

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

‘Warum dichtete man? Man lernte es auf der Schule.’ With characteristic vigour of formulation Ernst Robert Curtius drew attention to two of the most important facets of medieval poetry: the conception of the poet’s art as a learnable skill, and the role of the schools in teaching that skill. He continues:

Sehr viele mittelalterliche Autoren haben gedichtet, weil man es können mußte, um sich als *clericus* und *litteratus* auszuweisen; um Komplimente, Grabschriften, Bittschriften, Widmungen zu verfertigen und sich dadurch bei den Mächtigen in Gunst zu setzen oder mit Gleichstehenden zu korrespondieren; auch um des schnöden Mammons willen. Dichten ist lehr- und lernbar; es ist Schularbeit und Schulwissen.<sup>1</sup>

Any new contribution to the study of poetics in the Middle Ages would do well to begin by thinking over the implications of Curtius’s dictum, for its emphasis on poetry as school-lore, to be applied as occasion demanded, is as fruitful for our understanding of medieval writers and their work as it is problematic.

In the medieval school curriculum, which was based on the system of the seven liberal arts, poetics was not a subject in its own right; poetic doctrine was disseminated in the three arts of the trivium, grammar, rhetoric and dialectic, whose common feature is that they all have language as their object and medium. Grammar taught correct Latin, rhetoric effective and persuasive communication, and dialectic the method of logical disputation.<sup>2</sup> The relevance of dialectic to medieval poetics has received less attention than the contribution of the more obviously literary arts of grammar and rhetoric, although research in this area would undoubtedly cast light on such important matters as the role played in composition by topics.<sup>3</sup> The teaching of grammar and rhetoric drew on texts and traditions reaching back to classical antiquity. The reason for the survival of these traditions beyond the late Latin period, when the system of the seven liberal arts was codified, is twofold: firstly, Latin continued as the language of church, scholarship and administration in the Middle Ages, so that for the educated and professional classes a knowledge of its grammar and a mastery of its style never ceased to be necessary; secondly, Christianity pursued a policy of adaptively retaining the legacy of pagan learning and culture. The

wisdom of the ancients was put to use for new ends. A salient example is Augustine's vindication of rhetoric in *De doctrina christiana*, in which he argues that Christians should not eschew the pagan art of persuasion, but on the contrary should study and exploit it in order to propagate the word of God all the more effectively.<sup>4</sup>

Grammar was defined in Roman antiquity by Quintilian as 'recte loquendi scientia et poetarum enarratio';<sup>5</sup> in the Middle Ages its scope continued to extend beyond the teaching of the rules of correct Latin to embrace literary studies. Exercises in prose and verse composition imparted the elements of prosody and style, as did reading the set authors, whose medieval canon included pagan as well as Christian writers. Grammatical doctrine was enshrined in the works of traditional authorities such as Donatus and Priscian; in the twelfth century these were supplemented by new treatises, for instance the *Doctrinale* of Alexander of Villedieu and the *Grecismus* of Eberhard of Béthune. Intimately connected with the pedagogy of literature are the many surviving commentaries on curriculum authors, together with the short introductions to these writers and their works known as *accessus ad auctores*.<sup>6</sup> Commentaries and *accessus* are a rich source of poetic theory as it was rehearsed in the reading and elucidation of set texts in the schoolroom; they can provide insights as valuable as those contained in the more systematic presentation of theoretical issues that we find in treatises of rhetoric.

Classical rhetoric had three divisions or *genera*, forensic, deliberative, and demonstrative, corresponding to the three most important contexts in ancient Greek and Roman society where oratory had a place: in the lawcourt, in the political assembly and on public occasions, such as birthdays and funerals, where ceremonious speech was called for.<sup>7</sup> According to Curtius, it was the third genre that was instrumental in ensuring the survival of rhetoric into the Middle Ages and bringing about its close association with poetry: with the demise of the legal and political institutions that had supported the first two types of oratory, the *genus demonstrativum*, which because of its emphasis on eloquence for eloquence's sake<sup>8</sup> had always approached pure literature, came into its own; forensic and deliberative oratory meanwhile lived on as formal exercises in the schools. The beginnings of the alliance of poetry and rhetoric are traced by Curtius (pp. 73–76) to the Hellenistic period and to Augustan Rome; the systematization of demonstrative (or epideictic) eloquence occurred during late antiquity. But it was not only the association with poetry that kept rhetoric alive, for medieval society had its own uses for oratory, in preaching and letter-writing, giving rise to new manuals of style and composition, the *artes praedicandi* and *artes dictaminis*, which augmented the canon of classical treatises that continued to be studied. The most important ancient sources were Cicero's *De inventione*, the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (which was believed to be the work of Cicero) and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*. From the twelfth century

we also encounter new primers of literary rhetoric, the *artes poeticae* of Matthew of Vendôme, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, and John of Garland, to name but three of the high medieval contributors to the long and many-stranded tradition of the art of eloquence.<sup>9</sup>

