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Beards and texts, texts and beards

Most fundamentally, this book is concerned with the role played by references to beards in medieval German literature, and with the different forms and functions such references take in a variety of text types and vernacular literary traditions as they evolved from the mid-twelfth to the early sixteenth centuries. Such an investigation derives its legitimacy from the peculiar (and pretty much universal) cultural-historical significance of the beard as a – if not *the* – pre-eminent ‘natural’ symbol of masculinity. From a literary-historical point of view it seems pertinent to enquire how this notion translated into literary practice. Two inextricably linked objects of study emerge. For just as literary texts from the past may serve as a rich source of historical ideas concerning beards, so the beard, by virtue of its longstanding connotations of virility, authority and wisdom, can be used to measure developments in vernacular literature itself. It follows that the emphasis throughout this book will be on textual detail. Indeed, its main chapters stand and fall by the close readings they contain. For that reason this book is not overtly theoretical, although it has been written with a mind to several underlying issues.

Preliminary observations

The status of literary references to beards – for that matter the status of literary evidence *per se* – is of course up for debate. In the most general terms, the relationship between literature and the culture that produces it is complex and dynamic. As has been frequently observed, literary texts are shaped by and respond to their cultural environment, which may be understood to consist of any number of social practices, norms and ideals, imaginary notions and codified bodies of learning and knowledge.¹ For many of the texts under discussion here the cultural context in question

is that of the courts of the higher nobility, for whom literature served as a source of entertainment, a means of instruction (whether in moral-didactic issues, social ethics or religious ideas) and as a relatively sophisticated form of self-representation. That said, medieval courtly literature was not merely a receptacle for cultural content; it generated this cultural content also, helping to create and reiterate the images the nobility chose to define itself by.²

Medieval courtly society evidently had a number of media at its disposal when it came to expressing its own values. Yet literature seems to have enjoyed a special status. Statues of leading noblemen and noblewomen stood as enduring reminders of courtly lives well lived; however, as Joachim Bumke has pointed out, in matters of fashion, for instance, courtly poets were better placed to respond to the changing demands and predilections of their audiences.³ More significantly for us, literature's very discursivity facilitated the integration of (textual) material from other cultural domains. Prevalent social norms could be upheld in literature but they could also be treated with ironic detachment. With fictional narrative some poets exercised their imagination to focus on the extraordinary, although such fictionality, delimited by the wishes and mental horizons of their audiences, was never entirely unconstrained.⁴ For this reason Rüdiger Schnell's distinction between fictional content in the foreground of such texts (love scenes, battles, dialogue, descriptions) and the perceived reality and veracity of the concepts underpinning such content is a helpful one.⁵

All literary texts are documents of their time. Still, the position they occupy within their cultural context is in part dependent on their literary make-up. Chronicles do not as a rule function like comic tales, for example. Different literary traditions or, in the loosest sense, genres privilege different modes of presentation and reveal a preference for certain literary strategies and poetic devices. Certain types of content, certain narrative structures and motifs may conform to the culture of the day and may thus be subject to change in accordance with text-external social developments. But this is not always the case. Some types of content go unchanged for centuries.⁶ More often than not (and especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries), the telling of a story in literary form actually constituted a retelling, a translation-cum-adaptation of a Latin or an Old French source text.⁷ Thus, a number of divergent forces shaped literary work of this kind, including fidelity to source and truthfulness, generic conventions, the expectations of the new target audience, and the next poet's inventiveness, rhetorical expertise and determination in pursuing their own thematic agenda. Even for deceptively straightforward

issues like the external appearance of narrative figures, we must assume that poets took into account both text-external and text-internal factors when going about their business.

