

Appendix

THE PROLOGUE TO WOLFRAM VON ESCHENBACH'S *PARZIVAL*¹

A translation of Wolfram's prologue is always also an interpretation. The prologue operates primarily through metaphors, images that are calculated to evoke a realm of associations familiar to the audience. To supply this common denominator in translation is to interpret the whole. But not to do so would be to leave the text an unintelligible and clumsy approximation of the literal meaning of its metaphors. Thus, I have rendered *bîspel* (line 1,15) as "fable" because we have no equivalent, and I understand Wolfram's primary message to his audience to refer to the incommensurability of allegorical teaching and the layman's experience. The "blind man's dream" (line 1,21) is rendered as a vision, not only because dreams were treated as visionary seeings in the Middle Ages but also because the focus is on the idea of a communicable knowledge of the divine. *Antlützes roum* (line 1,22), always troublesome, I have rendered as a "shimmer" of the "true visage" i.e. God's), and "trüebe lîhte schîn" as "darkling-light image," because with these terms Wolfram's mirror evokes Paul's *speculum* (1 Corinthians 13.12), the all but universal image in the High Middle Ages for human incapacity to know God "face to face."

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| <p>1 <i>Ist zwîvel herzen nâchgebûr,
daz muoz der sêle werden sûr.
gesmæhet unde gezieret
ist, swâ sich parrieret</i></p> <p>5 <i>unverzaget mannes muot,
als agelstern varwe tuot.
der mac dennoch wesen geil:
wand an im sint beidiu teil,
des himels und der helle.</i></p> <p>10 <i>der unstæte geselle
hât die swarzen varwe gar,
und wirt och nâch der vinster var:
sô habet sich an die blanken
der mit stæten gedanken.</i></p> <p>15 <i>diz vliegende bîspel
ist tumben liuten gar ze snel,
sine mugens niht erdenken:
wand ez kan vor in wenken
rehte alsam ein schellec hase.</i></p> | <p>When doubt lives close by the heart,
the soul is surely imperilled.
Wherever the steadfast, manly disposition
makes room for company, it is both debased
and glorified,
as in the colouring of the magpie.
Such a one can still meet with a happy end,
for in him both Heaven
and Hell have a part.
The wholly inconstant fellow
is black all over
and will come to a dark end,
while he whose intentions do not waver,
holds fast to the light.
This fluttering fable
flies too fast for simple folk.
They're unable to think it through,
for it can cut and dash before them
just like a startled hare.</p> |
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¹ Text taken (with minor adaptation) from Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival. Studienausgabe*, 2nd ed., following the 6th ed. by Karl Lachmann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003).

- 20 *zin anderhalp ame glase
gelîchet,² und des blinden troum.
die gebent anlützes roum,
doch mac mit staete niht gesîn,
dirre trûebe lîhte schîn:*
- 25 *er machet kurze fröude alwâr.
wer roufet mich dâ nie kein hâr
gewuohs, inne an mîner hant?
der hât vil nâhe griffe erkant.
sprich ich gein den vorhten ouch,
daz glîchet mîner witze doch.*
- 2 *wil ich triwe vinden
aldâ si kan verschwinden,
als viur in dem brunnen
unt daz tou von der sunnen?*
- 5 *ouch erkante ich nie sô wîsen man,
ern möhte gerne kûnde hân,
welher stiure disiu mære gernt
und waz si guoter lêre wernt.
dar an si nimmer des verzagent,*
- 10 *beidiu si vliehent unde jagent,

si entwîchent unde kêrent,

si lasternt unde êrent.
swer mit disen schanzen allen kan,

an dem hât witze wol getân,
15 *der sich niht versizet noch vergêt

und sich anders wol verstêt.
valsch geselleclîcher muot
ist zem hellefiure guot,
und ist hôher werdekeit ein hagel.**
- 20 *sîn triwe hât sô kurzen zagel,
daz si den dritten biz niht galt,
fuor si mit bremen in den walt.
Dise manger slahte underbint
jedoch niht gar von manne sint.*
- It's like tin on the backside of glass
or the visions of a blind man:
they offer a shimmer of the true visage,
but such dim and darkling light
never lasts long;
it gives brief comfort indeed.
Who would try to get hold of me by hair
that's never grown, on the palm of my hand?
He'd need a sure grip, indeed!
And if I cry "ouch!" for fear's sake alone,
even so may my wits be judged.
Shall I seek true fellowship
where it's as like to vanish
as fire in a fountain
or dew under the sun?
And I've yet to meet a man so very
learned that he didn't himself need to ask
how to approach *this* story
and what good teaching it delivers.
It's no slouch on that score!
It'll show you its heels and then come
charging,
it will leave you the field and then take it
back again,
doling out both shame and honour.
He who can hold the saddle through these
ups and downs,
he has the gift of wit indeed:
one who neither sits out the fight or takes
to flight
and other-wise knows where he stands.
The false fellow's friendship
deserves the fire of Hell
and batters noble bearing like a hailstorm.
His loyalty has such as short tail
that it couldn't beat off the third bite
if flies chased it into the woods.
But all these deliberations
pertain by no means only to men.