The medieval tradition of school poetics, which I have sketched in its barest historical outline, is Latin. There is no comparable tradition of theoretical reflexion on the poet's art in the vernacular. Now, since I am going to be concerned with the poetics of a Middle High German writer, the question that must be posed is: what relevance does this Latin tradition have to vernacular literature? Here we encounter the first problem raised by Curtius's apophthegm, the problem of the relationship between Latin and vernacular. It would be surprising if the theories of the Latin schoolroom had not influenced vernacular practice, for two reasons: first, as the established language of education, administration, and devotion, with rich and subtle means of literary expression at its disposal, Latin enjoyed considerable prestige over the vernaculars, which in the Middle Ages were taking only their first steps towards becoming independent vehicles of written culture;<sup>10</sup> second, many vernacular authors, having attended schools and studied grammar and rhetoric, were *clerici* themselves, whose education stood them in good stead even when they were not writing in the language of the *litterati*.<sup>11</sup> The demonstrable influence of Latin poetics on the fledgling vernacular literatures of the Middle Ages (by which I mean *written* literature, as distinct from oral traditions), has given rise to a dependency theory, according to which Latin and vernacular are understood as donor and recipient cultures. Such a theory was formulated as early as 1919 by Gustav Ehrismann, writing about the style of Middle High German poetry: 'Die Stilkunst der führenden höfischen Dichter beruht in charakteristischen Ausdrucksformen auf der mittelalterlichen Schulrhetorik . . . Will man also die Grundlagen des mhd. höfischen Stils verstehen, so muß man auf die lateinische Rhetorik zurückgehen.'<sup>12</sup> Ehrismann demonstrated the fecundity of this theory with a detailed study of how the style of one Middle High German poet, Rudolf von Ems, was based on the precepts of medieval Latin poetics (pp. 57–78). A powerful buttress to this approach was the publication shortly afterwards, in 1924, of Edmond Faral's edition of *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle* which made readily accessible the principal texts of the *poetria nova*. From Faral's preface it is clear that he hoped medieval philology would rise to the challenge laid down by his work, namely that it should turn away from considering literary style as a matter of individual taste and instead place its inquiry on objective historical foundations (pp. xi–xvi). Indeed, the edition inspired numerous stylistic studies such as Hennig Brinkmann's book *Zu Wesen und Form mittelalterlicher Dichtung*, published in 1928, and Stanislaw Sawicki's monograph on *Gottfried von Straßburg und die Poetik des Mittelalters* of 1932, the findings of which are discussed at greater length towards the end of this introduction.

The most comprehensive and most influential formulation of the dependency theory has undoubtedly been the monumental book of Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, first published in 1948. Curtius's project was more ambitious than the work of any of the other scholars I have mentioned, in that he hoped to transcend the narrow specialism of medieval philology and promote a 'science of European literature'.<sup>13</sup> In the history of that literature, whose continuous tradition spans the twenty-six centuries from Homer to Goethe, medieval Latinity played the key part, for it formed the link between classical antiquity, whose cultural legacy it preserved, and the emerging vernacular literatures, which it fructified with that legacy (see especially pp. 20–21). As Curtius put it in the foreword he wrote for the English translation of his book: 'Without this Latin background, the vernacular literatures of the Middle Ages are incomprehensible.'<sup>14</sup> Curtius's is a dependency theory writ large, and not just because of the breadth of the historical canvas on which he paints. His inquiry is not limited to the influence of Latin on vernacular in matters of style and poetic technique; rather it is dedicated to showing that Latinity gave to the vernacular the very stuff of which literature is made. The 'cellars and foundations' of European literature are said to be *topoi*.<sup>15</sup> Cicero defines topics as 'disciplina inveniendorum argumentorum' and *topoi*, or *loci*, as 'sedes, e quibus argumenta promuntur';<sup>16</sup> these 'seats' are the various considerations from which arguments may be derived, for instance, similarity, difference, cause, antecedent, and so on. Antique topics was thus concerned with the 'general principles out of which arguments may be drawn for concrete cases',<sup>17</sup> and as such was germane to rhetoric and dialectic, the one concerned with winning arguments, the other with analysis of their logical form.<sup>18</sup> Curtius (p. 77) uses the term *topos* more loosely, however, to mean a cliché or a conventional figure or motif that the trained writer has at his disposal and makes use of as occasion requires. Thus there are *topoi* of beginning and concluding, of praise and consolation, of description, outdoing and inexpressibility, to name but a few, and a good deal of Curtius's book is devoted to tracing the tradition of these and other *topoi* in European literature. Topics, together with its counterpart metaphoric (pp. 136–52), might be said to constitute the 'genes' of that literature; preserved and disseminated in the medieval schools' teaching of grammar and rhetoric, these genes were transmitted from there to the vernaculars, thus ensuring the continuity of the classical heritage.<sup>19</sup> According to Curtius, the Romance languages, French in particular, were the first vernaculars to receive the seed of Latinity: 'Die lateinische Bildung und Dichtung geht voraus, die französische folgt. Das Latein hat dem Französischen die Zunge gelöst. Weil Frankreich der Träger des *studium* war; weil die *artes*, Grammatik und Rhetorik an der Spitze, dort ihr Hauptquartier hatten — deshalb sproßt dort zuerst der Flor der volkssprachlichen Poesie' (p. 388). The Romance literatures maintained their pre-eminence from the time of the Crusades until the French

Revolution, radiating the legacy of the Latin Middle Ages to England and Germany (pp. 41–43).