It is tempting to treat medieval literature as a window through which we may – if we look hard enough – catch a glimpse of past cultural reality, of how women and men actually thought, felt and behaved. However, it is just as important, if not more so, to bring to light what makes these literary texts so literary.⁸ Narrative or poetic detail is not just culturally coded, which is to say, indicative of the cultural codes at work in society at large. It is not just derived from other source texts or established discourses (theological, legal, medical); it exercises numerous functions within the text itself, whether this be a matter of theme, structure or characterization.⁹ The impact, both emotional and intellectual, which such detail may have had on recipients is closely related to the question of how or on what level it is being relayed, as part of the objective account of an omniscient narrator, as part of a more obviously subjective narratorial commentary, or as spoken, directly or indirectly, by the figures themselves.¹⁰ There is in fact no reason to doubt that in some literary works these text-internal functions were the poet's primary consideration. More to the point, it is entirely feasible that in some literary works the symbolic and poetic significance of beards was writ large in spite of prevailing social practices and attitudes.¹¹

For many pieces of medieval German literature, the contexts that we know most about are literary on the one hand, and on the other pertain to the manuscripts in which these works are preserved.¹² The search for medieval literary meaning therefore entails a close reading of the relevant material in its immediate narrative or poetic context (the text in question as a whole), as well as a comparative analysis of the principal source (where possible) and a review of the broader literary traditions with which the individual work is associated. Further nuances may be gleaned from manuscript variants, as well as from the emergence of differing redactions of one and the same work or even new versions.¹³ Where texts were received in collective manuscripts, the themes that spoke out to the readers or listeners of any one work may have, on occasion, been determined by its co-texts.¹⁴

The miniatures contained in illustrated codices represent another form of contextualization, albeit a very different one, not least because these pictures – which usually, but not always, belong to a second or third phase of reception – deploy iconographic motifs such as beardedness in their own way. Aside from their decorative and representative functions, most miniatures illustrate the accompanying text without necessarily

being subservient to it. Miniatures can provide a commentary; they can heighten the text's impact at certain points, modify textual content or develop it differently.¹⁵ Whereas the narration of detail pertaining to visual appearance (visualization) in any medieval text is almost always intermittent and subject to other poetic or narrative demands, miniatures simply had to provide concrete visual detail.¹⁶ Artists had no choice but to decide, for instance, whether male figures were bearded or beardless, quite apart from what (fashionable) garments or headgear they should be wearing. More often than not, the resulting images had little to do with beard-specific detail from within the text, being a product rather of the established iconographic motifs and schemes at their disposal. An amply illustrated codex could thus feature numerous bearded figures, far more than the literary text its miniatures were accompanying.

One such book of beards is the Berlin/Krakov codex, dateable c. 1220, of Priester Wernher's *Maria* (apocryphal account of Mary's life up to birth of Jesus), which contains an array of beard motifs, denoting sexual maturity (Joachim),¹⁷ old age (Joseph),¹⁸ rulership (fols 60r (Augustus), 79v (Herod)), wisdom (80v), mastery of a craft (50v) and years of imprisonment (76v). The generational scheme (for groups of three men) of beardless, cropped beard and long beard, as noted by Bumke for the Three Kings (83r), is also used throughout.¹⁹ The special interest taken in beards is attested above all by the miniature on fol. 73r (Figure 1.1), where a bearded figure of the artist's own conception – one of the shepherds outside Bethlehem – clutches his beard and declares in astonishment, by means of a speech scroll: 'Als grise so mir min bart ist. so vernam ich ditze wunder nie mere' / 'As grey as my beard is, I have never heard of such a marvel'. Unlike many of the other speech scrolls in this manuscript (the earliest known vernacular German codex to feature this device) this utterance is not based on lines found in the *Maria*-text.²⁰ Over and above Priester Wernher's narrative depiction of this scene (4192–225), the all-too-human response of bewilderment in the face of divine intervention is thus conveyed by the artist, for maximum affective impact, through the visualization of gesture and speech.

