

The Ends of Polemic and the Beginning of *Lohengrin*

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Introduction

The depiction of poetic rivalry in works of art has a long tradition behind it, one that may be most familiar to a modern audience from such works as the *Eclogues* or *Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Their counterparts in the intervening period that was shaped intellectually by Virgil and adapted creatively by Wagner are, perhaps, rather less widely known. This chapter introduces one particular example – the medieval German poem *Lohengrin* – and describes the polemic elements in its opening strophes. Starting from a modern scholarly dispute about the origins of the text and considering its contemporary literary context in the Middle Ages, the chapter develops the concept of polemic speech as a way of capturing the specifically linguistic strategies by means of which polemic unfolds. This provides the basis for a reading of *Lohengrin* that highlights its poetological interest as opposed to the derivative elements on which previous criticism has concentrated and thus shows that the creative depiction of polemic in the text is at least as important as academic polemic about it.

The plot of *Lohengrin* in outline is straightforward: the hero arrives as the saviour of Elsam of Brabant, whom he marries on condition that she never ask him about his identity, and returns to the grail when she does. The work differs from other versions of the story of the Swan Knight, though, in several ways, not least among them the involvement of the hero in battles defending Christianity against the Hungarians and the Saracens.¹ Preceding all this, we also find a depiction of the encounter between two rival singers that apparently led to the telling of Lohengrin's story in the first place. This series of strophes, and the role of polemical elements in it, is examined in detail below. A guiding thought in

¹ On the Swan Knight narratives, see *Lohengrin: Edition und Untersuchungen*, ed. Thomas Cramer (Munich: Fink, 1971), 46–129; Beate Kellner, 'Schwanenkinder – Schwanritter – Lohengrin: Wege mythischer Erzählungen', in Udo Friedrich and Bruno Quast (eds), *Präsenz des Mythos: Konfigurationen einer Denkform in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Trends in Medieval Philology 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 131–54, esp. 131–3, 139–41; Anthony R. Wagner, 'The Swan Badge and the Swan Knight', *Archaeologia* 2nd ser. 47 (1959): 127–38.

the process is that ‘polemic’ is not simply a way of describing genres or entire discourses and texts but can also characterize strategies in the detailed use of language in potentially very different settings. The scholarship on the origins of *Lohengrin* provides a first example of this.

What little information we have about the circumstances of the work’s composition is easily summarized: it was apparently written by an otherwise unknown Bavarian poet called ‘Nouhuwius’ (thus the acrostic in strophes 763–5), probably around 1300.² ‘Probably’, because the age of the earliest manuscript material – two leaves of parchment known as the Coblenz Fragments, now held in Berlin (Staatsbibliothek, Mgf 724) – is disputed. The debate about these fragments, on which hinges the question of whether *Lohengrin* was composed in the time of Rudolf of Habsburg or Ludwig of Bavaria, developed into a scholarly polemic that includes the following contribution from two literary scholars and experts on manuscript studies. They confidently highlight progress that has been made in their field – and observe that, as knowledge in it has grown, so its accessibility to outsiders has decreased:

Die Entwicklung bringt es mit sich, daß das Feld immer unübersichtlicher wird und Außenstehende, die sich hineinwagen, zunehmend Gefahr laufen, sich zu verirren.³

It is a consequence of this development that the field is becoming harder and harder to navigate and that outsiders who try to enter it are in increasing danger of losing their way.

The construction of a boundary between the initiated and the uninitiated, and the deployment of language that draws attention to the dangers facing those who attempt to penetrate the specialism indicate that this may be more than a scholarly statement of fact. Christa Bertelsmeier-Kierst and Joachim Heinzle do, after all, have a particular figure and his views in mind: Heinz Thomas, a historian who had attempted, also by referring to manuscript material, to defend an opinion that differed from theirs regarding the time of *Lohengrin*’s composition. The fact that he had in the process described their work as an ‘in mancherlei Hinsicht erstaunliche Analyse aus Marburg’ (‘analysis from Marburg that is astonishing in many respects’)⁴ may go some way to explaining the tone of their response:

² *Lohengrin*, 20–23, 149–63.

³ Christa Bertelsmeier-Kierst and Joachim Heinzle, ‘Paläographische Tücken! Noch einmal zur Datierung des “Lohengrin”’, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 115 (1996): 42–54, at 42.

⁴ Heinz Thomas, ‘Paläographische Tücken: Zur Datierung des “Lohengrin”’, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 114 (1995): 110–16, at 114.

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Das Fazit der Musterung von Thomas' Vergleichshandschriften lautet, daß ihr Aussagewert im Zusammenhang der Kontroverse gleich null ist. Das ist die unvermeidliche Folge mangelnder Vertrautheit mit dem materiellen Forschungsstand (Manesse-Codex!) und einer Mißachtung elementarer methodischer Grundsätze der Paläographie.⁵

The conclusion to be drawn from this assessment of the manuscripts which Thomas employs for comparison is that they are of practically no value in the context of this controversy. This is the inevitable consequence of insufficient familiarity with the state of research on the material (Codex Manesse!) and a disregard for elementary principles of palaeographical methods.

The irony that seems to have been lost on all concerned is that, by turning to strategies such as making inflammatory value-judgements, discrediting the character of an opponent and emphasizing boundaries between groups, the disputants find themselves in a situation not entirely dissimilar to the one portrayed in the opening strophes of the text. The figures there may not be academics in the modern sense of the word, but they are equally concerned – or profess equally to be concerned – with knowledge and the skill and legitimacy with which it is obtained. Specifically, we see Wolfram von Eschenbach vying with Clinschor 'üz Ungerlant' ('from Hungary')⁶ in an encounter that leads to Wolfram being established as the narrator of the tale of the ill-fated marriage between Lohengrin and Elsam. The dispute is to be seen in part in relation to the work of the historical author Wolfram:⁷ the story of Lohengrin picks up a narrative thread that was left hanging at the end of Wolfram's *Parzival*,⁸ the two texts are transmitted together in manuscript A (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg 364) and Clinschor presents himself in *Lohengrin* as a descendant of the

⁵ Bertelsmeier-Kierst and Heinze, 'Paläographische Tücken!', 46–7.

⁶ *Lohengrin*, 3.21.

⁷ See Regina Unger, *Wolfram-Rezeption und Utopie: Studien zum spätmittelalterlichen bayerischen 'Lohengrin'-Epos*, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 544 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1990), 9–52; Hedda Ragotzky, *Studien zur Wolfram-Rezeption: Die Entstehung und Verwandlung der Wolfram-Rolle in der deutschen Literatur des 13. Jahrhunderts*, Studien zur Poetik und Geschichte der Literatur 20 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971), 83–90.

⁸ See Joachim Bumke, 'Parzival und Feirefiz – Priester Johannes – Loherangrin: Der offene Schluß des *Parzival* von Wolfram von Eschenbach', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 65 (1991): 236–64, esp. 255–64; Annette Volting, 'Welt ir nu hæren fürbaz? On the Function of the Loherangrin-episode in Wolfram von Eschenbach's "Parzival" (V. 824, 1–826, 30)', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 126 (2004): 65–84; Horst Brunner, 'Von Munsalvaesche wart gesant / der den der swane brahte: Überlegungen zur Gestaltung des Schlusses von Wolframs "Parzival"', *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* n.s. 41 (1991): 369–84, at 381.