Curtius's 'fulminantes Werk'<sup>20</sup> ignited scholarly interest in historical topics as an effective means of showing how the vernacular literatures of the Middle Ages had been moulded by Latin.<sup>21</sup> At the same time it has attracted criticism and provoked controversy. This is not surprising; books that attempt an Olympian synthesis of a vast field of knowledge can hardly avoid containing something to displease everyone. Thus Curtius has been taken to task for dabbling in Jungian psychology; for broadening the definition of the *topos* beyond what historical sources strictly allow; for underestimating the possibility of a Christian topics independent of the classical tradition (see Wehrli, pp. 130–37). Perhaps the most serious criticism is that Curtius misrepresents the relationship of Latin to vernacular. The argument is not that the emergent vernacular literatures owe nothing to Latin, nor even that this debt is not considerable; rather it is that if the rise of these literatures in the Middle Ages is to be accounted for adequately then the frame of reference must be widened beyond the simple donor-and-recipient model of the dependency theory. Max Wehrli writes: 'Die entscheidende Leistung des Mittelalters — mindestens nach ihrem Erfolg und ihrer Ursprünglichkeit gemessen — ist die Schöpfung *volkssprachlicher* Literaturen mit ihren praktisch eben auf diese Volkssprachen beschränkten Formen . . . und Gehalten' (p. 135). These specifically vernacular forms and contents (Wehrli has in mind the courtly romance and love lyric) were born of the confrontation and interaction between several traditions, Latin, Christian, and the profane oral culture of the *illiterati*. The problem with Curtius's approach, as Wehrli sees it, is that it does not acknowledge the role played in the formation of European literature by traditions other than those directly inspired by Latin (pp. 135–37).

A recent and radical apology for dropping the dependency theory in favour of a model that stresses the interaction between Latin and vernacular is Walter Haug's book *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter*, which appeared in 1985. He questions whether the study of vernacular poetics should be reduced to determining how far authors knew and applied Latin theories; such an approach inevitably neglects how school precepts were adapted, critically and creatively, to new needs that arose out of writing in a different language from Latin, for an audience with different expectations and experiences of literature. To recognize such adaptation is to allow that the history of vernacular poetics in the Middle Ages is more than the sum of its repeated borrowings from Latin theory; these borrowings are made into an evolving tradition which is acquiring a specificity of its own. Haug seeks to bring this tradition to light through a close and contextual reading of the prologues to vernacular narratives, Old French and Middle High German. It was in the prologue that medieval authors were most disposed to set out both the theoretical premises that governed their writing and

the terms on which they hoped to be understood; Haug shows that when exordial topics, the extreme conventionality of which has often led critics to dismiss them as little more than empty clichés, are set in their context they sometimes appear in a new light, as a vehicle for expressing subtle theoretical reflexions on the part of authors who are aware of the distinctiveness of the vernacular tradition in which they work. The all-important context is provided by relating the prologue to the rest of work and its themes, and by constantly trying to envisage the communicative situation in which the work was received. The alternative to such a contextual reading of literary topics is atomization; by limiting the mode of analysis to identifying *topoi* in a passage and assigning them to their respective traditions, the critic effectively dissolves the text into its constituent 'building blocks', ignoring the fact that it is more often than not the combination of *topoi* in any one text that reveals original moves. Curtius's method, with its emphasis on continuity, its obsession with pointing out how the same *topoi* recur in literature over hundreds of years, is moreover not well suited to registering the changes or even breaks through which a tradition renews and reorients itself. One innovation of momentous importance for European literature is the rise of the Arthurian romance, and with it what Haug sees as a poetics based on the discovery of the possibilities inherent in narrative fiction. Within the framework of the dependency theory, this development would never come into view, because Latin school poetics provides no categories that will capture the essence of Arthurian fiction.<sup>22</sup>