One thing that image and text, or art and literature, do have in common is that they both represent ideals far more neatly than is possible in messy reality,²¹ allowing for the clearest of clear-cut distinctions between closely related phenomena and conditions, such as the difference between being clean-shaven, a relative concept throughout the Middle Ages, and being bearded. It is more than likely that this artistic amplification, as it were, applied in fact to other aspects of courtly culture and social interaction. The importance of the body as sign in a society still

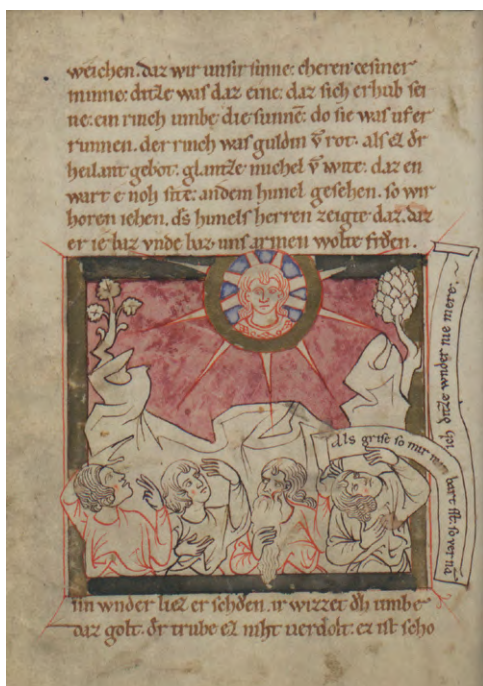


Figure 1.1 Four shepherds behold a golden ring around the sun (Priester Wernher's *Maria*). Krakow, Bibl. Jagiellońska, Berol. mgo 109, fol. 73r. Public domain.

dominated by face-to-face communication – by gesture, bodily self-discipline and appearance – is thus especially palpable in courtly literature, where this very principle is simultaneously subjected to critique.²² Likewise, as perfectly summed up by Beate Kellner and Christian Kiening, other kinds of knowledge concerning the body were not so much reiterated in the literary texts of the day as refashioned in accordance with literature's own 'Modi von Rhetorizität, Figuralität, Symbolizität und Narrativität', with its own 'Sprechweisen und Gattungen'.²³

Bodies were and still are *commonly* perceived to be carriers of meaning in respect of gender and sex,²⁴ with hair playing an important role in the representation of male and female identity. In turn, medieval literary images of women's and men's bodies give us a measure of insight into the 'collective memories and fantasies of medieval people' concerning gender.²⁵ In this context beards might be considered by some to be a particularly significant body part, especially – if not absolutely exclusively – in terms of masculinity. Of course, to advocates of modern performative

theories of gender (in the wake of Judith Butler), literary references to the body, to differences in physiology between men and women as referenced by literary texts, are only of interest in so far as they support readings of gender as an unstable category.²⁶ Scholars of this persuasion tend to insist that the meaning of gender is quite separate from biology, that the categories of female and male are constructed primarily through language or through being repeatedly performed.²⁷ Literary beard references which belie the purported attempts of medieval poets to ‘feminize’ their male protagonists are thus liable to be passed over in silence²⁸ or deliberately read against the grain in search of ‘auffällige “Leerstellen”, die Brüche und Widersprüche markieren’.²⁹ The following study offers an alternative to such ideological literary interpretation, albeit one which also seeks to benefit from the methodological gains made by studies of gender and masculinity. Thus, we will explore the possibility that medieval poets referred to beards not just to underline the differences between men and women (patriarchy) but to distinguish between men, beards being potentially expressive of ‘masculinist’ interests,³⁰ of male hierarchies, and of more than one understanding of masculinity. It remains to be seen whether the use of beard imagery to profile masculinity was always as monologic or monolithic as some critics might suspect.³¹ All literature constructs through language and this applies to every literary portrayal of gender irrespective of whether it questions or indeed upholds the notion that gender difference is a natural one.

