

HEROES AND THEIR BEARDS

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In Aventure 38 of the ‘Nibelungenlied’ Dietrich is so appalled by the news of Rüdiger’s death that he refuses to believe it and sends Hildebrand to the hall to discover the truth of the matter. When Hagen, with some regret, confirms that the reports are true (*daz maere ist ungelogen* B 2253,1),¹ Hildebrand and the rest of Dietrich’s assembled men are moved to tears:

*dô klageten in die recken. ir triuwe in daz gebôt.
den Dieterîches recken sach man trehene gân
über berte unde über kinne. in was vil leide getân.* (B 2254,2-4)

In one sense, and even before the “die kunstvoll dreifältige Klage” of strophes B 2255-2257 is launched into,² this striking if fleeting visualization of men weeping together brings the story of Rüdiger’s dilemma and death to a fitting conclusion.³ Indeed, this particular narrative sequence (beginning in Aventure 37) is punctuated by tears, whether shed by Rüdiger himself (B 2132,4; 2135,1-2) or by others at his magnanimity (B 2194,2), predicament (B 2199,2-3) and of course at his death (B 2222,4).⁴ The tears of Dietrich’s men represent a final affirmation of Rüdiger’s special status as the *vater maneger tugende* (B 2199,4); at the same time, however, they are a collective expression of the social bond between the exiled Amelungs and Rüdiger, grounded in unshakeable *triuwe* (B 2254,2).⁵ That these tears are male – and that the social bond or heroic affiliation on display is most emphatically one between men – is accentuated by the passing reference to the heroes’ *berte* (B 2254,4).⁶ But

¹ Das Nibelungenlied und die Klage. Nach der Handschrift 857 der Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, ed. JOACHIM HEINZLE (Deutscher Klassiker Verlag TB 51. Bibliothek des Mittelalters 12), Berlin 2015.

² UTE SCHWAB, Mancherlei Totendienst im Nibelungenlied. si dienten im nach tode also man lieben vrienden sol, in: Festschrift Ingo Reiffenstein, Göttingen 1988, pp. 353-396, here p. 374.

³ For visualization (*sach man* B 2254,3) as a fundamental narrative strategy in the ‘Nibelungenlied’ see HORST WENZEL, Augenzeugenschaft und episches Erzählen. Visualisierungsstrategien im Nibelungenlied, in: 6. Pöchlarn Heldenliedgespräch. 800 Jahre Nibelungenlied: Rückblick – Einblick – Ausblick, ed. KLAUS ZATLOUKAL (Philologica Germanica 23), pp. 215-234, here, pp. 220-224.

⁴ The “compositional significance” of moments of weeping in the work as a whole is emphasized by ALMUT SUERBAUM, Weinen si began. Male and female tears in the Nibelungenlied, in: Vir ingenio mirandus (Festschrift John Flood), 2 vols, Göttingen 2003, vol. I, pp. 23-37, here pp. 25-26.

⁵ For social relations in narrative portrayals of grief see ELKE KOCH, Trauer und Identität. Inszenierungen von Emotionen in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters (TMP 9), Berlin 2006, pp. 68-78.

⁶ See also HEINZ GERD WEINAND, Tränen. Untersuchungen über das Weinen in der deutschen Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters (Abhandlungen zur Kunst-, Musik- und Literaturwissenschaft 5), p. 118.

this outstanding detail may have another function, for in making explicit at this precise juncture what many of the text's recipients may well have assumed about their heroes – their beardedness – the author-narrator would appear to be compensating for something else. Scenes of weeping, grieving warriors may be conventional in heroic epics;⁷ nevertheless the accusation of effeminacy is never far away.⁸ In the course of the 'Nibelungenlied' itself this comes to represent the heroic insult of choice, such as when Volker seeks to antagonize and provoke Etzel's men still further after the first rounds of slaughter: *nû kiuse ich des die wârheit, als mir ist geseit,/ die Hiunen die sint boese, si klagent sam diu wîp* (B 2012,2-3).⁹ When the bearded followers of Dietrich weep, on the other hand, they are seen to weep entirely appropriately – as men.

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Given the predominance of male figures and male-dominated spheres of action in the 'Nibelungenlied' it is perhaps surprising that this is the only point in the text at which the beards of any of the heroes are expressly mentioned. Or perhaps it is not. For when it comes to the physical description of their characters – as opposed to the garments they are wearing – medieval (German) narratives are on the whole sparing in detail (relatively few physical features are found worthy of attention) and selective (relatively few figures within any single narrative are described at all), the rhetorically honed emphasis being on the exceptionally beautiful or, occasionally, the hideously ugly.¹⁰ Such sparsity of detail may, in some cases, have to do with an idealized view of (noble) figures, in which physiognomy plays a subordinate role even in scenes of recognition.¹¹ However, this phenomenon is also in keeping with medieval narrative strategies that are often highly elliptical and metonymical; in

⁷ TERESA PÀROLI, The Tears of the Heroes in Germanic Epic Poetry, in: *Helden und Heldensage* (Festschrift Otto Gschwantler), Vienna 1990, pp. 233-266.

⁸ LYDIA MIKLAUTSCH, *waz touc helden sölh geschrei? Tränen als Gesten der Trauer in Wolframs Willehalm*, in: *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* (NF) 10 (2000), 245-257, esp. pp. 254-256; KERSTIN SCHMITT, *Alte Kämpen – junge Ritter. Heroische Männlichkeitsentwürfe in der Kudrun*, in: *7. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch. Mittelhochdeutsche Heldendichtung ausserhalb des Nibelungen- und Dietrichkreises* (Kudrun, Ortnit, Waltharius, Wolfdietriche), ed. KLAUS ZATLOUKAL (*Philologica Germanica* 25), Vienna 2003, pp. 191-212, here pp. 201-205 ("Weinende Helden: Emotionalität und Männlichkeit").

⁹ See also ELISABETH LIENERT, *Geschlecht und Gewalt im Nibelungenlied*, in: *ZfdA* 132 (2003), 3-23, p. 5.

¹⁰ For more on beauty and ugliness in courtly narrative see CAROLIN OSTER, *Die Farben höfischer Körper. Farbattribuierung und höfische Identität in mittelhochdeutschen Artus- und Tristanromanen* (LTG 6), Berlin 2014, pp. 35-110, 111-181 (with numerous references to critical literature).

¹¹ INGRID HAHN, *Zur Theorie der Personenerkenntnis in der deutschen Literatur des 12. bis 14. Jahrhunderts*, in: *PBB* 99 (1977), 395-444, esp. pp. 395-409; JAMES A. SCHULTZ, *Bodies That Don't Matter. Heterosexuality before Heterosexuality in Gottfried's Tristan*, in: *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, edd. KARMA LOCHRIE, PEGGY MCCRACKEN and JAMES A. SCHULTZ (*Medieval Cultures* 11), Minneapolis 1997, pp. 91-110; ARMIN SCHULZ, *Schwieriges Erkennen. Personenidentifizierung in der mittelhochdeutschen Epik* (MTU 135), Tübingen 2008, esp. pp. 16-33.

other words, with narrative strategies that leave it up to recipients to fill in the gaps by drawing on their own cultural and literary knowledge, and extrapolating or constructing the greater whole of, say, a character from an isolated prompt in the text.¹²

This principle holds good for medieval narratives in general (in fact for all narrative texts to a greater or lesser degree),¹³ but it applies in particular to heroic epics like the ‘Nibelungenlied’ which reworked ‘native’ Germanic stories of longstanding cultural significance. One consequence of this, as ELISABETH LIENERT has argued, is that figures in German heroic epics, such as Dietrich von Bern, Hildebrand and Wolfhart, were constituted in part – ‘transtextually’ – by the knowledge of the Germanic saga-world that recipients brought to bear on any single text (“Wissensinterpolationen”), knowledge gleaned from both oral tradition and, increasingly, from other literary works.¹⁴ Although much of this process naturally escapes us now, residual traces of it can be detected in certain allusions (made either by the narrator or the figures themselves) or in problems surrounding ‘character’ and ‘motivation’ at crucial points in the narrative.¹⁵ If, as LIENERT maintains, this process also encouraged a dependence on “Figurenstereotype” such as “Dietrichs immer schon alten Waffenmeister Hildebrand”,¹⁶ there is no reason to suppose that certain fixed notions and assumptions concerning these figures’ physical appearance were not also part of the ‘deal’ struck by these stories with their recipients.

Against this background it seems likely that where such narrative detail does occur, it is imbued with additional meaning. If, as posited by ROBERT BARTLETT, “the language of hair” (and beards) in medieval society at large “was highly expressive”,¹⁷ then references in literary texts to these physical features were certainly no less significant and no less conducive to interpretation irrespective of the formulaic or stereotypical terms in which they are phrased.¹⁸ Such literary significance may be understood in the first instance as being

¹² See HARALD HAFERLAND and ARMIN SCHULZ, Metonymisches Erzählen, in: DVjs 84 (2010), 3-43; and MARKUS STOCK, Figur. Zu einem Kernproblem historischer Narratologie, in: Historische Narratologie. Mediävistische Perspektiven, edd. HARALD HAFERLAND and MATTHIAS MEYER (TMP 19), Berlin/ New York 2010, pp. 187-203, esp. p. 192.

¹³ See FOTIS JANNIDIS, Figur und Person. Beitrag zu einer historischen Narratologie (Narratologia 3), Berlin/ New York 2004, pp. 1-83.

¹⁴ ELISABETH LIENERT, Aspekte der Figurenkonstitution in mittelhochdeutscher Heldenepik, in: PBB 138 (2016), 51-75, esp. pp. 54-65.

¹⁵ LIENERT [Fn. 14]: “Im Zentrum der Figurendarstellung steht hier die Sagenrolle, nicht die textinterne Stimmigkeit der Figur” (p. 61).

¹⁶ LIENERT [Fn. 14], p. 62.

¹⁷ ROBERT BARTLETT, Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 6th series, vol. 4 (1994), 43-60, here p. 60.

¹⁸ This has been amply demonstrated in medieval French studies with reference to female hair in particular; see

determined by the ‘poetics’ of courtly narrative with its emphasis on visualization and (symbolic) representation.¹⁹ However, the literariness of these references resides no less in their meaning in narrative context and the range of text-internal strategic functions they may exercise whether in respect of characterization or as a means to highlight narrative structure or a particular type of action (for a particular effect). Both in terms of ideological value and narrative function such detail can even come to find a ‘natural home’ in certain kinds of material and thus continue to be transmitted in one literary tradition rather than in another.

Heroic beards represent a prime field of enquiry in this context. As a natural symbol for masculinity – and thus also for virility, power and authority²⁰ – the beard seems predestined to have been the physical attribute most readily associated with men of note.²¹ Thus, quite apart from constituting an obvious marker of sex difference between men and women,²² beards could also be understood to distinguish some men from others on the basis of social and/ or legal status, age or physical prowess. By extension beards were always liable to be referenced in certain kinds of literature and in certain narrative contexts. Indeed, when beardedness is explicitly thematized – and not simply taken for granted by storyteller and audience alike – the beard may be deemed to be the perfect heroic metonym. Of all the parts of the warrior’s body (that are on display) none would seem to epitomize so readily what SIMON GAUNT has described, with reference to Old French *chansons de geste*, as the “masculine value-system” inherent in stories dominated by relationships between men.²³

This principle is exemplified, quite outstandingly, by the ‘Chanson de Roland’ (c. 1100), where bearded Saracens are pitted against bearded Christians under the leadership of

CHANTAL CONNOCHIE-BOURGNE (ed.), *La chevelure dans la littérature et l’art du Moyen Âge*. Actes du 28e colloque du CUER MA 20, 21 et 22 février 2003 (Senefiance 50), Aix-en-Provence 2004; MYRIAM ROLLAND-PERRIN, *Blonde comme l’or. La chevelure féminine au Moyen Âge* (Senefiance 57), Aix-en-Provence 2010.

¹⁹ See, most fundamentally, HORST WENZEL, *Partizipation und Mimesis. Die Lesbarkeit der Körper am Hof und in der höfischen Literatur*, in: *Materialität der Kommunikation*, edd. HANS ULRICH GUMBRECHT and KARL LUDWIG PFEIFFER, Frankfurt a. M. 1988, pp. 178-202; id., *Hören und Sehen. Zur Lesbarkeit von Körperzeichen in der höfischen Literatur*, in: *Personenbeziehungen in der mittelalterlichen Literatur*, edd. HELMUT BRALL, BARBARA HAUPT and URBAN KÜSTERS (Studia humaniora 25), Düsseldorf 1994, pp. 191-218.

²⁰ MATTHIAS DÄUMER, *Bart*, in: *Metzler Lexikon literarischer Symbole*, edd. GÜNTER BUTZER/ JOACHIM JACOB, 2nd expanded edn, Stuttgart 2012, pp. 38-39.

²¹ For the historical and cultural significance of (all kinds of) beards in the Middle Ages see GILES CONSTABLE, *Introduction (on beards in the Middle Ages)*, in: *Apologiae duae. Gozechini Epistula ad Walcherum. Burchardi, ut videtur, Abbatis Bellevallidis Apologia de Barbis*, ed. R. B. C. HUYGENS (Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 62), Turnhout 1985, pp. 47-130. A general overview is given by CHRISTOPHER OLDSTONE-MOORE, *Of Beards and Men. The Revealing History of Facial Hair*, Chicago/ London 2016.

²² JOAN CADDEN, *Meanings of sex difference in the Middle Ages. Medicine, science, and culture*, Cambridge 1993, esp. pp. 181-183.

²³ SIMON GAUNT, *Gender and genre in medieval French literature* (Cambridge Studies in French 53), Cambridge 1995, pp. 22-70, here p. 42.

