalric concerns with the heightened late medieval interest in the Orient. However, in terms of characterization Johann’s novel represents a step in the direction of modern perspective. In contrast to earlier heroes, such as Erec or Parzival, whose quest was ultimately fulfilled by locating themselves correctly within society, Wilhelm is individualistic: he seeks his identity within himself and cannot come to rest.⁶ This explains why the novel does not have the expected happy ending. Ultimately, Wilhelm and Aglye marry, but he is killed treacherously with a poisoned spear while hunting a unicorn, and she dies of grief, leaving their son Friedrich the throne of Austria. He dies not because, like Tristan or Schionatulander, he has been denied the object of his quest, but because it was granted him and he was not content.

One remarkable courtly novelist of the fifteenth century was Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken (ca. 1393–1456).⁷ Born princess of Lorraine, she governed her principality as regent for over a decade (1429–42) during the minority of her sons. Her four romances, *Herpin*, *Sibille* (ca. 1437, published 1514), *Loher und Maller* (before 1437), and *Huge Scheppel* (1437, published as *Hug Schapler*, 1500), are adaptations of French works, and all are historically anchored, a feature that generally characterizes the later courtly novel in contrast to the classical courtly novel. In Elisabeth’s case, the claim of historical truth seems to be particularly strong, underlined by her use of the generic tag “warhaftige cronik” (true chronicle), and it is in this context that we may

understand why she was one of the first in German to use prose for the writing of a romance: by the fifteenth century the modern view was gaining ground that prose is more suitable than verse for a strictly factual report.

Despite the author's claims, however, *Huge Scheppel* is a fictional account of the tenth-century Hugh Capet, King of France and progenitor of the Capetian dynasty.⁸ The historical Hugh was a grandson of Robert I of France and on his mother's side a nephew of Emperor Otto the Great; in the novel, Hüge is the offspring of a nobleman and a butcher's daughter, an inauspicious match that should have condemned the boy to his mother's rank. But Hüge is not content with this and declares: "Jch hab wol ein ander besser meynung von mir. Metzlen oder kouffmanschatz zû triben hab ich keynen mǖt/oder ouch ochsen oder schwyn ab zû thûn. Ich hab vil ein hübscher hantwerk gelernet" (I have indeed a better opinion of myself. I have no desire to pursue butchery or the merchant's treasures, nor to slaughter oxen or swine. I have learned a far more courtly trade). Thus he seeks out the life of a knight, and by a series of adventures culminating in a royal marriage he attains the French throne. This rags-to-riches story offends the order of chivalric fiction, in which a young Parzival, Tristan, or Lancelot may appear to come from nowhere and succeed through personal merit, only to be revealed in the end to have impeccable parentage; the illusion of the self-made man ultimately confirms rather than undermines the doctrine that one must be born to high estate. The upward mobility of Hüge, however, radically challenges this doctrine, and it is surprising to find an author of Elisabeth's rank feeling comfortable with such material. One explanation may be that she herself, like the Hüge of the novel, lived through a turbulent period and succeeded in maintaining the stability of her realm by sustaining an alliance with the now powerful urban upper classes. This alliance of noble and patrician worlds lies behind the figure of Hüge, and indeed, although the romance was written for the entertainment of the court, it became immensely popular in the literate circles of the cities as well. Besides this, Elisabeth clearly intended her hero to be a role model for her sons, making the work something of a *Fürstenspiegel* (mirror of princes), which teaches the right manner of courtly conduct: young Hüge may be a ruffian, but as a king he embodies wisdom and prudence.

Another female author from the highest courtly circles was Eleonore of Scotland (1433–80), also known as Eleonore von Österreich or Eleonore Stuart. A daughter of James I of Scotland, she married Siegmund of Tirol in 1448, and similarly to Elisabeth of Nassau-Saarbrücken she became actively involved in governing the principality during the years of her husband's absence. Though her authorship has been called into question,⁹ it seems certain that the prose novel *Pontus und Sidonia* (1463), another adaptation from the French, was at least written under her patronage at the court of Innsbruck. It tells how Pontus, prince of Galicia, flees to Brittany when his father's kingdom falls to the armies of the sultan. Arriving incognito he proves himself as a knight and wins the love of the princess Sidonia. In subsequent adventures he wins back his father's kingdom, and the couple become ideal rulers of their joint realms. The plot is nostalgic for traditional courtly values, and like Elisabeth's novels, it may be seen as

a mirror of princes. Written shortly after the fall of Constantinople, it highlights the perceived threat of the rising power of Islam, a theme that became increasingly urgent in European literature until the Turkish expansion was contained a century later with the Battle of Lepanto (1571).

In the later fifteenth century a center of literary activity emerged at the court of the Electoral Palatinate in Heidelberg under the reigns of Friedrich der Siegreiche (the Victorious, 1449–76) and Philipp der Aufrichtige (the Honest, 1476–1508); it was inspired in no small part by Friedrich's learned sister Mechthild.¹⁰ The best known of the Heidelberg romancers was Johannes von Soest, whose *Die Kinder von Limburg* (The Children of Limburg, ca. 1480) is a curious blend of Arthurian epic, Tristan romance, *chanson de geste*, and *Antikeroman* (the courtly romance tradition drawing on classical Greek and Roman material), possibly a deliberate synthesis of the familiar strands of courtly fiction. One focus of this group of writers was the rewriting in German of Middle Dutch romances (most of these were themselves translated from French), and Johannes's novel is a fine example. Another is the anonymous *Ogier von Dänemark* (1479), which is particularly interesting for its political implications. Ogier's life is threatened by the vindictiveness of Charles the Great, but he succeeds in establishing his place in the feudal society when it becomes clear that Charles needs him in the fight against the Saracens. In the end Charles holds Ogier's spurs, thus inverting the classical symbol of the acknowledgement of a feudal superior. *Ogier von Dänemark* is often bracketed with the thirteenth-century romances *Gerart van Rossiliun* and *Reinolt von Montelban* under the heading *Empörerepen* (*empören*, "to rebel"), in which the hero is an upstart vassal in conflict with his overlord. In the original French context these may have had their place in the resentments of lower nobility in their little courts far from the eyes of the king. In Germany the background was the independence that the great lords claimed with respect to the emperor, especially in the century after the Golden Bull reinforced princely autonomy. The purpose of such a tale is not to undermine the feudal system but to set limits to its imperial dimension.

Turning to lyrics, we find in the fourteenth century the last phase of the traditional Middle High German genres of *Minnesang* and *Sangspruchdichtung* (aphoristic poetry), which lost vitality as the focus of interest switched to the new urban idiom of *Meistersang* (also called *Meistergesang*, "master song"). Nevertheless, *Minnesang* in the traditional mould is found well into the period of transition.¹¹ Here the literary giant of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century is the Meissen poet Heinrich Frauenlob (ca. 1250–1318).¹² His work covers the full range of courtly lyrics as we know them from the poets of the previous generation, including courtly love songs, political *Sangsprüche*, and a series of formally more complex songs, known as *Leiche*, on the Trinity and the Virgin; many of his melodies have also survived. In his portrait in the *Manessische Handschrift* (the famous Manessa Codex, or Heidelberg Manuscript C, begun during his lifetime), he seems to be conducting a choir of nine singers and players, which suggests the performance of a *Leich*, as only these extended religious pieces would have been performed by

an ensemble. The cognomen *Frauenlob* (praise of Our Lady) probably referred originally to this praise of the Virgin, though later tradition links it to his dispute with the poet Regenbogen about the relative merits of the terms *wîp* (woman) and *vrouwe* (lady). This *wîp/vrouwe* controversy in fact constituted one of the most fascinating episodes in his career.¹³ In the Manessa Codex one group of songs is ascribed alternately to Frauenlob and to “Regenbog,” forming a dialogue in which the Regenbogen stanzas argue for *wîp*, the Frauenlob verses for *vrouwe*. Behind this arrangement lies a romantic notion of singers’ joust, though it is doubtful whether these songs were sung as a contest in quite this form. At any rate, the argument develops with challenge and counter-challenge, until the final piece in the set wins the debate for Frauenlob by producing telling etymologies for the two words: *vrouwe* receives an honorable etymology, from the joy (*vrô*) and pain (*wê*) of love, but for *wîp* the poet invents the story of an unpleasant king:

Vrankriche, ich nenne dich durch Wippeon den künic.
 des mut was rünic.
 er hiez der kindel varen,
 die da meidel waren,
 unz sie verlurn der blumen lust mit der meide jaren;
 so was im lieb ir stolzer lib unz das sie wurden swanger. (V, 104, 1–6)

[France, I mention you because of King Wippeon. He was fickle. He ordered the children — the girls in that country — to be spied out, until they lost the flower of joy along with their maiden years. Then he rejoiced in their fine figures until they became pregnant.]

If they became pregnant they were banished; but as long as they were neither virgins nor mothers, he took pleasure in them. These in-between women (*mit-tenkünne*, *mittel-sie*) were named *wîp* after the lecherous pedophile Wippeon. Can a word with such origins stand beside the noble *vrouwe*, asks the poet? As it happens, Frauenlob was not so far from the truth with his fictitious etymologies, though he could not have known it. Modern linguistics derives *vrouwe* from Germanic **frawan*, **frōwō* (lord, or lady) from an Indo-European root **per* (first, chief); *wîp* on the other hand is thought to go back to IE **ghwibh-* (pudenda). And indeed, the subsequent semantic development in modern German, which makes *Frau* the standard term and *Weib* derogatory, would seem to answer Frauenlob’s plea.

After Frauenlob, *Sangspruch* went into a sharp decline, though in the later fourteenth century, Heinrich von Mügeln, and in the fifteenth, Muskatblüt and Michel Beheim, were still producing gnomic works for the courts.¹⁴ *Minnesang*, however, was to have one last blossom, as the outstanding singer of the early fifteenth century, the South Tyrolean Oswald von Wolkenstein (1376–1445), at least fleetingly reversed the trend.¹⁵ Unusual for a poet of this period, Oswald’s biography can be reconstructed in detail, thanks in part to frequent autobiographical references in his poems, which testify to a particularly strong authorial self-awareness. His corpus of some 133 songs reveals a highly innovative poet. His love songs are firmly rooted

in the *Minne* tradition, yet he goes new ways in introducing melodies and poetic techniques from Italian, French, and Flemish contemporaries. The thematic breadth of his range of songs is astounding: travel, war, marriage, spring, dawn; songs of the Virgin, repentance, and the city; songs full of social critique and autobiography. How far his technique exceeded that of earlier courtly lyricists can be seen from the opening of one of the travel songs:

Durch Barbarei, Arabia,
 durch Hermani in Persia,
 durch Tartari in Suria,
 durch Romani in Türggia,
 Ibernia,
 der sprüng han ich vergessen. (Song 44, I, 1–6)

[Through Berberland, Arabia, through Armenia to Persia, through Tartarland to Syria, through Byzantium to Turkey, Georgia, such hops I've long forgotten.]

The short lines and cataloguing effect lend the poem a momentum that suggests the excitement of the journey. Many of Oswald's travel songs have such lists of places, though it is unlikely that he actually visited them all. A conflict of the estates appears in song 25, "Ain burger und ain hofman," a disputation between a knight and a burgher, about which is best fitted to win the love of a young woman; interestingly, the knight comes off rather badly. Oswald was imprisoned twice in his life, and he introduced the new form of prisoner's song to his colorful *oeuvre*. In one song the image of the prisoner is fed back into the love poem:

Gevangen und gefüret
 ward ich ainst als ain dieb
 mit sailen zü gesnüret;
 das schüff meins herzen lieb,
 von der ich hab erworben
 mein aigen leiden swër.
 wer si noch ainst gestorben!
 noch ist si mir gevër. (Song 23, III, 9–16)

[Once I was captured and led away like a thief, bound up by ropes. It was the love in my heart that did this, a love that has caused me great suffering. If only this love had died! But still it haunts me.]

Oswald is also noteworthy for his mastery of the relationship between text and music; his melodies, like *Frauenlob*'s, which have been recorded, were often set in polyphony and quite sophisticated, if imitative.¹⁶ This was without doubt the acme of the late medieval lyric. Oswald was exceptional, however, and possibly out of step with the prevailing mood, for after his death his poetry was all but forgotten until modern scholarship rediscovered it. With him died the tradition of the courtly troubadour.

However, if the old forms of courtly literature suffered neglect, the fourteenth century did produce a number of new, specifically courtly forms, which focused on the characteristics that distinguished the nobility from the other classes of society. One was the chessbook, a peculiar form that turned the game into a didactic allegory of the feudal order. The *Schachzabelbuch* (Chessboard Book, 1337) of Konrad von Ammenhausen (b. 1280/90) is the best known of this series of mostly anonymous German verse and prose reworkings of a Latin tract by the Italian Dominican Jacobus de Cessolis (fl. 1288–1322), which takes the chessboard as the starting point for an extended metaphorical exploration of the divinely appointed social structure. King and queen (*chünig, chünigin*) head the dignitaries, aided by bishop (*alde*), knight (*ritter*), and rook (*roch*) leading an army of pawns (*venden*).¹⁷ The knights are the easiest of the middle-ranking pieces to locate in the feudal order; in the prose version of the text we read:

Der ritter auf dem schachtzabel sol sitzen auf ainem ross, mit allem harnasch vnd gantzem wappen getzyert vnd angelegt vnd also geschykt, das er hab ainen helm auf seinem hawpt vnd ain sper in der rechten hant vnd bedecktt in ainem schilt, vnd in der lenken hant ein swert vnd an dem leib ain pantzir, vnd vor ain prustplech, vnd mit armgerät vnd mit paingerät angelegt, vnd sporn an seinen füessen vnd plechhantschuech an seinen henten, vnd vnder im ain pford, das tzw streit getzogen sey vnd mit einer pfell wedekht.¹⁸

[The knight on the chessboard is to sit on a steed, adorned with full armor and weapons, and to be crafted with a helmet on his head and a lance in his right hand, covered by a shield, and in his left hand a sword and on his body a coat of mail and on his chest a hauberk, and wearing arm and leg protection and spurs on his feet and metal gloves on his hands, and under him a horse that is trained for battle and covered in silk cloth.]

As the pieces were differently shaped from today's, the modern reader is grateful that the text takes time to describe exactly what each one looked like. We thus have the full image of the knight as we know him from battle scenes in courtly novels, mounted on his steed with all the requisite accoutrements, and the text goes on to discuss the virtues he must possess and the tasks with which he is charged. The rook represents the king's deputy and is depicted holding a symbolic rod. The piece called a bishop in English is in Middle High German known simply as the elder, which the text allegorizes as a judge, and the figure on the board can be identified by the open book he is holding. This means that the ecclesiastical princes are not represented on the chessboard at all: the origins of chess lie in the Islamic world, and it was not until the sixteenth century that the English language Christianized the game by upgrading the Middle English archer to a bishop; German never did so. At the bottom of the structure, of course, are the pawns. Where modern German speaks of the *Bauer* (peasant), medieval *vende* (like English pawn) means "foot-soldier."¹⁹ However, since medieval warfare made more use of armed peasants and townspeople than of professional soldiers, the text is free to identify each of the eight pawns as representing a different group of agricultural or urban trades. Despite the

Dominican affiliation of Jacobus, chessbooks were fundamentally courtly in their interest and sought to strengthen feudal power structures by developing idealized models of each estate of secular society.