Medieval beards: medieval meanings

Poets did not start from scratch when it came to the meaning(s) of beards in their texts; rather they relied upon certain very basic and obvious ideas, ideas with which their listeners and readers too would have been familiar. Setting lived experience and social knowledge to one side, this shared understanding is also likely to have been shaped by exposure at first, second or even third hand to the discursive domains of religion, medicine and law. Vernacular evidence pertaining to beards in these more specialized contexts is relatively sparse; yet enough of it survives to suggest that vernacular poets and their audiences might well have been influenced – on occasion and to varying degrees – by these bodies of knowledge, even if they were not necessarily always aware of it.³²

For longevity and continuity nothing comes close to the affirmation of bearded masculinity in Christian homiletics and scriptural exegesis

from the writings of the Church Fathers onwards.³³ If, in principle, the beard could be seen as a marker of physical maturity, as a means of distinguishing sex and as a beautifully manly feature (Lactantius),³⁴ so its symbolic significance, with reference to the Scriptures, proved compelling. Thus St Augustine's commentary on Psalm 132 (133), and more specifically on the outstanding image of Aaron's anointment and the precious unguent running down over his beard,³⁵ was destined to become one of the most widely received theological beard references throughout the Middle Ages: 'The beard signifies the courageous; the beard distinguishes the grown man, the earnest, the active, the vigorous. So that when we describe such, we say, he is a bearded man'.³⁶ One such bearded hero, according to Augustine, was the martyred St Stephen;³⁷ and most (if not all) medieval exegetes followed suit by equating Aaron's beard in the first instance with the Apostles, men of exceptional fortitude and faith.³⁸ The unguent itself was commonly understood to symbolize the Holy Ghost or Divine Grace, which at first poured down onto Christ (the head) before running over his Apostles (the beard).³⁹

The Old High German rendering of Psalm 132 by Notker the German (Notker Labeo; d. 1022) reiterates Augustine's interpretation.⁴⁰ Several centuries later the ripple effect of such exegesis is just about discernible in the vernacular *Christherre-Chronik* (c. 1244–87; incomplete), a chronicle of universal (Old Testament) history, where the poet openly borrows the beard reference from Psalm 132 when recounting Moses's anointing of Aaron, which results in a far more detailed description than the one actually given in Leviticus (8: 12).⁴¹ These words of the Psalmist, the chronicler tantalizingly concedes, 'have multiple meanings' ('Bezeichnenunge hant so vil' 18119) which would take too long to explain. More inventively, at the outset of Konrad von Heimesfurt's account of Mary's Assumption (*Unser vrouwen hinvert*, c. 1225) the poet, only too mindful of his awesome responsibility, draws on the central image of the same Psalm to convey his desire to please God and benefit the world, comparing his humility with the unguent running down 'through Lord Aaron's beard' ('durch des hern Aarônes bart' 52–3). This is a far cry from the salve of vanity, Konrad maintains (47–50), alluding to another Psalm in the process ('oleum autem peccatoris non impinguet caput meum' / 'let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head' 140: 5).

The symbolic significance of hair and beards was expounded further in discussions within the Church concerning tonsuring and shaving.⁴² Bruno of Segni (d. 1123) sought to inspire others by distinguishing between spiritual and physical fortitude, between the monk's inner beard (which should be allowed to grow) and his outer one (which is shaved).⁴³

For Sicard of Cremona (d. 1215), shaving allowed monks to look like boys, a demonstration of humility and innocence that would help them gain entry into heaven.⁴⁴ By this time the Cistercian abbot Burchard of Bellevaux (d. 1163) had already penned an entire treatise on the subject (*Apologia de barbibus*), in which he sought to pacify a group of disgruntled lay brothers by praising them for their beards.⁴⁵ These were, he reassures them, a sign of distinction, strength, maturity, wisdom and piety, although it was also important for them to understand why monks proper shaved and were tonsured. In heaven there would in any case be no more shaving or cutting of hair, and they would all be adorned with resplendent white beards.⁴⁶