Charles *li reis a la barbe canue* “the king with the hoary-white beard” (3654).²⁴ Beard-references here function as a highly effective means of (male) characterization, the literary make-up of which ranges from formulaic epithets and traditional gestures (swearing by one’s beard;²⁵ tugging at it in anger or distress) to more poetic descriptions – *Blanche ad la barbe cume flur en avrill* “His beard is as white as a flower in April” (3503) – and less predictable narrative ‘embedding’, such as when Charles rides out to meet the enemy with his beard on proud display, inspiring many in his army to do the same: *Cent milie Francs en sunt reconoisable* “a hundred thousand Franks are thus recognizable” (3124).²⁶

Around two-thirds of the thirty odd references pertain to Charles and serve to accentuate his majesty;²⁷ but the beardedness of certain Saracens is emphasized too as if to confirm them in their status as worthy opponents, not least the mighty emir Baligant.²⁸ The text is in fact governed by an assumption that the principal figures have beards, an assumption that the recipients are expected to share too.²⁹ Hence, the first we hear of Olivier’s beard is when he swears by it: *Par ceste meie barbe* “By this beard of mine” (1719). Similarly, the traitor Ganelon’s beard is not mentioned at all until he is arrested and suffers ritual debasement on the orders of Charles: *icil li peilent la barbe e les gernuns,/ Cascun le fiert .iiii. colps de sun puign* “They pluck out his beard and his moustache, and each gives him four blows with his fist” (1823-1824).³⁰ When beards are so patently the norm, they evidently need only be mentioned in special circumstances and for special effect.

The significance of the beards in the ‘Chanson de Roland’ was not lost in the course of its literary reception,³¹ although none of the subsequent translations of this material into other European vernaculars evinces quite the same degree of ‘pognophilia’. Pfaffe Konrad’s

²⁴ Texts cited: La Chanson de Roland, ed. F. WHITEHEAD, Oxford 1988; The Song of Roland, transl. by GLYN BURGESS, London 1990.

²⁵ See JUTTA SCHMIDT-LORNSSEN, Der Griff an den Bart, in: Sprache und Recht (Festschrift Ruth Schmidt-Wiegand), 2 vols, Berlin/ New York 1986, vol. II, pp. 780-796, esp. pp. 790-793.

²⁶ This display of beards during battle effectively represents a counter-myth to Alexander the Great’s legendary order to his men to shave before the decisive battle against the Persians at Gaugamela (September 30, 331 BCE), as famously recorded by Plutarch; see OLDSTONE-MOORE [Fn. 21], pp. 38-41.

²⁷ See D. D. R. OWEN, Beards in the Chanson de Roland, in: FMLS 24 (1988), 175-179; and PETER WUNDERLI, Das Karlsbild in der altfranzösischen Epik, in: Karl der Große in den europäischen Literaturen des Mittelalters. Konstruktion eines Mythos, ed. BERND BASTERT, Tübingen 2004, pp. 17-37, here pp. 19-20.

²⁸ *Li amiralz ben resemblet barun,/ Blanche ad la barbe ensemment cume flur* “The emir has the look of a true baron; his beard is white, just like a flower” (3172-3173).

²⁹ For a possible suppressed(!) reference to Roland’s beard see IAN SHORT, Roland’s Final Combat, in: Cultura neolatina 30 (1970), 135-155, esp. pp. 140-155.

³⁰ For ‘decalvation’ and the legal process of crime and punishment see SHORT [Fn. 29], pp. 147-148.

³¹ Charles’s beard may well have provided the template for the *barba tan conplida* “the flowing beard” (268) of the exiled Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, otherwise known as the Cid in the Spanish heroic epic of the same name (c. 1200). Text cited: The Poem of the Cid. A bilingual edition with parallel text. Translated by RITA HAMILTON and JANET PERRY with an Introduction and Notes by IAN MICHAEL, London 1984. See also P. A. BLY, Beards in the Poema de Mio Cid. Structural and Contextual Patterns, in: FMLS 14 (1978), 16-24.

‘Rolandslied’ (c. 1170), for instance, drastically reduces the number of beard-references overall, but retains the use of this motif to privilege the figure of Karl. Now his beard is no longer quite so indicative of his marvellous old age; instead it is connotated primarily with various regal gestures and demonstrative expressions of emotion such as in the course of Genelun’s trial: *Der kaiser erzurnte harte/ mit ûf gevangem barte* (8771-8772).³² There is in fact only one reference to its colour in the entire text and this comes in the (suspect) words of the heathen king Marsilie: *Karl mit sînem grawen barte/ hât menigiu rîche betwungen* (5207-5208). In the illustrated ‘Rolandslied’-manuscript (Heidelberg, Cpg 112) of around c. 1200 beard-semantics are then taken to a whole new level by the attribution of beards of varying lengths to Karl (fols 5v, 119r), Marsilie (fols 6r, 29v) and Paligan (fols 102r, 109v) as emblems of their relative power and worth.³³ Notably, although the beards of Karl and others continue to be an inalienable component of the story for Der Stricker in his courtly adaptation of the material (‘Karl’, c. 1220),³⁴ this beardedness is evidently no longer self-explanatory. Thus, in this version of the story Karl’s decision to wear his beard openly in battle – *er hiez im ziehen sinen bart/ durch des halsperges ringe* (9234-9235) – is put into some historical perspective by the author-narrator who notes that this custom proved popular with the Franks *unz man die barte begunde schern./ done maht ez niht langer gewern* (9240a-b).³⁵

The German reception of the story of Roland and Karl is clear proof (if any were needed) of a common appreciation of the symbolic meaning(s) of beards. However, it should also act as a pertinent reminder that attitudes towards beards are and were culturally variable. Thus, there is plenty of literary evidence that by c. 1200 at the very latest, it was more

³² Text cited: Das Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad, ed. DIETER KARTSCHOKE (RUB 2745), Stuttgart 1993. Such references to Karl’s beard punctuate the narrative: *Der keiser zurnte harte./ mit gestreichem barte./ mit ûf gewunden granen/ hiez er die phacht vüre tragen* (1154-1157); *der kaiser brach ûz sîn bart* (6965); *Der kaiser begonde den bart strachen* (7651).

³³ Digital copy: <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg112>. In accordance with the text the illustrator uses beards to characterize other figures as well, such as Blanscandiz and Genelun, if not always consistently; see PETER KERN, Bildprogramm und Text. Zur Illustration des Rolandsliedes in der Heidelberger Handschrift, in: ZfdA 101 (1972), 244-270, esp. pp. 253, 258; NORBERT H. OTT, Reich und Stadt. Karl der Große in deutschsprachigen Bilderhandschriften, in: Karl der Große als vielberufener Vorfahr. Sein Bild in der Kunst der Fürsten, Kirchen und Städte, ed. LIESELOTTE E. SAURMA-JELTSCH (Schriften des historischen Museums 19), Sigmaringen 1994, pp. 87-111, esp. pp. 89-92.

³⁴ In fact Der Stricker makes a number of his own beard-related tweaks to the story. For instance, the role of ‘greybeard’ here is played by another Christian figure, *Von Normandi Ritschart* (9019), to whom God gives the strength to kill a host of heathens *swie gra im doch der bart was* (9682). Text cited: Strickers Karl der Große, ed. JOHANNES SINGER (DTM 96), Berlin/ Boston 2016.

³⁵ There is no such qualification in the ‘Rolandslied’: *dar nâch flîzten sich iemer alle Karlinge/ dem kaiser Karle ze minnen* (7945-7946).

fashionable for (younger) men in courtly society to keep their beards cropped or even be clean-shaven.³⁶

In Hartmann von Aue's 'Gregorius', for instance, the vision of courtly beauty that does **not** meet the Roman elders' eyes, when they find Gregorius on his rock, is a well-trimmed one: *mit wol geschornem barte,/ in allen wîs also getân/ als er ze tanze solde gân* (3396-3398).³⁷ Wolfram goes one step further in 'Parzival' when describing the impression Gahmuret makes on the inhabitants of Kanvoleiz: *vil dicke aldâ gevrâget wart,/ wer waere der ritter âne bart* (63,27-28).³⁸ The epithet *âne bart* is subsequently used to denote a number of other (young) knights including Parzival (174,23; 227,28), Clamidé (211,16) and Segramors (286,23);³⁹ explicitly bearded figures in 'Parzival' tend to be grey-haired old men like Kahenis, the Grey Knight: *im widergien ein rîter alt,/ des part al grâ was gevar* (446,10-11).⁴⁰

Whether this courtly ideal in itself is grounds enough to read the fleeting reference to the beards of Dietrich's men in the 'Nibelungenlied' as part of a deliberately archaic picture is open to question. But the discrepancy does suggest that when it comes to assessing how far the heroes of 'native' German heroic epics are defined by their beards, it might be as well to look out for any types or patterns of beardedness that we may describe as particular to this tradition. If, as a rule, MHG heroic epics provided recipients with plenty of scope to exercise their own imagination as to what their heroes looked like, what purposes do beard-references really serve? What can they tell us about the literary strategies and narrative practices governing these texts? And what, if anything, can they tell us about the literary and cultural knowledge upon which their success was predicated? To answer these questions perhaps we should start with the 'Nibelungenlied' (again).

I: 'Nibelungenlied'

The lines portraying the tearful tribute paid by Dietrich's bearded men to Rüdiger are preserved as a relatively intact unit throughout the manuscript transmission of the 'Nibelungenlied'. They are to be found in versions A (2194,3-4), B (2254,3-4) and C

³⁶ See also JOACHIM BUMKE, *Höfische Kultur. Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, Munich 1986, pp. 201-203; SCHULTZ [Fn. 11], esp. pp. 93-94.

³⁷ Hartmann von Aue: *Gregorius. Der arme Heinrich*. Iwein, ed. VOLKER MERTENS (Deutscher Klassiker Verlag TB 29. Bibliothek des Mittelalters 6), Frankfurt a. M. 2008.

³⁸ Wolfram von Eschenbach: *Parzival*. Nach der Ausgabe Karl Lachmanns, rev. edn by EBERHARD NELLMANN with a translation by DIETER KÜHN (Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker 110. Bibliothek des Mittelalters 8), 2 vols, Frankfurt a. M. 1994.

³⁹ DENNIS H. GREEN, *The Young Parzival – Naming and Anonymity*, in: *Interpretation und Edition deutscher Texte des Mittelalters* (Festschrift John Asher), Berlin 1981, pp. 103-118, here pp. 109-110.

⁴⁰ See also SONJA KERTH, *Wolframs Greise. Alter(n) im Parzival, Titirel und Willehalm*, in: *ZfdA* 144 (2015), 48-76, here pp. 56-65.

(2316,3-4), as well as in the ‘mixed’ redaction I (2254,3-4).⁴¹ They are even retained in the abbreviated version of ‘n’: *Von her Dittherichs man sach man die trehen gan/ Vber bart vnd vber kone; ys was enen leyt gethan* (764,3-4).⁴² One case where the oblique reference to the beards of the Amelungs is elided is the text (‘k’) contained in the so-called ‘Piaristenhandschrift’ of c. 1480-1490: *Von des von Perne recken sach man di czeher gan/ Fliessen vber di wangen grosz jammer hub sich an* (2311,3-4).⁴³ Whether such an omission was thematically motivated is hard to say (see V below); however, the fact that the place of these lines is on the whole so secure suggests that this small detail provided an image of enduring heroic value to recipient-generation after recipient-generation of the ‘Nibelungenlied’.

In terms of the work’s narrative technique the allusion to the *berte* (B 2254,4) of the Amelungs represents an oblique reference-type that mentions beards in passing and as determined by another factor, the other factor in this case being the act of weeping (with tears streaming down the heroes’ faces). In this way we get the impression that the beardedness of the heroes is a natural assumption, something that up to this point has gone unremarked as it has not been relevant to the action or thematically significant. This strategy is not without precedent in the text. Indeed the lines in question may be regarded as a gendered variation on the way in which, for instance, Brünhild’s discordant tears concerning Kriemhild’s ‘demeaning’ marriage to Siegfried are described during her own wedding feast: *weinen si began./ ir vielen heize trehene über liehtiu wange dan* (B 615,3-4).⁴⁴ From this we might conclude that the beardedness of Dietrich’s men is as obvious and requisite an attribute for them as a beautiful face is for queen Brünhild; to take the unusual step of mentioning such features is to emphasize the particular importance of these moments of weeping for the story as a whole.

There are in fact precious few references to male hair of any kind in this text. Hildebrand is still *der alte Hildebrant* (B 1715,2), but unlike in ‘Die Klage’ (*Hildebrant, den grîsen* [4209]) his grey hair, which is such a standard feature of later MHG heroic epics (see

⁴¹ In a number of the manuscripts the beards of the Amelungs are referred to in the singular: *den Dietriches reken den sach man trehne gan/ vber bart vn[d] vber chinne; in was vil laeit getan* (A 2194,3-4); text cited: Das Nibelungenlied. Paralleldruck der Handschriften A, B und C nebst Lesarten der übrigen Handschriften, ed. MICHAEL S. BATTIS, Tübingen 1971. In other variants the heroes’ tears pour *uber bart und uber wang* (I 2254,4); text cited: Nibelungenlied und Klage. Redaktion I, ed. WALTER KOFLER, Stuttgart 2011.

⁴² Das Nibelungenlied nach der Handschrift n. Hs. 4257 der Hessischen Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek Darmstadt, ed. JÜRGEN VORDESTEMANN (ATB 114), Tübingen 2000.

⁴³ MARGARETE SPRINGETH, Die Nibelungenlied-Bearbeitung der Wiener Piaristenhandschrift (Lienhart Scheubels Heldenbuch: Hs. k). Transkription und Untersuchungen (GAG 660), Göppingen 2007.

⁴⁴ See also SUERBAUM [Fn. 4], pp. 26-27. Other gendered descriptions of female weeping include references to beautiful eyes (B 369,4; 552,1-2; 840,4; 1066,4; 1246,3; 1283,3) and breasts (B 371,2-3; 1225,3).