Another interesting form coming to prominence in the fifteenth century, but not achieving high fashion until the mid-sixteenth, was the *Hauschronik* (housebook), the chronicle of a noble family designed to demonstrate its antiquity and grandeur.²⁰ At a time when humanism was demanding that scholarship pay rigorous attention to sources and distinguish *res factae* from *res fictae*, the housebook became popular among ruling houses — especially those of the lower ranks of the nobility that had recently enjoyed some rise in fortune — to underpin their legitimacy with elaborately embellished accounts of the origins of their bloodlines. In the attempt to meet the expectations of both patrons and peers, humanistically trained historians had to juggle contradictory demands. The *Hauschronik* thus became a hybrid form. Occupying a position between the late medieval chronicle and early modern historiography it integrates elements of mythology, travel literature, biography, genealogy, objective history, and blatant fiction. An early example is the *Schaumburgische Chronik* by Hermann von Lerbeck (fl. 1380), a Dominican theologian working in the service of the dukes Bernhard and Otto von Schaumburg. It runs from 1030 to 1407 and draws on the local history of Minden as well as the history of Hermann's own order but concentrates principally on the successes of the family. The two best-known housebooks, the *Truchsessenchronik* and the *Zimmerische Chronik*, are both sixteenth-century.

As a postscript to this survey of the late medieval courts we must also take note of the bishops' courts, which obviously stand apart from the secular courts and yet are closer in their thinking to the courtly world than to the monasteries. Bishops, after all, were often scions of ruling houses. The best-known writer at a bishop's court in this period was Heinrich Wittenwiler (ca. 1395–1426), whose *Ring* is a comic-didactic verse satire, probably written in the first decade of the fifteenth century.²¹ Wittenwiler was presumably engaged in the service of the bishop of Constance, to whom he would later become *Hofmeister*. In the prologue to the *Ring* he explains that, since pedagogy is usually boring, he has chosen to communicate through the medium of an entertaining tale. The ring of the title is an allusion to the cycle of the world, and he wishes above all to inculcate good manners and right conduct in the world, though he is equally concerned with literary style. In the manuscript, colored marginal stripes identify in green those passages that satirize peasant boorishness and in red those that can serve as stylistic models for young writers; simply put, green is for comic relief, red for the serious or sententious.

The *Ring* tells how the peasant lad Bertschi Triefnas of Lappenhäusern sets out to win the love of the unspeakably ugly Mätzli Rüerenzumph. The first green passage in the work describes her virtues in terms perhaps meant to invoke Wolfram's depiction of Cundrie:

Ir wängel rosenlecht sam äschen,
Ir prüstel chlein sam smirtäschen.

Die augen lauchten sam der nebel,
 Der aten smacht ir als der swebel. (ll. 89–92)

[Her cheeks were as rosy as ashes, her breasts as delicate as sacks of fat.
 Her eyes glowed like fog, her breath was scented like sulfur.]

He first woos her in a peasant tournament that parodies the knightly joust, then by singing on her rooftop; and when this results in disaster and Mätzli is locked in her room by her father, he turns to love letters. Unfortunately, neither of them can read. Bertschi seeks the help of the clerk Nabelreiber, and Mätzli turns to the apothecary Chrippenchra, who however takes advantage of her and leaves her pregnant. The young woman is now as keen as her suitor to marry, but the parents' objections must be overcome. Bertschi's family debates the pros and cons of marriage, while Mätzli's requires the groom to undergo an examination to prove his fitness for family life. When these obstacles have been surmounted, the wedding takes place and, despite the unpalatable fare, degenerates into an orgy of gluttony and drunkenness ending in a brawl between the Lappenhäuser locals and the Nissingen neighbors. While the happy couple enjoy their wedding night, the two villages go to war, supported by witches, giants, and dwarfs, the only allies they can find. After lengthy campaigns, Lappenhäuser is defeated through treachery and razed to the ground; all the inhabitants (including Mätzli) are slaughtered, with the sole exception of Bertschi, who retreats to the Black Forest to live as a hermit.

The basic plot comes from a short *Schwank* (farce) known as *Von Metzzen hochzit* (On Metzzen's Wedding) and is expanded to some 9,700 lines. As the names of the protagonists suggest, the entire tale is a parody of crude peasant mores. However, Wittenwiler's point is not that peasants in particular are to be condemned for such behavior, but that all who behave in this way are peasants. Thus the courtly sneering at the rural poor is harnessed for the instruction of the reader on all questions concerning, "wie ein man sich halten schol / an sel und leib und gen der welt" (how a man should conduct himself in his soul and body, and in his dealings with the world). Wittenwiler builds into the narrative all kinds of didactic material. For example, Mätzli's father examines Bertschi on his knowledge of religion, health, and managing a household, as well as on general questions of virtue and right conduct. While the element of preaching clearly stands in the forefront, with many dogmas of the church carefully documented, Wittenwiler's clerical and courtly audiences obviously set equal store by the finer points of culinary sophistication, for the hero also has to proclaim in demonstration of his learning: "Chäs nach flaisch und nuss zuo fischen / Geb man uns ze allen tischen!" (At every meal let us be given cheese after the meat, and nuts with the fish!).

Monasticism and New Spiritualities

Medieval European literature was dominated by the church, and despite the explosion of secular literature from the twelfth century onward the traditional

forms of religious writing continued to be produced in vast quantities throughout the later Middle Ages, principally in the monasteries. It is estimated that 75% of all late medieval German manuscripts contain spiritual texts.²² Most were written in Latin, but German-language texts increased proportionately in response to changes in the educational demographics of German society. Biblical texts gradually became available in the vernacular, first as freely related verse narratives, such as Lutwin's *Eva und Adam* (fourteenth c.),²³ then as prose in the tradition of the *Historienbibeln*,²⁴ and from the mid-fourteenth century as more disciplined prose translations. The Augsburg Bible of 1350 contains the first complete New Testament in German; the Wenzel Bible of 1389 added the Old Testament; in 1452–55 the Latin Gutenberg Bible became the first book to be printed with movable type in the Christian West; the Mentel Bible, the first printed German translation, was produced by Johannes Mentel in Strasbourg in 1466; it was followed by the Cologne Bible of 1478–79 and others. The language of Mentel's Bible is archaic, suggesting that he took the text from an early-fourteenth-century manuscript that may predate the 1350 Augsburg text.²⁵ Meanwhile the *Biblia pauperum* (Paupers' Bible) tradition flourished in the fourteenth century, presenting the Bible in opulent painted manuscripts in which illustrations of scenes from the two testaments appear in parallel showing typological relationships; thus a scene from a Gospel would be flanked by one *ante legem* and one *sub lege*²⁶ to illustrate the integrated nature of God's plan of salvation. Some of the large colorful manuscripts with eight roundels on a page were entirely textless, but others, such as those printed as blockbooks,²⁷ had some commentary. Because of the great costs of production, this was clearly not, as the name might suggest, a Bible intended for the poor; the *pauperes* have been interpreted as the uneducated wealthy, but that too is problematic, for the visual program of these works is intellectually demanding. Alongside the Bible the most sought-after vernacular religious texts were legends, that is, biographies of saints, which began to be collected in vast legends, such as the various translations of the *Legenda aurea* (Golden Legend, ca. 1260) of Jacobus de Voragine (ca. 1229–98).²⁸ There were also books of discipline, meditative texts, various forms of expository works, and a new fashion for histories of the foundation of monasteries.

In the late Middle Ages, Europe experienced a series of religious renewals, whose origins reached back to the Cluniac reforms of the eleventh century and whose influences reached forward to the Reformation of the sixteenth; from the late thirteenth century they gave rise to uniquely late medieval forms of spirituality. The most important was mysticism.²⁹ Christian mysticism was summed up in the phrase *cognitio Dei experimentalis* (knowing God by experience), a paraphrase of St. Bonaventura's statement, "Optimus enim modus cognoscendi Deum est per experimentum dulcedinis" (The best way to know God is by experiencing his sweetness); similar formulations occur in Thomas Aquinas. Mysticism denotes an intense personal experience in which the believer has a sense of being taken up into oneness with God (*unio mystica*); it is commonly portrayed as a love relationship — with the Almighty, with Jesus,

with the Holy Spirit — and may be drastically erotic.³⁰ Knowledge of self and of God are achieved through self-denial, spiritual exercises, and ecstatic trances. Mysticism held a particular appeal to certain women, who found in its practice an area of religious life that often inspired literary expressions of their special relationship with God. As *religiosae mulieres* (religious women) they were able to participate on an equal basis with men, though many pursued their spiritual enlightenment under the guidance of a male confessor. The great founders of German mysticism were David von Augsburg (ca. 1200–1272), Hadewijch of Brabant (fl. ca. 1240–50), Mechthild von Magdeburg (ca. 1207–ca. 1282), Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260–ca. 1328), Johannes Tauler (ca. 1300–1361), and Heinrich Seuse (ca. 1295–1366). Although their dates give the impression that the golden age of mysticism lay between the mid-thirteenth and the mid-fourteenth centuries, the movement commanded an undiminished popular following in the later fourteenth century too. At the same time, a new wave of piety known as the *Devotio Moderna* was emerging from the Low Countries, inspired above all by the teaching of Geert Groote (1340–84). Geert's influence is visible in the asceticism of the most original fifteenth-century writer on spirituality, Thomas à Kempis (1379–1471). Like mysticism, *Devotio Moderna* stressed experience — better to feel contrition than to be able to define it, as Thomas wrote in the first chapter of his *Imitatio Christi* (ca. 1418) — but it remained wary of visionary rapture; the aim was still closeness to God, but no longer conceived as mystic union.

Thomas was a member of the Augustinian Order, which like the Benedictine Order had exerted decisive influence on German culture throughout the Middle Ages. Though these older orders remained influential, their preference continued to be for writing mainly in Latin. The upsurge of vernacular religious writing was driven by new institutions and by the spiritual awakening of the laity. The Teutonic Order (1190), the Franciscans (1210), and the Dominicans (1215) came into existence during the Middle High German *Blütezeit* but had a significant impact on German literature only later. To these orders we must add the enormously influential lay movement begun in the late twelfth century, the Beguines. It is in these settings that we will find the literary fruits of the new spiritualities.³¹

The Teutonic Order (members may have the letters OT = *Ordo Teutonicus* after their names) was originally established in the Holy Land by Hanseatic crusaders as a medical brotherhood in imitation of the Templars and Hospitallers. In 1198 it was raised to the status of a knightly order comparable to the Maltese Order, and as such it was a religiously based organization of lay people trained in arms for the defense of Christendom. A papal *exemptio* freed it from the jurisdiction of local civil and ecclesiastical authorities, allowing it to take military action almost autonomously. Led by a *Hochmeister* (Grand Master) and organized in provinces, it grew rapidly in the following century and by 1300 had more than 300 *Kommenden* (command posts). In 1224 it turned its force against the “heathen” Prussians and in the ensuing wars not only subdued and Christianized the populations of the eastern Baltic but also established there a Teutonic Order state with its residence at

Königsberg. This territorial entity endured for 300 years and provides part of the historical background to the German-speaking East Prussia of modern times. The Teutonic Knights were eventually dislodged from the Baltic by the rise of Poland in the sixteenth century. A second main concentration was the province of Austria, where the order became involved in the Turkish wars.³²

The literature of the Teutonic Order, which is substantial, was at its most productive in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.³³ Recent scholarship has questioned whether all of it was actually written, or commissioned, by members of the order or merely used by them; for instance, in some of the religious literature they may simply have appropriated existing works. However that may be, the writings found their place in the life of the order and have come down to us as a comprehensive corpus testifying to the literary awareness of the community. The importance of the order for literature has often been underestimated; but the huge volume of knights who passed through its doors in the course of these centuries made it a formidable force in the shaping of early modern German society and culture.

The cult of the Virgin was particularly important for the religiosity of the Teutonic Order; members were sometimes called *Marienritter* (Knights of Mary). A series of works produced by the order are dedicated to her life, foremost among them Bruder Philipp's *Marienleben* (Life of Mary, early fourteenth c.), a particularly fine poem.³⁴ Philipp himself was a Carthusian, but a dedication in his prologue declares he is writing for "den brüdern von dem deutschen hûs" (the brothers of the German Order). St. Martina was also the subject of a number of pious legends originating in the order, and Luder von Braunschweig (1275–1335) wrote a celebrated life of St. Barbara. More generally, the Teutonic Knights' interest in inspirational saints is seen in their two great legendaries, the *Väterbuch* (Book of the Church Fathers) and the *Passional*, apparently both by the same late-thirteenth-century poet. The focus of these works on the *miles Christi* (soldier of Christ) and on conversion is characteristic of the Teutonic Order.

The extent to which the order contributed to the tradition of the biblical epic may seem surprising. Throughout the first half of the fourteenth century an apparently systematic attempt was made to render the most useful parts of the Bible into German. Besides the *Historia der alden ê* (History of the Old Covenant), which covers longer stretches of biblical history, a series of works reproduce individual books of the Bible: Judith, Esther, Job, the Maccabees, the Book of Acts, and the Apocalypse. The *Hiob-Paraphrase* (Paraphrase of Job) may serve as an example of the method. Each verse receives paraphrase and commentary, so that text and exegesis flow together and the interpretations of the poet appear to fall in the mouth of Job himself.³⁵ The biblical epics are generally anonymous, a possible exception being the *Makkabäer*, tentatively ascribed to Luder von Braunschweig, and there is some question whether the composition of certain of the biblical epics predates their adoption by the order. Among other religious writings to emerge from the Teutonic Order is a curious text by Tilo von Kulm entitled *Von sibem ingesigeln* (1331), in just over 6,000 lines of rhyming couplets.³⁶ In allusion to

Revelation 5 and 6, the seven seals of the title are seven theological wonders, sealed to readers lacking insight: the incarnation of Christ, his baptism, passion, resurrection, ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the Last Judgment. *Von siben ingesigeln* is not a narrative account of these events but seeks rather to “unseal” their mystery. The Teutonic Order is not usually known for contemplative writings, but this work is an exception in its sense of inner reflection.

The order also produced a smaller corpus of secular writings. One category beginning in the early fourteenth century was historiography, which chronicled the order’s activities and the regions implicated in its military campaigns. Foremost among these were histories of Prussia: Nikolaus von Jeroschin’s (d. ca. 1345) *Kronike von Pruzinlant*; Peter von Dusburg’s *Cronica terre Prussie*; the *ältere* and *jüngere Livländische Reimchronik*; and the *ältere* and *jüngere Hochmeisterchronik*.³⁷ Other text types include a chessbook — a form that transferred readily from the court to the knightly order — and a life of Marco Polo — perhaps the prototype of the German-language travel report,³⁸ whose observations about the non-Christian East made it of obvious interest to this order of crusaders.