So far I have concentrated on the methodological issues raised by Curtius's assertion that medieval poets wrote because they learned to at school. The danger is that vernacular culture will simply be assimilated to Latin, and in this way a good deal of what is unique about it, and important for the future course of European literature, will be missed. But Curtius's emphasis on the school-room as the matrix of poetry also gives rise to a further set of questions, about form and meaning. If the ability to write poetry is largely a matter of having learned to manipulate the appropriate *topoi* for the occasion (funeral orations, dedications, petitions and so on), then the implication is that literature is really a technical affair whose meaning is exhausted in the matching of form to function. Indeed, for Curtius poetry is best approached through its form. *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* not only offers a new synthesis of the European tradition in which the Latin Middle Ages occupy the place of honour; it is also an attack on the hold exerted over literary criticism in Curtius's day by 'Geistesgeschichte'. The great mistake of 'Geistesgeschichte' was, Curtius maintained, that it did not study literature on literary terms, but borrowed its categories from other disciplines, leading to a misrecognition of the autonomous structure of literature (pp. 19–20). In place of what he regarded as a 'dilettantische Vernebelung von Sachverhalten' (p. 19), Curtius proposed a *Nova Rhetorica* based on historical topics and metaphors (p. 136); only by

highlighting the concrete formal constants of the literary tradition was it in his view possible to penetrate the very tissue of literature (pp. 233, 386).

It was the desire to base his science of literature on foundations more solid than the abstractions of 'Geistesgeschichte', together with the concern to establish the continuity of the European tradition, that led Curtius to cultivate the garden of literary forms (his metaphor, p. 23). Formal elements of poetry are the most tangible; their objective existence is not in dispute in the same way as is the meaning of a literary work of art. One effect of this orientation is, however, that the school disciplines through which the fundamentals of literature were taught — grammar and rhetoric — appear more formalist, more 'technicist', than they actually were, either in antiquity or in the Middle Ages. Quintilian, listing the qualities he considers indispensable in a good *grammaticus*, says that it is not enough to have read the poets; the teacher must be familiar with writers of every kind, and with music, astronomy, and philosophy, if he is to possess the background knowledge necessary for elucidating a literary text in all its aspects.<sup>23</sup> Grammar is thus more than the teaching of forms; it brings into play the general knowledge required to understand the poet's meaning. Rhetoric likewise is not all technique: Cicero insists that eloquence without knowledge ('eloquentia sine sapientia') is more worthless and more harmful to the well-being of the state than knowledge without eloquence.<sup>24</sup> Nor were the medieval *artes poeticae* concerned with form for form's sake, even though their preoccupation with the ornaments of style might give rise to that impression;<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey of Vinsauf for instance is insistent that the writer should first pay heed to what he wants to say, the *res* or *sententiae*, and only then attend to the outward form of the *verba*, which are to be selected with a view to their ability to express the desired meaning: 'In his quae dixeris esto/Argus et argutis oculis circumspice verba/In re proposita.'<sup>26</sup> Clearly, the cultivation of language in the schools concentrated on what was said no less than on how to say it.

How, in the light of what has been said about the need both to recognize the particularity of the vernacular tradition and to take questions of meaning into account, should we approach the poetics of Gottfried von Strassburg? Gottfried was a '*clericus par excellence*'.<sup>27</sup> In his *Tristan* he displays familiarity with a range of school-lore: classical poetry and mythology, legal terminology, music.<sup>28</sup> It is hard to explain how he could have acquired his considerable erudition if not from having gone to school. To exclude Latin rhetoric and poetics from the theoretical background against which we evaluate Gottfried's practice would be to deny his status as *clericus* and *litteratus*. But we must also consider that in his own work Gottfried sets himself in a tradition of poetry that is entirely vernacular. In an excursus he names Hartmann von Aue, Bliigger von Steinach, Heinrich von Veldeke, Reinmar von Hagenau and Walther von der Vogelweide, all poets whose medium is the literary German language, as models of eloquence whom he admires and claims he cannot better.<sup>29</sup> This review of

poets, narrative and lyric, is no mere list; it is an attempt to establish a tradition and a canon.<sup>30</sup> Veldeke is said to have implanted the first twig of German eloquence, which since has so grown and flourished that all his successors can pluck its blossoms (4738–50). The presentation of the ‘verwaere’ or narrative authors centres on the dispute over who should wear the poet’s laurels, Hartmann, or ‘des hasen geselle’, the unnamed rival customarily identified with Wolfram von Eschenbach;<sup>31</sup> a panel of peers will judge the claims according to their artistic merit (4634–55). Likewise the roll-call of the ‘nahtegalen’ or minnesingers is subordinated to the question of who should carry their banner now that their leader, Reinmar, is dead; Walther is selected as worthy of the honour (4778–801). Paradoxically in a passage that is supposed to justify the narrator’s professed lack of confidence in his own rhetorical skills, Gottfried speaks throughout this excursus with the assuredness of one who is aware of belonging to a tradition that has its illustrious founders, is now at its brilliant apogee, and is already consolidating itself into a sort of exclusive club or academy whose fellows decide to whom the laureate or the honour of standard-bearer shall go.