IV), is never alluded to; and Gunther's hair is mentioned only once he has been executed as a means of accentuating Kriemhild's barbarity: *man sluoc im ab daz houbet. bî dem hâre si ez truoc/ viir den helt von Tronege. dô wart im leide genuoc* (B 2366,3-4).⁴⁵

References to female hair are also few and far between. In spite of all the narrator's assertions of their beauty in general neither Kriemhild's nor Brünhild's hair, for instance, is ever described.⁴⁶ Only groups of courtly ladies are characterized in this way, such as when the pre-eminent damsels of the Burgundian court gather to meet Brünhild for the first time: *die sach man dâ valvahse under liechten borten gân* (B 570,3); or when the women of Rüdiger's household ready themselves for the arrival of the Burgundians: *si truogen ûf ir houbete von golde liehtiu bant/ (daz wâren schapel rîche), daz in ir schoene hâr/ zevuorten niht die winde* (B 1651,2-4).

One exception to this rule is Alberich the dwarf, who is handled so very rudely by Siegfried on his return to the land of the Nibelungen in *Aventiure 8*: *dô vienc er bî dem barte den altgrîsen man* (B 495,2).⁴⁷ Apart from featuring the only other beard-reference in the 'Nibelungenlied', and arguably a humorous one at that, this passage is striking in that it is Alberich's grey-haired old age and not the youthful vigour of Siegfried that is explicitly characterized.⁴⁸ Physical features pertaining to the masculine (heroic) ideal thus go unremarked, as if to do so in this burlesque moment would run the risk of undermining their validity.⁴⁹

Another exception is Hagen whose significance in the second part of the story, as many scholars have pointed out, is highlighted by a strophe (B 1731) devoted to his intimidating appearance: broad in the chest; long in the leg; unflinching stare.⁵⁰ It is Hagen's (grizzled) hair-colour – *gemischt was sîn hâr/ mit einer grîsen varwe* (B 1731,2-3) – that

⁴⁵ JOHN L. FLOOD, *The Severed Heads. On the Deaths of Gunther and Hagen*, in: *German Narrative Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Festschrift Roy Wisbey), Tübingen 1994, pp. 173-191, passim.

⁴⁶ If anything the emphasis is more on their magnificent clothing; see ANDREAS KRAB, *Geschriebene Kleider. Höfische Identität als literarisches Spiel* (Bibliotheca Germanica 50), Tübingen/ Basel 2006, pp. 174-176.

⁴⁷ The bearded (older) dwarf is one of three literary types identified by AUGUST LÜTJENS, *Der Zwerg in der deutschen Heldendichtung des Mittelalters* (Germanistische Abhandlungen 38), Breslau 1911, pp. 68-72.

⁴⁸ See also CLAUDIA BRINKER-VON DER HEYDE, *Junge Alte – alte Junge. Signale und paradoxe Verschränkungen des Alter(n)s in höfischer Epik*, in: *Alterskulturen des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit. Internationaler Kongress. Krems an der Donau 16. bis zum 18. Oktober 2006*, ed. ELISABETH VAVRA (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit 21), Vienna 2008, pp. 141-155, here p. 143.

⁴⁹ For more on this paradox, and with reference to other scenes, see JAN-DIRK MÜLLER, *Woran erkennt man einander in Heldenepos. Beobachtungen an Wolframs Willehalm, dem Nibelungenlied, dem Wormser Rosengarten A und dem Eckenlied*, in: *Symbole des Alltags* (Festschrift Harry Kühnel), Graz 1992, pp. 87-111, here pp. 96-97; SCHULZ [Fn. 11], pp. 63-70.

⁵⁰ See ALOIS WOLF, *Die Verschriftlichung der Nibelungensage und die französisch-deutschen Literaturbeziehungen im Mittelalter*, in: *Montfort 32* (1980), 227-245, esp. p. 229; CLAUDIA BRINKER-VON DER HEYDE, *Hagen – ein Held mit vielen Gesichtern!*, in: *ABäG 51* (1999), 105-124, esp. pp. 112-114; ANNETTE GEROK-REITER, *Individualität. Studien zu einem umstrittenen Phänomen mittelhochdeutscher Epik* (Bibliotheca Germanica 51), Tübingen 2006, pp. 53-99, here p. 92.

most specifically evokes the image of a seasoned warrior who is all the more formidable for his years of experience.⁵¹ But whether we are to imagine Hagen as bearded or not is not made clear. All we can say is that this portrait of heroic ‘individuality’ evidently focusses on what sets Hagen apart and makes him stand out; and there is no hint here that Hagen, as an older warrior, does anything other than conform to an unspoken norm of beardedness.

By the same token, as an unambiguous sign of their collective identity as men and warriors,⁵² the *berte* (B 2254,4) of the Amelungs are not characterized by any further details regarding colour, length or style, that is to say, by anything that might differentiate the heroes further as either older (ie. grey or white beards) or younger men (first beard-growth).⁵³ The emphasis is entirely on (male) solidarity in grief, an aspect which distinguishes this tears-and-beard scene from other comparable ones in MHG literature featuring grey-haired or white-haired ‘individuals’, whether this be the remorseful fisherman in Hartmann’s ‘Gregorius’: *nû sahen im die grîsen/ diu ougen über wallen,/ die heizen zäher vallen/ über sînen grâwen bart* (3346-3349); or the compassionate patriarch Heimrich (von Narbonne) in Wolfram’s ‘Willehalm’: *Heimrîches blanker bart/ mit zeheren ouch berêret* (251,10-11).⁵⁴ Other tableaux of masculine – bearded – grief are rather more conventional. The extreme gesture of tugging at one’s own beard represents a (relatively) common variation on hair-pulling as an expression of uncontrollable grief.⁵⁵ This gesture is the hallmark of Charles’s distress at Roland’s death, for example: *Ploret des oilz, sa blanche barbe tîret* “His eyes stream with tears and he tugs at his white beard” (‘Chanson de Roland’ 2943); *der kaiser brach ûz sîn bart./ er viel zuo der erde* (‘Rolandslied’ 6965-6966); *den bart er weinend ûz brach* (‘Karl’

⁵¹ The impression Hagen makes on others is thematized in two earlier episodes as well (Iceland; Bechelaren) albeit without reference to specific physical characteristics: *der ist sô grülich/ und doch mit schoenem libe* (B 411,1-2); *er dûhte si* [Rüdiger’s daughter] *sô vorhillich* (B 1662,4).

⁵² From a *Gender-Studies* perspective this beard-reference is a prime instance of ‘monologic’ gender-construction; see LEILA WERTHSCHULTE, *Erzählte Männlichkeiten im Nibelungenlied*, in: *genus & generatio. Rollenerwartungen und Rollenerfüllungen im Spannungsfeld der Geschlechter und Generationen in Antike und Mittelalter*, edd. HARTWIN BRAND et al. (Bamberger Historische Studien 6), Bamberg 2011, pp. 269-294, here p. 269; and ANDREA SIEBERS, *Gender Studies*, in: *Literatur- und Kulturtheorien in der germanistischen Mediävistik. Ein Handbuch*, edd. CHRISTIANE ACKERMANN and MICHAEL EGERDING, Berlin/ Boston 2015, pp. 103-140, p. 121.

⁵³ This strategy is realized most vividly in Wolfram’s ‘Willehalm’, where beard-references are used to thematise youthfulness (Vivianz; Rennewart) and old age (Heimrich; Purrel); see also CARL LOFMARK, *Rennewart in Wolfram’s Willehalm. A Study of Wolfram von Eschenbach and His Sources*, Cambridge 1972, pp. 151-156; KERTH [Fn. 40], pp. 68-75.

⁵⁴ Text cited: *Willehalm. Nach der Handschrift 857 der Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen. Mit den Miniaturen aus der Wolfenbütteler Handschrift und einem Aufsatz von Peter und Dorothea Diemer*, ed. JOACHIM HEINZLE (Bibliothek deutscher Klassiker 69. Bibliothek des Mittelalters 9), Frankfurt a. M. 1991.

⁵⁵ See ROLLAND-PERRIN [Fn. 18], pp. 172-188. For more on the narrative functions of such descriptions of emotion see RÜDIGER SCHNELL, *Gefühle gestalten. Bausteine zu einer Poetik mittelalterlicher Emotionsbeschreibungen*, in: *PBB* 138 (2016), 560-606, esp. pp. 586-598.

7117).⁵⁶ By comparison, however, in the ‘Nibelungenlied’ the depiction of Dietrich’s men as they weep is less exaggerated and less hyperbolic, and as a result the image is one of stoical suffering rather than of hysterical grief.

II: ‘Die Klage’

The appearance of the very same heroes is left largely to the recipients’ imagination in ‘Die Klage’ as well. Once again there is only one explicit reference to heroic beardedness in the entire text. Here, however, the beard in question belongs to a named individual – one of the Amelungs in fact – whose corpse is discovered and lamented over by Dietrich (and Hildebrand): *dô sach er Wolfharte/ mit roetelohtem barte/ gevallen nider in daz bluot* (1669-1671). Just as other prominent figures among the piles of the dead are identified and ‘individualized’ with reference to their chain-mail, helmets and fine armour (Volker; Wolfbrant; Sigestab; Wolfwîn) or their wounds (Gernot), so Hildebrand’s nephew Wolfhart is distinguished in the first instance by his red beard,⁵⁷ although less perhaps as a symbol of “his fiery temperament”⁵⁸ than as a consequence of lying in a pool of blood and gore.⁵⁹ Everything and everyone at this point in ‘Die Klage’ is covered in blood, even the grieving ladies of the court: *mit bluote berunnen/ man manec antlütze vant* (2162-2163). Yet it is Wolfhart’s blood-soaked beard that functions most strikingly as a singular image of needlessly slaughtered manhood. For all of Wolfhart’s fine words in his last moments in the ‘Nibelungenlied’,⁶⁰ the grim reality of his violent end would seem to contradict any simplistic notion of glory in ‘heroic’ death.

By replacing tears with blood in its portrayal of heroic beardedness ‘Die Klage’ continues to work within what MANFRED KERN has dubbed the “Säftelehre heldenhafter Anstrengung”.⁶¹ Nevertheless, given that Wolfhart belongs to the group of Amelungs referred

⁵⁶ See also MARTIN J. SCHUBERT, *Zur Theorie des Gebarens im Mittelalter. Analyse von nichtsprachlicher Äußerung in mittelhochdeutscher Epik: Rolandslied, Eneasroman, Tristan* (Kölner Germanistische Studien 31), Cologne 1991, pp. 116-118.

⁵⁷ Other features of Wolfhart in death are the vice-like grip he keeps on his sword with *sînen vingern langen* (1690) and his *durchbizzen zanden* (1704). See also ELISABETH LIENERT, *Der Körper des Kriegers. Erzählen von Helden in der Nibelungenklage*, in: *ZfdA* 130 (2001), 127-142, here pp. 133-137.

⁵⁸ GEORGE T. GILLESPIE, *A catalogue of persons named in German heroic literature (700-1600) including named animals and objects and ethnic names*, Oxford 1973, pp. 151-152, here p. 151 (Fn. 9).

⁵⁹ HEINZLE [Fn. 1], p. 1562; see also ELISABETH LIENERT (ed.), *Die Nibelungenklage. Mittelhochdeutscher Text nach der Ausgabe von Karl Bartsch. Einführung, neuhochdeutsche Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Schöninghs Mediävistische Editionen 5), Paderborn 2000, p. 412.

⁶⁰ Even as he lies dying in a pool of blood Wolfhart sees no cause for grief in his bloody end (B 2299,1-4); tears are for the *wîp* (B 2300,1-2) of the (many) brave knights he has killed.

⁶¹ MANFRED KERN, *Heiliges Leiden und heilige Leidenschaft. Die Passion Christi als Paradigma des heroischen Affekts*, in: 11. *Pöchlarnner Heldenliedgespräch. Mittelalterliche Heldenepik – Literatur der Leidenschaften*, edd. JOHANNES KELLER and FLORIAN KRAGL (Philologica Germanica 33), Vienna 2011, pp. 1-18, here p. 8. This is

to in the ‘Nibelungenlied’, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the poet of ‘Die Klage’ must have been prompted in some way by the beard-reference in *Aventure 38*, if only to take the idea in a characteristically different direction.

A number of other hair-references in ‘Die Klage’ do appear to take their cue from the ‘Nibelungenlied’. This can be a matter of straightforward emulation or reconfiguration in terms of the overriding narrative preoccupation with grief and mourning. For example, the juxtaposition of *tumb* and *grîs* in one line of the ‘Nibelungenlied’ (*daz dô die tumben wâren, wie grîse die nû sint* B 1795,2) is echoed by another line in ‘Die Klage’ to describe the mourning of young and old alike: *die tôren mit den grîsen/ klagten al gemeine* (1952-1953). Similarly, the (beautiful) hair of ladies is referred to collectively in ‘Die Klage’ as well, only for it to be torn at in distress: *vil manec magt von houbte brach/ mit grôzem jâmer daz hâr* (708-709).⁶² However, even here the poet of ‘Die Klage’ was evidently not afraid to go beyond the bounds of the formulaic for shocking effect. Thus, Gotelind’s sense of foreboding regarding Rüdiger is captured by her traumatic dream of baldness: *mîn houbet was von hâre blôz,/ daz ich eines hâres grôz/ mînes vahses niht entruoc* (2893-2895). This image of bereftness anticipates a state of grief so extreme it leaves Gotelind unfit for courtly society.⁶³

One question raised by such thematically charged hair-references is that of literary or cultural precedent. As far as the detail of Wolfram’s bloodied beard is concerned, one does not have to search too long in canonical classical literature before finding descriptions of slain heroes that focus on hair and blood as a way of accentuating the awfulness of violent death. In Virgil’s ‘Aeneid’, for example, Aeneas recalls how the slaughtered Hector appeared to him in a dream *squalentem barbam et concretos sanguine crinis* “with rugged beard, with hair matted with blood” (II,277);⁶⁴ and later on, in the course of the final battle against Turnus and his allies, when Aeneas is moved to take pity on the brave youth he has just killed, it is Lausus’s bloodied hair that is brought to our attention: *et terra sublevat ipsum,/ sanguine turpantem comptos de morte capillos* “and uplifts this chief from the earth, where he befouled with blood his seemly ordered locks” (X,831-832). If we accept it as likely that

not to say that heroes such as Dietrich and Hildebrand do not shed tears in the ‘Klage’, only that descriptions of such weeping make no mention of beards: *manegen trahen nider liez/ Dietrich unde Hildebrant* (1514-1515).