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scribe of the conjuror of the same name in the earlier text ('mîns enn uren sîn schriber was').⁹ Yet there is more at stake than a discourse of authorship defined by what came before. Wolfram's argument with Clinschor turns on questions of knowledge and artistic skill, and in both cases, as we shall see, the discourse of confrontation comes to be pursued for its own sake, undermining the notion that there is actually a specific theme or issue that is meant to be settled. The concept of polemic speech provides one way of tracing how this takes place: it can be outlined with examples from the literature of medieval Germany up to the first decades of the fourteenth century, which will provide a context in which to see the techniques employed in *Lohengrin*.

Polemic Speech in Middle High German Verse: Language and Voice

The approach adopted here distances itself from understandings of polemic as a particular type of text that is set apart from others (such as the *Streitgedicht*, 'debate poem', or *Streitgespräch*, 'disputation') on the one hand or defined by its relationship to reality outside the text on the other (as suggested, albeit in rather different ways, by Burghart Wachinger and Günther Schweikle).¹⁰ Rather than categorizing texts along generic lines in this manner, the focus lies on matters of detail, on how language can be put to polemical effect in a variety of texts and contexts, and the phrase 'polemic speech' is intended to reflect this.¹¹ Religion and literature, in some cases together, are involved in the examples below, starting with the twelfth-century *Kaiserchronik* (Chronicle of the Emperors) and ending with strophes from the *Jenaer Liederhandschrift* (Jena Song Manuscript, one of the major sources for the medieval German lyric, c. 1330).¹² The passages, which represent only part of a much larger body of material, have been chosen because

⁹ *Lohengrin*, 229.2289.

¹⁰ Burghart Wachinger, *Sängerkrieg: Untersuchungen zur Spruchdichtung des 13. Jahrhunderts*, Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters 42 (Munich: Beck, 1973), 306; *Parodie und Polemik in mittelhochdeutscher Dichtung: 123 Texte von Kürenberg bis Frauenlob samt dem Wartburgkrieg nach der Großen Heidelberger Liederhandschrift C*, ed. Günther Schweikle, Helfant Texte T5 (Stuttgart: Helfant Edition, 1986), xi.

¹¹ See *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), s.v. 'polemic', <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/146793>> (accessed 30 Sept. 2013); *Duden: Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, 3rd edn (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 1999), s.v. 'Polemik'.

¹² The first redaction of the *Kaiserchronik* breaks off in 1146. On the dating of the *Jenaer Liederhandschrift*, see Gisela Kornrumpf, 'Der Grundstock der "Jenaer Liederhandschrift" und seine Erweiterung durch Randnachträge', in Jens Haustein and Franz Körndle (eds), *Die 'Jenaer Liederhandschrift': Codex – Geschichte – Umfeld* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 39–79, at 39.

they illustrate not only the use of language for polemical purposes but also the significance of the presence of a speaker, or speakers, who direct what is said against an 'Other'.

The prologue of the *Kaiserchronik* contains an attack on those who are unwilling to listen to spiritually beneficial subject matter of the kind that its historiographical narrative purports to supply:

die tumben dunchet iz arebait,
 sculn si iemer iht gelernen
 od ir wistuom gemêren.
 die sint unnuzze
 unt phlegent niht guoter wizze,
 daz si ungerne hôrent sagen
 dannen si mahten haben
 wistuom unt êre;
 unt wære iedoch frum der sêle.¹³

The foolish consider it laborious if they are ever to learn anything or to increase their wisdom. They are good-for-nothings who have renounced good sense, for they dislike hearing tell of what they could gain wisdom and honour from, even though it would benefit their souls.

The rhetorical effect of the passage lies in how it manipulates the relationship between two groups – those spoken to (the audience previously addressed directly in the second person plural as 'ir' and 'iuh') and those spoken about ('die tumben' ['the foolish']).¹⁴ The criticism is arguably made not in an attempt to persuade the latter to change their behaviour and thus to reduce the difference between them and the audience, but to underline and perpetuate that very difference: by describing the text as 'daz guote liet' ('the good song'),¹⁵ the narrator positions his criticism as one that will be heard only by 'die wîsen' ('the wise') in the first place¹⁶ not by those whom he actually attacks. In this respect, this early section of the prologue of the *Kaiserchronik* proves to be subtly more complex than the subsequent, and better known, criticism of putting together lies that are bad for

¹³ *Die Kaiserchronik eines Regensburger Geistlichen*, ed. Edward Schröder, MGH Deutsche Chroniken 1/1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1892), 6–14; on the prologue, see Christian Kiening, 'Freiräume literarischer Theoriebildung: Dimensionen und Grenzen programmatischer Aussagen in der deutschen Literatur des 12. Jahrhunderts', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 66 (1992): 405–49, esp. 416–19.

¹⁴ *Die Kaiserchronik*, 3, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 42.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 41.

the soul, probably in the form of oral-heroic poetry.¹⁷ Rather than criticizing performance or production as in the latter case, the narrator here engages with the act of reception. He actively involves his audience in the opposition he establishes and, rather than criticizing with a view to constructively changing behaviour, excludes the possibility of engaging with those whom he attacks.

The neglect of religious values could also be condemned in relation to specific historical contexts. Walther von der Vogelweide is perhaps best known for his love lyrics, but he also produced a significant body of political works, including a group of three strophes from the early thirteenth century that attack Pope Innocent III, albeit without identifying him by name (strophes VII–IX of the *Unmutston*; they are transmitted together in the Codex Manesse but not in other manuscripts). Strophe VII accuses him of abusing his position by causing murder and theft; VIII and IX allege that he is channelling money raised in Germany to fund the crusades into the coffers of the papacy. Walther employs a number of techniques to make his point. In strophe VII, the state of affairs in Innocent's pontificate is likened to the situation 'als hie vor bî einem zouberære Gêrbrehte' ('as it was before in the time of a conjuror called Gerbert'¹⁸) – a reference to Gerbert of Aurillac (Pope Sylvester II), who had come to be associated with black magic.¹⁹ Having thus cast doubt on the spiritual standing of its target, the strophe helps to make a reality of the response it calls for by at the same time performing it: 'Alle zungen suln ze gote schrîen wâfen' ('Let every tongue cry out "to arms!" to God').²⁰ The strategy of depriving one's opponent of a voice, implicit here, becomes explicit in the next two strophes. Strophe VIII puts words in the pope's mouth with which he incriminates himself: 'Ahî, wie kristenliche nû der bâbest lachet, / swanne er sînen Walhen seit: "ich hânz alsô gemachtet!"' ('Ha, how Christian is the laughter of the pope now when he says "I've done it!" to his Italians').²¹ Strophe IX goes a step further by addressing an object – the collection box – which, being inanimate, cannot respond to

¹⁷ See Ernst Hellgardt, 'Dietrich von Bern in der deutschen "Kaiserchronik": Zur Begegnung mündlicher und schriftlicher Traditionen', in Annegret Fiebig and Hans-Jochen Schiewer (eds), *Deutsche Literatur und Sprache von 1050–1200* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), 93–110, at 94–5.