In spite of its very specific purpose Burchard's *Apologia de barbibus* is widely regarded as an important document for the history of beards, a rare example of 'barbologia' (III, 432) as Burchard the 'Barbilogus' (Preface, 3) puts it. Not only does it constitute a study in beard symbolism from a churchman's point of view, it contains information on contemporary beard fashions, as well as several different approaches to categorizing beard growth. Of course Burchard's reflections on the cleanliness (*sermo* I), 'composition' (II) and nature (III) of beards draw heavily on biblical passages, some of his favourite topics being Aaron's beard (anointed and pure), the leprous (subject to ritual purification), David's beard (covered in spittle) and the prophet Ezekiel (shaving in despair).⁴⁷ Being something of a literary scholar, Burchard also submits the Vulgate and his other sources to close textual analysis,⁴⁸ and he firmly distinguishes between those events in the Bible which actually happened (David did play the madman to escape capture) and those with purely symbolic meaning, such as the leprous beards in Leviticus (13: 29–34; 14: 8–9): 'nemo enim unquam vidit barbam leprosam' / 'for no one has ever actually seen a leprous beard' (III, 1209).

Conducted exclusively in Latin, these beard debates and others like them would largely have remained a closed book for most laymen and laywomen across Europe. However, some of the ideas formulated therein must have entered broader circulation. That vernacular sermons may have played a role in this is suggested by a text attributed to the Franciscan preacher Berthold von Regensburg (c. 1220–72) which centres, ostensibly, on the theme of leprosy (*sermon* VIII: *Von der ûzsetzikeit*). All young priests, Berthold declares, must learn to diagnose where the person in their care is diseased, whether in their hair, flesh, skin or, in true Leviticus fashion, 'an dem barte' / 'in their beard' (111,32–5). To suffer sickness in the beard, he subsequently reveals, is to be guilty of sins of the tongue,⁴⁹ some seventeen of which are counted (115,38–118,2),

including lying, cursing and mocking. Many of the sins listed are everyday ones, more relevant and less heinous to Berthold's listeners perhaps than heresy, which was the standard exegetical interpretation of leprosy of the beard.⁵⁰ The telling association here appears to be that between beard and mouth, and so, as with all of the other body parts and sins expounded in this sermon, applicable in principle to both men and women.⁵¹ Indeed, in another version of the same sermon Berthold voices his criticism of certain bad-mouthed women in expressly these terms: 'aber der frouwen dâ ze dorfe ist mêr ûzetzic umbe den bart, dan anderswâ' / 'but the women [out] there in the villages, they are more diseased around the beard than [women] anywhere else' (119,4).

It is possible that Berthold's reference to the symbolic beards of peasant women was calculated to raise a laugh.⁵² But no matter how unnatural, suspect or even monstrous female beardedness was perceived to be throughout the Middle Ages,⁵³ no matter how many times Isidore of Seville's somewhat circular definition of the beard was faithfully copied out ('Our forefathers named the beard, *barba*, because it is proper to men, not to women'),⁵⁴ in religious contexts the *notion* of the female beard could be understood altogether more positively. Bishop Bruno actually prefaces his thoughts on the inner beards of monks by recognizing that female saints, who are so much stronger than normal men in spirit, fully deserve to be called 'bearded'.⁵⁵ Moreover, on the basis of a short chapter (13) in Book IV of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* (c. 595), a certain widow by the name of Galla came to be venerated for her steadfast refusal to get married, even when warned by doctors that unless she did, she would grow a beard through 'excess of heat'.⁵⁶ Unperturbed, according to Gregory at least, Galla insisted on becoming a nun, confident in the knowledge that Christ did not love her for her outer beauty. A lot is made of St Galla's beard in the *Apologia de barbibus* (III, 83–135).⁵⁷ Although Burchard classifies this beard growth as 'contra consuetum cursum naturae' / 'contrary to the normal course of nature' (III, 106), he even recommends that Galla's virtuous indifference to it should serve as an example to lay brothers who fear being ridiculed for their natural lack or thinness of beard (III, 120–7).