⁶² Cf. also 2158-2159; 3716-3717.

⁶³ This is akin to Sigune’s implied baldness in Wolfram’s ‘Parzival’ (252,30-253,1), as discussed by ULRICH ERNST, *Differentielle Leiblichkeit. Zur Körpersemantik im epischen Werk Wolframs von Eschenbach*, in: *Wolfram-Studien* 17 (2002), 182-222, here pp. 206-207.

⁶⁴ Text cited: Virgil with an English translation by H. RUSHTON FAIRCLOUGH, 2 vols, rev. edn by G. P. GOOLD (LCL 63/64), Cambridge, MA. 1999-2000.

‘Die Klage’ reflects a clerical engagement with the ‘Nibelungenlied’,⁶⁵ then knowledge of Virgil’s text becomes a very real possibility.⁶⁶ Under these circumstances the reference to Wulfhart’s blood-soaked *barte* (1670) is not just a highly effective poetic device and means of conveying the horrors of war, it is one with a very particular literary pedigree.

III: ‘Piðreks saga’

Explicit references to the beards of German heroes have so far proven to be the exception rather than the rule. That alternative narrative strategies were nevertheless possible in the thirteenth century is put beyond any doubt by the Old Norse ‘Piðreks saga’ (c. 1250).⁶⁷ Not only does this text thematise beards in a number of ways, it does so with reference to figures at the heart of the Germanic heroic tradition, about whose physical appearance so little is said in the ‘Nibelungenlied’ and ‘Die Klage’.

The ‘Piðreks saga’ pays next to no attention to its female figures, focussing almost exclusively on the male figures who dominate its numerous cycles of stories.⁶⁸ This principle is most spectacularly evident half-way through the work in a sequence of chapters ostensibly concerned with a grand banquet hosted by Piðrekr (cap. 277³-294³ [= I,325-350]). What these chapters actually provide is a review of thirteen named heroes, a gallery of ‘portraits’ that is then extended to include two other noteworthy individuals who are not present (Sigurðr; Sifka).⁶⁹ Many of these figures are described in terms of their physical appearance as well as their moral character and equipment, with details pertaining to hair and, in certain eye-catching instances, to beards routinely coming first:

⁶⁵ See FRITZ PETER KNAPP, *Tragoedia und Planctus. Der Eintritt des Nibelungenliedes in die Welt der litterati*, in: *Nibelungenlied und Klage. Sage und Geschichte, Struktur und Gattung. Passauer Nibelungengespräche 1985*, ed. FRITZ PETER KNAPP, Heidelberg 1987, pp. 152-170, esp. pp. 166-170.

⁶⁶ Another possible borrowing from the ‘Aeneid’ occurs when Gotelind tells her daughter how she saw Rüdiger’s ‘shade’ in a dream: *dīnen vater Rūedegêre/ sach ich hīnte gar grâ* (2886-2887); this brings to mind the story of Dido and her first husband, Sychaeus, whose ghostly apparition reveals to her in a dream that he has been murdered: *ipsa sed in somnis inhumati venit imago/ coniugis; ora modis attollens pallida miris* “But in her sleep came the very ghost of her unburied husband; raising his pale face in wondrous wise” (I,353-354).

⁶⁷ Text cited: *Piðriks Saga af Bern*, ed. HENRIK BERTELSEN (SUGNL 34), 2 vols, Copenhagen 1905-1911. All English translations are taken from: EDWARD R. HAYMES, *The Saga of Thidrek of Bern* (Garland History of Medieval Literature B56), New York/ London 1988.

⁶⁸ See ROBERT NEDOMA, *Zu den Frauenfiguren der Piðreks saga af Bern*, in: *Festschrift Otto Gschwantler* [Fn. 7], pp. 211-232, esp. p. 214.

⁶⁹ This section of the narrative is contained in some manuscripts but not in others; see SUSANNE KRAMARZ-BEIN, *Die Piðreks saga im Kontext der altnorwegischen Literatur* (Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie 22), Tübingen and Basel 2002, here pp. 46-55.

Gunnarr (Gunther): *Gvnnar konungr var leos har oc breiðleitr. leost skeG oc skamt herðibreiðr leoslitðr oc haligr* “King Gunnar had light hair and a broad face, a short light-colored beard, and broad shoulders. He was light complected and tall” (I,342);

Högni (Hagen): *Hoegni broðir hans haevir har suart oc sit oc nockorr sueipr i. langleitr nef mikill brvnsiðr doekt skeG oc allr er hann doeklitaðr* “Högni, his brother, had black hair that hung down with some curl in it. He was long-faced, and had a large nose and hanging brows. He had a dark beard and he was dark in coloration everywhere” (I,343);

Sigurðr: *Sigurðr suein hans har er brvnt oc fagrt oc liðaz ilocka stora. oc hans skeG er skamt oc þykt. oc með sama lit* “Young Sigurd’s hair was brown and fair and fell in great curls, and his beard was short and thick and of the same color” (I,344).

The specificity and variety of these descriptions ensure that no two figures are the same in terms of their physical appearance regardless of what ethical or heroic values they may collectively embody. At the same time the colour, length and/ or style of the hair and beards of a number of these ‘individuals’ would seem to be at least partly determined by their roles within the narrative. A kind of literary physiognomy thus emerges: Högni’s dark hair and beard are consonant with the murky circumstances surrounding his birth, whilst the legitimate king Gunnarr is fair-haired; the outstanding vigour of Sigurðr in his prime is signalled by his short yet thick beard; and Sifka, who will prove to be such a treacherous enemy to Þiðrekr, is rendered suspect by the redness of his hair and beard (I,347-348).⁷⁰

HERMANN REICHERT has argued that the poet of the ‘Þiðreks saga’ implicitly claims a higher degree of historicity for his material by paying detailed attention to physical features of the heroes that are not important for the action, such as their “Haar, Nase, Augen”.⁷¹ Such a ‘documentary’ style of characterization is certainly not uncommon in the Old Norse and Icelandic sagas. However, it scarcely does justice to the various references to (male) hair and beards that occur elsewhere in the text and that play such a fundamental role in the thumb-sketches of particularly significant heroes as both younger and older men: Þiðrekr’s

⁷⁰ Evidence for the stigma attached to red hair can be found from the tenth (‘Ruodlieb’) to the sixteenth centuries; see RUTH MELLINKOFF, Judas’s Red Hair and the Jews, in: *Journal of Jewish Art* 9 (1982), 31-46. For MHG literature specifically cf. the narratorial defence of the Red Knight in the thirteenth-century Arthurian romance ‘Wigalois’: *Im was der bart und daz hâr/ beidiu rôit, viurvar./ von den selben hoere ich sagen/ daz si valschiu herze tragen;/ des gelouben hân ich niht:/ [...]/ swie sîn hâr ist getân,/ ist et er ein getriuwer man,/ diu varwe im niht geschaden kan* (2841-2855); text cited: Wirnt von Grafenberg: Wigalois. Text der Ausgabe von J. M. N. KAPTEYN übersetzt, erläutert und mit einem Nachwort versehen von SABINE SEELBACH und ULRICH SEELBACH, Berlin/ New York 2005.

⁷¹ HERMANN REICHERT, Nibelungen auf Island, in: 12. Pöchlerner Heldenliedgespräch. Spuren der Heldensage: Texte – Bilder – Realien, edd. JOHANNES KELLER, FLORIAN KRAGL and STEPHAN MÜLLER (Philologica Germanica 36), Vienna 2015, pp. 197-219, here p. 213.

companion Heimir, for instance, already has a *skegg hefuer hann yfrid þyktt* “a very thick beard” (I,39) by the age of twelve;⁷² and as an older warrior, seeking to retire to a monastery, Heimir is characterized by a massive beard that is *graatt sem dvfa* “gray as a dove” (II,386). Old Hildibrandr shares this attribute of course,⁷³ whereby the reference to his beard as a young man (in one of the earlier chapters) is something of a collector’s item in the Germanic heroic epic tradition as a whole: *Haar hans og skegg er gult sem silke og hrøkkur sem lokarspann* “His hair and beard were as golden as silk and as curly as plane shavings” (I,33). When so many heroes have beards, beardlessness – as a permanent condition – becomes one very obvious sign of exorbitance, the perfect example of which being Þiðrekr himself: *Haar hans var litid og fagurt og lidadizt allt j locka. a honum var eke skegg suo gamall madur sem hann vard* “His hair was light and fair and fell in curls. He had no beard, no matter how old he got” (I,31).⁷⁴

Beards – like hair – function as natural symbols for the passing of time and the encroachment of (old) age, and the various references to them serve to highlight the narrative structure of the work as a whole, concerned as it is with the deeds of its heroes first as younger and then as older men.⁷⁵ The ‘Þiðreks saga’ negotiates this thematic complex in two very different ways. On the one hand, there is the pathos and sentimentality of those scenes in which older men of action reflect upon their lives, their mortality and fame, with reference to the changes their bodies have undergone, such as when Samson, Þiðrekr’s formidable grandfather, calls his men to arms for one last time: *enn margt hefuer skipast síþann mitt haar og skegg war svartt sem hrafn enn nv er þat hvitt sem dufa* “And much has changed. My hair and beard are no longer as black as a raven, but rather as white as a dove” (I,25).⁷⁶ On the other hand, there is the aggressive comedy of those scenes in which antagonistic reference is made to the beards of other (older) men. The best example of this comes when Þiðrekr and Hildibrandr are waylaid by a group of thirty or so of Jarl Elsung’s men, as they are making their way back to Berne; and of course it is the aged, bearded Hildibrandr and not Þiðrekr who is singled out for abuse by one of their younger assailants:

⁷² For more on “Zwölfjährigkeit” in the context of Icelandic literature see KRAMARZ-BEIN [Fn. 69], pp. 34-35.

⁷³ Old Hildibrandr’s beard is described by others first as grey (II,341-342) and then as white (II,344).

⁷⁴ For other examples of beardlessness in Icelandic literature see REICHERT [Fn. 71], p. 201.

⁷⁵ See also KRAMARZ-BEIN [Fn. 69], pp. 32-33.

⁷⁶ Cf. also Þiðrekr’s attempt to persuade Heimir to leave the monastery and join him by talking about times past: *þa haufdu wier haar litt sem gull og rokkitt fagurligha. þat sama ern v gratt sem dvfa hwartueggia þitt og mitt* “We had then hair coloured like gold and curled fairly. We are both now as gray as doves, both you and I” (II,387). The same principle is also at work in the ‘Nibelungenlied’ in the words of the Hun who reflects on just how much time has elapsed since Hagen was last seen at Etzel’s court: *daz dô die tumben wâren, wie grîse die nû sint!* (B 1795,2).

gefit upp vopn yður skiot oc sialfa yðr i vart valld. enn ef aeigi viltu þat taek ek minni hendi i þitt skegg sua at mestr lutr skal hendinni brot fylgia “Now give up your weapons and yourselves quickly into our power. If you do not do that, I will take your beard in my hands so that most of it will come off in the hand” (II,338).

The provocative exchange culminates in a witty variation on the derogatory (medieval) proverbial wisdom regarding the foolishness of women: *þottu ser harr i skeggi þa er tu vist favis* “Obwohl du lang von Bart bist, bist du kurz von Witz” (II,338).⁷⁷ Given that Hildibrandr’s strength is not in doubt (Þiðrekr himself vociferously vouches for it), there is never any real danger that someone is actually going to grab him by the beard; consequently for a figure of Hildibrandr’s stature within the heroic world to be subjected to the indignity of such insults is comically incongruous.⁷⁸ A mental image of demeaning assault on the older warrior is evoked for an instant if only to be categorically rejected: Þiðrekr kills seven, Hildibrandr nine of the enemy. In relation to the “masculine value-system” of the text as a whole the empty insults would seem to function as a harmless means of expressing and thereby defusing the inevitable tension between young and old, between those who have yet to prove themselves and those who demand respect for what they have already done.

IV: MHG ‘Dietrichepik’

The beard-specific detail in the ‘Þiðreks saga’ can be explained in terms of this work’s own narrative strategies and thematic preoccupations. As far as we can tell, however, the ‘Þiðreks saga’ also represents something of a compendium of German heroic material. Thus, it is not entirely out of the question that some of the heroic beardedness on show here is drawn from other oral and/ or literary ‘saga’-sources that may have played a role in the production and reception of MHG ‘Dietrichepik’ from the first half of the thirteenth century onwards. There are some striking parallels for sure in those texts commonly categorized as ‘aventurehafte Dietrichepik’, although given the literary make-up of these works it is hard to tell whether such beard-related detail is symptomatic of thirteenth-century literary developments, or

⁷⁷ The witticism is rendered more faithfully in FINE ERICHSEN, *Die Geschichte Thidreks von Bern* (Thule 22), Jena 1924. The anti-feminist topos of ‘long on hair and short on sense’ is fairly ubiquitous in medieval literature. For MHG cf. ‘Wolfdietrich D’ and the way Ortnit’s widow excuses herself to Wolfdietrich for her lack of faith in him: *Nu hant wir frowen langes hor vnd do zuo kurtzen muot* (1573,1); text cited: Ortnit und Wolfdietrich D. Kritischer Text nach Ms. Carm. 2 der Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main, ed. WALTER KOFLER, Stuttgart 2001.