The second influential order to appear in this period was founded in Italy by Francis of Assisi (1182–1226). The Franciscans, also known as Friars Minor (OFM = *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*) or in England as Grey Friars, were a mendicant order committed to extreme poverty, hence their popular name in German: *Barfüsser* (The Barefoot Order). The Italian Thomas of Celano (ca. 1190–1260), a confidant of Francis and his earliest biographer (ca. 1230), was among the first group of Franciscans sent north of the Alps to establish provinces in Germany. The order was popular because of its simple spirituality and service to the poor, and spread rapidly. Important German Franciscans of the early period were Lamprecht von Regensburg, who wrote a *Sanct Franciskens Leben* (Life of St. Francis) around 1238; David von Augsburg, the first German mystic; and David’s pupil, the prolific preacher Berthold von Regensburg (ca. 1220–72). By the beginning of our transition centuries, then, the order was well established and already had a literary tradition.³⁹

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Franciscans were less productive in literary output than other orders, perhaps because their principal calling led them away from the scriptorium. Nevertheless, a complete inventory of Franciscan writings would be extensive. An important center of Franciscan activity developed in Erfurt, and it is notable that this convent had a role in the biographies of many Franciscan authors of the late Middle Ages.⁴⁰ Usually, their work took the form of sermons in German or Latin. Since medieval preachers did not carry scripts into the pulpit, manuscripts of written sermons must have been intended as textbooks or sourcebooks for younger members of the order. Among the notable sermon writers were Berthold of Wiesbaden, Erasmus Schaltdorfer (both fourteenth century), and Hermann Etzen (fifteenth).

In the fifteenth century the Franciscan Order was troubled by an internal conflict. A laxness in observance of the rule led to a reform movement that

reached Germany around 1420, beginning in Cologne, and over the course of the century spread to include the majority of German Franciscans. The Observants, as they were called, insisted on absolute poverty, while the part of the order known as Conventuals permitted property. In 1517 the two groups finally split, the Observants becoming the modern Franciscans, while the Conventuals took the name Minorites. These tensions lie behind the *Chronica Ordinis Minorum Observantium* (Chronicle of the Order of Minor Observants) of Nikolaus Glasberger (d. 1508), which was begun in 1506 and continued by another hand after the author's death. The principal early chronicle of the Franciscans in Germany, it catalogues the observant monasteries and supports their cause. It is in the same context that we must read Bruder Heinrich's *Lob der Armut* (Praise of Poverty), an open letter testifying to his strict adherence to the observant lifestyle.

The most prolific Franciscan writer in late medieval Germany was Marquard von Lindau (ca. 1320–92), who wrote mainly in Latin. *De reparatione hominis* (On the Renewal of Mankind, ca. 1421–26) expounds salvation history in thirty chapters. Marquard also produced a number of important works in German: most notably his elucidation of the Decalogue, a collection of sermons, and tractates on the Book of Job and the Eucharist.⁴¹ The *Dekalogerklärung*, or *Buch der Zehn Gebote* (Decalogue Elucidation, or Book of the Ten Commandments), is a comprehensive guide to Christian living based on scholastic thinking but with strong elements of mysticism and the cult of the Virgin. Formally the text is presented as a dialogue in which a teacher (*der meister*) responds to questions from a student (*der iunger*) with lengthy expositions on each of the commandments. When, for example, the student asks, "Sag mir fürbas von dem dritten gebot als dû mir von den andern gesagt hast von seinen synnen vnd materien etc." (Tell me about the third commandment as you told me of the others, about its sense and meaning, etc.), the teacher begins to expound on the holiness of Sunday, beginning with the days of creation.⁴² We are obliged, he explains, to abstain not only from work but also from trade and legal proceedings, "es wer dann vmb fried oder vmb gehôrsame oder von notdurft oder das vil guts dovon kôm douon got gelobt wûrd" (unless it be a matter of maintaining the peace, or of obedience, or of urgent necessity, or if much good would come of it, through which God would be praised). The Sabbath begins at vespers, but this varies from place to place, and we should respect local customs. Question: Is it permissible to dance or feast on a Sunday? Answer: Distinctions have to be made, for this is more reprehensible in a cleric than in a layman. All this seems quite legalistic, as an exposition of ancient laws must inevitably be; but soon the discussion moves on to the ways in which Mary kept the commandments, and positive examples take the place of prohibitions: how Mary prepared her prayers, how she listened to the sermon, with what piety she lay down to sleep, and — entirely in the spirit of mysticism — the six stages of her contemplation.

A number of other Franciscan writers of this period are worthy of note, though few were widely known outside the order. Otto von Passau was a religious didactic writer of the second half of the fourteenth century. His most

influential work, *Die vierundzwanzig Alten oder der goldene Thron der minnenden Seele* (The Twenty-Four Elders, or the Golden Throne of the Loving Soul, 1418), contains instructions for the Christian life. Friedrich von Saarbürg wrote a poem in rhyming couplets on the antichrist.⁴³ The majority of the best authors wrote in Latin, however. Doubtless the most important Franciscan historian of the fourteenth century was Johannes von Wintertur (ca. 1302–after 1348), whose chronicle was planned to account for world history but never got beyond the years 1190–1348. Rudolf von Biberach (ca. 1270–1326), a mystic theologian, wrote *De septem itineribus aeternitatis* (On the Seven Journeys of Eternity), which describes the ascent of the soul to God in seven stages; Johannes von Erfurt (fl. ca. 1300) was known for his theological, philosophical, and juridical manuals. However, none of these equaled the status of Marquard von Lindau, and few were widely known outside the order. It was only in the sixteenth century, with Thomas Murner, that the Franciscans again produced a writer with great appeal to a secular readership.

The Dominicans, the third new order, were also known as Predicants, or Order of Preachers (OP = *Ordo Praedicatorum*), or in England as Black Friars. Like the Franciscans, on whom to some extent they were modeled, the Dominicans were a mendicant order, but their focus on preaching made them a more aggressive force. Founded by the Spaniard Dominic of Calaruega (ca. 1170–1221), their origins lay in the Albigensian controversy, which had lasting implications for their understanding of their mission.⁴⁴ It motivated them, for example, to high intellectual aspirations in order to be armed for disputations against heresy. Like the Franciscans, they drew many of their neophytes from the cities, but with the difference that their recruitment targeted well-educated people from the upper burgher classes. Many Dominicans had a university education, and the order produced great scholars, foremost among them Albertus Magnus (1193–1280), an authority on everything from biblical exegesis to zoology, and his pupil, the most gifted systematic theologian of the late Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas (1224–74). The darker side of the order's history was its advocacy of the forceful suppression of deviance. As early as 1227 the Dominican Konrad von Marburg was placed in charge of the German Inquisition, which he pursued with extreme cruelty. This facet of the order left a literary testament in the form of the *Hexenhammer* (The Witches' Hammer, 1487) by the Dominican friar Heinrich Kramer (Institoris, 1430–1505), the most notorious treatise on witch hunting of the fifteenth century.⁴⁵

The Dominican Order struggled against perceived pagan tendencies in humanism, and their most powerful response to this competing source of learning was to produce kerygmatics — works on the exposition and preaching of the gospel — of the highest quality. Jakob von Soest (ca. 1360–after 1438) was a scholar of broad distinction whose writings include theological, homiletic, historical, and legal texts. His work on preaching technique may be regarded as his main contribution to the life of the order: *Distinctiones longiores pro arte praedicandi* (Longer Book of Distinctions on the Art of Preaching,⁴⁶ ca. 1400) is an alphabetically arranged encyclopedia of the

sermon genre, with explanatory lemmata on themes, biblical characters, points of doctrine, and theoretical problems. The amassing of comprehensive collections of alphabetically organized information was characteristic of the scholars of this period, though the use of alphabetical order was still far less common than it would become. Johannes Herolt (before 1390–1468) deserves mention as another respected author of preaching aids.

Dominican scholarship produced a number of significant historians in addition to Jakob von Soest. Hermann Korner (1365–1458) must have spent most of his life working on his *Chronica novella*, as he revised it repeatedly in both Latin and German, prose and verse. In essence a compilation of the works of earlier historians, but with personal critique of the events recorded, this chronicle runs from the foundation of Rome down through the sequence of emperors, but focuses particularly on Korner's home town of Lübeck. Hermann von Lerbeck's *Schaumbergische Chronik* was mentioned above; on behalf of his order he also composed ecclesiastical chronicles of Minden.

The Dominicans made a particularly strong contribution to German mysticism, with Meister Eckhart, Heinrich Seuse, and Johannes Tauler all standing in this tradition. The first and greatest was the creative theologian Meister Eckhart.⁴⁷ Eckhart himself never speaks of visionary experiences or emotional catharses, but he laid the philosophical foundation on which many subsequent mystics built their ideas. Eckhart's was more of an intellectual mysticism. He is best known for his German works, particularly his sermons and his *Buoch der goetlichen troestunge* (Book of Divine Consolations, ca. 1314), generally known as the *Trostbüchlein* (Little Book of Consolation), a short, sophisticated work that couches complex spiritual ideas in a dense prose style. It is impossible to understand Eckhart's German correctly without an awareness of certain key ideas that he expounds fully only in his Latin works, and this is no doubt one reason why his intentions have often been confused. Eckhart's mystical teachings take as their starting point the distinction between the temporal and the eternal, whereby only God the Eternal really *is*, while his creatures receive *being* as long as the Creator allows it to flow to them out of himself. Eckhart describes this process by analogy with a mirror, which receives an image though it produces none. The incarnation of the divine logos is thus a divine self-projection into time, and this — like everything in Eckhart's metaphysics — has two aspects: as an act of God it is eternal, but as an event in history it is rooted in time. The same two aspects lie at the root of his understanding of the human soul, whose vital spark, the *scintilla animae*, or *Seelenfünklein*, is both eternal and transitory; it is one with God and thus uncreated, yet at the same time divinely created and bound by the dimensions of this world. This paradox provides the metaphysical basis for Eckhartian mysticism; it became one of the principal complaints in turning the ecclesiastical establishment against him.

Fourteenth-century mysticism had formidable opponents on the conservative side of the church. In 1326 Eckhart became a *cause célèbre* in the political wrangling when the archbishop of Cologne instigated heresy proceedings against him through the Inquisition. It was unusual for this instrument to be

used against a leading theologian working within a major order, and since the Dominicans defended him — papal representative Nikolaus von Strassburg OP declared Eckhart's writings to be free of error — the Franciscans were asked to lead the prosecution. A series of theses, mostly from the *Trostbüchlein*, were adduced as evidence of unorthodoxy, and the defendant's rebuttal focused on the spirit of his intentions rather than the letter of the disputed theses. Ultimately, he appealed to the pope but lost his case, though the verdict of heresy did not fall until 1329, the year after his death.

This institutional disapproval did little to dampen the enthusiasm of those to whom he was a beacon of mystic enlightenment. Most of his Latin writings were translated into German in the subsequent decades, but his popularity went far beyond the reception of his works. The *Eckhart-Legenden*, actually sermon illustrations containing anecdotes of his wisdom, reflect that popularity. Examples are *Meister Eckharts Tochter* (Daughter) or *Meister Eckhart und der nackte Knabe* (and the Naked Boy). In the former, a "daughter" knocks at the monastery door asking for the master and declaring that she is neither virgin nor married nor widow, neither woman nor man; the solution to the riddle is that she exists in a transcendental state of enlightenment, and Eckhart declares her to be the "aller lüstersten menschen" (most enlightened person) he has ever met. The latter story tells how God appears in the form of a poor boy and engages Eckhart in a philosophical dialogue on the nature of divinity and revelation.

Eckhart's younger contemporary, Johannes Tauler, was deeply affected by the master's preaching. Tauler's own sermons are contained in over 200 manuscripts. They explore the *transformatio* or *deificatio* of the believer, which can occur in that divine *scintilla animae*, whereby God perfects the human soul by resolving it to himself. Tauler's influence was enormous, and it is telling that he was valued equally in the sixteenth century by the reformers and by the Jesuits. The other great original thinker to follow in Eckhart's wake was Heinrich Seuse, who as a young man received pastoral counseling from his mentor. Seuse's German writings are classics of mysticism. These include an autobiography, *Vita* (ca. 1362–66), a relatively new form in this period that lent itself to mystic explorations. This book concentrates on his sufferings, likened to Job's, and includes a running analogy with a knightly career: he is raised to spiritual knighthood and wounded in spiritual jousts, but in his tribulations he is comforted by visions, in one of which Meister Eckhart appears.

The Dominicans were keen to bind the new movement of female spirituality into their institution, and thus set up convents of nuns under their auspices.⁴⁸ The *cura monialium*, the pastoral care of women by the brethren, was in fact an obligation placed on both the Franciscans and the Dominicans by the church authorities to bring these women under the discipline of their organizations. For the monks this responsibility was not always welcome, but they pursued it with diligence; indeed, this may be the main reason why a highly intellectual order like the Dominicans produced vernacular literature at all. It has been asserted that Eckhart wrote in German only when he was writing for the nuns. *Yolanda von Vianden*, a 6,000-line verse account by the Trier

Dominican Hermann von Veldenz, straddles the genres of courtly romance and biography. It tells of the childhood of Yolanda (1231–83), a daughter of the Luxembourg nobility, who rejected her parents' plans for an advantageous marriage and instead entered the Dominican convent at Marienthal. Hermann's manuscript was spectacularly rediscovered in 1999.

Of this lively tradition of Dominican women who tended toward mysticism, Margareta Ebner (ca. 1291–1351), a Swabian and close correspondent of Tauler, is known for her *Offenbarungen* (Revelations), a kind of inner autobiography. Among her correspondents was Heinrich von Nördlingen, whose letters survive as testimony to his almost hagiographical reverence for her. Christine Ebner (1277–1356), no relation, was also a confidant of Heinrich — a good example of how mystics moved in tight circles. Encouraged by her confessor Konrad von Füssen, she too wrote autobiographical revelations and composed the *Engelthaler Schwesternbuch* (Book of the Engelthal Sisters), a collection of accounts of the experiences of the nuns in her convent. A similar work is the *Chronik* of Anna von Munzingen (fl. 1316–27), a collection of lives of female mystics in southern German Dominican convents. Adelheid Langmann (1306–75) was a member of the convent at Engelthal, but a generation younger. Her own *Offenbarungen* were influenced by Christine Ebner but are less pointedly autobiographical. They chart the stages of the gradual elevation of a soul to God, climaxing in an erotic allegory in which *Spes* (Hope) and *Caritas* (Love) lead the enraptured soul to the marriage bed, where it experiences the *Unio* with Christ.