¹⁸ Walther von der Vogelweide, *Unmutston*, VII, 2, in *Leich, Lieder, Sangsprüche*, ed. Karl Lachmann, 14th edn, ed. Christoph Cormeau with contributions from Thomas Bein and Horst Brunner, de Gruyter Texte (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 64–5 (Lachmann 33.21, 34.4, 34.34); for the background, see Walther von der Vogelweide, *Spruchlyrik*, ed. and trans. Günther Schweikle, in Walther von der Vogelweide, *Werke*, vol. 1, rev. edn (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005), 406–11.

¹⁹ Marco Zuccato, 'Gerbert of Aurillac and a Tenth-Century Jewish Channel for the Transmission of Arabic Science to the West', *Speculum* 80 (2005): 742–63, at 746–7.

²⁰ Walther von der Vogelweide, *Unmutston*, VII, 5.

²¹ *Ibid.* VII, 1–2.

the accusation levelled: ‘Sagent an, her Stoc, hât iuch der bâbest her gesendet, / daz ir in rîchet und uns Tiutschen ermet unde *pfendet*?’ (‘Tell us, collection box, good sir, did the pope send you here so that you can make him rich and us Germans poor and dispossessed?’).²² Accordingly, the strophe ends by stating the allegation as fact: ‘her Stoc, ir sît ûf schaden her gesant, / daz ir ûz tiutschen liuten suochent tœrinne unde narren’ (‘Collection box, good sir, you have been sent here to cause damage, to seek out foolish women and stupid men among the Germans’).²³ These devices are more than just rhetorical figures: in preventing opponents from speaking for themselves and denying the very possibility of an alternative viewpoint, the strophes present as unquestionable that which on a larger scale was debatable, as can be seen from Thomasin von Zerklære’s response to Walther’s criticism of the pope in *Der Welsche Gast* (The Italian Guest):

Nu wie hât sich der guote kneht
an im gehandelt âne reht,
der dà sprach durch sinn hôhen muot
daz der bâbest wolt mit tiuschem guot
vûllen sîn welhischez schrîn!²⁴

How did this good man come to do the injustice of saying in his arrogance that the pope wanted to fill his Italian coffers with German property?

The strophes by Walther belong to what is known as *Sangspruchdichtung* – the corpus of German strophic compositions for sung performance that deal with themes, such as knowledge or political concerns, that set them apart from the courtly love lyric.²⁵ Rivalry, including personal attacks on other poets, became increasingly common in this literary form in the course of the thirteenth century.²⁶ Many of the authors involved are relatively obscure, and contextualizing them further is not always straightforward: while we are reasonably well informed about the identity of figures such as Konrad von Würzburg, our knowledge of others is much more sketchy. In this respect, it is worth bearing in mind that the attacks of interest here are not necessarily linked to biographical circumstances:

²² Ibid. IX, 1–2.

²³ Ibid. IX, 9–10.

²⁴ *Der Wâlsche Gast des Thomasin von Zirclaria*, ed. Heinrich Rückert, Deutsche Neudrucke: Texte des Mittelalters (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965), 11191–5.

²⁵ On the genre, see Helmut Tervooren, *Sangspruchdichtung*, Sammlung Metzler 293 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995), 1–4, 81–9; Margreth Egidi, *Höfische Liebe: Entwürfe der Sangspruchdichtung: Literarische Verfahrensweisen von Reinmar von Zweter bis Frauenlob*, Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift-Beihefte 17 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2002), 37–54.

²⁶ Wachinger, *Sängerkrieg*, 116–319.

a poetological discourse of competition is also involved.²⁷ One example occurs in the first of four strophes by the Meißner criticizing misguided beliefs about the ostrich, phoenix and pelican.²⁸ Here, again, the figure under attack is not named openly: the criticism is directed at a generalized 'swer' ('whoever'),²⁹ but it would appear that the Marner, who makes the disputed assertions in his *Sangspruch* strophe 7.15, is meant.³⁰ The Meißner discusses them at length, but begins with a direct attack on his opponent:

Swer sanc, daz der pellicanus tode sine kint,
her hat gelogen, her lese baz die büch.
Swer valsch singet, der mac wol wesen kunsten blint.³¹

Whoever sang that the pelican kills its offspring – he lied and would do better to read the books. Whoever sings wrongly is very likely blind to artistry.

The Meißner also links his criticism – oriented around abstracts such as 'war' ('true'), 'valsch' ('wrong, false') and 'kunst' ('artistry') – to the physical body of the target under attack, part of which is singled out for punishment: 'An valschem sange strafe ich lugeneres munt' ('Where song is false, I will punish the liar's mouth').³² It is significant that the mouth, the organ of speech and song, is singled out for punishment: the gesture of 'gagging' the opponent stands in the context of an active debate in a number of other strophes. Although it is not always possible to identify with certainty the authors involved or whether, for example, praise is meant genuinely or ironically, we do have a strophe, probably

²⁷ See Wachinger, *Sängerkrieg*, 303–6; Egidi, *Höfische Liebe*, 50–54; Freimut Löser, 'Von kleinen und von großen Meistern: Bewertungskategorien in der Sangspruchdichtung', in Dorothea Klein, Trude Ehlert and Elisabeth Schmid (eds), *Sangspruchdichtung: Gattungskonstitution und Gattungsinterferenzen im europäischen Kontext: Internationales Symposium Würzburg, 15.–18. Februar 2006* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2007), 371–96.

²⁸ Meißner, XII, 1–4, in Georg Objartel, *Der Meißner der Jenaer Liederhandschrift: Untersuchung, Ausgabe, Kommentar*, Philologische Studien und Quellen 85 (Berlin: Schmidt, 1977); on the strophes and authors discussed here, see *ibid.* 292–4; *Der Marner: Lieder und Sangsprüche aus dem 13. Jahrhundert und ihr Weiterleben im Meistersang*, ed. Eva Willms (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 253–7, 386–94; Wachinger, *Sängerkrieg*, 121–7, 151–70; Jens Hausteil, *Marner-Studien*, Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters 109 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995), 14–47.

²⁹ e.g. Meißner, XII, 1.1.

³⁰ The strophe is numbered 7.15 in the most recent edition (*Der Marner*, 253), but much of the earlier critical literature refers to the earlier edition by Philipp Strauch, where it is numbered XV, 15.

³¹ Meißner, XII, 1.7–9.

³² Meißner, XII, 1.6

by Fegfeuer, which refers explicitly to the Meißner and the Marner and comes to the latter's defence:

Danc habe der Mîzener, daz er sîner wort ist unverdrozzen!
ich høere sagen, daz er habe alle kunst besozzen.
in sîner hant des ist genuoch, er mac es wol gote danken.
.
Ez wâren singer, alsô noch sîn, die tichten vil wol kûnnen.
nû wil er dem Marner sînes sanges nicht gegûnnen.³³

Praise be to the Meißner for never tiring in his work with words! They say that he has laid claim to all artistry. He's got enough of it in his hands; he can thank God for that. ... There were singers, as there still are, who were skilled in poetry, yet he will not grant the Marner his song.