⁷⁸ Remarkably the figure of Hildibrandr is left largely undiscussed in GERT KREUZER, *Aspekte des Komischen in der Þiðreks saga*, in: *Hansische Literaturbeziehungen. Das Beispiel der Þiðreks saga und verwandter Literatur*, ed. SUSANNE KRAMARZ-BEIN (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 14), Berlin/ New York 1996, pp. 100-130.

whether it constitutes residual, traditional motifs or simply reflects deeply entrenched ideas about masculinity.⁷⁹

At the outset we should note that in most cases it is left to the recipients to decide what the figures look like. In none of the relevant texts is Dietrich von Bern explicitly denoted as bearded, or indeed – like Þiðrekr – as beardless, although a work like ‘Virginal’ (before 1300?) clearly presents him as a young knight(!) at the start of his heroic career.⁸⁰ Dietrich’s appearance is thematized most overtly in the ‘Eckenlied’ (before 1230),⁸¹ when Ecke, not content with what *ain alter varnder man* (E₂ 28,1) has already told him (*zen brusten harte wit,/ gestalt alsam die lovwen* 29,7-8), quizzes Helerich, the wounded knight in the forest, as to what Dietrich looks like: *wie hat ers an dem libe?* (60,3).⁸² In another version of the text Ecke even asks for an indication of Dietrich’s age: *hede er vor alter irgent gran?* (E₃ 16,2).⁸³ The wounded knight never gives a proper answer to this question (*so kunen man ich nie gesach* E₃ 16,5), and there may well be nothing more to this than a crude association of beardedness with (legitimate?) rulership. However, the ‘Helerich-episode’ is not an incidental one, containing as it does a number of “deutliche Anknüpfungspunkte” to heroic tradition.⁸⁴ For any recipient with text-external knowledge of beardlessness on the part of Dietrich (as featured in the ‘Þiðreks saga’) Ecke’s question would have seemed quite ironic, his ignorance concerning Dietrich alienating.⁸⁵

The only explicit reference to beardlessness in these epics (that I have found) does not concern Dietrich in fact but serves rather to characterize Alphart and Danewart in a less well-known fragment of the ‘Rosengarten’: *Wi*

⁷⁹ The peculiar literary status of ‘aventurehafte Dietrichepik’ is best summed up by SONJA KERTH, *Gattungsinterferenzen in der späten Heldendichtung (Imagines Medii Aevi 21)*, Wiesbaden 2008: “Es handelt sich um ein Erzählen am Rande der Intertextualität, das auf Erzählstoffe und Sagenwissen [...] rekurriert, ohne daß klar würde, ob es sich nun um altes Sagenwissen oder stoffliche Ausfaltungen jüngerer Zeit handelt und welchen Grad an erzählerischer Geformtheit diese Stoffpartikel überhaupt erreicht haben” (p. 100).

⁸⁰ Hence the comic effect of Dietrich’s gallant banter with Virginal after his first experiences of fighting heathens, dragons and giants: *durch iuch, edeliu künegîn,/ sô bin ich worden grîs unt alt* (Virginal [version I] 1023,12-13); text taken from: *Dietrichs Abenteuer von Albrecht von Kemenaten nebst den Bruchstücken von Dietrich und Wenezlan*, ed. JULIUS ZUPITZA (DHB V), Berlin 1870, repr. Dublin/ Zurich 1968, pp. 1-200.

⁸¹ All quotations of the ‘Eckenlied’ are taken from: *Das Eckenlied. Sämtliche Fassungen*, ed. FRANCIS B. BRÉVART (ATB 111), 3 vols, Tübingen 1999.

⁸² See also KAY MALCHER, *Die Faszination von Gewalt. Rezeptionsästhetische Untersuchungen zu aventurehafter Dietrichepik (QuF 60 [294])*, Berlin/ New York 2009, pp. 80-85: “Es scheint fast so, als wollte Ecke selbst noch hinter die Rüstung des Berners schauen” (p. 82).

⁸³ These lines also feature in the ‘Eckenlied’ as preserved by the ‘Dresdener Heldenbuch’ (1472): *hot er von alter do icht gran?* (E₇ 58,2). In another redaction of the text Ecke’s enquiry concerns the colour of Dietrich’s hair: *hat er vor alter nit graus har?* (e₁ 51,2).

⁸⁴ KERTH [Fn. 79], p. 192.

⁸⁵ A different ironic effect is achieved in the equivalent episode of the ‘Þiðreks saga’ (cap. 173² [= I,176-178]), when (the beardless) Þiðrekr claims to be (the bushy-bearded) Heimir upon encountering Ekka in the forest in the middle of the night.

wol da gezuostiret wart/ van zuein helden jungen; sie weren beide ane bart ([version F] II,62-63).⁸⁶ Such beardlessness is the sign of youth with entirely different cultural connotations, contributing here to the courtly stylization of the two heroes as ideal knights under the literary influence of texts like Wolfram's 'Parzival': *wol dâ getjostieret wart/ von den zwein jungen* [Parzival and Clâmidê] *âne bart* (211,15-16).⁸⁷

The one hero in MHG 'Dietrichepik' whose beardedness is usually made abundantly clear is Dietrich's weapon-master and loyal companion Hildebrand, the archetypal old warrior.⁸⁸ The notion that Hildebrand has a grey beard is evidently so well-established that it requires next to no narrative description within a story.⁸⁹ Indeed, Hildebrand's *bart* functions first and foremost as a point of reference in direct speech ('Figurenrede'). In version A of the 'Rosengarten' (before 1300?), for instance, it is Hildebrand himself who first mentions it – and for rhetorical effect – when emphasizing his determination to fight king Gibeck: *Wie gra mir der bart ist, er wurt sin nit erlon* (R₁₂ 135,2).⁹⁰ In a later redaction, the 'Jüngere Vulgatafassung' (contained in the first printed 'Heldenbuch' [1479]), this expression of Hildebrand's unweakened heroic resolve is then picked up by the narrator and turned into an epithet of sorts to mark the moment when Hildebrand has defeated Gibeck: *Da gieng auß dem garten der frumme Hildebrant/ mit seinem grawen barten den kunig het er geschant* (r₁ 409,3-4).⁹¹ There is, one senses, a considerable amount of affection for Hildebrand at work here, which by no means precludes more obviously humorous depiction, such as when the old warrior demands the incongruously courtly prize that Kriemhild still owes him (*Wa ist mein krenczelein,/ das ich hie ziere meinen grawen kopff* r₁ 406,4-407,1) only to reject her

⁸⁶ All quotations of the 'Rosengarten' are taken from: Rosengarten. Teilband I: Einleitung, Rosengarten A. Teilband II: Rosengarten DP. Teilband III: Rosengarten C, Rosengarten F, Niederdeutscher Rosengarten, Verzeichnisse, ed. ELISABETH LIENERT, SONJA KERTH and SVENJA NIERENTZ (TSMH 8), Berlin 2015.

⁸⁷ For more on "das höfische Moment" in 'Rosengarten F' see JOACHIM HEINZLE, Einführung in die mittelhochdeutsche Dietrichepik, Berlin/ New York 1999, p. 187 (cit.); and GHISLAINE GRIMM, Heldendichtung im Spätmittelalter. Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien zu den skriptographischen, typographischen und ikonographischen Erscheinungsformen des Rosengarten zu Worms (Imagines Medii Aevi 22), Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 43-45.

⁸⁸ Only in the longest version of 'Wolfdietrich' (D) does Hildebrand appear as a young man who together with Hugdietrich, Wolfdietrich's son, represents the next generation of heroes at the close of the narrative. Unlike the 'Piðreks saga', however, where young Hildibrand's fair hair and beard (I,33) are described, no such attempt is made in the MHG text; here the novelty of being able to refer to Hildebrand as *der junge* (2180,1; 2184,2; 2189,3; 2206,1; 2231,1) and under the tutelage of his elders is evidently entertaining enough: *die alten woltent schowen, wie sy* [Hildebrand and Hugdietrich] *iebtent sich* (2184,4).

⁸⁹ See also WOLFGANG DINKELACKER, Der alte Held. Belege aus mittelalterlicher Heldendichtung und ihr kulturhistorischer Quellenwert, in: Alterskulturen [Fn. 48], pp. 183-202, esp. pp. 190-194.

⁹⁰ In other manuscripts of this 'Ältere Vulgatafassung' the beard Hildebrand refers to belongs to Gibeck(!): *Wie gra yme ist der barte* (R₂₀ 125,4); cf. also R₁₀ 125,4.

⁹¹ This epithet occurs once more in the context of Hildebrand's attempts to persuade Dietrich to fight Siegfried: *Da sprach mit dem barte der alte Hildebrant:/ 'Es ist nyeman me jm garte dann Seifrit auß Nyderland'* (r₁ 425,1-2).

embrace and kiss out of respect for his beloved wife: *Das huoren werck sol nit sein* (r₁ 408,1).

This attitude towards Hildebrand may be put into some perspective by a comparison with the portrayal of another grey-haired and bearded German(ic) hero: Wate in ‘Kudrun’.⁹² Wate is one of a number of older warriors (Wate; Fruote; Ludwig) who are denoted as *grîs* (340,2; 355,3; 521,3) or *altgrîs* (474,1; 1442,1).⁹³ However, Wate’s is the only beard to be referred to in the entire text: first, on the occasion of his audience with the two Hildes at the Irish court: *sîn bart was im breit* (341,1); second, when he goes berserk during the battle to rescue Kudrun in the land of ‘Ormanie’: *mit grisgramenden zenden zehant huob er sich dar,/ mit schînenden ougen, mit ellenbreitem barte* (1508,2-3). There is no trace of sentimentality here. In the second instance most particularly Wate’s untamed beard forms part of the terrifying aspect of a warrior overwhelmed by blood-lust: *alle die dâ wâren vorhten den helt von den Stürmen harte* (1508,4).

The more Hildebrand’s status is symbolized by his grey beard, the greater the comic potential of this motif; and the interest in an altogether more robust type of comedy at Hildebrand’s expense is one that other texts in the MHG tradition seem to share with the ‘*Þiðreks saga*’. Thus, Ecke’s response to Hildebrand’s pointed refusal to help him find Dietrich seems very familiar if not entirely predictable: *het ich uch bi dem barte/ vor der porte uf der haide brait,/ es wurd u liht ze laide* (‘Eckenlied’ E₂ 47,6-8).⁹⁴ This pattern of amusing verbal abuse even finds its way into the ballad of the ‘Jüngerer Hildebrandslied’, as found in the ‘Dresdner Heldenbuch’ (dated 1472), where no sooner has Hildebrand referred to his own beard as evidence of his hard-won experience (*des glaub du mir, du junger: dar umb grabt mir mein part* 8,4) than his son responds in suitably antagonistic fashion: *Dein part wil ich aus rauffen - das must du sehen an -/ das dir das plut mussz lauffen und auf dem harnisch stan.* (9,1-2).⁹⁵

The comic disrespect paid to Hildebrand’s beard is taken one step further in both versions of ‘Sigenot’, where Sir Hildebrand is first insulted (*du alter grîser man* [‘Älterer Sigenot’ = version I] 19,4) then manhandled by Sigenot, the giant who takes him captive: *Bî dem barte er in gevie, hern Hiltebranten* ([I] 20,1-2).⁹⁶ The effect of this narrative twist is compounded by Hildebrand’s expression of outrage that seems to play on the literary

⁹² See also KERSTIN SCHMITT, *Poetik der Montage. Figurenkonzeption und Intertextualität in der Kudrun* (PhSt 174), Berlin 2002, esp. pp. 266-267.

⁹³ *Kudrun*, ed. UTA STÖRMER-CAYSA (RUB 18369), Stuttgart 2010.

⁹⁴ This is the only reference to Hildebrand’s beard in the ‘Eckenlied’.

⁹⁵ Text taken from: *Das Dresdener Heldenbuch und die Bruchstücke des Berlin-Wolfenbütteler Heldenbuchs. Edition und Digitalfaksimile*, ed. WALTER KOFLER, Stuttgart 2006, pp. 393-395.

⁹⁶ Text taken from: ZUPITZA [Fn. 80], pp. 205-215.

knowledge of the text's recipients and their awareness of the significance of his beard for his identity: *het ichs gewist zu Pern,/ ich het in ab geschorn* ([‘Jüngerer Sigenot’ = version II] 159,12-13).⁹⁷ Even after Hildebrand has killed Sigenot, he does not stop complaining to Dietrich about the horrendous indignity he has suffered at the giant's hands.⁹⁸ In the ‘Älterer Sigenot’ the comic image is kept very much alive for the recipients when the honest stalwart compares the rough treatment meted out to his beard with the ritual punishment of ‘decalvation’ reserved for criminals: *den bart er mir dô ûz gelas/ sô rehte als einem diebe* ([I] 63,9-10).

In the context of the manuscript transmission of the ‘Eckenlied’ and ‘Sigenot’ the significance of the respective references to Hildebrand's beard may be seen to be shaped by the order in which these two texts were read or heard. In the relatively early Karlsruher codex (Donaueschingen 74 [c. 1300?]), where ‘Sigenot’ (= S₁) fol. 130a-132c) precedes the ‘Eckenlied’ (= E₂) fol. 132c-148b), Ecke's threatening behaviour towards Hildebrand aligns him firmly with Sigenot and functions as a pertinent reminder that Ecke is a giant.⁹⁹ In the ‘Dresdener Heldenbuch’, on the other hand, where the order is reversed (‘Eckenlied’ [= E₇]: fol. 92r-151r; ‘Jüngerer Sigenot’ [= S₆]: fol. 201r-240r), Sigenot carries out Ecke's threat (E₇ 44,6-8); and Hildebrand's initial helplessness here is all the more hilarious against the backdrop of the effort he makes to avoid such ignominy in the ‘Eckenlied’.¹⁰⁰

Hildebrand is not (quite) the only hero in these texts to be attributed with a beard. The ‘Rosengarten’ (in its various versions) also features Ilsan, Hildebrand's brother, whose beardedness plays a significant role in the course of the action.¹⁰¹ Unlike Hildebrand's beard, Ilsan's is not defined by its colour as a marker of age but functions rather as a sign of social identity in scenes (of comic effect) that seem to assert the value of lay masculinity.¹⁰² Thus, in the ‘Jüngere Vulgatafassung’ of ‘Rosengarten A’ Ilsan deliberately exploits the fearsome ferryman's assumption that he is just an ordinary monk to make him more amenable (to

⁹⁷ Text taken from: KOFLER [Fn. 95], pp. 244-295.