Veldeke draws his artistry from the spring of Pegasus on Mount Helicon (4730–31); Reinmar sings with the tongue of Orpheus (4790–92); Walther’s melodies are said to come from Cithaeron, seat of the goddess of love (4806–10; Gottfried is here confusing or conflating Mount Cithaeron, traditionally one of the homes of the Muses, with Cythera, a shrine of Aphrodite).<sup>32</sup> It is interesting that the denizens of Gottfried’s German Parnassus should owe their talent to inspiration from pagan, classical sources, for this points to a relationship between Latin and vernacular similar to that proposed by medievalists such as Wehrli and Haug: classical culture inspires and fertilizes a tradition that is conscious of its growing independence. Gottfried’s own excursus indicates, then, how we should frame our inquiry into his poetics: the vernacular draws on the Latin legacy, but on its terms.

Accordingly, the place to begin is the German narrative tradition around 1200. I shall argue in the next chapter that here we find two divergent poetic principles at work. The one tendency, which I call ‘archival’, deals predominantly in historical subject-matter; it is the older of the two narrative types, and is heavily dependent on Latin historiography and Christian interpretations of history. Its more recent competitor, to which I give the name ‘experimental’ is a vernacular creation, and its development is bound up with the genre of romance. The material basis of experimental narratives is fictional, and the attitude to meaning is open, in contrast to the closed ideology of archival narratives. These two categories, archival and experimental, set the terms within which the subsequent chapters go on to investigate the relevance of various Latin theories to Gottfried’s narrative poetics. Here, the discussion is centred around the concepts of truth, fiction, and verisimilitude, and their

related genres of history, fable, and argument, as they are defined and applied in grammatical and rhetorical sources. My thesis will be that Gottfried bases his poetics on a principle of verisimilitude, using it to reconcile the tension between the poles of archive and experiment in the vernacular narrative tradition. It will be apparent that all of my categories — archive, experiment, history, fiction, verisimilitude — are concerned with the truth-value of narrative. In other words, they have been chosen with a view to emphasizing how poetic form is also a vehicle for the expression and production of meaning.

Before turning to the vernacular tradition in detail, some account of previous treatments of Gottfried's poetics is called for. I shall concentrate on the two most important — and indispensable — monographs that have appeared to date, bearing in mind the points that have been raised in the course of our discussion up to now. The relevance of Latin school poetics to Gottfried's narrative technique was convincingly demonstrated by Stanislaw Sawicki in his pioneering dissertation on *Gottfried von Straßburg und die Poetik des Mittelalters*, published in 1932. Sawicki, who noted that the study of literature, poetics, and rhetoric flourished in the monastery schools of Alsace,<sup>33</sup> compared Gottfried's practice with theoretical doctrine as it is represented in contemporary *artes poeticae* such as the *Ars versificatoria* of Matthew of Vendôme and the *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf. It was a line of investigation that continued Ehrismann's work on Rudolf von Ems and benefited from the recent publication of Faral's edition of the principal medieval doctrinal sources (see above, p. 3). Not only did Sawicki show that Gottfried used a wide range of amplificatory devices and stylistic ornaments as prescribed by the medieval theoreticians, he also established that Gottfried had absorbed their technical terminology into his own critical vocabulary in the literary excursus (pp. 56–167). Sawicki's conclusion, which can hardly be impugned in the light of the impressive array of evidence assembled in his monograph, is that 'Gottfried steht fest auf dem Boden der mittelalterlichen Poetik' (p. 178).

Sawicki conducts his inquiry within the terms of the dependency theory. He also confines poetics to the realm of the purely formal and ornamental. For him both the theory and the practice of poetry are concerned with the surface texture of language alone; his estimate of the *artes poeticae* is that they promote 'das Ideal des Pretiösen und Überornamentierten', and Gottfried himself is described as 'der Virtuose und Meister des . . . pretiös überkünstelten Stils' (pp. 48, 173). The techniques of poetics are presented as nothing more than a repertoire of decorative figures with which Gottfried adorns his style; within this ornamental conception of Gottfried's literary art it is impossible to pose (in the words of another of Sawicki's critics, Winfried Christ) 'die Frage, wie Stil und Bedeutung im Werk vermittelt sind'.<sup>34</sup>

Christ's book *Rhetorik und Roman: Untersuchungen zu Gottfrieds von Straßburg 'Tristan und Isold'* (1977) seeks to provide a corrective to an excessively formal

approach to Gottfried's poetics. Christ emphasizes the rhetorical basis of medieval literary technique and reminds us of the fundamental tenet of rhetoric, that eloquence is intended to persuade, edify and move the audience. Rhetoric is the art of effective public speaking, and a poetics based upon it will be a 'Wirkungspoetik': 'Dichtung war Ansprache, war dialogisch interessiert, war rhetorisch' (p. 343; see also pp. 14–41). This is poetics in my sense of the word, not concerned with art for art's sake but with the communication between author and public through the medium of the literary text. Christ bases his detailed examination of Gottfried's technique on a concept of the text as the rhetorical transformation of a traditional legend to which the author has applied his ingenuity in order to present the public with a story that will be interesting, entertaining and, above all, plausible (see pp. 291–330 in particular).