Any account of new spiritualities in late medieval Germany would be incomplete without some account of the lay movement of women who chose reclusive lives and often found their spiritual homes in mysticism. The Beguines, an independent movement, developed from the twelfth century onward, starting in the Netherlands and spreading rapidly to the cities of the Rhineland and southern Germany. The most famous Beguines were the great mystics of the thirteenth century, Mechthild von Magdeburg (for part of her career she was also a Cistercian) and the Brabantine visionary Hadewijch. Their male counterparts were called Béghards, but the lay movement had a special appeal for women. The persona of the *religiosa mulier* allowed a Beguine to achieve social acceptance as a spiritual authority without disappearing from the world. The women lived austere, but they remained free of vows or hierarchy or any common rule. Although they practiced chastity, they could at any time return to normal life and marry, and they were permitted to hold property. However, the Beguines were under the scrutiny of the church establishment. In 1310 a French Beguine, Margareta Porete, was burned at the stake for her mystical writings, and a bull of 1312 declared that a dangerously heretical spirit of freedom was at large in the German Beguine and Béghard circles. By the mid-fourteenth century, the movement was in decline.⁴⁹

Their numbers and visibility give the Beguines significance as the most obvious users of lay religious literature. The lay mystic was a natural recipient, for example, of a work like *Christus und die minnende Seele* (Christ and the

Loving Soul; anon.),⁵⁰ which presents the way to the *unio mystica* in pictures and verse, using the image of the lover from the Song of Solomon to depict the love affair of the soul with Christ. Both its simple style of presentation and the fact of its appearance in print imply a primary readership among the laity, an assumption supported by the fact that one of the best manuscripts was commissioned by a patrician woman, Margarethe Ehinger of Constance.⁵¹

Similarly, the macaronic Christmas carol *In dulci iubilo*, which is still sung today, had its origin in a fourteenth-century mystic community, probably lay. The manuscript testimony suggests that, already in the earliest stages, it existed in at least two versions, one Upper German and the other Dutch, which corresponds to the geographical distribution of the main groups of Beguines at the time. The Upper German version has exactly the strophic structure of the modern German and English carols, but the Middle Dutch text has two extra lines; the texts vary from four to seven strophes. The mixture of languages creates a sense of fun; this and the accompanying bouncy rhythm conjure up a feeling of Christmas joy. Typical features of mysticism here include the ecstatic feeling and the image — in the first strophe of the Dutch version — of hearts soaring up to God. The nineteenth-century poet Hoffmann von Fallersleben first published the historical lyrics (German version, left; Dutch, right):⁵²

In dulci iubilo
nu singet und seit fro!
alle unser wonne
leit in praesepio,
sie leuchtet vor die sonne
matris in gremio,
que est a et o.
que est a et o.

In dulci iubilo
singhet ende weset vro!
al onse hertenwonne
leit in presepio,
dat lichtet als die sonne
in matris gremio.
ergo merito,
ergo merito,
des sullen alle herten
sweven in gaudio.

[German: In sweet rejoicing now sing and be merry! All our joy lies in a manger. It shines more than the sun in the bosom of the mother, and is alpha and omega.]

[Dutch: In sweet rejoicing sing and be merry! All the joy of our hearts lies in a manger. It shines like the sun in the bosom of the mother; therefore, to our benefit all hearts should soar in joy.]

Literature in the Cities

The most important contextual development between medieval and early modern German literature was the emergence of an entirely new literary milieu. The cities, not even on the literary landscape in the early thirteenth century, had by the sixteenth century replaced the courts as the centers of innovative writing. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries many of the most

significant authors belonged to the new urban intellectual world: Johannes von Tepl, Hans Rosenplüt, Heinrich Kaufringer, Thüring von Ringoltingen, Hans Folz, Sebastian Brant.⁵³ The southern German cities led in printing from the beginning, and one characteristic of urban literature is that it was intended for a far broader reading public than ever before. The spread of literacy to the urban populations began in earnest with the formation of new schools in the thirteenth century; in 1348 the first German-speaking university was founded in Prague, followed by Vienna, Heidelberg, Cologne, and Erfurt, and in the fifteenth century by a further eleven. Always, universities were located in cities. One factor driving this upsurge in urban erudition was a recognition of the usefulness of reading and writing skills for trade; but we should not underestimate the extent to which education and culture were ends in themselves for social classes with a new-found self-confidence and aspirations to a ranking hitherto barred to them.

The new cities represented an anomaly in the feudal thinking of the medieval courtly world, which with its pyramid structure of service and land tenure was fundamentally rural in conception. Even in the earlier Middle Ages city populations had enjoyed freedoms unknown to the peasantry, and city walls had as much to do with marking the boundaries of these privileges as with practical defensive purposes. While the cities too had clear power structures, in which for example patricians defined their identity in contradistinction to artisans, the potential for upward mobility within the ranking system of a city was far greater than on the land. The medieval cities mostly came under the direct rule of feudally appointed overlords, the dukes of Vienna, for example, or the bishops of Cologne; but as early as the beginning of the Middle High German period the citizenry was enjoying some degree of self-government in many cities. The transition to the early modern period was characterized by a striving for greater urban independence. Usually this meant persuading the feudal superior not to intervene in municipal affairs, but fuller legal independence was possible by attaining the status of imperial free city (*freie Reichsstadt*), as Regensburg did in 1285. In the north, the foundation of the Hanseatic League in 1160 was partly a question of the emancipation of the cities, as it was again in the south with the rise of the Swiss Confederation in the fourteenth century. The emergence of the term *stat* in place of *burg* must be seen in the context of the city becoming something more than merely the seat of a nobleman.⁵⁴

One of the new literary forms of this period, the town (or city) chronicle (*Stadtchronik*), was often dedicated to this struggle.⁵⁵ The *Zerbster Ratschronik*, commissioned 1451, charts the history of Zerbst, near Magdeburg, from 1259 to 1445.⁵⁶ The first century is covered cursorily, recording documents granting trade prerogatives to the city, cited by incipit⁵⁷ and briefly described; but the bulk of the chronicle is a narrative account of the city's assertions of prerogatives against the dukes of Anhalt from the late fourteenth century onward. The activities of the mayor Peter Becker, who represented the city before the emperor, are recorded sympathetically. The purpose of the *Zerbster Ratschronik* was to provide a pool of information from which the interests of the city could be defended, and a docket in the manuscript

warns that it should be shown only to trusted collaborators: “sal nyemant lesen, er sie denn met eyden der stadt verwandt!” (no one shall read it unless he is bound to the city by oath!).

The literary classes of urban society had an ambivalent view of the courtly world. On the one hand, the older, higher estate was resented, and some began to question the principle of the inherent superiority of the nobility. One of the first patrician writers, the Viennese Jans der Enikel, has such a program in mind in his *Weltchronik* (World Chronicle, ca. 1272). He first rehearses the old interpretation of the Noah story, that servitude comes from the curse of the renegade Ham and that the noble lines descend from the righteous brothers Shem and Japheth; but then Jans abruptly challenges this view:

doch hân ich dick vernomen,
daz wir von Evâ sîn bekomen
und von Adâmen
und von ir beider sâmen,
herren unde knechte. (ll. 3121–25)⁵⁸

[yet I have often heard that we are all descended from Eve and from Adam and from their offspring, masters and servants alike.]

The argument has an egalitarian ring, but Jans, a member of one of the city’s elite families, is not thinking of the rights of all social groupings alike. Rather, the jibe is directed upward, toward the tension between the Viennese patriciate and the Viennese court. This rebelliousness against authorities above or outside the city allowed urban literature to go in different directions.

On the other hand, the leading patrician circles styled themselves as a new urban aristocracy, as *Ritterbürger* or *Stadtadel* (urban nobility), and in maintaining their preeminence within the cities they drew on precisely those concepts of nobility that troubled them at the court. It would therefore be a mistake to imagine that the urban centers of literary production rejected chivalric ideals. Their writings consciously seek continuities with the courtly traditions of the *Blütezeit*. Such a desire may have prompted Ulrich von Rappoltstein, the *Dombherr* (lit., cathedral director) in Strasbourg, to commission the *Rappoltsteiner Parzival* (1331–36).⁵⁹ This vast work — a team effort, written mainly by two goldsmiths, Philipp Colin and Claus Wisse, but also with a Jewish collaborator, Samson Pine — is in fact a compilation of Wolfram’s *Parzival* (all sixteen books), a 36,000-line translation of Chrétien’s *Perceval* (including the French continuations), and a collection of *Minnesang*. The result is rambling and inconsistent, as its philosophy (as in other urban compilatory works of this period — witness the chronicles of Heinrich von München) is to accumulate rather than to distil. The *Rappoltsteiner Parzival* was written in verse, but many urban versions of courtly romances were prose reductions, as for example an anonymous *Tristrant und Isalde* (printed 1488); Ulrich Fueterer (d. 1496), a church painter from Landshut, produced both a prose and a strophic version of the Lancelot story. Thus, the narrative forms of

courtly literature found their urban reworkings, and from the fifteenth century they were often printed for a wider audience.

Thüring von Ringoltingen's (ca. 1415–83) genealogical novel *Melusine* (1456, printed 1474),⁶⁰ offers an instructive example of the literature of the urban nobility. A relatively close reworking of the fourteenth-century French courtly romance by Couldrette, it is given a fresh dynamic in the context of Thüring's status among the elite of the city of Bern.⁶¹ Reymund, son of an impoverished nobleman of Poitou, marries the mysterious Melusine, who had promised him prosperity when he encountered her by a spring. As a condition for the marriage, she sets one taboo: Reymund must never seek her out on a Saturday. They have ten sons, who are all, except the two youngest, marked by some facial disfigurement, be it a birthmark, an extra eye, or a boar's tooth. The eldest sons, Urien and Gyot, go to war, and the novel takes a lengthy digression on their exploits and successes, in which we see a reflection of the contemporary fear of Turkish expansion. At home, Reymund's brother misses Melusine at court on Saturdays and plants in her husband's mind a suspicion of misconduct. Reymund spies on his wife and discovers her in the bath, her lower body transformed into a serpent's winding tail. This is her curse, to be altered one day per week. Reymund regrets his disloyalty and keeps the secret until his son Goffroy, in a fury that his brother Freymund has joined a religious order, burns down the monastery, killing all the monks. In a voice loud enough for the members of the court to hear him, Reymund rages against Goffroy and his "demonic" mother. Thus exposed, Melusine must leave the courtly world. Goffroy later finds the tomb of his grandparents and discovers the secret of Melusine's curse, a parallel breach of trust in the previous generation: Melusine's father had broken a taboo laid on him by her mother, in retribution for which Melusine and her sisters killed him. Through this deed she earned the curse that could be removed only through marriage to a man who would keep the clause of their contract. Unfortunately, Reymund fails her, and her chance is lost; but Goffroy makes good his own failings, rebuilding the monastery and finally succeeding to his father's title.

As a symbol, the serpent's tail is multiapplicable. The fact that no harm comes of Reymund's initial breach of trust — Melusine knows he has spied on her and ignores it because she also knows he has told no one — suggests that it is not the taboo itself that matters but rather the public consequences of exposure. The novel is therefore a study in the social damage done when skeletons are allowed out of closets. Melusine's secret could speak to readers of various potential scandals that might lead to the social ruin of a dynasty. A pivotal question concerns Melusine's origins. If her parents are human and she herself a normal woman cursed for her sin, then the message of the novel relates to fall and redemption. However, if her mother is a water sprite, as is more likely, then the supernatural element does not originate from Melusine's patricide but from her matrilineal prehistory, and the difficulty with her socialization lies not in her personal failing but in her genealogy. The focus on lineage implies that for Thüring the stigma was above all the disgrace of having parentage below the social ranking to which a family aspired. When Reymund invites his feudal

Ich schall vil mee dann tausent mal. Ach nun gesehen
 dich got mein alleliebster trost vñ hort in manes her-
 gen grunde Gesehen euch got alles volk / Gesehen dich
 got dz schloß lusiniē so vñ vñ so schön dz ich gemacht
 vñ selbs gestift hab. Gesehe dich got du süßes sere spil
 Gesehen dich got aller preiß diser welt / gesehe dich got
 alles dz einer frauē wol gefallen mag. gesehe dich got
 mein alleliebster freunt. d. mein hez g ganz hat besesse.
 Wie M. lusina Reymund gesehet vñ alles volk vñ
 schied wänende vñ schreieude hin wer.



¶ o nun M. lusina dise wort alle volbracht. do
 thett sy a. or in allen einen sprung. vñ sprang
 gegen einem venster vñ stoh also zu de ven-
 sterauf vñ waz züstund eines außplickes vñ der güttel

*Melusine flies away after jumping from the castle.
 Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.*

superior to the wedding, the latter replies with the question, “wer oder von wannen ist die fraue die du da nimest. Acht das du nit mißfahrest von welcher gegent / oder was geschlechtes. Auch sag mir / ob sy fast wol und Hochgeboren sey” (Who or from where is the woman you are marrying? Take care that you are not misled about her country or family. And tell me if she is of high and noble birth). Reymund is forced to admit that he does not know, “wer oder von wannen sy sey / oder was ir wesen sey” (who or from where she is or what her essence is), except insofar as her “stand und gestalt” (rank and nature) are obvious for all to see. This thematic linking of Melusine’s

Wesen, her monstrous nature, with her *Geschlecht*, or *Stand*, her bloodline, is programmatic: we might say that *Wesen* is a metaphor for *Stand*. In this case, the novel is grappling with the problem of the integration into high society of a family whose origins are inferior. Although for Melusine herself success comes too late, her progeny is able to establish itself and break the stranglehold of its history.⁶²

The story has direct relevance to Thüring's own socialization. His family had soared to the heights of Bernese society; his father, Rudolf, served several terms as mayor. They belonged to a cartel of eight ruling families, the so-called *Berner Twingherrengeschlechter*,⁶³ who laid claim to urban nobility. This elite group signaled its status through a dress code, which exacerbated tensions with other groupings in the city. In a celebrated case known as the *Twingherrenstreit* (1469–71), twenty-two members of this circle, among them Thüring, were convicted of breaching a ban on such sartorial symbols. Thüring was actually born with the surname Zigerli (quark-maker), which bore shades of the agrarian world of the Niedersimmertal, whence the family had moved to Bern as wine merchants in 1350.⁶⁴ In 1439 Rudolf changed the family's name to obliterate the memory of its mercantile origins, and the young Thüring assisted him with the archival research, producing the documentation necessary for a claim of genealogical succession to the now extinct line of von Ringoltingens. Thüring's requisitioning of the genre of the courtly romance may have been a strategic move: the family could compensate for their ancestral deficits through cultural competence. However, if the serpent's tail represents a failure of lineage, then Melusine becomes an allegory of the author's own family history, her ultimately successful struggle for class assimilation reflecting the genealogical self-invention that both Thüring and his primary readership practiced with such great creativity and dedication.