Passages such as the above are a reminder that considering strophes in isolation reveals only part of the picture: attacks could elicit responses. Another part of that picture takes shape in manuscript transmission. The strophes by the Meißner and Fegfeuer are both transmitted – in the case of the former, only – in the *Jenaer Liederhandschrift*. There, in turn, the Meißner's strophes are followed by strophes by Konrad von Würzburg, which appear to have included one that is conventionally treated as an ironically exaggerated and thus critical praise of the Meißner.³⁴ The manuscript as a whole, indeed, contains a number of texts 'die – polemisch, mahnend, rühmend, trauernd – Autoren der Sammlung zueinander in Beziehung setzen' ('which – polemicizing, warning, praising, grieving – place authors in the collection in relation to one another').³⁵ This development of what might be described as a dialogicity in manuscript context is most distinctive in the case of a complex of material – also represented in the Jena manuscript – known as the *Wartburgkrieg* (Wartburg Battle), at whose core lies a confrontation between rival poets that was believed to have taken place at the court of Landgrave Hermann of Thuringia in the early thirteenth century.³⁶

³³ Fegfeuer, II, 4.1–5, in Wolfgang von Wangenheim, *Das Basler Fragment einer mitteldeutsch-niederdeutschen Liederhandschrift und sein Spruchdichter-Repertoire* (Kelin, Fegfeuer), Europäische Hochschulschriften Reihe 1st ser. 55 (Berne: H. Lang, 1972).

³⁴ Konrad von Würzburg, *Die Klage der Kunst: Leiche, Lieder und Sprüche*, ed. Edward Schröder, 3rd edn (Dublin: Weidmann, 1970), 32.286–300. The *Jenaer Liederhandschrift* has not been preserved in its original form (see Kornrumpf, 'Der Grundstock der "Jenaer Liederhandschrift"', 68–72).

³⁵ Kornrumpf, 'Der Grundstock der "Jenaer Liederhandschrift"', 71.

³⁶ The medieval sources are covered in Herbert Wolf, 'Zum Wartburgkrieg: Überlieferungsverhältnisse, Inhalts- und Gestaltungswandel der Dichtersage', in Helmut Beumann (ed.), *Festschrift für Walter Schlesinger*, Mitteldeutsche Forschungen 74

It is to this material, specifically to that part of it known as the *Rätselspiel* (Game of Riddles), that the opening strophes of *Lohengrin* belong. Against the background of the tendencies traced so far, the exchange between Wolfram and Clinschor can be examined from three perspectives.

The Opening of *Lohengrin*: Attacks on the Body, Argumentation and Character

The challenges that Clinschor and Wolfram set each other are generally referred to as *Rätsel* ('riddles') in the secondary literature, and it will be convenient to draw on their conventional names in order to demarcate the different sections of the text. The first is the 'Riddle of the Sleeping Child', which Clinschor presents to Wolfram. The child, despite the efforts of his father to wake him with a horn-call and club, remains asleep and drowns when the dyke next to him bursts. Both disputants initially appear to be engaging with each other with the understanding that this puzzle can be solved. Clinschor envisages a solution to the challenge, 'Swer mir nû loeset disen haft, / der hât in sins herzen kunst guot meisterschaft' ('Whoever can untie this knot for me has good mastery in the artistry of his heart'),³⁷ and Wolfram provides it:

Hoert, wie er dem kinde rief, Altissimus der starke.
ein iegelich sündler ist des kint.
gotes horn die wîsen meisterpfaffen sint.³⁸

Take heed of how he – the great Almighty – called to the child. Each and every sinner is his child, and the wise master-priests are the horn of God.

At the core of the reading presented here, though, lies the observation that the dispute does not always amount merely to the 'decoding' of information

(Cologne: Böhlau, 1973), 1: 513–16. The *Wartburgkrieg* has been edited by Karl Simrock (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1858) and by T.A. Rompelman (Amsterdam: Paris, 1939), but neither text is entirely satisfactory. On the preparation of a new edition, see Beate Kellner and Peter Strohschneider, 'Wartburgkriege: Eine Projektbeschreibung', in Martin J. Schubert (ed.), *Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters zwischen Handschriftennähe und Rekonstruktion: Berliner Fachtagung 1.–3. April 2004*, Beihefte zu editio 23 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005), 173–202; Burghart Wachinger, 'Überlegungen zu einer Neuausgabe des "Wartburgkriegs": Mit Editionsproben zum Rätselstreit', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 133 (2011): 57–99.

³⁷ *Lohengrin*, 4.31–2

³⁸ *Ibid.* 5.47–9.

‘encrypted’ in the form of a riddle.³⁹ Wolfram, indeed, moves from the generalizing interpretation above to one that concentrates on Clinschor alone: ‘Wilt dû iht mêre in den sünden slâfen, / Des slegels wurf, daz ist der tût, den er danne an dich sendet’ (‘If you choose to sleep a moment longer in your sins, then the club thrown is the death that he will send to you’).⁴⁰ This leads to a breakdown of the framework of challenge and response. The boundary between the riddle as a linguistic puzzle to be decoded on the one hand and the situation of the disputants as characters on the other has become fluid: death is now a fate awaiting Clinschor personally, to whose life Wolfram further binds the riddle in his interpretation of the lynx that had according to God placed the child in its ‘valschen slaf’ (‘false sleep’):⁴¹ ‘der luhs den tiuvel diutet, der dir sûren lôn / wil geben’ (‘the lynx means the Devil who hopes to give you an unpleasant reward’).⁴² Clinschor turns to a similar strategy when he links the figure of the Devil to Wolfram in order to undermine his ability to make sense of the riddle:

Ich wil gelouben, daz den list
dîn engel vindē oder daz der tiuvel in dir ist.

her Sâtanas, ob ich iu hie entwîche,
Daz kan sô balde niht geschehen.⁴³

I’m convinced that your angel found this skill or that the Devil is in you. ... Lord Satan, I’m not going to yield to you here that easily.

It is not only the distinction between the world of the riddle and the world of the characters that becomes blurred here: that between the metaphorical and literal senses of the language of violence is equally labile. If it is at least possible that Wolfram has not only likened Clinschor to the sinner whose eyes are closed to his guilt but also transposed him into the situation of drowning depicted in the riddle, so too ‘entwîche’ (‘withdraw from,’ ‘make way for’)⁴⁴ has a literal, physical sense that takes the imagery of confrontation out of the metaphorical plane. Both rivals draw on the same field of imagery elsewhere

³⁹ Ragotzky, *Studien zur Wolfram-Rezeption*, 48–62; Tomas Tomasek, *Das deutsche Rätsel im Mittelalter*, Hermaca n.s. 69 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994), 50–54, 220–52.

⁴⁰ *Lohengrin*, 6.56–7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 3.29.

⁴² *Ibid.* 7.69–70.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 8.71–7.