There are three criticisms that might be levelled at Christ's complex and frequently illuminating study. The first is that he comes no closer himself to answering the question he accuses Sawicki of neglecting, namely how technique assists the expression of meaning. In fact, Christ's account of rhetoric makes it impossible for him to tackle this problem. Gottfried's transformation of the Tristan story is, according to Christ, piecemeal and episodic; he is said to concentrate on representing individual scenes in an effective manner without paying much regard to their integration into a coherent and meaningful whole. Gottfried's rhetorical technique is thought by Christ to bring about the disintegration of the traditional myth into a loosely connected sequence of 'microstructures', each consistent in itself, but whose significance does not reach beyond the boundaries of the individual episode. Rhetoric is, in a way, corrosive of meaning; the consequence of what Christ terms Gottfried's 'rhetorischer Partikularismus', his focusing on one scene in isolation from others, is 'epische Diskontinuität' (pp. 109–16, 159, 341–48). Although Christ eschews an aesthetics of 'art for art's sake', he effectively adopts a position of 'rhetoric for rhetoric's sake', for he never gives a satisfactory explanation why Gottfried should devote so much rhetorical virtuosity to holding the attention and interest of his public over some twenty thousand lines, except to say that the poet wished to instruct, entertain, and convince. But convince the audience of what?

My second reservation is that Christ's insights into the rhetorical foundations of Gottfried's narrative practice remain schematic and unhistorical to a great degree. Christ is aware of the problem of knowing where to begin in his attempt to derive Gottfried's literary technique from rhetorical doctrine: 'Zwar ist die Rhetorik allgegenwärtig, aber darum auch in vielerlei Gestalten und Traditionen verfügbar' (p. 27); but a fear of making what he calls 'genetische Trugschlüsse' renders him unwilling to investigate the possible connexions between Gottfried's poetics and specific theories and traditions of rhetoric.

Instead, he interprets Gottfried's practice against the background of a general and supposedly omnipresent system of rhetoric — it is revealing that Christ does not go directly to the rhetoricians for his doctrine, but to Lausberg's *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, an admirable guide, to be sure, but with all the advantages and drawbacks that a highly schematized distillation of Quintilian entails (see pp. 28–31, 43–50, for Christ's exposition of his method). Christ's reluctance to get down to the level of individual rhetorical texts means that the relationship between theory and Gottfried's practice remains abstract. It is true that we possess so little information about Gottfried that we could never prove what, if any, rhetorical and poetic treatises he had read, but — I hope that my argument in the chapters to come will bear me out — it is at least possible to make connexions between aspects of his technique and specific sources that are representative of the *type* of theoretical tradition with which he may have been familiar. The question of genetic links cannot be side-stepped, for it is implicit in any approach that seeks to explain observable textual features by deriving them from a body of theoretical doctrine. Christ, it seems to me, wants to have it both ways: his analysis requires that there should be a relationship between Gottfried's narrative technique and the theory of rhetoric, but he does not want to make this relationship substantial, preferring instead to appeal to the omnipresence of rhetoric in the Middle Ages as a sufficient explanation.