The growth of the modern city required a bureaucratic apparatus, which in turn led to the rise of an administrative class that by virtue of its education and social contacts was well placed to make a significant contribution to urban literature. The prominence of incumbents of the high civil office of *Stadtschreiber* (city clerk, director of the city chancery, responsible for official correspondence), especially among the authors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, provides ample testimony to this.⁶⁵ This urban executive could be recruited from the ruling circles of the cities, but equally it provided an excellent career opportunity for young men of middle-ranking families. Johannes von Tepl (ca. 1350–1415) was apparently such a man. He was notary of the Bohemian city of Saaz by 1383, presumably having moved there from his northern Bohemian hometown of Tepl. He was also a teacher and held other public offices. Of his writings, only the *Ackermann aus Böhmen* (The Plowman of Bohemia, 1400/1) survives.⁶⁶

The *Ackermann* is a disputation between a bereaved "plowman" and the personified figure of Death. It is organized in thirty-three prose chapters (a spiritually significant number) averaging barely 200 words each. Each chapter is a speech, assigned alternately to the plowman and Death, until in the final chapter God speaks. There is no framework narrative, and only a postscript, in

which the author's voice is heard, falls outside the direct speech of the litigants. At the beginning of the third chapter, the agricultural metaphor is explained: "Ich bins genant ein ackerman, von vogelwat ist mein pflug" (I am called a plowman, my plow is of a bird's attire), that is, he "plows" with a quill; the plaintiff is by profession a writer. The plowman laments the passing of Margaretha, his wife and the mother of his children. An acrostic in the post-script reads IOHANNES-MA, and the name Margaretha is introduced at the letter M, which suggests that the lamenting plowman may be identical with the author Johannes. Such a biographical interpretation is appealing, as the work appears more poignant if we believe it to be a cry from the heart; but it is equally possible that the drama of bereavement is merely a narrative prerequisite for the debate.

The literary power of the *Ackermann* owes much to the new chancery German style cultivated at Charles IV's Prague court by Johann von Neumarkt (d. 1380).⁶⁷ Based on the rhetorical forms of trecento Italian humanists, most notably the elegant epistolary style of Petrarch,⁶⁸ with whom Neumarkt exchanged letters regularly, German chancery style was full of formulaic, rhythmical devices. Johannes's admiring imitation of this characteristic is obvious from the very first sentence of the *Ackermann*, a bitter tirade against Death, with its double- and triple-repetitions and variations that enhance the effect of the outrage of the newly widowed plaintiff: "Grimmige tilger aller lande, schedlicher echter aller werlte, freissamer mörder aller guten leute, ir Tod, euch sei verfluchet!" (Cruel scourge of all nations, destructive purger of the world, terrible murderer of all good people, you, Death, be cursed!). Death answers in a tone of bewilderment, calling him "son" and challenging him to prove that he has been wronged. At this the plowman complains, "ir habt mir den zwelften buchstaben, meiner freuden hort, aus dem alphabet gar freisamlich enzücker" (you have most terribly plucked the twelfth letter [that is, M], my entire joy, out of my alphabet). He speaks of his former joy, but now "mein anker haftet ninder" (my anchor finds nothing to grip). In the ensuing exchange it is striking how reasonable Death is. While the plowman again and again rages bitterly about his loss — she was his "beloved," his "guiding star," his "sun," his "honorable falcon," his "hen with her chickens" — and curses his adversary in furious emotional tirades, Death patiently explains to him the way of the world. He describes the intolerable crush there would be in the world, and the terrible consequences that would follow, if all the animals and people born since creation were still alive; the mosquitoes would be unbearable! He argues that it would not be better to wait until people are so sick of life that they desire death, for that is not honorable. And things are not that bad: after all, there are other women, and in any case, is a man not better off without a wife, marriage being only a sequence of trials? Death repeatedly takes the pragmatic approach: since decay is the way of all flesh, it is wise to accept what one cannot change. Besides, who is this plowman to question a primeval force? In a mocking variant of God's answer to Job in the Bible, Death pretends to remember how the plowman was present at all the great events in history, when Moses was promised the land or Alexander defeated Darius — the

implication being that since Death really was there, only an upstart plowman can challenge him. This reaches its ironic climax when he pretends to recall the plowman's appearance before the heavenly council to advise God when Eve took the forbidden fruit — and then the anticlimax, with the final mocking words of praise, “du bist zumale ein kluger esel!” (you are indeed a clever ass!).

The plowman may call on God to testify against Death, but Death insists he is doing the work of God, and like God, who makes his sun shine on the good and the evil alike (an allusion to Matt. 5:45), he treats all with equal force. In a key passage in chapter 16, Death declares himself God's reaper, created in Paradise when Eve fell, and pictured on a fresco from noble antiquity:

Du fragest, wer wir sein. Wir sein Gotes handgezeuge, herre Tod, ein rechte würekender meder. [. . .] Du fragest, was wir sein. Wir sein nichts und sein doch etwas. Deshalben nichts, wan wir weder leben weder wesen, noch gestalt noch understand haben, nicht geist sein, nicht sichtig sein, nicht greiflich sein; deshalben etwas, wan wir sein des lebens ende, des wesens ende, des nichtwesens anfang, ein mittel zwischen in beiden. [. . .] Du fragest, wie wir sein. Unbescheidenlich sein wir, wan unser figure zu Rome in einem tempel an einer wand gemalet was als ein man sitzend auf einem oxsen, dem die augen verbunden waren. Der selbe man furte ein hauen in seiner rechten hand und ein schaufel in der linken hand; damit facht er auf dem oxsen. Gegen im slug, warf und streit ein michel menige volkes. [. . .] In unser bedeutnuß bestreit der und begrub sie alle.

[You ask *who* we are. We are God's tool, Lord Death, a most effective reaper. You ask *what* we are. We are nothing, and yet something indeed. Nothing, because we have neither life nor being nor form nor foundation, are not spirit, not visible, not tangible; something, because we are the end of life, the end of being, the beginning of nonbeing, a midpoint between the two. You ask what we are *like*. We are ruthless, for our image was painted on a wall in a temple in Rome in the form of a man sitting on an ox, his eyes bound. The same man held a hoe in his right hand and a shovel in his left, and with these he drove the ox forward. A large crowd of people beat him, threw things at him and argued with him. In our parable he overcame them and buried them all.]

And yet Death is not entirely right. The plowman's arguments gradually become more sober and rational while Death's become more subjective and disparaging. When Death denigrates humanity (chap. 24) and the plowman argues that people are “Gotes aller hübschestes werk” (God's finest work, chap. 25), it appears as if the indignant mortal has won a round. In the end, God reprimands Death for ignoring the source of his power, the plowman for refusing the sway of mortality. God, the ultimate judge, concludes the debate with a final statement that balances the domains of man and Death: “klager, habe ere, Tod, habe sige” (Plaintiff, I award you honor; Death, I award you victory, chap. 33). In the epilogue the narrator is a model of Christian patience; the plowman has learned, has given up his complaint, and praises God, committing his late wife into the hands of the Eternal.

Sebastian Brant (1457–1521), the preeminent literary figure of the closing decades of the fifteenth century, was by descent a representative of the lower-to-middle echelons of city life: his parents ran the inn *Zum Goldenen Löwen* in Strasbourg.⁶⁹ At the same time, he represents urban intellectuality at its highest. In 1475 he enrolled at the recently founded University of Basel, where he studied humanities and law and became a lecturer even before completing his doctoral exams. He remained in Basel teaching, writing, publishing, and practicing law, for a quarter of a century before returning to his native city in 1500 and assuming the position of *Stadtschreiber*. University education as a path to authorial success was a new dynamic at the dawn of the early modern period and was typically urban. Even Brant's name is urban in conception. Most of the authors so far examined in this chapter have a name and a sobriquet, such as Johannes von Tepl, who may be referred to simply as "Johannes," but never as "Tepl," and is properly listed alphabetically under "J"; with the surname "Brant" we encounter the modern convention of nomenclature, which in Germany was an innovation of the artisan class.

Brant's *oeuvre* in German and Latin is strikingly diverse, including legal discourses, religious, political, and historical tracts and poems, and moral-didactic exhortations of various kinds. Many of these are short works that appeared as single-sheet pamphlets, so-called *Flugblätter* (broadsheets), which were so popular in the early days of printing. In his political writings he displays his loyalty to the empire and his hopes that the election of Maximilian I will lead to a Germany more united under a strengthened imperial sway; it is said to have been this stance that forced his return to Strasbourg after Basel joined the Swiss Confederation in 1499. Other pieces describe natural catastrophes, astronomical occurrences, and prodigies. His Latin eulogy on Petrarch is one of his finest poems. The intended readership varied considerably. While the Latin poems targeted the poet's academic contemporaries, possibly his students, the more popular topics were published in the vernacular for a wider reception. Single-sheet pamphlets may be thought of as the predecessors of newspapers, and one can imagine them being read aloud and thus reaching even the least literate of the city's residents. The aim was invariably to educate.

These diverse interests flow together in the work with which Brant's name is most closely associated, the *Narrenschiff* (Ship of Fools, 1494).⁷⁰ The genre of moralistic social satire on the theme of the fool was already coming into vogue when Brant appeared on the literary scene, but his *Narrenschiff* raised it to respectability. The Latin version, *Stultifera navis* (1497), translated by Brant's student Jacob Locher (1471–1528),⁷¹ achieved international acclaim. The success of Brant's work lay above all in the manner in which it resonated with the mood of the day. All human eccentricities are catalogued and characterized in rhyming couplets. Each of the 112 short chapters addresses a different vice, from amiable silliness to wanton sinfulness. With biting wit Brant attacks the immoral and the irreligious, the boorish, ungrateful, envious, or vain; adulterers, flatterers, gamblers, dancers, and singers; parents who set their children a bad example, children who will not take a telling. Sometimes the

butt of his jibe is a source of minor irritation, like people who take their dogs with them when they go to church; sometimes it is a serious threat to the social order, like Hans Böhme, the “bag-piper of Nickelshausen,” who instigated the peasants’ revolt of 1476. The evidence of folly is categorized finely, but the ultimate verdict is undifferentiating: all belong on board. The ship of fools was a popular image long before Brant adopted it: the ship going nowhere because of its crew’s incompetence; the ship that encompasses the fools of the world, who despite their variety are in reality all “in the same boat”; the sinking ship full of exultant passengers ignorant of their impending destruction; or as Brant put it, the ship bound for the Land of Fools, Narragonia. The exact interpretation of the allegorical vessel need not be consistent or clear; it is enough that the ship can appear on the title page, crammed with figures in jesters’ caps, an absurd visual image of human foolishness.

The visual presentation of the work was clearly foremost in Brant’s mind as he wrote, and there can be little doubt that the relationship of text and image provides one key to the book’s success. Each chapter is introduced by a woodcut, superscripted by a sententious three-line rhyme, and under this stand the title and the expository poem; the relationship between text and image was carefully planned and brilliantly executed — probably by the young Albrecht Dürer himself.⁷² The chapters are always precisely thirty-four or ninety-four lines in length, calculated to fill exactly two or four pages respectively, with the result that the woodcut always appears on the right-hand side. A few woodcuts are used more than once in the work, such as the famous picture of the wheel of fortune in chapters 37 and 56, a frugality encouraged by the considerable expense involved in hand-carving the pictures; but one is never left with the impression that images have been recycled clumsily, as is often the case in prints of this period. On the contrary, the detail in which text and image echo each other testifies to careful planning. Every image contains at least one fool in his distinctive cap, and the humorous caricature of the theme carries the reader into the subsequent text. “Von zů vil sorg” (On Worrying too much, no. 24) shows the fool with the world literally on his shoulders; “Von nachtes hofyeren” (On Nighttime Courting, no. 62) depicts a woman, undressed for bed, emptying a chamber-pot over the unwelcome singers below her window; “Von alten narren” (On Old Fools, no. 5) plays with two different German idioms, showing an old man both with one foot in the grave and with the “Schindmesser im Arsch” (the butcher’s knife in his arse).

In the prologue Brant declares that the book is a *Narrenspiegel* (mirror of fools), in which fools should see themselves and learn. Though the success of the book derives in part from the way it pokes fun in all directions, its humor is challenging rather than vindictive. A combination of parody and preaching seeks to bring the fool back onto the way of salvation. The key to salvation, however, is learning. This is underlined by the patterns of biblical citation: Brant’s most frequented portion of scripture is the Old Testament wisdom literature, followed by the books of the Law. The volume opens with the *Büchernarr* (Fool for Books), the would-be scholar who does not truly understand his books, and it returns frequently to the theme of useful and useless



Von alten Narren, illustration from chapter 5 of Sebastian Brant's Das Narrenschiff, Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.

learning. In part, Brant is making fun of academia, for there are many side-swipes at the culture of students, disturbing the peace, for example, by singing below the window of their beloved, but mainly it serves to indicate the true purpose of learning. For folly's opposite is wisdom, and one achieves wisdom through judicious and informed self-reflection. The optimistic humanist

assumption is that the sin and corruption that flow from folly (an intellectual failing) can be cured through education.

The principal contribution of the early cities to German lyric poetry is associated with the distinctive figure of the *Meistersinger* (also called *Meistersänger*, “master singer”).⁷³ *Meistersang* has been seen as an urban attempt to usurp *Minnesang* (love song), a view encouraged by the singers’ identification of Frauenlob, Heinrich von Mügeln, and other late-courtly troubadours, as their founders. However, the idea of a historical continuum is problematic, and the immediate precursors were probably traveling urban singers rather than courtly ones.⁷⁴ In contrast to the peripatetic *Minnesänger*, the *Meistersinger* were settled and organized in guilds like other urban trades; their meetings, or concerts, were known as *Singschulen*.⁷⁵ With the business-like efficiency of the urban classes, these “singing schools” established rules to make poetry and music teachable techniques; their codification was published in a tablet called the *Tabulatur* (tablature). Strict regulations were also enforced for the conduct of their closed meetings. Adam Puschmann first elucidated the principles in 1571 in his *Gründlicher Bericht des deutschen Meistergesanges* (Thorough Report on the German Master Song); the first history of *Meistersang* was composed by Cyriacus Spangenberg (1528–1604) and published in Strasbourg in 1598. But one of our best sources for this subculture was written much later, in 1697, by Johann Christoph Wagenseil (1633–1705):⁷⁶ *Buch von der Meistersinger holdseligen Kunst* (Book of the Mastersingers’ Lovely Art), from which Richard Wagner drew much of the material for his opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Wagenseil reveals rituals and methods, reproduces the most important *Töne* (tones, melodies; each song used a specific *Ton*) in musical notation, offers a full-page woodcut of a master presiding in his finery, and reflects the great erudition with which the *Meistersinger* approached their art.