⁴⁴ Georg Friedrich Benecke, Wilhelm Müller and Friedrich Zarncke, *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1854–66), 3: 615–16, <<http://urts55.uni-trier.de:8080/Projekte/MWV/wbb>> (accessed 30 Sept. 2013).

in the context of this riddle: ‘Verwirre ich mich in dînem ham ...’ (‘If I get trapped in your net ...’)⁴⁵ and ‘Ich vinde iu noch daz iuch ze grunde kan senken’ (‘I’ll yet come up with something for you that will sink you all the way to the bottom’).⁴⁶ The effect of such statements rests on the fact that they are not simply a way of expressing rivalry about the ability to solve problems but embody threats against the body. The shift into physical reality is finally and unambiguously completed later in the confrontation, when Clinschor summons a demon called Nazarus. He threatens Wolfram directly in terms of his potential to harm what he touches:

Wolferam, sihst dû wie mir daz leben glüet?
ruort ich den Emsenberc in disem zorne,
Der müest ze üseln werden gar.⁴⁷

Wolfram, can you see how my body is inflamed? If I were to touch the Emsenberg in this rage, it would be reduced to nothing but ashes.⁴⁸

He then flees – ‘vuor enwec’ – when Wolfram draws the sign of the Cross,⁴⁹ and reports to Clinschor thus: ‘bî dem ich was, der ist ein engestlicher man, / er streich vür sich die lenge und ouch die breite’ (‘the person I met is a fearful man; he strode forth left, right and centre’).⁵⁰

Before the encounter with Nazarus, though, there are two further challenges to consider. The ‘Riddle of the Sleeping Child’ is followed by the ‘Riddle of the Die’, which shows how the two rivals move away from the dialogue structure of reasoned argumentation such that they are no longer presenting each other with problems to be solved. Clinschor introduces this riddle – which concerns the interpretation of the numbers three and four on a die – by presenting the answer as one that cannot be found by legitimate means in the first place:

⁴⁵ *Lohengrin*, 5.44 (Wolfram to Clinschor); for *ham* as a net used to catch or trap, see Matthias Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1872–78), 1: 1162, <<http://urts55.uni-trier.de:8080/Projekte/MWV/wbb>> (accessed 30 Sept. 2013).

⁴⁶ *Lohengrin*, 8.80 (Clinschor to Wolfram).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 17.162–4.

⁴⁸ The Emsenberg is the modern-day Inselsberg near Schmalkalden in Thuringia (*Wartburgkrieg*, ed. Rompelman, 321).

⁴⁹ *Lohengrin*, 17.172. ‘Wolfram daz kriuze vür sich reiz’ (*ibid.* 18.171), can be translated ‘Wolfram made the sign of the Cross’ following *Wartburgkrieg*, ed. Simrock, 142–3 (strophe 114). The phrase ‘vür sich’ (‘in front of himself’) would support this, but the verb *rizen* in this context appears normally to describe writing, drawing or inscription (see Lexer, *Handwörterbuch*, 2: 477–8).

⁵⁰ *Lohengrin*, 18.175–6.

Nû sage mir, meister, sunder haz,
wâ windet gotes tougen? nieman vürebaz
gesuochen tar, swer bliben wil bî sinne.⁵¹

Now tell me, master, without hate, where do God's mysteries end? Nobody will dare to seek further if he wants to stay sane.

By placing a taboo on the solution to the riddle, Clinschor thus seeks to deny Wolfram the opportunity to respond successfully to the challenge.⁵² This strategy is accompanied by a threat that picks up the physical mode of attack described above:

swer nû dâ vürbaz sinnen wil,
sô mac der ham im rîzen ûf des hirnes zil
und belibet doch vor witzen gar der vrîe.⁵³

If anyone wishes to pursue this further, he may find his skin torn on the top of his head and yet remain quite without insight.⁵⁴

Wolfram's response initially disregards these threats with which Clinschor frames the riddle. He confidently asserts superiority over Clinschor: 'Sô hiez ich nimmer Wolferam, / kundē ich dîniu wilden wort niht machen zam' ('I'd not be called Wolfram if I couldn't tame your wild words').⁵⁵ He also correctly links the number 4 to the four Evangelists, whom he names in symbolic form (ox, lion, eagle and man). But, rather than completing the solution by interpreting the number 3, he abruptly switches into an attack on his rival: 'ich rüere an dînes sêwes grunt, / und schatt doch gote niht an sîner sterke' ('I have touched the bottom of your sea and even so have not done ill to the power of God').⁵⁶ On the one hand, Wolfram

⁵¹ Ibid. 9.81–3.

⁵² Beate Kellner and Peter Strohschneider, 'Poetik des Krieges: Eine Skizze zum Wartburgkrieg-Komplex', in Manuel Braun and Christopher Young (eds), *Das Fremde Schöne: Dimensionen des Ästhetischen in der Literatur des Mittelalters*, Trends in Medieval Philology 12 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 335–56, esp. 352–6.

⁵³ *Lohengrin*, 9.88–90.

⁵⁴ The interpretation of this passage turns on the word *ham*, which is here translated following *Wartburgkrieg*, ed. Simrock, 132–3 (strophe 105); see also Unger, *Wolfram-Rezeption und Utopie*, 49; Lexer, *Handwörterbuch*, 1: 1162; Benecke, Müller and Zarncke, *Wörterbuch*, 1: 624–45.

⁵⁵ *Lohengrin*, 10.91–2.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 10.99–100. The riddle can be seen in the context of such texts as Reinmar von Zweter's strophe 109, where all six faces of the die are interpreted (*Die Gedichte Reinmars von Zweter*, ed. Gustav Roethe [Leipzig: Hirzel, 1887]). It has been suggested that Wolfram does

thus asserts his ability to speak in spite of Clinschor's efforts to prevent him from doing so, but, on the other, he does so by making recourse to the language of confrontation and thus himself adopts Clinschor's strategy of realigning the discourse in a way that is no longer centred on solving the problem posed. In this respect, again, Nazarus takes matters a step further later, for he turns to the written word to cast aspersions against Wolfram's character: 'Dû bist ein leie, snippensnap, an dise want ich schribe' ('You're a layman, Ha! I'll write it on the wall').⁵⁷ Even the attempt to transcend the dialogue situation by means of the permanence of written language, though, does not lead to success, for Nazarus is, as we have seen, driven away by the non-linguistic sign of the Cross.

In branding Wolfram a 'leie', Nazarus picks up a strategy of casting doubt on the character of one's opponent that Clinschor and Wolfram have employed before him. Clinschor, for example, suggests after the 'Riddle of the Die' that Wolfram is familiar with the black arts of astronomy.⁵⁸ Wolfram's response has a similar flavour:

Ich, Wolferam, muoz mich des bewegen,
swaz dû und dîn tiuvel künste kunnest pflegen.
die bringe alher, sô wil ich daz beziugen,
Daz ich daz quater rehte vant.⁵⁹

I, Wolfram, will have to do without any of the artistry that you and your Devil can pursue. Bring it all here, and then I will prove that I interpreted the four fittingly.

At stake here is not simply the factual content of his knowledge, but the way in which it is obtained and whether this reflects an association with the Devil. That these statements pursue rivalry in terms of character rather than by means of a coherent argument can be seen from the fact that Clinschor, having failed to 'out' Wolfram as a conjuror, later attempts to outdo him by boasting of his own

provide the correct answer with his reference to the Evangelists – the riddle is usually known in German as the 'Quater-Rätsel' ('Riddle of the Four') – despite the fact that he never resolves the significance of the number 3 (see Tomasek, *Das deutsche Rätsel im Mittelalter*, 80–81; Kellner and Strohschneider, 'Poetik des Krieges', 352–3).