One effect of Christ's schematic derivation of the poet's technique from a general system of rhetoric is that other forces that might have shaped Gottfried's poetics, such as the tradition of vernacular narrative in which he was working, are excluded from consideration. This brings me to my third criticism, that Christ does little to outline Gottfried's position within Middle High German literature and to explain why developments there might have favoured the application of certain poetic theories. His observation that there is a resemblance between the orator of antiquity and the medieval poet, who recites his work to a listening public, does no more than establish on a general level that there is scope for rhetoric in medieval literature (pp. 21–22). Quite apart from the fact that it underestimates the role increasingly played by reading in the reception of vernacular literature,<sup>35</sup> such an assimilation of the medieval performance context to classical rhetoric gives undue weight to the similarities between the two when, I would argue, it is the differences that are more telling. The vernacular poet of the Middle Ages is not the orator of the city-state of antiquity; he faces a different public, which has different expectations, and accordingly his eloquence fulfils a different function. For me, the particularity of vernacular literary culture must come first, since it is from this vantage-point that it becomes possible to see the general conditions under which specific rhetorical theories are applied and adapted. It is to this culture that we now turn.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. E. R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Berne, 1948), p. 464.
2. On the seven liberal arts and medieval education, see Louis John Paetow, *The Arts Course at Medieval Universities, with Special Reference to Grammar and Rhetoric* (Champaign, Illinois, 1910); Pierre Riché, *Les Écoles et l'enseignement dans l'occident chrétien* (Paris, 1979).
3. See Richard McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 17 (1942), 1–32; Lothar Bornscheuer, 'Topik', in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, vol. vi, second edition, edited by K. Kanzog and A. Masser (Berlin, 1984), pp. 454–75.
4. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, edited by W. M. Green, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 80 (Vienna, 1963), Book iv. See Erich Auerbach, *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter* (Berne, 1958), pp. 25–53.
5. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, edited by H. E. Butler, 4 vols (London, 1921–22), 1.4.2.
6. On grammar and curriculum authors in the Middle Ages see Curtius, pp. 50–62, 263–67, 445–63; Günter Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter: Entstehung und Wandlung des Lektürekansons bis 1200 nach den Quellen dargestellt*, Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung, 5 (Munich, 1970); Riché, pp. 247–52, 254–58. On *accessus ad auctores* see Edwin A. Quain, 'The medieval *accessus ad auctores*', *Traditio*, 3 (1945), 215–64; Paul Klopsch, *Einführung in die Dichtungslehren des lateinischen Mittelalters* (Darmstadt, 1980), pp. 48–64 (with references to further secondary literature).
7. See Werner Eisenhut, *Einführung in die antike Rhetorik und ihre Geschichte* (Darmstadt, 1974); Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, second edition, 2 vols (Munich, 1973).
8. Lausberg, para. 239, p. 130.
9. For medieval rhetoric and *artes poeticae* see Edmond Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XII<sup>e</sup> et du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du moyen âge*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Etudes, 238 (Paris, 1924); Charles Sears Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400): Interpreted from Representative Works* (New York, 1928); James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1974); Klopsch, pp. 64–163.
10. Max Wehrli, *Literatur im deutschen Mittelalter: Eine poetologische Einführung* (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 29–46.
11. The term *clericus* was not restricted to men in holy orders but could refer to anyone who had been educated in a Church school; it meant 'having a Latin education' and as such was synonymous with *litteratus*, 'able to read and write Latin'. See Herbert Grundmann, 'Litteratus — illitteratus: Der Wandel einer Bildungsnorm vom Altertum zum Mittelalter', *AfK*, 40 (1958), 1–63; Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur: Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, 2 vols (Munich, 1986), pp. 607–10, 682–85.
12. G. Ehrismann, *Studien über Rudolf von Ems: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Rhetorik und Ethik im Mittelalter*, SB der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse (Heidelberg, 1919), p. 23.
13. Curtius, p. 23: 'Eine solche "Wissenschaft von der europäischen Literatur" hat in dem spezialisierten Fächerwerk unserer Universitäten keinen Platz.'
14. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, translated by Willard R. Trask (London, 1953), p. viii.
15. Curtius, p. 87: 'Topik . . . , die selbst der "Literaturwissenschaftler" kaum den Namen nach kennt, weil er die Kellerräume — und Fundamente! — der europäischen Literatur entschlossen meidet'.
16. Cicero, *Topica*, edited by H. M. Hubbell (London, 1949), 1.2, 7.
17. I. M. Bochenski, *Ancient Formal Logic* (Amsterdam, 1951), p. 32.
18. On the definition and history of topics, see Bornscheuer, pp. 454–61.
19. 'Die Kontinuität der europäischen Literatur ist an die Schule gebunden' (Curtius, p. 44). Although Curtius does not use the genetic metaphor, in the foreword to the English edition of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* he alludes, interestingly, to the 'biology' of literature (p. ix).
20. Wehrli, *Literatur*, p. 130.
21. For a full bibliography of works up until 1972 see Peter Jehn, *Toposforschung: Eine Dokumentation*, *Respublica Literaria*, 10 (Frankfurt, 1972), 321–48. Of the numerous works that have followed on the trail blazed by Curtius one of special relevance to German is Werner Fechter's *Lateinische Dichtkunst und deutsches Mittelalter: Forschungen über Ausdrucksmittel, poetische Technik und Stil mittelhochdeutscher Dichtungen*, PhStQ, 23 (Berlin, 1964). Fechter identifies classical *topoi* in Hartmann von Aue and Wernher der Gartenaere, and also discusses the relationship between specific Latin sources and a number of Middle High German texts and authors, including the *Nibelungenlied*, Burkhart von Hohenfels, Rudolf von Ems, and Konrad von Würzburg.