⁹⁸ The text offers in fact a mini chain-reaction of beard-pulling, as no sooner has Hildebrand dispatched Sigenot than he bests the dwarf (Eggerich) in the giant's service(?) by doing the very same thing to him: *er ergreif ez bî dem barte* ([I] 33,3; cf. also [II] 193,3).

⁹⁹ In fact there is some evidence here to suggest that in this manuscript ‘Sigenot’ functioned as a kind of pre-history for the ‘Eckenlied’; see HEINZLE [Fn. 87], pp. 132-133; and MALCHER [Fn. 82], pp. 32-37.

¹⁰⁰ *Und als her Eck die wort sprach,/ das mayster Hilleprant wol sach,/ das der Eck zornig ware./ do thet er als ein weisser man;/ er sprach: ‘ich habs in schimpf gethan’* (E₇ 45,1-5).

¹⁰¹ In terms of the wider literary reception of this figure Ilsan's beard is evidently his outstanding characteristic; cf. the reference to *münch Eylsam mit sym bart* in chapter 72 of Sebastian Brant's ‘Narrenschiff’, as cited by MEINOLF SCHUMACHER, *Der Mönch als Held oder: Von Ilsans Kämpfen und Küssen in den Rosengarten-Dichtungen*, in: JOWG 14 (2003/ 2004), 91-104, here p. 95.

¹⁰² See also JAN-DIRK MÜLLER, *Höfische Kompromisse. Acht Kapitel zur höfischen Epik*, Tübingen 2007, pp. 158-161; ANDREAS HAMMER, *Held in Mönchskleidern oder Mönch im Heldenkostüm? Zur Wahrnehmung Ilsans im Rosengarten zu Worms*, in: ZfdPh 127 (2008), 35-49.

ferrying Dietrich and his men across the Rhine) – *Wan er dan sicht meinen bart, der vngefiege man,/ so machet er sich auf die fart* (r₁ 213,1-2) – before battering him into submission: *In dem bart der bruoder kund boeser list genuog* (r₁ 220,2). Elsewhere, towards the end of the narrative, when Ilsan is rewarded by Kriemhild for a second time with her kisses, he uses his beard as a weapon to punish her for her scheming:

*Wann die kunigin zarte den munch da wolte kissen,
mit seinem rauhen barte reib er sie vmb den trissen,
das darnach gunde fliessen das rosenfarben pluot.* (r₁ 468,3-469,1)

Ilsan's masculinity cannot be contained by courtly ceremony. Indeed his bristly beard aggressively gives lie to the notion that the whole event is an exercise in gallant chivalry. Nevertheless, however typical Ilsan's beard may be of his station as a lay brother, his beard is of a different kind to those of his (emasculated) fellow monks.¹⁰³ This is confirmed upon his return to the monastery by the punishment he dishes out to those who refuse to help him atone for his sins: *Er knypft in die bert zuo samen vnd hieng sie uber ein stang* (r₁ 488,1).

If the bearded figure of Ilsan 'upstages' Hildebrand at times in the transmission of the 'Rosengarten', it should be noted that Hildebrand's beard is not explicitly referred to in every narrative that he appears in. In the various 'Virginal'-texts, for instance, the formulaic insistence on Hildebrand's grey hair never extends to his beard.¹⁰⁴ Beards in the 'Heidelberger Virginal' (= version I) and the 'Wiener Virginal' (= version III) belong to the ranks of giants whom the heroes are obliged to kill, as stipulated by Hildebrand: *etlichen weiz ich under in:/ die tragent klâfterlangen bart* ([I] 621,12-13).¹⁰⁵ The potential for aggressive comedy here far outweighs anything we have seen so far, in relation either to dwarves (Alberich in the 'Nibelungenlied'; Eggerich in 'Sigenot') or to Hildebrand himself. Thus, in one of the fights orchestrated by Hildebrand, Dietleib tears so violently at the bart ([I] 738,8) of his chosen opponent (Boemrian) *daz er im von dem kinne reiz/ drüzzel unde nasebant* ([I]

¹⁰³ Cf. 'Rosengarten D', where Kriemhild's disgust for Ilsan's *ruchen bart* (2237) prompts him to exclaim (in mock-outrage?): *Suliche smehe rede mir nie me erbotten wart./ Den orden trag ich rechte durch den suessen Jhesus Crist* (2238-2239).

¹⁰⁴ The frequency with which the attribute of *grîs[e]* occurs may partly be explained by the convenient rhyme with *wîs[e]*, another of Hildebrand's key characteristics. Nevertheless, whilst the hair colour of the other heroes is never specified Hildebrand's greyness is a constant point of reference, whether in his 'own' words: *ich dunke iuch nu sô grîse* ([version I] 29,10); the words of others (such as Dietrich): *ich weiz alsô den grîsen* ([I] 82,3); or those of the narrator: *des antwurte er dem grîsen* ([I] 155,6) etc.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. also version III 612,12-13; text cited: Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt, ed. FRANZ STARK (StLV 52), Stuttgart 1860. The 'Dresdner Virginal' (= version II) features a single bearded giant: *sein winpran waren ym ein knoten,/ sein part het manchen pilbis tzoten* (107,4-5); text taken from: KOFLER [Fn. 95], pp. 360-392.

738,12-13). In the ‘Wiener Virginal’ Dietleib’s debasement of his foe (now called Morean) does not stop there, as he parades his head in front of the other giants: *mit seinem part daz haupt er trug/ da für die risen alle* ([III] 670,2-3).¹⁰⁶ We can only speculate that the poet refrained from alluding to Hildebrand’s own beard for fear of associating the wise old warrior, such an important figure for the didactic import of the text,¹⁰⁷ with the horrible and laughable giants. Whether such omission actually changed the image of Hildebrand that the recipients of this work constructed for themselves is open to question (see V below).

The references to Hildebrand’s beard in the ‘Eckenlied’, the ‘Rosengarten’ and in ‘Sigenot’ draw these various texts together by reaffirming this figure’s privileged status within the literary tradition as a whole. By contrast the (not inconsiderable) thematic significance of Ilsan’s beard in the ‘Rosengarten’ would appear to be entirely determined by its immediate narrative context. There are echoes here of Heimir as a bushy-bearded monk in the ‘Piðreks saga’, although this may just be a natural consequence of the shared narrative motif of (heroic) ‘moniage’ deriving, ultimately, from Old French ‘chansons de geste’.¹⁰⁸ What the respective portrayals of Hildebrand and Ilsan do have in common is their comic register, symptomatic in itself of the fundamentally unserious character of ‘aventurehafte Dietrichepik’ as it developed in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Certainly, the heroic beard-references in these texts function in very different ways to those we found in the ‘Nibelungenlied’ and ‘Die Klage’.

In certain redactions of the ‘Rosengarten’ Hildebrand’s frustration at Dietrich’s refusal to meet Siegfried in combat is described in terms that are in fact reminiscent of the weeping Amelungs in the ‘Nibelungenlied’: *Von zorn begunt fliessen Hiltebrant daz wasser ueber den bart* (D 1791).¹⁰⁹ Of course the comic tenor of this scene could not be further removed from the ‘tragedy’ of Rüdiger’s death, not least because the cowardly Dietrich will eventually be induced to fight and get the better of Siegfried.¹¹⁰ Nor could Hildebrand’s weeping be any less stoical. In a text which pitches Rüdiger against Gernot (D 1418-1461) without the loss of life, the bearded Hildebrand’s tears are those of an older and wiser *meister* mortified by the unruliness of his (younger)

¹⁰⁶ For more on aggressive comedy of this kind in the heroic epic see MANUEL BRAUN, *Mitlachen oder verlachen? Zum Verhältnis von Komik und Gewalt in der Heldenepik*, in: *Gewalt im Mittelalter. Realität – Imagination*, ed. MANUEL BRAUN and CORNELIA HERBERICHS, Munich 2005, pp. 381-410, here pp. 391-393.

¹⁰⁷ CORDULA KROPIK, *Dietrich von Bern zwischen Minnelehre und Fürstenerziehung. Zur Interpretation der Virginal h*, in: *JOWG 14* (2003/ 2004), 159-173.

¹⁰⁸ THORDIS HENNINGS, *Französische Heldenepik im deutschen Sprachraum. Die Rezeption der Chansons de Geste im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert. Überblick und Fallstudien*, Heidelberg 2008, pp. 517-525.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. the emphasis on Hildebrand’s old age in other redactions of this text: *Dem alden viln dy zcere obir synen bart* (P 676); *[D]em [alden vluszen] die tranen ueber [sinen] grawen b[art]* (F XI,4).

¹¹⁰ See RALF BREYER, *Dietrich cunctator. Zur Ausprägung eines literarischen Charakters*, in: *5. Pöchlarn Heldenliedgespräch. Aventure-märchenhafte Dietrichepik*, ed. KLAUS ZATLOUKAL (*Philologica Germanica 22*), Vienna 2000, pp. 61-74, esp. pp. 67-70.

charge;¹¹¹ they are part and parcel of the parodic treatment of heroic motifs and roles that pervades the ‘Rosengarten’.¹¹²

It also seems appropriate to make a categorical distinction between ‘historische Dietrichepik’ and ‘aventurehafte Dietrichepik’ on this point. The closest the former comes to the latter is in ‘Alpharts Tod’ when Hildebrand *der alde* (504) attempts to defeat Alphart *der junge* (510) and return him to Berne unscathed but is himself vanquished and forced to suffer Alphart’s jibes: *no sint yr wol so gryse, yr solt uns der reyß han erlan* (537).¹¹³ But as comic as this scene is, it contains no (burlesque) reference to the older warrior’s beard.¹¹⁴ Elsewhere, in ‘Dietrichs Flucht’ the only references to hair occur in the context of hyperbolic gestures of wild grief, such as when Dietrich mourns the death of so many of his *getriwe man* (9881): *Vor leide er reht verzagte./ Er vie sich selbe in daz har* (9887-9888).¹¹⁵ The pattern is the same in the ‘Rabenschlacht’,¹¹⁶ including the awful moment when Etzel is told that his sons have been slain:

*Daz har ouz der swarte
Ezele vor leide brach.
Er rouft sich bi dem barte,
michel was sin ungemach.* (1113,1-4)

That Etzel should be bearded is perhaps indicative of nothing more than of his status as king. Having said this, it is hard to overlook the parallels between this portrayal of Etzel’s injured majesty and Karl’s response to the death of his nephew Roland (see above). The key thing to note, however, is that this represents the only explicit beard-reference in the ‘historische Dietrichepik’. The ostensible historicity and the sheer scale of the events depicted in these

¹¹¹ See also DETLEF GOLLER, Her Dietrich und sîn Hildebrant – die Unzertrennlichen? Aspekte von Herrschaft und Erziehung in einer langen literaturhistorischen Beziehung, in: PBB 131 (2009), 493-509, here pp. 496-501.

¹¹² KERTH [Fn. 79], pp. 48-56.

¹¹³ Alpharts Tod. Dietrich und Wenezlan, ed. by ELISABETH LIENERT and VIOLA MEYER (TSMH 3), Tübingen 2007.

¹¹⁴ For more on the characterization of Hildebrand in this sub-category of Dietrich-epic see ELISABETH LIENERT, Die ‘historische’ Dietrichepik. Untersuchungen zu Dietrichs Flucht, Rabenschlacht und Alpharts Tod (TSMH 5), Berlin/ New York 2010, esp. pp. 200-203.

¹¹⁵ Dietrichs Flucht. Textgeschichtliche Ausgabe, ed. ELISABETH LIENERT and GERTRUD BECK (TSMH 1), Tübingen 2003. Cf. also 4284-4286; 9927; 9986-9987.

¹¹⁶ Here too Dietrich is repeatedly depicted tearing at his own hair: *Sich selben bi dem hare/ mit beden handen er vie,/ er rovte sich ze ware* (912,1-3); cf. also 881,3-4; 887,3-4. Text cited: Rabenschlacht. Textgeschichtliche Ausgabe, ed. ELISABETH LIENERT and DORIT WOLTER (TSMH 2), Tübingen 2005.

tales of death, disaster and hollow victory certainly prohibit anything like the fun and games that the poets of the ‘Rosengarten’ or ‘Sigenot’ have with heroes and their beards.

The Middle Low German ballad ‘Ermenrikes Dôt’ (first transmitted in a printed pamphlet of c. 1540) enhances this picture to the extent that it features a notable heroic epithet for one of Dietrich’s band of twelve men: *Hardenacke mit dem barde dat was de achte Man* (17,4).¹¹⁷ Used without any supporting narrative detail, this kind of name, it seems, is always a possibility in texts dominated by relationships between men. Exactly the same kind of device is found in the ‘Chanson de Roland’: *Guarlan le barbét* “Guarlan the bearded” (65); and it is retained in the German reception of this material as well: *Gerglant mit dem barte* (‘Rolandslied’ 574); *Gralant mit dem barte* (‘Karl’ 1158).