⁵⁷ *Lohengrin*, 17.167.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 11.103. The image of Wolfram as a layman has its roots in Wirnt von Grafenberg, *Wigalois*: 'leien munt nie baz gesprach' ('a layman's mouth never spoke better'; ed. J.M.N. Kapteyn, trans. Sabine Seelbach and Ulrich Seelbach, de Gruyter Texte [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005], 6345); Clinschor contrasts this with his own self-image as a 'meisterpfaffe' ('master-priest'; *Lohengrin*, 22.211). The astronomical expertise about which Clinschor and Nazarus interrogate Wolfram points back to *Parzival* (see Ragotzky, *Studien zur Wolfram-Rezeption*, 37–43, 53–6, 83–4; Unger, *Wolfram-Rezeption und Utopie*, 17–20).

⁵⁹ *Lohengrin*, 12.111–14.

knowledge in that very field: 'Nigromanciam weiz ich gar, / der Astronomie nim ich an den sternen war' ('I know all about black magic, and I can discern astronomy in the stars').⁶⁰

The precedence of attack over argument can be seen again in the 'Brandan Riddle'. Here, Wolfram backs up his claim to have interpreted the 4 on the die 'fittingly' by referring to a number of authorities – Aristotle, Daniel and 'Uranias, der nam daz buoch Brandân ûz sîner hende' ('Uranias: he took the book from Brandan's hands').⁶¹ Clinschor's response is to provide further information about Brandan:

Ein engel brâht dem wîsen man
daz buoch dâ von er manic herzen swaer gewan,
dô er die schrift gelas an einer ecken.
Er zêch den engel und daz buoch gar trügenhafter maere.
vor zorne warf erz an die gluot.
der engel sprach: 'sint daz dîn ungeloube tuot,
dû muost ez wider holn mit maniger swaere.'⁶²

An angel brought the wise man the book that caused him much torment in his heart when he read the words in a corner. He accused the angel and the book of most misleading statements. He threw it onto the coals in anger. The angel said: 'As it's your lack of faith that's done this, you'll have to bring it back with many torments.'

This particular passage is clearly related to the German vernacular 'Reise-Fassung' ('Journey Version') of the Brandan legend, in which Brandan burns a book describing God's marvels because he did not believe them and replaces it by subsequently writing down what he witnesses on his travels.⁶³ Yet it is hard

⁶⁰ Ibid. 19.181–2.

⁶¹ Ibid. 12.117–18. The references to a book (or books) involving Brandan in *Lohengrin* and the *Wartburgkrieg* are complex (see Reinhard Hahn, 'Ein engel gap dem wîsen man ein buoch: Anmerkungen zur Brandanlegende im "Wartburgkrieg"', *Neue Forschungen zur mittelhochdeutschen Sangspruchdichtung*, special issue of *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 119 [2000]: 112–29, esp. 122–4). Mention is made of Brandan and a book on three separate occasions in *Lohengrin* (strophes 10, 12, 13), but it is not clear whether all involve the same book.

⁶² *Lohengrin*, 13.124–30.

⁶³ For a summary, see *Brandan: Die mitteldeutsche 'Reise'-Fassung*, ed. Reinhard Hahn and Christoph Fasbender, *Jenaer germanistische Forschungen* n.s. 14 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2002), 156–7, 206–7. The allusion is complicated by the fact that not all versions of the 'Reise'-Fassung concur regarding the number of books Brandan read and the reasons for why he set off and wrote a 'new' one (see Walter Haug, 'Brandans Meerfahrt und das

to identify the place of the digression in terms of what has previously been a question-and-answer exchange. Its significance seems to lie instead in how it presents the relationship between the two protagonists. One reading, which detects a conciliatory element in the passage, is that Clinschor is pointing out the divine legitimacy behind the source of Wolfram's knowledge.⁶⁴ An alternative, though, is that Clinschor is attempting to outdo Wolfram by taking the latter's reference to Brandan as a cue to display more of his own knowledge – and in the process casting Wolfram again in a shady light, for the aspects of Brandan's story that he singles out are negative ones (the hardship caused by reading the book, the inability to believe its content, the trouble involved in making up for this). Nazarus, finally, likewise seeks to corner Wolfram into revealing dubious knowledge:

Nû sage mir, hâst dû meisterschaft,
wie daz firmamentum mit sô hôher kraft
gein den sibem plânêten müge kriegen.⁶⁵

Tell me then, in your mastery, how the firmament is able to challenge the seven planets with such great power.

But Wolfram reiterates that what he knows, he knows in religiously legitimate terms, invoking Christ and Mary⁶⁶ and treating God as the ruler of the universe: 'Ich weiz, der alle dinc vermac, / der hât gezirkelt beidiu naht und ouch den tac' ('I know that he who can do all things has measured out both night and day'), before finally driving the demon away with the sign of the Cross.⁶⁷

Resolution: Actions and Words

We have seen so far how three kinds of polemic speech are employed in three different 'riddles' at the beginning of *Lohengrin*, culminating in the Nazarus

Buch der Wunder Gottes', in Laetitia Rimpau and Peter Ihring (eds), *Raumerfahrung – Raumerfindung: Erzählte Welten des Mittelalters zwischen Orient und Okzident* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), 37–55, at 46–7.

⁶⁴ Cf. Hannes Kästner and Bernd Schirok, 'Ine kan decheinen buochstap / Dâ nement genuoge ir urhap: Wolfram von Eschenbach und "die Bücher"', in Martin Ehrenfeuchter and Thomas Ehlen (eds), *Als das wissend die meister wol: Beiträge zur Darstellung und Vermittlung von Wissen in Fachliteratur und Dichtung des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit: Walter Blank zum 65. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2000), 61–152, at 129–30.

⁶⁵ *Lohengrin*, 14.131–3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 15.147–50.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 16.158–9.

scene. It would be a mistake to treat these strategies as neatly separated and each bound to a different section of the text. The 'Riddle of the Sleeping Child', for instance, not only illustrates the introduction of violence and physical confrontation but also has Clinschor attack Wolfram's character by identifying him with Satan,⁶⁸ and Clinschor's introduction of the riddle with 'Swer mir nû loeset disen haft, / der hât in sîns herzen kunst guot meisterschaft' ('Whoever can untie this knot for me has good mastery in the artistry of his heart')⁶⁹ could, rather than signalling an initial readiness to engage in argument, be read as an ironic effort to make even the first riddle seem unsolvable. Likewise, Wolfram later introduces physical confrontation in the 'Brandan Riddle' by saying 'Er zage, der hie den rücke vlühtic wende' ('Whoever turns tail in flight here will be a coward').⁷⁰ Combined, then, these strategies produce a situation in which, by the Brandan strophes, the participants are no longer engaging in a dispute that has the potential to be resolved by one party demonstrating superiority in terms of knowledge alone. This continues after Nazarus's departure, when Clinschor returns to the fray with a series of strophes about how God made Lucifer and the existence of Arthur in a mountain, intertwined with boasts about how he cast a spell on the messenger of a Paris master and a maid from the Landgrave's court and how his artistry has the force of violence: 'sô kan ich kunst, dâ varent riuteling mit' ('and I am skilled in artistry; it is accompanied by barbs').⁷¹ Wolfram responds in like manner, highlighting what Clinschor does not know (the identity of a knight that Arthur sent out, later disclosed as Lohengrin)⁷² and likening his own artistry to a violent force: 'mîn ûf geworfen kunst mit suoche gein im gât. / ob ich in einen vuoz danne hinder trîbe ...' ('my artistry unsheathed comes at him to probe him. If I drive him back a footstep ...').⁷³

Yet soon afterwards, by strophe 31, Wolfram is established as the narrator of the Lohengrin story proper and the exchange with Clinschor recedes into the background. On two out of the three occasions when it does resurface, Clinschor acknowledges Wolfram's superiority: 'von Eschenbach / her Wolferam singet vürebaz. als ich vor iach, / ich hôrt bi mîner zît nie sanc sô gerne' ('Wolfram von Eschenbach, sing on. As I said earlier, I've never enjoyed hearing a song this much') and 'sing vür dich, meister wîs. / ich gip dir an diser âventiur den prîs, /

⁶⁸ Ibid. 8.76.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 4.31–2.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 12.120.