In the early period, that is, in the first half of the fifteenth century, Mainz was the leading center of *Meistersang*, followed by Nuremberg; later Augsburg, Strasbourg, Colmar, Freiburg, and Ulm became famed for their *Singschulen*. The leading singer of the late fifteenth century was Hans Folz (ca. 1435–1513), who expanded the repertoire, though he now seems to have been less of a reformer than was once assumed.⁷⁷ A barber from Worms, Folz settled in Nuremberg, where he joined the singers’ guild and became a leading practitioner. His literary activity was far broader than simply *Meistersang*; like his great successor in Nuremberg, Hans Sachs (1494–1576), he also excelled as a dramatist and produced historical, political, and alchemistic tracts, as well as one disturbingly anti-Semitic piece, *Jüdischer Wucher* (Jewish Usury, 1491). However, it seems to have been for his *Meisterlieder* (master songs) that he was most prized by his contemporaries. The bulk of these treat of religious themes, but Folz breaks with tradition, for example by making a *Meisterlied* out of a misogynous *Schwank*: a man dies, he tells us, and his apparently distraught wife accompanies the bier to the cemetery. The pallbearers wish to rest beneath a certain tree, but the widow objects, remembering that her first husband, in being carried to his grave, was mysteriously brought back to life while

the procession rested under this same tree. She would not wish this to happen again, she explains with feigned altruism, because his soul is at rest, and her grief is not reason enough to disturb his sleep. A week later she has remarried. Folz concludes:

Das peispiel merckt, ir jungen gseln,
 Hie von der weiber liste,
 Sie wein und lachen wan sie weln,
 Des yn nümer gepriste,
 Wan sie hant kurczen mut und lange cleider.
 Das clagt vil mancher leider.
 Es sind nit neue mer,
 Spricht Hanß Folcz barwirer. (20, 63–70)

[Note well this example of female deceit, you young journeymen.⁷⁸ They weep and laugh when they will; this never fails them, for they are short in brains but long in clothes. Many a man has cause to rue this. There is nothing new about that, says Hans Folz the barber.]

The *Meistersang* tradition continued to blossom into the sixteenth century, reaching its golden age with Sachs, through whom it entered the service of the Reformation. After this it stagnated somewhat but survived for a further three centuries: the last German *Singschule*, in Memmingen, shut its doors in 1875.

The New Jewish Vernacular

From the tenth century onward Germany — אשכנז (*Ashkenaz*)⁷⁹ — had developed its own discrete brand of Judaism with distinctive customs and rituals, and a number of German cities became centers of international Jewish scholarship, foremost among them Mainz, Vienna, and Regensburg.⁸⁰ The visible presence of this community resulted in the frequent appearance of the Jew as a stock figure in, for example, the courtly novel, usually with a hostile overtone.⁸¹ However, a host of Jewish motifs in Middle High German texts testify as well to a positive intellectual exchange.⁸² Thus, the Jews left their mark on early German literature, but not as authors. Notwithstanding the celebrated case of the late-thirteenth-century Jewish *Minnesänger* Süßkind von Trimberg (ca. 1230–ca. 1300), whose *Sangsprüche* are transmitted in the Manessa Codex,⁸³ or of Samson Pine (fl. 1336), mentioned earlier in connection with the *Rappoltsteiner Parzival*, Jews did not contribute greatly to mainstream German literature until well into the modern period. However, bearing in mind that each of the various groupings of late medieval society produced a different literature for its own consumption, it is, in any case, problematic to apply the concept of mainstream to the literature of that time. Like urban, monastic, and courtly authors, Jews wrote mostly for a readership in their own communities, and this meant that they wrote in Hebrew. For the Jews of medieval Europe, Hebrew enjoyed a similar status to that of Latin for Christians: as the language of religion and scholarship, but with the difference that the average Jew

commanded a far greater competence in the sacred language than the average Christian. It was no doubt for this reason that the Jewish communities turned later to the common language as a literary medium.⁸⁴

Jewish vernacular works began to appear from the beginning of the fourteenth century. In its earliest phase the Judeo-German that later became the Yiddish language was a variety of Middle High German with a significant number of distinctive lexemes, mostly taken from Hebrew. It was written in Hebrew characters, the consonants *aleph*, *yod*, *waw*, and *ayin* being pressed into service as vowels. Later, as Yiddish came to be spoken across large parts of eastern Europe and to acquire a stronger Slavic influence, its kinship with German became less immediate; but in the late medieval period, writers in Old Yiddish perceived their language as טײַטש (*tuits*), that is, *Deutsch*.⁸⁵

In a manner similar to the first Christian excursions into vernacular writing in Old High German, the Judeo-German chirographic tradition began with glosses on the Bible and other Hebrew religious works and with inserts and asides in sacred manuscripts.⁸⁶ Probably the earliest example of the latter is a single rhyming couplet in a *machsor* (prayer book) datable to 1272–73, in which the scribe blesses the user with the wish:

gut ták ím betáge
se wár dis máchasór in béss hakenéssess tráge!

[May he be granted a good day who carries this machsor into the synagogue.]

In the years that followed, prayers and religious verse appeared, such as the macaronic pieces and Hebrew poems with German versions collected by the late-fifteenth-century Menahem ben Naphtali Oldendorf. By the sixteenth century, Yiddish had acquired sufficient respectability to allow interpretive translations of scripture; the paraphrase on the Book of Job (1557) by Avroham ben Schemuel Pikartei is reminiscent of the comparable work by the Teutonic Order. The use of written Jewish vernacular for secular purposes began slightly later than for sacred, and it too developed through phases broadly parallel to those earlier experienced by German Christian literature, beginning with small-scale functional writings, such as private letters or snippets of medical lore that sometimes have the character of charms. Although the earliest surviving examples of these are from the fifteenth century (the oldest known letter in Yiddish is dated 1478), the regular migrations of European Jewish populations in the face of pogroms and expulsions, combined with their lack of enduring institutions such as monastic or courtly libraries, mean that a great deal must have been lost. Functional writing in Judeo-German therefore probably began as early as the late thirteenth century.

The earliest monument of Judeo-German narrative literature are the verse narratives collected in the Cambridge Codex, which may date back as far as the early fourteenth century.⁸⁷ Dated 1382, the manuscript was partly written by one Isak der Schreiber. It was discovered in the archives of the Ezra Synagogue in Fostat, Cairo, in 1896,⁸⁸ that it reached Egypt is testimony to the great

mobility of medieval Jewish communities. It contains six narrative poems: the closing lines of a poem about Moses, *Gan Eden* (The Garden of Eden), *Awroham owinu* (Abraham our Father), *Josef'ha-zadik* (Joseph the Righteous), the *Lion Fable*, and *Dukus Horant*.⁸⁹ Although the texts are Judeo-German, the titles (only two of which are in the manuscript) are Hebrew. *Dukus* is a borrowing into Hebrew of Latin *dux* “leader,” in the medieval sense of duke. Most of these poems contain biblical narrative, but the *Lion Fable* is secular. *Dukus Horant* stands on its own as a Jewish adaptation of a German heroic epic and has received the most scholarly attention of all the works in proto-Yiddish. It is composed in strophes of four lines, the first pair being the long two-part lines familiar from Germanic heroic poetry (though distichal verse, albeit unrhymed, is also typical in Hebrew), the second pair being short lines. The opening strophe, transcribed and transliterated, gives a flavor of the style and language:⁹⁰

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| עש ווש אין טוצן ריכן | איין קוניק וויט ארקנט |
| איין דעגן אלזא קונא | איטנא ווש ער גננט |
| ער ווש מילדא און שונא | |
| ער טרוק דער אירן קרונא | |

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 's uus 'in tužn rikn | 'iin quniq uuit 'rqnt |
| 'iin d'gn 'lz' qun' | 'itn' uus 'r gnnt. |
| 'r uus mild' 'un šun' | |
| 'r truq der 'irn qrun' | |

[There was in the German lands a famous king, a most valiant hero; Etene was his name. He was generous and fair, and bore the crown of honor.]

If we now translate this into a normalized Middle High German, it becomes obvious that the two are very similar:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ez waz in tiutschen rîchen | ein kunic wît erkant, |
| ein degen alsô kuone | Etene waz er genant. |
| Er waz milde unde schône, | |
| er truoc der êren krône. | |

Whether these two forms of language are different at all depends on how the script is interpreted, and it has been argued that *Dukus Horant* is nothing more than standard Middle High German in Hebrew characters. However, the modern consensus is that the language of the poem does already have a distinctively Jewish tone.

The poem tells the story of Etene, a young German king, whose hegemony extends to Denmark, Spain, Italy, France, and Hungary. Etene is advised by his confidant, Duke Horant, to seek a wife. At a council of his vassals, the Greek princess Hilde is proposed as his wife, though the ferocity of her father, King Hagen, is a cause for concern. Accompanied by his brother Morunk, three giants who recognize Etene as their feudal superior, and 200 knights,

Horant embarks on a journey to Greece to win the bride on his king's behalf. Arriving at a vast eastern port (presumably Constantinople) Horant first seeks contact in patrician circles, eventually finding quarters in the home of one of the richest merchants in town. After twenty-eight days, the Whitsun festivities furnish Horant with the opportunity to catch the eye of the princess. Later that same evening Horant sings in the courtyard of his merchant host, and now his true gift is revealed: the birds fall silent, the animals come out of the woods, and even the wild boar — for Jewish listeners the epitome of the uncivilized — ceases to roll in the mud. From the palace roof, Hilde hears and is captivated. A meeting is arranged and Horant presents Etene's suit. When he promises to sing for her in Germany, Hilde agrees to abscond after the festival. During the festivities Horant's men kill a lion, while Horant acquits himself well in a joust. Both incidents attract Hagen's attention; Horant offers to become Hagen's vassal and promises to return the next day. At this point the manuscript breaks off. Obviously, the tale must end with a successful conclusion to Horant's quest. Presumably, his ruse initially will be successful, allowing him to smuggle Hilde from the city; presumably, Hagen will come after him, since a military confrontation involving the knights, the giants, and ultimately Horant's own prowess is a necessary ingredient, given the rules of the heroic epic; and presumably, this battle will end with Hagen submitting to the feudal supremacy of Etene. Two loose ends may be significant: Hilde gives Horant a ring with a magic stone that may be instrumental in Horant's ruse; and Horant has his horses shod with golden shoes fixed only with a single nail, so that they periodically fall off, a strategy aimed at winning the affection of the impoverished townspeople: perhaps their support is later valuable to him.

The work has been referred to as the "Jewish *Kudrun*," since several characters share names and attributes with those of the Middle High German *Kudrun* epic,⁹¹ and the parallels come particularly close in the sections where Hilde is wooed at Hagen's court, in Ireland. A parallel has also been suggested with another epic, *König Rother*; it too has a bridal quest, and in this case the particular similarity to *Dukus Horant* lies in the locations, the German King Rother seeking to woo the princess of Constantinople. What these analogies indicate is not any direct intertextual relationship but rather a shared oral tradition finding an independent literary expression in both Jewish and Christian milieus.⁹² This most likely represents a Jewish tradition of oral performance consisting of both indigenous Jewish material and tales from the majority Christian community sung in a vernacular that at the time still had only a slight Jewish coloring. It may point to the presence in the Jewish community of professional peripatetic singers who practiced oral performance poetry for the entertainment of their peers. Earlier scholarship spoke of the Jewish *spilman*, though the word is unfortunate, both because it forces Jewish culture into Christian terms and because the concept of the *spilman* is in any case an inaccurate way of describing what was going on in German oral tradition. An intriguing suggestion is that these singers might have been the cantors of the synagogues. Cantors certainly had the necessary performance skills as well as a

natural place in the limelight. Against this conjecture is the fact that some Jewish religious authorities spoke out against secular songs.

The *Dukus Horant* manuscript is the earliest surviving witness to this tradition, but it clearly was no isolated curiosity. Another early Judeo-German retelling of a courtly novel, *Widuwilt*, also known as *Kinig Artus Hof* (King Arthur's Court), is an adaptation of the late-thirteenth-century Middle High German romance *Wigalois* by Wirnt von Gravenberg.⁹³ The first poet in this tradition whose name is recorded became active toward the end of the fifteenth century: Elia Levita Bachur (1469–1549), author of the *Bovo-Buch* and *Paris un Viene*. In the centuries that followed, the range of Judeo-German and Old Yiddish literature broadened immensely. Thus, by the time mainstream modern German literature was flourishing in the Baroque period, Yiddish too had become a fully-fledged literary idiom.

Notes

¹ This neglect has been partly rectified by a surge of interest in recent decades. Particularly useful orientations are Thomas Cramer, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im späten Mittelalter*, vol. 3 of *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im Mittelalter* (Munich: DTV, 1990); Wolfgang Spiewok, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur des Spätmittelalters*, 3 vols. (Greifswald: Reineke, 1997–99); and Johannes Janota, *Vom späten Mittelalter zum Beginn der Neuzeit*, vol. 3/1 of *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004). Helmut de Boor and Richard Newald, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, parts 3/1 (5th ed., 1997), 3/2 (1986), and 4/1 (2nd ed., 1994) (Munich: Beck) also give thorough coverage. The element of transition is highlighted in Werner Röcke and Marina Münkler, eds., *Die Literatur im Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Munich: Hanser, 2004). See also Wolfgang Harms and Peter Johnson, eds., *Deutsche Literatur des späten Mittelalters* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1975); Walter Haug, Timothy R. Jackson, and Johannes Janota, eds., *Zur deutschen Literatur und Sprache des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1983); and Horst Brunner and Werner Williams-Krapp, eds., *Forschungen zur deutschen Literatur des Spätmittelalters* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2003). On the novel see Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger, eds., *Positionen des Romans im späten Mittelalter* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991). On historical writing: Hans Patze, ed., *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1987). For career biographies on individual authors see Max Reinhart and James Hardin, eds., *German Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation 1280–1580*, vol. 179 of *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Detroit: Gale, 1997). Henceforth cited as Reinhart and Hardin, eds., *DLB* 179.

² “Chirographic” refers to handwritten documents and may be contrasted with “typographic”; see R. Graeme Dunphy, “Orality,” in *Early Germanic Literature and Culture*, ed. Brian Murdoch and Malcolm Read, vol. 1 of *Camden House History of German Literature* (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 103–18. The Camden House series will hereafter be cited as *CHHGL*.

³ See in this volume the chapter by Renate Born.

⁴ See Dorothea Klein, “Wann endet das Spätmittelalter?,” in Brunner and Williams-Krapp, eds., *Forschungen*, 299–316.

⁵ Ernst Regel, ed., *Johanns von Würzburg Wilhelm von Österreich* (1906; repr., Zürich: Weidmann, 1970).

⁶ This interpretation is expounded in Gisela Vollmann-Profe, "Johann von Würzburg, 'Wilhelm von Österreich,'" in Haug and Wachinger, eds., *Positionen des Romans*, 123–35.

⁷ Wolfgang Haubrichs, ed., *Zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich: Elisabeth von Lothringen, Gräfin von Nassau-Saarbrücken* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 2002).