V: Pictures

Another distinguishing feature of ‘aventurehafte Dietrichepik’ and its transmission in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in particular is its illustration, whether this be in the form of manuscript drawings in pen and ink, printed woodcuts or mural paintings.¹¹⁸ Given that the date of composition of the texts in question is likely to have been much earlier, the visual imagery used to depict Dietrich, Hildebrand and others is quite patently part of secondary processes of reception with their own agendas of “Aktualisierung” and, more often than not, “Höfisierung”.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, and as the following review of the manuscript evidence hopes to demonstrate, it is instructive to note the extent to which beards and beardlessness are a feature of the various schemes of illustration at work here. Not only do beards in these pictures serve as a pertinent reminder of several enduring ideas concerning masculinity and authority, they provide us with evidence of the very diverse relationship between text and image in this period.

The earliest surviving evidence of all is represented by a cycle of frescoes (dating to around 1400) in castle Lichtenberg im Vintschgau that includes three scenes from ‘Laurin’.¹²⁰ Whilst the text itself contains next to no detail pertaining to the appearance of the heroes, whether young (Dietrich, Wolfhart, Dietleib) or old

¹¹⁷ Text taken from: HILKERT WEDDIGE, *König Ermenrikes Dôt. Die niederdeutsche Flugschrift ‘Van Dirick van dem Berne’ und ‘Van Juncker Baltzer’. Überlieferung, Kommentar, Interpretation* (Hermaea NF 76), Tübingen 1995, pp. 41-45.

¹¹⁸ For an overview see NORBERT H. OTT, *Die Heldenbuch-Holzschnitte und die Ikonographie des heldenepischen Stoffkreises*, in: *Heldenbuch. Nach dem ältesten Druck in Abbildung*, ed. JOACHIM HEINZLE (Litterae 75/ I-II), 2 vols, Göttingen 1981/ 1987, vol. II: Kommentarband, pp. 245-296.

¹¹⁹ GRIMM [Fn. 87], pp. 333-346.

¹²⁰ See JOHANNA THALI, *Schrift als Bild. Literatur als Teil adeliger Selbstdarstellung im Wandmalereizyklus der Burg Lichtenberg* (um 1400), in: *Wolfram-Studien* 19 (2006), 269-300 (and plates 46-48).

(Hildebrand),¹²¹ the murals appear to differentiate between knights with whiskers (eg. Hildebrand?) and those without (eg. Dietleib?). The reasons for an artistic decision like this may not always be clear.¹²² In the famous triads of castle Runkelstein from around the same time (c. 1400), for instance, beards are an entirely conventional attribute of kings (including Alexander the Great!) and giants, but it is hard to second-guess why in the painting devoted to the three bravest heroes the figure identified as Dietleib should be bearded when Siegfried and Dietrich are not.¹²³

The ten titular illustrations contained in the earliest extant and complete ‘Heldenbuch’, the so-called ‘Dresdner Heldenbuch’ (Dresden, Mscr. M 201, c. 1472), are quite typical of the pictures in this tradition as a whole.¹²⁴ First, the scenes of combat chosen to preface texts such as the ‘Eckenlied’ (fol. 91v), the ‘Rosengarten’ (fol. 151v) and ‘Sigenot’ (fol. 200v) invariably depict knights (and giants) fighting in full armour with their faces largely obscured by their helmets. Second, in the one instance where the combatants have discarded their helmets, in the title-image for the ‘Jüngeres Hildebrandslied’ (fol. 344v), the figures of father and son are instantly recognizable. Indeed a stark contrast is drawn here between the grey-haired and grey-bearded Hildebrand on the one hand and his beardless son on the other, who is portrayed as a handsome, courtly youth by his fair and curly locks, although none of these particulars are expressly mentioned in the actual text.

The depiction of *meister* Hildebrand takes pride of place in other fifteenth-century illustrated manuscripts of individual heroic epics. The relatively early Heidelberger ‘Rosengarten’-manuscript Cpg 359 (‘Elsässische Werkstatt 1418’, c. 1420) depicts Hildebrand fighting Gibeck as one in a whole series of combat-pictures: *Hie stritet kunig Gippich und meister Hildebrant* (fol. 57v).¹²⁵ The outstanding detail here is that of Hildebrand’s grey-white beard that flows down over his chest, emphasizing Hildebrand’s identity as opposed to that of his faceless opponent, Gibeck, who is distinguished solely by the crown on top of his closed helmet. Notably, at this point in the text (version D) there are

¹²¹ The two beard-references that do occur in the manuscript transmission of this text serve instead to accentuate the ‘otherness’ of either the dwarf-king Laurin: *Er hat ein part al sein geis* (L₁₈ 301); or Streitpas, a giant in Laurin’s service: *Streitpas was rauch und wadel und het ein langen part* (L₁₁ 267,1). All quotations are taken from: Laurin. Teilband I: Einleitung, Ältere Vulgatversion, Walberan. Teilband II: Pressburger Laurin, Dresdener Laurin, Jüngere Vulgatversion, Verzeichnisse, edd. ELISABETH LIENERT, SONJA KERTH and ESTHER VOLLMER-EICKEN (TSMH 6), Berlin 2011.

¹²² In another (unrelated) scene in the cycle (see THALI [Fn. 120], plate 50) the courtly nobleman helping a lady to make a garland of roses is sporting a well-trimmed beard and moustache; the fighting men’s whiskers in the ‘Laurin’-pictures appear to be of a different style.

¹²³ See JOACHIM HEINZLE, *Die Triaden auf Runkelstein und die mittelhochdeutsche Heldendichtung*, in: *Runkelstein. Die Wandmalereien des Sommerhauses*, ed. WALTER HAUG et al., Wiesbaden 1982, pp. 63-93, here pp. 70-74.

¹²⁴ Digital copy: <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/9933>.

¹²⁵ Digital copy: <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg359>.

no references to the old warrior's beard as such, although in the passage preceding the picture he is referred to as *den alten Hildebrant* (2092) and in the very first line on the next page Dietrich addresses him provocatively as *Du alter balter grin* (2095). In fact the only relevant beard-reference occurs some 200 lines earlier when Hildebrand sheds tears of frustration at Dietrich's refusal to fight Siegfried (1791). In this context it is not unlikely that the artist's knowledge of Hildebrand's beardedness may indeed have been 'transtextual' or received in some other way.¹²⁶

In the case of Ilsan, who is pictured three times in Cpg 359, the respective rubrics appear to have been the decisive factor rather than proper narrative detail. Thus, this figure's identity as a warrior-monk is clearly conveyed by the black habit he wears over his armour when fighting the ferryman (*Also munch Ylsam und der verge mit ein ander striten* [fol. 18r]) or wounding Volker (*Hie stritet Volger und der munch Ylsan* [fol. 46v]) or receiving his garland (*Also munch Ylsan ein kussen wart von der jungfrowen, und die andern heilde ieglichen ein jungfrov kuset* [fol. 61r]). However, the Ilsan-figure on fols 18r and 61r is beardless(!), and on fol. 46v, in an exceptional act of deference to the text, a sketchy black beard seems to have been added as an afterthought or correction.¹²⁷ By the same token, two of the first five pictures in the codex portray bearded characters (fols 14r, 22v) in courtly scenes that evidently draw on standard iconographic models (the corresponding passages in the text contain no beard-references).¹²⁸ The picture on fol. 7r with the rubric *Also der schriber den herren den brief laß* is different again; here another sketchy black beard has been added to the foremost of the lords (Dietrich?!), out of the necessity perhaps of rendering an originally female figure more overtly masculine.¹²⁹ What the coloured drawings in Cpg 359 certainly make clear is that in pictures of this type the beard-motif is not only extremely effective as a distinguishing feature, it is also relatively easy to add later (if need be).

Pictures of the bearded Hildebrand abound in later manuscripts such as the 'Virginal'-codex produced in the workshop of Diebold Lauber (Heidelberg, UB, Cpg 324; c. 1444-1448), in which over a quarter of the forty-six pen-and-ink drawings feature this figure.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ GRIMM [Fn. 87], p. 371.

¹²⁷ The sketchiness of Ilsan's 'new' beard is not necessarily an indication that it was penned by a different hand; the technique adopted could simply have been the most effective one for adding to a picture that was already finished.

¹²⁸ See GRIMM [Fn. 87], who stresses the stylistic similarities between a number of the first pictures and those found in other codices associated with the 'Elsässische Werkstatt von 1418', not least in respect of "der Zeichnung der Gesichter und der Haare" (p. 358).

¹²⁹ GRIMM [Fn. 87], pp. 366-367.

¹³⁰ Digital copy: <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg324>. For a critical assessment of this codex in general see CORDULA KROPIK, *Heldenepik im Bild. Zu Diebold Laubers Illustrierung der Virginal*, in: *Aus der*

Given that there is not a single reference to Hildebrand's beard in the main text itself and the rubrics refer to him neither as 'meister' nor 'der alte' (but rather as *her hildebrant*), his beardedness would again seem to be determined by the artists' knowledge of a broader tradition of representation and other texts if not actual 'Sagenwissen'.¹³¹ Such knowledge, however, does not preclude a surprising degree of variation when it comes to the colour and style of Hildebrand's beard: short and straight (fols 21r, 51r); grey and in two 'bunches' (fols 106v, 247r, 348v); fair (fols 184r, 199v, 211r, 235v); brown and curly (fol. 215v).¹³² Hildebrand is by no means the only bearded figure;¹³³ but the overwhelming majority of the male figures are portrayed – when not in full armour – as beardless young courtiers (fols 92v, 309v, 323v, 343r). This also applies to named individuals such as Wolfhart (fol. 191r) and Dietrich von Bern himself who, with his curly locks, is repeatedly presented as the epitome of courtly fashion: whether in dialogue with a bearded[!] messenger (fol. 153r);¹³⁴ or in dialogue with the bearded Hildebrand (fol. 235v); or on returning to Berne (fol. 348v).¹³⁵

The contrast between Dietrich and Hildebrand, between (beardless) youth and (grey-bearded) old age, is emphasized most particularly in a 'Sigenot'-manuscript of c. 1470 (Heidelberg, UB, Cpg 67) with its opening sequence of eleven illustrations that show the two characters engaged in dialogue (fols 1r-6r).¹³⁶ This is no doubt necessitated by the extraordinary format of the manuscript that places each of the text's 201 strophes on a separate page beneath its own picture.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, at this initial stage in the story this scheme serves to underscore the respective roles of inexperienced youth and old master. As

Werkstatt Diebold Laubers, ed. CHRISTOPH FASBENDER (Kulturtopographie des alemannischen Raums 3), Berlin/ Boston 2012, pp. 99-121.

¹³¹ KROPIK [Fn. 130], p. 105, points out that Dietrich's fire-breath is not in the text either but that does not prevent the artist from using this traditional motif in two of the pictures (fols 32r, 43r). This motif is a feature of the depiction of Dietrich in Cpg 359 (fol. 49r) as well; see also GRIMM [Fn. 87], p. 371.

¹³² In some cases the variation can be explained by the change of artist after fol. 51r; see KROPIK [Fn. 130], p. 108. For the picture on fol. 215v the balding lord with a curly brown beard was in all likelihood not 'intended' to represent Hildebrand; but to the reader of the text at this point it can hardly be anyone else.

¹³³ Bearded heathens: fol. 32r; giants: fols 96r, 99v, 163v, 211r, 228v; and King Imian: fols 171r, 215v.

¹³⁴ With the sole exception of fol. 153r, messengers are depicted as beardless courtiers. KROPIK [Fn. 130], p. 107 n. 30, suggests that the bearded figure-type (Hildebrand?) was used here to enable recipients to identify Dietrich with ease.

¹³⁵ For the markedly different medieval images of Theoderic the Great (as a bearded and/ or moustachioed king) see WOLFGANG STAMMLER, Theoderich der Große (Dietrich von Bern) und die Kunst, in: WOLFGANG STAMMLER, Wort und Bild. Studien zu den Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Schrifttum und Bildkunst im Mittelalter, Berlin 1962, pp. 45-70, passim; Dietrich-Testimonien des 6. bis 16. Jahrhunderts, ed. ELISABETH LIENERT (TSMH 4), Tübingen 2008, esp. pp. 327-328. Curiously whilst the famous bronze of Theoderic that was made for Maximilian I in Nürnberg (1513?) portrays the figure with a fashionable moustache, the shield Theoderic holds is emblazoned with the image of a warrior-king with a long beard; see VINZENZ OBERHAMMER, Die Bronzestandbilder des Maximiliangrabmales in der Hofkirche zu Innsbruck, Innsbruck 1935, pp. 404-418.

¹³⁶ Digital copy: <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg67>.

¹³⁷ See HENRIKE LÄHNEMANN/ TIMO KRÖNER, Die Überlieferung des Sigenot. Bildkonzeptionen im Vergleich von Handschrift, Wandmalerei und Frühdrucken, in: JOWG 14 (2003/2004), 175-188, esp. pp. 176-180.

distinctive as Hildebrand's beard is,¹³⁸ his attire in these first pictures is quite striking (red cap; long and rather exotic-looking gown), characterizing him less as an old knight and more as a sage. As the plot unfolds and Hildebrand is obliged to free Dietrich from imprisonment, the former's appearance changes quite visibly too, and once he has donned his armour on fol. 63v his gown never reappears. Unsurprisingly the image of Sigenot holding Hildebrand by the beard is repeated over three pages (79v, 80r, 80v). But from the second fight with Sigenot onwards (fol. 84r) Hildebrand is only depicted in full armour as a man of action.¹³⁹ Thus, in the final dialogue-scene with Dietrich (fols 100v, 101r), before they ride back to Berne (fol. 101v), the contrast is between armed (Hildebrand) and unarmed (Dietrich), and Hildebrand's value to Dietrich is based on what he has proved capable of doing rather than simply on words of wisdom.