⁷¹ Ibid. 19, 24–6 (on the background to the motif of Arthur in the mountain, see Roger Sherman Loomis, 'The Legend of Arthur's Survival', in id. [ed.], *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959], 64–71), 20–21; 23.229 (*Riutelinc* appears to refer to a knife or small spear [Lexer, *Handwörterbuch*, 2: 471–2; Benecke, Müller, and Zarncke, *Wörterbuch*, 2/1: 748]).

⁷² *Lohengrin*, 27.264–5.

⁷³ Ibid. 28.275–6.

wan ich ir hân dekeiner slahte künde' ('Sing on, wise master. I'll grant you fame on the basis of this tale, for I know nothing about it').⁷⁴ The polemical element has given way to consensus, at least regarding the specific question of who is the better teller of stories, raising the question of how, in the space of a few strophes, the nature of the encounter between Wolfram and Clinschor has changed so markedly. One explanation can be found by comparing this conclusive triumph over Clinschor with the earlier defeat of Nazarus described above. The crucial turning point in the Nazarus scene occurs when Wolfram takes the dispute out of the domain of language, described by the narrator thus: 'Wolfram daz kriuze vür sich reiz. / der tiuvel vuor enwec' ('Wolfram drew the Cross. The demon departed').⁷⁵ It is not a further intensification of the verbal dispute that allows Wolfram to dismiss Nazarus and his threats, but a physical action – either that of inscribing a sign or that of making the sign of the Cross over his body.⁷⁶ Likewise, his subsequent victory over Clinschor occurs when, rather than continuing to attack character, make threats and contest knowledge, he tells the story of Lohengrin. Wolfram sticks to the medium of language, but it is again an action, something that is done – in this instance narrating – that settles the issue.

It is, however, not quite as simple as that, for even before Wolfram has begun his story, Clinschor appears to admit defeat in strophes 29 and 30:

Clingesor sprach: 'mir ist zornes buoz,
von Dürgen herre, ob ichz mit hulden sprechen muoz,
sô hôrt ich selber singen nie sô gerne.'⁷⁷

Clinschor said: 'My anger has left me, Lord of Thuringia; if I may have leave to say this, then I've never wanted more to hear someone's song.'

It is significant that these words are addressed to a new figure on the scene, Landgrave Hermann, who was mentioned briefly earlier with his wife in strophe 21 and has just called on Wolfram to tell the story of Lohengrin:

Der Dürgenvürste sunder haz
sprach: 'wilt uns diu maere künden vürebaz
wir müezen nâch den vrouwen allen senden.
Kanst uns mit singen tuon bekant,

⁷⁴ Ibid. 108.1071–3; 229.2281–3. In the third and final case (strophes 667–8), Clinschor and Wolfram exchange jibes about their relationships with women, including ironic deference to Wolfram on Clinschor's part: 'sing vür dich, meister guot' ('Sing on, good master'; *ibid.* 667.6664). The tension is resolved by the ladies of the court.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 18.171–2.

⁷⁶ See n. 49 above on the interpretation of the passage.

⁷⁷ *Lohengrin*, 29.288–90.

wie Lohengrîn von Artûs wart ûz gesant
dâ von liez wir uns alle noete wenden.
Al die wîle lâz wir iuch miteinander nimmer *schermen*.⁷⁸

The Landgrave of Thuringia said without hate: 'If you will relate the tale to us from here, we'll have to summon all the ladies. If you can reveal to us in song how Lohengrin was sent out by Arthur, we'd let all our concerns be banished. Throughout, we'll never let you spar with each other.'

The Landgrave not only introduces an element of reconciliation by speaking literally 'without hate' and determining to prevent the two from conflicting with each other;⁷⁹ he also defuses the situation by identifying the knight that Arthur sent out: in the end, it is neither Wolfram nor Clinschor who is first to name the unknown hero. Granted, the recipient is still confronted with a causal gap to fill in so far as it is not clear precisely what it is that makes Clinschor decide Wolfram is better than him, but what stands out is that this resolution is tied to the presence of a third party and his intervention in the dispute, particularly since the presence of others is underlined once the women have returned and Wolfram prepares to perform:

Die lantgraevîn quam ouch aldar
ze Wartberc ûf den palas. man wart dâ gewar
bî ir wol vierzic vrouwen oder mêre,
.
nû siht man den von Eschenbach
als man Hôrant vor der künigîn Hilden sach.
der Clingesor sprach: 'nû singet, meister wise'.⁸⁰

The Landgrave's wife came to the palace on the Wartburg as well. Forty ladies or more were to be seen with her there. ... Now von Eschenbach was seen as Horant had been seen before Queen Hilde. Clinschor said: 'Now sing, wise master'.⁸¹

The comparison of Wolfram and Horant functions on two levels. Most obviously, it reinforces Wolfram's physical presence in a public situation through

⁷⁸ Ibid. 29.281–7.

⁷⁹ Note, however, that the edition's reading of the crucial line, 29.287, is the product of considerable editorial intervention. The Landgrave and his wife have a similar role in strophe 21, where they assert the ability to judge Clinschor's treatment of the court maid.

⁸⁰ *Lohengrin*, 30.291–300.

⁸¹ The manuscripts diverge regarding the place name: 'warpec' (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg 364, fol. 114v), 'warpat' (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg 345, fol. 6v), 'wardpurg' (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 4871, p. 5).

the repetition of the 'siht man' / 'man ... sach' ('was seen' / 'had been seen') construction. In addition, those familiar with the allusion to *Kudrun* would recognize the figure of Horant as he appears in its sixth *aventure*, the model singer who is likened implicitly to Orpheus and attracts the admiration of the court with his art, in contrast to the warrior role that he adopts in later episodes.⁸² It is no accident that the end of the dispute in *Lohengrin* is accompanied by the presentation of Wolfram unambiguously as singer, dissolving the connection between art and violence that he has invoked repeatedly up to now.

Conclusion: Textual Strategies and Historical Setting

This chapter began by identifying a number of ways in which polemic speech was deployed in medieval German literary texts. Techniques such as those found in the *Kaiserchronik*, in Walther and in the Meißner–Marner controversy reverberate in the dispute in *Lohengrin* where Wolfram and Clinschor deny each other the ability to respond, threaten each other's bodies and discredit each other's characters. At the same time, performing actions – doing things – in front of an audience in a public context seems, at least in these early strophes of *Lohengrin*, to provide an alternative way of managing disagreement: only with the intervention of the narrator to describe things and a third party in the form of the Landgrave to settle the matter is the circle of polemical back-and-forth broken. At least two conclusions can be drawn from this, one relating to *Lohengrin* in particular and the other to the wider questions about polemic that are addressed in this volume.