⁸ Edition: Jan-Dirk Müller, ed., *Romane des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts: Nach den Erstdrucken mit sämtlichen Holzschnitten* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990). Also Hermann Urtel, ed., *Der Huce Scheffel der Gräfin Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken nach der Handschrift der Hamburger Stadtbibliothek* (Hamburg: Gräfe, 1905).

⁹ Reinhard Hahn, "Von frantzosischer zungen in teütsch": *Das literarische Leben am Innsbrucker Hof des späteren 15. Jahrhunderts und der Prosaroman "Pontus und Sidonia"* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1990).

¹⁰ See Martina Backes, *Das literarische Leben am kurpfälzischen Hof zu Heidelberg im 15. Jahrhundert: Ein Beitrag zur Gönnerforschung des Spätmittelalters* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992). Also Richard Benz, *Heidelberg: Schicksal und Geist* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1961), esp. 63–81.

¹¹ See Will Hasty, "Minnesang — The Medieval German Love Lyrics," in *German Literature of the High Middle Ages*, vol. 3 of *CHHGL* (2006), 141–59.

¹² Not to be confused with an earlier *Minnesinger*, the margrave Heinrich von Meissen, Margrave Heinrich III (1218–88), also called Heinrich der Erlauchte. The works of both appear, clearly distinguished, in the Heidelberg manuscript C. The standard edition of Frauenlob is Karl Stackmann and Karl Bertau, eds., *Frauenlob (Heinrich von Meissen): Leichs, Sangsprüche, Lieder* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981).

¹³ See Burghart Wachinger, *Sängerkrieg: Untersuchungen zur Spruchdichtung des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Beck, 1973), chap. 10.

¹⁴ On gnomic (moralizing or didactic) poetry see Nigel Harris, "Didactic Poetry," in Hasty, ed., *CHHGL* 3, 123–40.

¹⁵ Karl Kurt Klein, ed., *Die Lieder Oswalds von Wolkenstein* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962). See also Albrecht Classen, "Oswald von Wolkenstein," in Reinhart and Hardin, eds., *DLB* 179, 198–205.

¹⁶ The melodies are in the appendix to Klein, ed., *Die Lieder Oswalds*. See also Elke Maria Loenertz, *Text und Musik bei Oswald von Wolkenstein* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2003). Biography: Alan Robertshaw, *Oswald von Wolkenstein: The Myth and the Man* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1977). As Steven Saunders points out in "Music in Early Modern Germany" in the present volume, Oswald often only reworked French or Italian antecedents.

¹⁷ The MHG terms for the chess pieces differ from those used in modern German: *König, Dame, Läufer, Springer, Turm, and Bauer*.

¹⁸ Gerard F. Schmidt, ed., *Das Schachzabelbuch des Jacobus de Cessolis, O.P. in mittelhochdeutscher Prosa-Übersetzung* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1961), 48. The last word, *wedekcht*, is a regional variant of *bedeckt*.

¹⁹ *Pawn* is French, from Latin *pedo, -onis* (a person on foot); *vende* comes from the IE **pend-* (to go, to find one's way), and so is actually most closely related to *finden*, but again implies "walking."

²⁰ See Gerhard Wolf, *Von der Chronik zum Weltbuch: Sinn und Anspruch südwestdeutscher Hauschroniken am Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002).

²¹ Edition: Bernhard Sowinski, ed., *Heinrich Wittenwiler, Der Ring* (Stuttgart: Helfant, 1988). English translation by George Fenwick Jones, *Wittenwiler's "Ring" and the Anonymous Scots Poem "Colkel-bie Sow": Two Comic-Didactic Works from the Fifteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1956). For his career biography see Albrecht Classen, "Heinrich Wittenwiler," in Reinhart and Hardin, eds., *DLB* 179, 326–31.

²² Dorothea Klein, "Spätmittelalter," in Brunner and Williams-Krapp, eds., *Forschungen*, 306.

²³ Mary-Bess Halford, *Lutwin's Eva und Adam: Study — Text — Translation* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1984). For an introduction to the biblical epic see Brian Murdoch, *The Medieval Popular Bible: Expansions of Genesis in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003); on its earlier history, Dieter Kartschoke, *Bibeldichtung: Studien zur Geschichte der epischen Bibelparaphrase von Juvenicus bis Otfrid von Weissenburg* (Munich: Fink, 1975).

²⁴ The *Historienbibeln* contain selected episodes from the historical books of the Bible freely rewritten in the vernacular. In the absence of a satisfactory edition the most reliable texts are to be found in H. F. L. Theodor Merzdorf, *Die deutschen Historienbibeln des Mittelalters* (1870; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), though Merzdorf's presentation of only two basic texts is a serious over-simplification of this vast and complex tradition. See also Ute von Bloh, *Die illustrierten Historienbibeln: Text und Bild in Prolog und Schöpfungsgeschichte der deutschsprachigen Historienbibeln des Spätmittelalters* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1991–92).

²⁵ For an introduction to Bible translations see Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2, *The West from the Fathers to the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969), esp. W. B. Lockwood, "Vernacular Scripture in Germany and the Low Countries before 1500," 415–36. Sample texts for comparative study in Joseph Kehrein, *Zur Geschichte der Deutschen Bibelübersetzung vor Luther* (1851; repr., Walluf: Sändig, 1972).

²⁶ Medieval biblical interpretation distinguishes three phases: *ante legem* (before the law) refers to everything before Moses; *sub lege* (under the law) is the remainder of the Old Testament; and *sub gratia* (under grace) is the dispensation beginning with the birth of Jesus. The exegetical discipline of typology drew parallels between these, so that, for example, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac (*ante legem*) speaks of God's sacrifice of Jesus (*sub gratia*); Isaac is a type of Christ, and the two might appear in parallel in the illustration program.

²⁷ Blockbooks were the first, rather crude, book illustrations in Europe, printed from engraved wooden blocks, one block per page. The *Biblia pauperum* is the most renowned example.

²⁸ With respect to literature prior to Luther the term *legend* connoted a biography of a saint. Though vernacular legends appeared in OHG times, the compilation of legends began in the thirteenth century. Jacobus de Voragine's Latin legendary dates from ca. 1267. The first German-language legendary is a fourteenth-century translation, the *Elsässische Legenda Aurea* (1350). Text: Ulla Williams and Werner Williams-Krapp, eds., *Die 'Elsässische Legenda Aurea,'* vol 1, *Das Normalcorpus* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1980). See also Williams-Krapp, *Die deutschen und niederländischen Legendare des Mittelalters: Studien zu ihrer Überlieferung-, Text- und Wirkungsgeschichte* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986). Edith Feistner, *Historische Typologie*

der deutschen Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters von der Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts bis zur Reformation (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1995).

²⁹ On mysticism see Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, 4 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1990–99), esp. vol. 2, *Frauenmystik und Franziskanische Mystik der Frühzeit* (1993), and vol. 3, *Die Mystik des deutschen Predigerordens und ihre Grundlegung durch die Scholastik* (1996); also Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Herder, 1998), esp. vol. 3, *The Flowering of Mysticism 1200–1350*; Peter Dinzelbacher, *Christliche Mystik im Abendland: Ihre Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des Mittelalters* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1994); Uta Störmer-Caysa, *Entrückte Welten: Einführung in die mittelalterliche Mystik* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1998).

³⁰ On mystic experience as a love affair see Hildegard Elisabeth Keller, *My Secret Is Mine: Studies on Religion and Eros in the German Middle Ages* (Louvain: Peeters, 2000); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991). On the element of secrecy — hiding one's particular state of grace from the other nuns — see Keller, "Absonderungen: Mystische Texte als literarische Inszenierung von Geheimnis," in Walter Haug and Wolfram Schneider-Lastin, eds., *Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang: Neu erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 195–221.

³¹ See Herbert Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970); Arno Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000).

³² Today it survives mainly in Austria as a charitable organization. On the history of the Teutonic Order see Hartmut Boockmann, *Der deutsche Orden: Zwölf Kapitel aus seiner Geschichte* (Munich: Beck, 1981); Marian Biskup and Gerard Labuda, *Die Geschichte des deutschen Ordens in Preußen: Wirtschaft — Gesellschaft — Staat — Ideologie* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2000); also the many volumes in the series *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Ordens*, gen. ed., Udo Arnold (Marburg: Elwert).

³³ The most useful overview of Teutonic Order literature, though not always reflecting current opinions, remains Karl Helm and Walther Ziesemer, *Die Literatur des Deutschen Ritterordens* (Giessen: Schmitz, 1951). A more recent study focusing on reading (as opposed to writing) in the order is Arno Mentzel-Reuters, *Arma spiritualia: Bibliotheken, Bücher und Bildung im Deutschen Orden* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003). At the turn of the twentieth century the series *Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Weidmann) produced a subordinated series of editions entitled *Dichtungen des Deutschen Ordens*.

³⁴ Edition: Heinrich Rückert, ed., *Bruder Philipp des Carthäusers Marienleben* (1853; repr., Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1966).

³⁵ See Graeme Dunphy, "Rabengefieder, Elefantengezisch: Naturdeutung in der 'Mitteldeutsche Hiobparaphase,'" in *Natur und Kultur in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. Alan Robertshaw and Gerhard Wolf (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), 91–102.

³⁶ Karl Kochendörffer, *Tilos von Kulm Gedicht von siben Ingesigeln* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1907).

³⁷ The main historical works of the Teutonic Order are contained in the series *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum: Die Geschichtsquellen der preussischen Vorzeit*, vols. 1–5, ed. Max Töppén Hirsch, et al. (1861–74; repr., Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1965); vol. 6, ed.

Walther Hubatsch (1968). Also Nicolaus von Jeroschin, *Deutschordenschronik* (1854), ed. Franz Pfeiffer (Hildesheim: Olms, 1966). See Hartmut Boockmann, “Die Geschichtsschreibung des Deutschen Ordens: Gattungsfragen und ‘Gebrauchssituationen,’ ” in Patze, ed., *Geschichtsschreibung*, 447–69.

³⁸ On the genre of the travel report see in this volume the chapter by Wolfgang Neuber, especially the section “Cosmography and Apodemics.” Neuber explains that the genre’s first fully formed German travel report was the *Wahrhaftige Historia*, written in 1557 by Hans Staden.

³⁹ The starting point for any study of Franciscan literature is the anthology *Franziskanisches Schrifttum im deutschen Mittelalter*, ed. Kurt Ruh, vol. 1 (Munich: Beck, 1965), vol. 2 (Munich: Artemis, 1985).

⁴⁰ See Ludger Meier, OFM, *Die Barfüßerschule zu Erfurt* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1958).

⁴¹ Jacobus Willem van Maeren, ed., *Marquard von Lindau OFM, Das Buch der Zehn Gebote (Venedig 1483): Textausgabe mit Einleitung und Glossar* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984); Rüdiger Blumrich, ed., *Marquard von Lindau, Deutsche Predigten: Untersuchungen und Edition* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994); Eckart Greifstein, *Der Hiob-Traktat des Marquard von Lindau: Überlieferung, Untersuchung und kritische Textausgabe* (Munich: Artemis, 1979).

⁴² Marquard, *Buch der Zehn Gebote*, 23. The passage in Exod. 20 from which the Ten Commandments are taken can be divided up in various ways. Where a Protestant reading takes “no other gods” and “no idols” separately as the first two commandments, medieval practice saw these as a single commandment and divided “coveting” into “coveting neighbor’s property” (no. 9) and “coveting neighbor’s wife” (no. 10). Thus the commandment about the Sabbath was no. 3 in medieval lists, but no. 4 in many modern representations.

⁴³ Ute Schwab, ed., *Der Endkrist des Friedrich von Saarburg und die anderen Inedita des Cod. Vind. 2886* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1964); W. Röhl, “Die Antichrist-Rede Friedrichs von Saarburg,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 96 (1967): 278–320.

⁴⁴ The Albigensians, or Cathars, of southern France followed a dualistic religion akin to Gnosticism. Dominic had been involved in a mission to convert them and was a supporter of the brutal Albigensian crusade that led to the crushing of the Provençal civilization (1209–29). The Dominicans were founded (1215) and received papal approval (1216) in the context of this conflict, and from the beginning were a driving force in the Spanish and French Inquisitions.

⁴⁵ Kramer was the sole author of this work; in earlier research another inquisitor, Jakob Sprenger, was wrongly assumed to have been his collaborator. The two did work together on other witch-finding missions, however, as Gerhild Scholz Williams explains in the present volume in “Demonologies: Writing about Magic and Witchcraft”: “The papal bull *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, issued in December of that year by Innocent VIII, authorized two inquisitors, the Dominican friars Heinrich Kramer (Institoris) and Jakob Sprenger (1436–95), to identify, imprison, and prosecute the witches allegedly plaguing southwestern Germany and parts of present-day Austria.”

⁴⁶ “Longer” because about five years earlier he had written a *Distinctiones breviores pro sermonibus* (Short Book of Distinctions for Sermons, ca. 1395).

⁴⁷ A new edition of Eckhart’s complete works was begun in 1958, with various volume editors, under the title *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer). Reliable partial editions: *Meister Eckhart, Werke I: Predigten*, and *Werke*

II: *Traktate: Lateinische Werke*, trans. Josef Quint, ed. Niklaus Largier (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993). Among the many single-volume general introductions to Eckhart see esp. Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), and Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: Beck, 1985).

⁴⁸ See for example Hieronymus Wilms, *Geschichte der deutschen Dominikanerinnen* (Dulmen: Laumann, 1920); Anette Hettinger and Amalie Föbel, *Klosterfrauen, Beginen, Ketzerinnen: Religiöse Lebensformen von Frauen im Mittelalter* (Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner, 2000); Susanne Bürkle, *Literatur im Kloster: Historische Funktion und rhetorische Legitimation frauenmystischer Texte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Francke, 1999); Ursula Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrungen als literarisches Faktum: Zur Vorgeschichte und Genese frauenmystischer Texte des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988).

⁴⁹ The most useful starting place for literature on the Beguines is Frank-Michael Reichstein, *Das Beginenwesen in Deutschland* (Berlin: Köster, 2001), which has an extensive bibliography. On Mechthild see Frank Tobin, *Mechthild von Magdeburg: A Medieval Mystic in Modern Eyes* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995); Elizabeth A. Andersen, *Mechthild of Magdeburg: Selections from The Flowing Light of the Godhead* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003).

⁵⁰ It is difficult to say confidently by or for whom it was composed. We know this tract from fifteenth-century prints, but it is likely to go back to a fourteenth-century manuscript version.

⁵¹ See Keller, *My Secret*, chaps. 4 and 5.

⁵² A. H. Hoffmann von Fallersleben, *In dulci jubilo, nun singet und seid froh: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Poesie*, 2nd ed. (1861; repr. as an appendix to Fallersleben's *Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenliedes bis auf Luthers Zeit*, Hildesheim: Olms, 1965), 46–50. Fallersleben, an enthusiastic collector of German antiquities, takes the credit for the rediscovery of the OHG *de Heinrico*.