The four fifteenth-century manuscripts touched on here also provide us with a number of useful points of comparison when it comes to the two known illustrated codices of the 'Nibelungenlied': 'b' ('Hundeshagenscher Codex', Berlin, SB, mfg 855, c. 1436-1442) and 'k' ('Piaristenhandschrift' or 'Lienhart Scheubels Heldenbuch', Vienna, ÖNB, cod. 15478, c. 1480-1490). The thirty-seven (extant) pen-and-ink drawings in the 'Hundeshagenscher Codex' depict most of the male figures as beardless most of the time.¹⁴⁰ But there are a few exceptions: a bearded king (Gunther?) is present when Kriemhild and Siegfried meet for the first time (fol. 17v);¹⁴¹ Alberich's bearded head can be glimpsed above the castle-gate on Siegfried's return to the land of the Nibelungen (fol. 30r); and an otherwise unidentifiable bearded figure is one of a group of five men (including Siegmund?) cautiously approaching Kriemhild as she grieves over Siegfried's (beardless) corpse (fol. 64r).

The most conspicuously bearded figure of all is – of course – Hildebrand, most notably in the picture encapsulating the events of *Aventiure 38* (fol. 148v), in which the Amelungs, led by Hildebrand, argue with the Burgundians over Rüdiger's (beardless) body. Although the text at this point clearly refers to the beardedness of the weeping Amelungs as a

¹³⁸ CLAUDIA HÄNDL, Überlegungen zur Text-Bild-Relation in der Sigenot-Überlieferung, in: *helle döne schöne* (Festschrift Wolfgang Walliczek), Göttingen 1999 (GAG 668), pp. 87-129: "am ausgeprägtesten ist der Kopf des ungewappneten Hildebrand durch Bart und Haartracht" (p. 105).

¹³⁹ Hence when Hildebrand himself seizes Eggerich the dwarf by the beard there is nothing in the picture on fol. 96v to remind the recipients that he too was treated this same way by Sigenot.

¹⁴⁰ Digital copy (of all but six of the drawings):

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Hundeshagenscher_Kodex. For a detailed description of the content of the pictures see JOACHIM HEINZLE, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Bilder*, in: *Das Nibelungenlied. Der Hundeshagensche Codex. Ms. germ. fol. 855 der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, Berlin, 2 vols, Gütersloh/ Munich 2012, vol. II: *Kommentarband*, pp. 139-157.

¹⁴¹ Cf. also HEINZLE [Fn. 140]: "[...] Bart als Zeichen des Alters" (p. 140).

group of men (*bart b 2254,4*),¹⁴² in the drawing Hildebrand is singled out for special artistic attention (once again in accordance with ‘transtextual’ knowledge of one kind or another): he is the only one of the armed men in the scene to be bare-headed, pictured as he is in the process of swearing by his golden-brown(!) and exquisitely pointed beard.¹⁴³ The choice of such an arresting colour for Hildebrand’s beard may have been dictated to the artist by the need to make it visible against the grey-white plate-armour of the figure standing behind. In the final picture (fol. 158v), however, as Kriemhild approaches Hagen with Siegfried’s sword in one hand and her brother’s head in the other, Hildebrand alone stands in judgement, his grey-white beard (betokening wisdom and experience) set in relief by his blood-red tunic.

However integral Hildebrand’s beards are to the original design of the cycle of pictures in ‘b’ that did not stop a later hand from scrawling more whiskers onto this same figure’s face in an earlier scene (fol. 111v).¹⁴⁴ In fact, several other figures are subject to this secondary process of ‘bearding’, not least Volker (fol. 115v) and Hagen who receives this treatment in as many as six different scenes including the murder of Siegfried (fol. 58v), defeat at the hands of Dietrich (fol. 154v) and the final confrontation with Kriemhild (fol. 158v). As an idiosyncratic reader-response to the ‘Nibelungenlied’, as opposed to the artistic ‘corrections’ undertaken in Cpg 359 (fols 7r, 46v), this practice may well reveal a particular fascination with the figure of Hagen.¹⁴⁵ However, in the final scene (fol. 158v) in particular it is hard to ignore the gender-politics at play, when even Gunther’s decapitated head has whiskers added to it. The principle of ‘mascultation’ is thus extended to Kriemhild’s heroic victims, whilst she herself is subjected not only to the judgemental gaze of the bearded Hildebrand but also to defacement on the part of the same(?) later hand.¹⁴⁶

In contrast to the densely illustrated ‘b’, manuscript ‘k’ of the ‘Nibelungenlied’ is more akin to the ‘Dresdner Heldenbuch’, with title-pictures for three of its texts: ‘Virginal’ (fol. 1v); ‘Antelan’ (fol. 156v); ‘Nibelungenlied’ (fol. 291v). The scene chosen for the

¹⁴² Variant in ‘b’ as noted by BATTIS [Fn. 41], p. 687.

¹⁴³ BRIGITTE JANZ, *Inszenierte Mündlichkeit. Zum Bildprogramm des Nibelungenliedes im Hundeshagenschen Kodex*, in: *Nibelungenlied und Klage. Ursprung – Funktion – Bedeutung. Symposium Kloster Andechs 1995 mit Nachträgen bis 1998*, edd. DIETZ-RÜDIGER MOSER and MARIANNE SAMMER (Literatur in Bayern 2), München 1998, pp. 411-441, views this gesture as one of anger (p. 440); HEINZLE [Fn. 140], p. 156, disagrees. The same gesture is seemingly pictured in the ‘Rolandslied’-manuscript Cpg 112 (fols 8v, 119r); see also SCHUBERT [Fn. 56], p. 96; BRIGITTE JANZ, *dune verwindest niemir disin tac (6105). Rechts- und Zeitzeichen im Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad*, in: *Mediaevistik 7* (1994), 119-142, here pp. 128-129.

¹⁴⁴ For more on such ‘defacement’ see BEATE BRAUN-NIEHR, *Die Federzeichnungen*, in: *Kommentarband* [Fn. 140], pp. 101-122, esp. p. 114.

¹⁴⁵ As emphasized by JOHANNA THALI, *Ein Buch Kriemhilds. Zum Bildprogramm der Berliner Nibelungenlied-Handschrift Ms. germ. fol. 855 (Hundeshagenscher Codex)*, in: *Spuren der Heldensage* [Fn. 71], pp. 221-278, esp. pp. 251 (“Verehrung für den Tronjer”), 263 (“Bewunderung für den treuen Gefolgsmann”).

¹⁴⁶ THALI [Fn. 145], p. 263.

‘Nibelungenlied’ is that of Siegfried’s murder.¹⁴⁷ From our point of view the striking thing about this picture is not that the prostrate Siegfried should be beardless and have long locks of fair hair, but that his three(!) murderers should all be sporting the same look. However foul this murder may be it is carried out by figures whose idealized courtly appearance is remarkably homogenous.¹⁴⁸ This stylization certainly chimes with the absence of any reference to the beards of the weeping Amelungs later in the text (*Von des von Perne recken sach man di czeher gan/ Fliessen vber di wangen grosz jammer hub sich an* 2311,3-4), and it would seem to be consistent with the tendency in this redaction to portray “höfische Helden”.¹⁴⁹ Even if we accept that lexical variation of this kind may not be motivated by any such thematic concerns, the collection as a whole, like many other such collections in the later fifteenth century, does appear to cater for an urban recipient-circle with a keen interest in all things courtly.¹⁵⁰ The subject material of the two other illustrations in the codex bears this out (armed encounters between knights), although in each case the figures are wearing full armour. Only the ink-drawing for the ‘Nibelungenlied’ reveals the fashionable hair-styles and youthful beardlessness of a number of its main protagonists, thereby lending a courtly gloss to a scene of gross treachery and murder.

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In terms of the process of reception of these illustrated codices the pictures may well have influenced the recipients’ visualization of the figures at certain points in the stories by supplying the kind of detail pertaining to appearance that the texts do not. But where there were no illustrations to hand recipients were left largely to fill in the gaps for themselves, drawing on knowledge derived from other texts and oral heroic tradition as well as on their own contemporary cultural assumptions and social experience. In theory at least this kind of engagement with the text could render the imagined characters either more archaic or more

¹⁴⁷ An excellent reproduction of the ‘Nibelungenlied’-picture is to be found in: [JÖRG KASTNER,] *Das Nibelungenlied in den Augen der Künstler vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Passau 1986, p. 8.

¹⁴⁸ See also ANDREA GRAFETSTÄTTER, *Text und Bild. Nibelungenlied und seine Ikonographie im Spätmittelalter und im 19. Jahrhundert*, in: *The Nibelungenlied. Genesis, Interpretation, Reception. Kalamazoo Papers 1997-2005*, ed. SIBYLLE JEFFERIS (GAG 735), Göttingen 2006, pp. 179-212, here p. 183.

¹⁴⁹ SPRINGETH [Fn. 43], esp. pp. 545, 558.

¹⁵⁰ XENJA VON ERTZDORFF, *Linhart Scheubels Heldenbuch. Das buech und bethschafft soll nymant hassen,/ Ist linharcz schewbels an der prayten gassen*, in: *XVE, Spiel der Interpretation. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Literatur des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit* (GAG 597), Göttingen 1996, pp. 393-410; BJÖRN-MICHAEL HARMS, *Der Artushof dankt ab. Heldenepisches Erzählen im Antelan. Mit einer Edition und Übersetzung*, in: *Freiburger Universitätsblätter* 183 (2009), 75-97, esp. p. 75.

‘modern’, always assuming that medieval recipients constructed mental images of physical appearance and physiognomy in this way.

The very absence of such narrative detail most of the time suggests that where it does in fact occur it draws attention to itself and exercises additional literary functions. Beards are particularly significant in this context. As an obvious or visible feature of masculinity literary beards come with a ready-made set of symbolic associations (virility; status and authority; age) which facilitated their use – in narrative – as markers of difference, difference between men and women, and, perhaps even more importantly, between men and other men. Certain types of beard reference thus found their ‘natural home’ in the tradition of the heroic epic, in texts which pay special attention to male relationships, most notably those between older and younger men. This is exemplified by the recurrent ‘partnership’ of Hildibrandr/ Hildebrand and Ðiðrekr / Dietrich, whereby the emphasis is very much on the former’s beardedness (as opposed to the latter’s beardlessness). However, the resonance of the beard-motif can also be registered in other more marginal MHG heroic epics in relation to other named characters.

It can hardly be coincidental that in ‘Biterolf und Dietleib’ (c. 1250?), for instance, the young Dietleib has only one descriptor to go on when in search of his long-lost father: *dar zuo ich daz vernomen hân/ daz im grâwe nu der bart* (2634-2635).¹⁵¹ Elsewhere, in version D of ‘Wolfdietrich’ (c. 1300?) the course of the protagonist’s life is punctuated by hair-references of one kind or another.¹⁵² Moreover, Berchtung, Wolfdietrich’s wise and benevolent guardian, is cast in the Hildebrand-role of sympathetic and much put-upon older fighting man. The colour of Berchtung’s (grey) hair is second only to his name as a marker for his identity throughout the text: *do sprach der alte grise* (38,4);¹⁵³ and not only is Berchtung, as a bearded elder, insulted and threatened by one of Wolfdietrich’s usurping brothers in stereotypical fashion – *du alter zigebart* (369,1); *daz hor von dinem munde heis ich dir brechen gar* (369,4) – he is even defined by his beardedness as he lies in his grave (in the words of one of his sons): *lont ligen den zigebart!* (2042,1).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Biterolf und Dietleib, ed. OSKAR JÄNICKE (DHB I), Berlin 1866, repr. Berlin/ Zurich 1963. There are no other references to beards or beardlessness in the text. Dietleib himself is later described as having extraordinarily long and golden hair: *Er truoc ouch hâr alsam ein maget,/ der junge degen unverzaget,/ daz für den swertvezzel hie/ swanne erz ungebunden lie,/ vor regene mohte er sich dâ mite/ decken nâch der valken site;/ vil schône goltvar ez schein* (3265-3271).

¹⁵² As a younger man on adventure Wolfdietrich is attributed with *lecke wunesan* (520,2) and *reites hor* (522,1). However, by the time he eventually finds Berchtung’s grave and reclaims his throne with the aid of Berchtung’s sons, he evidently has both a beard (*von dem grossen leide rofte er vs sin bart* 1958,4) and grey hair (*ich han sit beschowet manig wildez lant./ do von bin ich ergrowet* 1973,3-4). The scheme is finally completed when he is found dead after a night spent fighting the ghosts of the men he has killed: *daz hor vf sime hobete wart ym wis also der sne* (2239,4).

¹⁵³ Cf. also 346,3; 362,1; 538,1; 1466,2. Berchtung’s grey hair is of course a point of reference in his own speech as well: *schowent vf minen growen hals: den streck ich selber dar* (352,4).

¹⁵⁴ The same derogatory term is used by the ferryman in the ‘Jüngere Vulgatafassung’ (the printed ‘Heldenbuch’ of 1479) of ‘Rosengarten A’: *Warumb hastu gelogen, du alter zigebart?* (r₁ 219,4). Another beard-related parallel between these versions of the ‘Rosengarten’ and ‘Wolfdietrich’ comes in the context of Wolfdietrich’s

Such references to beards (and hair), it would seem, follow certain distinctive patterns with a particular emotive and thematic appeal across the diverse tradition of the MHG heroic epic. What so much of the material reviewed here also makes abundantly clear, however, is the special status of our very first example: the tear-soaked *berte* of the Amelungs in Aventure 38 of the ‘Nibelungenlied’ (B 2254,3-4). (As far as this reader is aware) no other MHG heroic epic after the ‘Nibelungenlied’ features a collective beard-reference of this kind. In the course of this literary tradition beards, if mentioned at all, are an outstanding feature of individual if entirely stereotypical figures. As is so often the case the ‘Nibelungenlied’ proves to be a heroic archetype that is at the same time quite singular.

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‘moniage’ when he feels compelled to chastise his fellow monks by stringing them up by their beards: *er stricket ie zwene mit den berten zuo samen - als wir es vernomen han./ er truog si zuo einer wende: er hing si vber ein stange dan* (2132,2-3).