First, it is clear that the opening strophes of *Lohengrin* do more than merely pick up a well-known tradition of Wolfram-reception in order to establish Wolfram as the narrator of the story. Indeed, it is arguably a tendency to concentrate on this, the outcome of the opening, as a teleological objective for what precedes it, that has proved to be a source of difficulty for critics in the past. It has, for example, been stated that Clinschor presents Wolfram with riddles 'welche Wolfram sämtlich mit Bravour löst, womit er seine Meisterschaft als Dichter unter Beweis stellt' ('all of which Wolfram solves with a flourish, thus demonstrating his mastery as a poet');⁸³ yet, as we have seen, an unproblematic question-and-answer exchange of this nature is precisely what the text does not present. Equally, it does not seem satisfactory to steer round the issue by simply registering the sequence of elements in the text and observing that it 'begins with a long exchange in riddle form ... after which "Wolfram" tells the story of

⁸² See Werner Hoffmann, *Kudrun: Ein Beitrag zur Deutung der nachnibelungischen Heldendichtung*, Germanistische Abhandlungen 17 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1967), 61–70.

⁸³ Unger, *Wolfram-Rezeption und Utopie*, 9.

Lohengrin.⁸⁴ The concept of polemic speech provides a route between these two alternatives, a source of the coherence that might otherwise appear to be lacking from the strophes, by allowing them to be read as a process of confrontation and resolution.⁸⁵ This reading also has implications for *Lohengrin* criticism in more general terms, for it underlines with reference to one particular series of strophes that the interest of the work does not, as previous research has often seemed to suggest, lie primarily in its relationship to what came before.⁸⁶ Mathias Herweg has, indeed, argued in a recent study that it should be read not in terms of earlier ‘classical’ courtly literature but as one of a series of romances from around 1300 that have in common a historicizing tendency.⁸⁷ What also begins to emerge, though, alongside an awareness of such broader traits, is a picture of the compositional techniques employed in *Lohengrin* on a more detailed level: just as style is manipulated at the end to present a distinctive narrative voice rather than merely reproducing an earlier source text (the *Sächsische Weltchronik* [Saxon World Chronicle]),⁸⁸ so too the representation of polemic speech at the beginning contributes to an encounter between two figures that unfolds with its own dynamic rather than just invoking the legacy of an earlier author (Wolfram).

Second, *Lohengrin* stands out because it presents the linguistic strategies of polemic in a particular context. Again and again in the introductory examples, we encountered texts that generated or envisaged an ‘Other’ by means of language – the ‘tumben’ (‘foolish’), the collection box, a ‘swer’ (‘whoever’). Polemic speech is thus bound to the presence of a target; the *Jenaer Liederhandschrift* gave a first indication of how this presence could be made explicit, and the process is developed further in *Lohengrin*, where both rivals are present and refer to

⁸⁴ Matthias Meyer, ‘Intertextuality in the Later Thirteenth Century: *Wigamur*, *Gariel*, *Lohengrin* and the Fragments of Arthurian Romances’, in W.H. Jackson and S.A. Ranawake (eds), *The Arthur of the Germans: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval German and Dutch Literature*, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages 3 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 98–114, at 104.

⁸⁵ On war and competition as a source of coherence in the *Wartburgkrieg*, see Kellner and Strohschneider, ‘Poetik des Krieges’; Franziska Wenzel, ‘Textkohärenz und Erzählprinzip: Beobachtungen zu narrativen Sangsprüchen an einem Beispiel aus dem “Wartburgkrieg”-Komplex’, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 124 (2005): 321–40.

⁸⁶ e.g. Unger, *Wolfram-Rezeption und Utopie*; Alain Kerdelhué, *Lohengrin: Analyse interne et étude critique des sources du poème moyen-haut-allemand de la fin du 13^{ème} siècle*, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 44 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1986).

⁸⁷ Mathias Herweg, *Wege zur Verbindlichkeit: Studien zum deutschen Roman um 1300*, *Imagines Medii Aevi* 25 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2010), esp. 15–70.

⁸⁸ Alastair Matthews, ‘Wolfram als Chronist? “Chronikstil” und Sprecher in den Schlusstrophen des *Lohengrin*’, in Elizabeth Andersen, Ricarda Bauschke-Hartung, Nicola McLelland and Silvia Reuvekamp (eds) *Litterischer Stil: Mittelalterliche Dichtung zwischen Konvention und Innovation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, forthcoming).

each other in both the third and the second person – Wolfram, for example, says in quick succession both ‘hoer, Clingesor’ (‘listen up, Clinschor’) and ‘der Clingesor’ (in the third person).⁸⁹ This combination is an oblique reminder of the fact that the confrontation is taking place before an audience at the Landgrave’s court, even if the presence of the latter is only rarely made explicit. In this respect, the strategies described cease to be merely a linguistic game but take up a place in a historical environment. Johannes Rothe recognized as much in the fifteenth century when he included an account of a dispute between Wolfram and Clinschor in the description of the song contest on the Wartburg in his *Thüringische Landeschronik* (Chronicle of Thuringia):

In den selben gecziten quam meister Clingsor, der mit sinen dinern ging recht als cyn bisschoff, czu Wartperg uf dem ritther huße czu entscheidene die senger widder Heinriche von Affterdingen, dar *umb* her dar kommen was. Da was widder *on* Wolferam von Esschenbach mit synen lyden, die her gesungen hatte. Unde dae meister Clingsor den mit sinen reden nicht obirwinden mochte.⁹⁰

In these times, Master Clinschor came, in the manner of a bishop with his servants, to the knights’ palace on the Wartburg to adjudicate between the singers and Heinrich von Ofterdingen; that was why he had come. Wolfram von Eschenbach opposed him there with the songs which he sang. And master Clinschor was unable to overcome him with his words.

The quotation makes a fitting conclusion. It is, as the reference to Clinschor’s role as an adjudicator in the song contest makes clear, to be seen against the background of the *Wartburgkrieg* complex as a whole, to which the approach outlined here could profitably be applied in future work. As well as opening up this perspective, though, the evidence from the historiographical tradition underlines how the strands of polemic considered in this book converge in the opening strophes of *Lohengrin*: the linguistic strategies of polemic speech employed in the text are combined with – and perhaps even inextricable from – the context of a historical setting.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 27.270; 28.272.

⁹⁰ Johannes Rothe, *Thüringische Landeschronik und Eisenacher Chronik*, ed. Sylvia Weigelt, Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 87 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), 49–51, at 50. Rothe’s *Eisenacher Chronik* contains a parallel account of the contest (ibid. 104–6), as do his life of Elisabeth of Thuringia and the chronicle now known as the *Thüringische Weltchronik* (*Johannes Rothes Elisabethleben*, ed. Martin J. Schubert and Annegret Hase, Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 85 [Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005], 225–690; *Düringische Chronik des Johann Rothe*, ed. R. von Liliencron, Thüringische Geschichtsquellen 3 [Jena: Frommann, 1859], 330–36).