2 As argued in Powell, "'Parzival'-Prolog," 66–67, Lachmann's conjecture, *geleichet*, is no longer necessary, so that I have restored the reading in all manuscripts but D.

- 25 *für diu wîp stôze ich disiû zil:*³
swelhiu mîn râten merken wil,
diu sol wizzen war si kêre
ir prîs und ir êre,
und wem si dâ nâch sî bereit
minne und ir werdekeit,
3 *sô daz si niht geriuwe*
ir kiusche und ir triuwe.
vor gote ich quoten wîben bite,
daz in rehtiû mâze volge mite.
- 5 *scham ist ein slôz ob allen siten:*
ich endarf in niht mêr heiles biten.
diu valsche erwirbet valschen prîs
wie staete ist ein dünnez îs,
daz ougestheize sunnen hât?
- 10 *ir lop vil balde alsus zergât.*
manec wîbes schæne an lobe ist
breit:
ist dâ daz herze conterfeit,
die lob ich als ich solde
daz safer ime golde.
- 15 *ich enhân daz niht für lîhtiu dinc,*
swer in den kranken messinc
verwurket edeln rubîn
und al die âventiure sîn
(dem glîche ich rehten wîbes muot)

For the women I promise this reward:
 she who pays heed to my counsel
 will know well where
 to entrust her honour and her good name,
 likewise on whom she should thereafter
 bestow her love and her precious person,
 such that her chaste virtue
 and her true devotion be not abused.
 Before God I pray that all good women
 might keep proper discretion as their
 constant companion.

Modesty holds the key to all other virtues;
 I can wish their souls no greater help.
 The false woman wins false praise.⁴
 What constancy is there in a thin sheet of ice
 exposed to the hot August sun?
 Her reputation will fade just as fast.
 Many a woman's beauty is praised far
 and wide,
 but if her heart is counterfeit,
 then I praise her as I should [as Isolde]:
 a glass bauble set in gold.
 But I hold it to be no small feat,
 when someone works into base brass
 a noble ruby
 with all the *âventiure* it contains;
 the true woman's disposition.

3 Something is lost regardless of which punctuation mark is used here, although I find Nellmann's colon an improvement over Lachmann's period. The line artfully carries the relevance of the foregoing *underbint* into the prologue's second half, and simultaneously announces something very different. The resulting *apokoinu* is a rhetorical figure of the woman's significance to the argument, and to the poetic project.

4 The entire women's prologue exhibits the dual meanings of *prîs* and its complement, *lop*. *Prîs* is both the opinion of others (clearest here and in line 3,24) and an attribute of the subject itself (line 2,28), both "praise" and "honour" or "worth." It is characteristic of Middle High German usage that the overlap between these two is not yet objectified as "reputation." *Lop* is the action through which others manifest *prîs* and the latter accumulates to the subject. *Prîs* and *lop* thus imply moral obligations in both beholder and beheld. Through this idea the remarks on moral disposition continuously collapse the distinction between the truth (here: *rehter wîbes muot*) and its appraisal, the narrative and its reception.

20 *diu ir wîpheit rehte tuot,
dane sol ich varwe prüeven niht,
noch ir herzen dach, daz man siht.*

*ist si inrehalb der brust bewart,
so ist werder prîs dâ niht verschart.*

25 *Solt ich nu wîp unde man
ze rehte prüeven als ich kan,
dâ füere ein langez mære mite.
nu hoert dirre âventiure site.
diu lât iuch wizzen beide
von liebe und von leide:*

4 *fröud und angest vert tâ bî.
nu lât mîn eines wesen drî,
der ieslîcher sunder phlege
daz mîner künste widerwege:*

5 *dar zuo gehörte wilder funt,
op si iu gerne tæten kunt
daz ich iu eine künden wil.
si heten arbeite vil.*

*ein mære wil i'u niuwen,
10 daz seit von grôzen triuwen,
wîplîchez wîbes reht,
und mannes manheit alsô sleht,
diu sich gein herte nie gebouc.*

Where a woman to woman is true,
you won't find me examining her
complexion
or the mere cover of her heart, that which
meets the eye.

If she be steadfast within her breast,
there no noble name will come to shame.

Were I to go on and tell you all I can
on the judgment of woman and man,
it would make a tiresome tale.
now hear what sort of story this one is.
it will give you a part in either,
in love and in sorrow.

joy and fear go along for the ride.

If there were three men here in my place
and each of them with skill enough
to equal my own:

they'd still need a wild imagination,
to try and tell you all
that I alone intend to do.

They'd have trouble enough.

I intend to renew a tale,
that tells of great devotion,
of true woman's womanhood
and man's manhood no less upright,
that never faltered under trial.