⁵³ The standard work on the urban literature of at least the earlier part of the transitional period is Ursula Peters, *Literatur in der Stadt: Studien zu den sozialen Voraussetzungen und kulturellen Organisationsformen städtischer Literatur im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1983). See also Heinz Schilling, *Die Stadt in der frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993).

⁵⁴ *Burg* is derived by ablaut from the same root as *Berg*, meaning a (fortified) high place: IE **b^herg-* (high; *Burg* from the zero grade), hence its modern meaning of “castle”; however, parallel to English *borough*, it applied in OHG and MHG also to a walled city, the sense retained in modern *Bürger* (citizen). MHG *stat*, from the same root as *stehen*, means “place” (as in *Werkstatt*), as indeed does English *stead* (literal meaning in *homestead*, metaphorically in both languages: *anstatt/instead* = “in place of”); already in OHG *stat* could mean “place of settlement,” but in the legal sense of “city” it replaced *burg* from the twelfth century onward; the distinction in spelling (*Stadt/Statt*) emerged only between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. We may surmise that the impulse causing *stat* to supplant *burg* as “city,” and indeed leading English *borough* as “fortification” to be replaced by the French loan-word *castle*, was that sociological changes forced a distinction not required in earlier centuries.

⁵⁵ See the thirty-seven-volume series *Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert* (1862–1968; repr., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961–69).

⁵⁶ Hermann Wäschke, ed., *Die Zerbster Ratschronik* (Dessau: Dünnhaupt, 1907). Frank Kreissler, “Peter Becker (um 1385–1455): Ratmann und Bürgermeister in Zerbst,” in

Mitteldeutsche Lebensbilder: Menschen im spätern Mittelalter, ed. Werner Freitag (Cologne: Böhlau, 2002), 137–56.

⁵⁷ In medieval library catalogues and bibliographical lists many works were identified not by author and title but by their *incipit*, the first few words of the text.

⁵⁸ Philipp Strauch, ed., *Jansen Enikels Werke*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, deutsche Chroniken II (1891–1900; repr., Munich: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1980). Graeme Dunphy, ed., *History as Literature: German World Chronicles of the Thirteenth Century in Verse* (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan UP, 2003). On this passage, Dunphy, *Daz was ein michel wunder: The Presentation of Old Testament Material in Jans Enikel's Weltchronik* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1998), 120–22.

⁵⁹ Edition: Karl Schorbach, ed., *Parzifal von Claus Wisse und Philipp Colin* (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1888). See Dorothee Wittmann-Klemm, *Studien zum 'Rappolsteiner Parzifal'* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1977); Sonja Emmerling, "Geld und Liebe: Zum Prolog des 'Rappolsteiner Parzifal,'" in Brunner and Williams-Krapp, eds., "Forschungen," 31–49.

⁶⁰ Cited from Jan-Dirk Müller, ed., *Romane des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts: Nach den Erstdrucken mit sämtlichen Holzschnitten* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990). Other editions: Karin Schneider, ed., *Thüring von Ringoltingen, Melusine: Nach den Handschriften kritisch herausgegeben* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1958); Hans-Gert Roloff, ed., *Thüring von Ringoltingen, Melusine*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1991).

⁶¹ This is validated by the most recent research. My interpretation of Melusine substantially follows Hildegard Elisabeth Keller, "Berner Samstagsgeheimnisse: Die Vertikale als Erzählformel in der *Melusine*," *Paul und Braunes Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 124 (2005): 208–39.

⁶² Keller, "Berner Samstagsgeheimnisse," has usefully employed the tag "verticality" as a means of conceptualizing this parallel: the verticality of Melusine's body, of the social hierarchy, and of the family tree as popularized in the symbolic art of the fifteenth century.

⁶³ Twingherr (*twingen* = *zwingen*, "force") is a specifically Swiss word for the *Stadtadel*, highlighting the power they had within the city.

⁶⁴ On the etymology of *Zigerli* see Keller, "Berner Samstagsgeheimnisse."

⁶⁵ On the *Stadtschreiber* see Peters, *Literatur in der Stadt*, chap. 4, "Die Bedeutung städtischer Beamter für das literarische Leben ihrer Stadt," esp. 225–68.

⁶⁶ Johannes von Tepl, *Der Ackermann*, ed. Willy Krogmann (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1978); Johannes von Tepl, *Der Ackermann und der Tod*, ed. Christian Kiening (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000); Gerhard Hahn, *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen des Johannes von Tepl* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984); Anne Winston-Allen, "Johannes von Tepl," in Reinhart and Hardin, eds., *DLB* 179, 287–92; and Kiening, *Schwierige Modernität: Der Ackermann des Johannes von Tepl und die Ambiguität historischen Wandels* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998). The *Ackermann* has been translated into English as *The Plowman from Bohemia*, trans. Alexander and Elizabeth Henderson (New York: Unger, 1966). The translations of the quotations that follow, however, are primarily those of the author of the present article.

⁶⁷ In the epilogue Johannes directly includes a number of passages from Neumarkt's translation of the pseudo-Augustinian *Soliloquia animae ad deum* (The Soul's Soliloquy to God).

⁶⁸ See Heinz Otto Burger, *Renaissance, Humanismus, Reformation: Deutsche Literatur im europäischen Kontext* (Berlin: Gehlen, 1969), 15–31 and 45–53.

⁶⁹ Recent literature includes: Vera Sack: *Sebastian Brant als politischer Publizist: Zwei Flugblatt-Satiren aus den Folgejahren des sogenannten Reformreichstags von 1495* (Freiburg i.B.: Stadtarchiv, 1997); Silke Mausolf-Kiralp, *Die "traditio" der Ausgaben des Narrenschiffs von Sebastian Brant mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Straßburger Editionen* (Aachen: Shaker, 1997); Cordula Peper, "zu nutz und heylsamer ler": *Das "Narrenschiff" von Sebastian Brant (1494): Untersuchung der Zusammenhänge zwischen Text und Bild* (Leutesdorf, Krautsgrasse 1: Peper, 2000); Thomas Wilhelmi, *Sebastian Brant: Forschungen zu seinem Leben, zum "Narrenschiff" und zum übrigen Werk* (Basel: Schwabe, 2002). A full bibliography of Brant scholarship to 1985: Joachim Knappe, *Sebastian-Brant-Bibliographie* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990); see also Wilhelmi, *Sebastian Brant Bibliographie* (Bern: Lang, 1990).

⁷⁰ Cited from Manfred Lemmer, ed., *Sebastian Brant, Das Narrenschiff: Nach der Erstausgabe (Basel 1594) mit den Zusätzen der Ausgaben von 1495 und 1499 sowie den Holzschnitten der deutschen Originalausgabe*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986). The Reclam edition by H. A. Junghans modernizes the language, altering the text freely to keep the rhyme.

⁷¹ Edition: *Die "Stultifera Navis": Jakob Lochers Übertragung von Sebastian Brants "Narrenschiff"*, 2 vols., ed. Nina Hartl (Münster: Waxmann, 2001).

⁷² Albrecht Dürer, who at the time was learning his vocation as a journeyman, probably designed many of the woodcuts for Brant's great project. John Van Cleve, "Sebastian Brant," in Reinhart and Hardin, eds., *DLB 179*, 19a, claims that Dürer in fact led the effort.

⁷³ See in this volume, the chapter by Peter Hess.

⁷⁴ On continuities see Michael Baldzuhn, *Vom Singspruch zum Meisterlied: Untersuchungen zu einem literarischen Traditionszusammenhang auf der Grundlage der Kolmarer Liederhandschrift* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002).

⁷⁵ Though literature on the *Meistersinger* frequently refers to the guilds themselves as *Singschulen*, the singers in fact only used this word to mean a meeting, or a concert, of the guild, held on Sundays.

⁷⁶ Photographic reprint with commentary by Horst Brunner (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1975). Note that the title of Wagner's opera uses the form *Meistersinger* rather than *Meistersänger*, influenced no doubt by Wagenseil.

⁷⁷ The older literature goes back to August L. Mayer, ed., *Die Meisterlieder des Hans Folz* (1908; repr., Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1970). More recent assessments include Rüdiger Krohn, "Hans Folz," in *Deutsche Dichter der frühen Neuzeit (1450–1600): Ihr Leben und Werk*, ed. Stephan Füßel (Berlin: Schmidt, 1993), 111–24, and Joe G. Delap, "Hans Folz," in Reinhart and Hardin, eds., *DLB 179*, 63–69.

⁷⁸ *Junger Geselle* (young journeyman) may already have the modern sense of *Junggeselle* (bachelor) here; the two are in any case synonymous in a social class that regarded marriage, accreditation as a master craftsman, and attainment of adulthood as a single transition. See Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth*, trans. Graeme Dunphy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

⁷⁹ According to Genesis 10:3, Ashkenaz was a son of Gomer, one of the Japhethite (traditionally understood to mean European) nations; the *Targumim* (early medieval Aramaic translations) of this verse identified Gomer with Germania. The geographical

boundaries of Jewish cultural areas did not follow the political or linguistic boundaries of Christian society. The Ashkenazi area stretched farther west, covering most of northern France, while the Jews of southern France belonged to the (Spanish) Sephardic Jewry.

⁸⁰ On Jewish life in this period see Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Atlas of Jewish History* (London: Routledge, 1994); Michael Toch, *Die Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998); Klaus Geissler, *Die Juden in Deutschland und Bayern bis zur Mitte des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Beck, 1976); Siegfried Wittmer, *Jüdisches Leben in Regensburg vom frühen Mittelalter bis 1519* (Regensburg: Universitätsverlag, 2001); Klaus Lohrman, *Die Wiener Juden im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Philo, 2000); Thérèse and Mendel Metzger, *La vie juive au moyen âge illustrée par les manuscrits hébraïques énumérés du XIIIe au XVIIe siècle* (Freiburg: Office du Livre, 1982).

⁸¹ On Jews in early German literature see Helmut Birkhan, “Die Juden in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters,” in *Die Juden in ihrer mittelalterlichen Umwelt*, ed. Birkhan (Bern: Lang, 1992); Edith Wenzel, *Do worden die Judden alle geschant: Rolle und Funktion der Juden in spätmittelalterlichen Spielen* (Munich: Fink, 1992); Andrew Colin Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age 1200–1600* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Hans-Martin Kirn, *Das Bild vom Juden im Deutschland des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts, dargestellt an den Schriften des Johannes Pfefferkorns* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989).

⁸² On German-Jewish relations see the seven articles under the collective title “Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen: Kulturelle Kontakte zwischen Juden und Christen im Mittelalter,” *Aschkenaz: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 14 (2004): 1–162. Also R. Po-Chia Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann, *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), and Achim Jaeger, “‘Ghetto’ oder ‘Symbiose’? Überlegungen zur Rezeption höfischer und populärer volkssprachlichen Literatur in jüdischen Kontexten,” in *Ein jüdischer Artusritter: Studien zum jüdisch-deutschen ‘Widuwilt’ (‘Artushof’) und zum ‘Wigalois’ des Wirnt von Gravenberg* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 117–66.

⁸³ Dietrich Gerhardt, *Süßkind von Trimberg: Berichtigungen zu einer Erinnerung* (Bern: Lang, 1997).

⁸⁴ For an orientation in early Yiddish literature see Sol Liptzin, *A History of Yiddish Literature* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1972); also Helmut Dinse, *Die Entwicklung des jiddischen Schrifttums im deutschsprachigen Gebiete* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974).

⁸⁵ The precise definitions of the terms *Judeo-German* and *Old Yiddish* remain controversial, but it is advisable to use the former when referring to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the latter from the early sixteenth. *Judeo-German* implies a unique coloring to the German language, whereas *Old Yiddish* implies a distinct language. See Edith Wenzel, “Alt-Jiddisch oder Mittelhochdeutsch?,” *Aschkenaz: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 14 (2004): 31–50. On the language generally see David Katz, ed., *Origins of the Yiddish Language* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1987); Bettina Simon, *Jiddische Sprachgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988); and Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980).

⁸⁶ On the equivalent developments in OHG see the relevant chapters in Brian Murdoch, ed., *German Literature of the Early Middle Ages*, vol. 2 of *CHHGL* (2004).

⁸⁷ The Cambridge Codex is located in Cambridge University Library, CY.T.-S.10.K.22.

⁸⁸ As Jewish law forbids the destruction of documents containing the name of God, old books no longer fit for ritual use were “retired” to a *genisa* (archive).

⁸⁹ Edition: Lajb Fuks, *The Oldest Known Literary Documents of Yiddish Literature (c. 1382)*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1957). Vol. 1 has photographic reproductions on the left hand pages and a transcription in Hebrew square characters on the right; vol. 2 has a transliteration into the Latin alphabet on the left, and a (rather inadequate) translation into modern German on the right. The most thorough linguistic analysis of the codex as a whole remains Heikki J. Hakkarainen, *Studien zum Cambridger Codex T.S.10.K.22*, vol. 1, *Annales Universitatis Turkuensis* B104 (Turku: Turun Yliopisto, 1967), vols. 2 and 3 as *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, B174 (Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 1971) and B 182 (1973). Edition for *Dukus Horant*, with a thorough linguistic analysis, P. F. Ganz, F. Norman, and W. Schwarz, eds., *Dukus Horant* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1964). Literature: Manfred Caliebe, *Dukus Horant: Studien zu seiner literarischen Tradition* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1973); Friedrich Mader, *Die “Dukus-Horant“-Forschung: Bericht und Kritik* (Osnabrück: Biblio, 1979); Gabriele Strauch, *Dukus Horant: Wanderer zwischen zwei Welten* (Amsterdam: Rudopi, 1990). On *Josef ha-zadik* see James Marchand and Frederic Tubach, “Der keusche Josef,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 81 (1962): 30–52.

⁹⁰ Yiddish transcription follows Fuks; my transliteration follows the usual English system for Hebrew, but representing *yod* with *i* and *waw* with *u*, since these are vowels in Judeo-German. *Aleph* (transliterated with a comma pointing left) and *ayin* (comma pointing right) both mostly correspond to *e*. For comparison, Fuks, Hakkarainen, and Ganz et al. all have transcriptions using different systems.

⁹¹ On *Kudrun* see William H. Jackson, “Court Literature and Violence in the High Middle Ages,” in Hasty, ed., *CHHGL* 3, 268; bibliography, 313–14.

⁹² On oral performance poetry see Dunphy, “Orality.” An alternative theory, that the writer of *Dukus Horant* had a MHG written source, cannot be entirely discounted, but another work in the same manuscript has an acrostic that only works in the Hebrew alphabet; so clearly the writer sees himself as more than a copyist.

⁹³ Edition: Sigmund A. Wolf, ed., *Ritter Widuwilt: Die westjiddische Fassung des Wigalois des Wirnt von Gravenberg: Nach dem jiddischen Druck von 1699 besorgt* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1974). The most recent discussions are Jaeger, *Ein jüdischer Artusritter*, and Neil Thomas, *Wirnt von Gravenberg’s “Wigalois”: Intertextuality and Interpretation* (Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2005).