22. Haug's methodological premises are set out in the introductory chapters of *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter: Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts: Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt, 1985), pp. 1–15. I discuss his account of fiction in the Arthurian romance at greater length in the following chapter, pp. 30–36. The proposition that the poetics of romance cannot be accommodated within the categories of Latin theory has also been advanced by Fritz Peter Knapp, 'Historische Wahrheit und poetische Lüge: Die Gattungen weltlicher Epik und ihre theoretische Rechtfertigung im Hochmittelalter', *DVLG*, 54 (1980), 582–83, 627–28.
23. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 1.4.4: 'Nec poetas legisse satis est: excutiendum omne scriptorum genus non propter historias modo sed verba, quae frequenter ius ab auctoribus sumunt. Tum neque citra musicen grammaticae potest esse perfecta, cum ei de metris rhythmisque dicendum sit, nec, si rationem siderum ignoret, poetas intelligat, qui (ut alia omittam) totiens ortu occasuque signorum in declarandis temporibus utantur; nec ignara philosophiae, cum propter plurimos in omnibus fere carminibus locos ex intima naturalium questionum subtilitate repetitos, tum vel propter Empedoclea in Graecis, Varronem ac Lucretium in Latinis, qui praecepta sapientiae versibus tradiderunt'.
24. Cicero, *De inventione*, edited by H. M. Hubbell (London, 1949), 1.1: 'ut existimem sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse civitatibus, eloquentiam vero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse nunquam. Quare si quis omissis rectissimis atque honestissimis studiis rationis et officii consumit omnem operam in exercitatione dicendi, is inutilis sibi, perniciosus patriae civis alitur'.
25. Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, p. 86.
26. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, lines 749–51, in Faral, *Les Arts poétiques*, p. 220; see Christoph Huber, 'Wort-Ding-Entsprechungen: Zur Sprach- und Stiltheorie Gottfrieds von Straßburg', in *Befund und Deutung: Zum Verhältnis von Empirie und Interpretation in Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft: Hans Fromm zum 26. Mai 1979 von seinen Schülern*, edited by K. Grubmüller and others (Tübingen, 1979), pp. 284–90.
27. Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, p. 684.
28. See Wilhelm Hoffa, 'Antike Elemente bei Gottfried von Straßburg', *ZfdA*, 52 (1910), 339–50; Alois Wolf, 'Zur Frage des antiken Geistesgutes im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg', in *Natalicium Carolo Jax*, vol. II, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, 4 (Innsbruck, 1956), pp. 45–53; Rosemary Combridge, *Das Recht im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg*, PhStQ, 15, second edition (Berlin, 1964); Franzjosef Penschel, 'Rechtsgeschichtliches und Rechtssprachliches im epischen Werk Hartmanns von Aue und im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Humboldt University, Berlin, 1961). Lambertus Okken, *Kommentar zum Tristan-Roman Gottfrieds von Straßburg*, Amsterdamer Publikationen zur Sprache und Literatur, 57–58, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1984–85), contains an appendix on music by Martin van Schaik (II, 163–224); see also Luise Gnaedinger, *Musik und Minne im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg*, WW Beihefte, 19 (Düsseldorf, 1967), and, on Gottfried's and Boethius's theories of music, W. T. H. Jackson, 'Tristan the Artist in Gottfried's Poem', *PMLA*, 77 (1962), 364–72.
29. *Tristan und Isold*, edited by Friedrich Ranke, fourteenth edition (Dublin and Zurich, 1969), lines 4597–844. Line references to this edition will henceforth be given in the text.
30. See the entry 'Literaturexkurs' in each of the two volumes of Hans-Hugo Steinhoff, *Bibliographie zu Gottfried von Straßburg*, Bibliographien zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 5 (Berlin, 1971) and 9 (1986) for the extensive secondary literature on this passage. The following raise and discuss some of the issues I am concerned with: Ursula Schulze, 'Literarkritische Äußerungen im "Tristan" Gottfrieds von Straßburg', *Beiträge* (Tübingen series), 88 (1967), 285–310; Ingrid Hahn, 'Zu Gottfrieds von Straßburg Literaturschau', *ZfdA*, 96 (1967), 218–36; Johan H. Winkelmann, 'Die Baummetapher im literarischen Exkurs Gottfrieds von Straßburg', *ABAG*, 8 (1975), 85–112.
31. For the controversy surrounding the supposed enmity between Gottfried and Wolfram, and the large secondary literature, see Gerhild Geil, *Gottfried von Straßburg und Wolfram von Eschenbach als literarische Antipoden: Zur Genese eines literaturgeschichtlichen Topos* (Cologne and Vienna, 1973).
32. I discuss these classical references more fully below, pp. 68–70.
33. S. Sawicki, *Gottfried von Straßburg und die Poetik des Mittelalters*, Germanische Studien, 124 (Berlin, 1932), pp. 24–25, 51.
34. Christ, *Rhetorik und Roman: Untersuchungen zu Gottfrieds von Straßburg "Tristan und Isold"*, Deutsche Studien, 31 (Meisenheim, 1977), pp. 11–12. Sawicki's formalism is also criticized by Heinz Scharschuch, *Gottfried von Straßburg: Stilmittel — Stilästhetik*, Germanische Studien, 197 (Berlin, 1938), p. 305; for him Gottfried's style expresses a series of polarities that symbolize 'die künstliche Synthese deutscher und französischer Wesenszüge' (p. iii), and this synthesis is

itself said to be a reflexion of the special historical and geographical position of Alsace which, moreover, Alsations such as Scharschuch himself are best placed to appreciate (p. iv). Form is for Scharschuch an expression of national mentality; this is conceptual territory where critics would be reluctant to tread nowadays.

35. D. H. Green, review of Christ, *MLR*, 75 (1980), 442.