Unlike the miraculous beard growth of several late medieval female saints whose chastity is saved by the extraordinary transformation in their appearance,⁵⁸ Galla's physical 'deformity' is presented as having a physiological, medically cogent reason.⁵⁹ Burchard supplies further commentary: it is on account of women's 'natural inborn coldness' ('ingenitam naturaliter frigiditatem' III, 108) that they do not normally grow beards; but occasionally it can happen (by an accident of nature),

this being as shameful to a woman as it is for a man to remain beardless (III, 111–15). Medical knowledge concerning men's heat and their (greater) ability to produce hair and beards from their superfluities was famously codified elsewhere in the mid-twelfth century by Hildegard of Bingen in her *Causae et curae*.⁶⁰ It is not until the first half of the fourteenth century that we find the same scientific observations being made in the vernacular. Book I of Konrad von Megenberg's *Buch der Natur* (c. 1350) contains a chapter on beards (I.9: 'Von dem part'), which provides a digest of contemporary medical opinion: the human beard is a sign of the male sex ('mannes gesläht' 2); like hair it grows from (internal) superfluities ('überflüezzichait' 3); the hotter the man, the more vigorous the beard growth; some women have a beard above the mouth, and this is due to their (unusually) hot nature; natural eunuchs cannot grow a beard; and any man who is capable of growing a beard ('partochter' 10) will, if castrated, lose beard and manly courage and 'become womanly in spirit' ('vnd gewinnet ainen wepleichen sin' 11–12).

Scientific discourse such as this explained and rationalized what everyone already knew: beard growth was a visible sign of virility and physical maturity. This common understanding of male physiology had very real social consequences, as reflected in charters and legal texts of various kinds. Giles Constable informs us that (according to their written constitutions) certain monasteries in the eleventh and twelfth centuries only admitted laymen who had enough of a beard ('tantum barbae') to be shaved off as part of the ritual of tonsure.⁶¹ By the same token, according to the later thirteenth-century *Schwabenspiegel*, a legal compendium in the vernacular, in cases where the age of male child oblates was in doubt, puberty (the age of fourteen) was to be ascertained by examining the boy's body: 'It should be felt above his mouth below the nose: if any hair growth is found there, that counts as proof'.⁶² The time-honoured principle of beardedness as a measure of a man's age, and thus also of his legal status as an adult, is similarly formulated in a secular context in the *Sachsenspiegel*, the early thirteenth-century vernacular law book most likely composed by Eike von Repgow (c. 1220–35): 'In respect of any man whose age is unknown: if he has hair in his beard and down below and under each arm, then it should be known that he has come of age'.⁶³ There can be little doubt that in certain circumstances beardlessness was 'socially disabling'.⁶⁴ The concomitant respect shown to bearded men, the protection afforded to their beards, something that might almost be regarded as a definitive feature of traditional Germanic law,⁶⁵ was covered expressly by legal statute in the mid-twelfth century. In the *Landfrieden* issued by Frederick I (Barbarossa) in 1152 anyone found guilty of pulling

out the hair or beard of another man had to pay his victim ten pounds.⁶⁶ The same type of law is evinced for the fifteenth century by the ordinances compiled in 1433 within the city of Bremen.⁶⁷ As we shall see, there is plenty of literary and artistic evidence to suggest that throughout the Middle Ages swearing by one's beard continued to be perceived as especially forceful.⁶⁸ The striking illustration of an astonished (elderly) shepherd in the early thirteenth-century Krakow codex discussed above (Figure 1.1) is a case in point.

The ideas upon which these various discursive references to beards were based, and which the latter indeed sought to consolidate, evidently held sway over a long period of time. Their longevity is further testified to by the high number of relatively stable beard-related topoi which are to be found, both in Latin and in the vernacular, in a wide range of literary contexts. Because beards were understood in terms of sex and gender, and thus also in terms of human nature, masculinity and social relations, they almost inevitably come ideologically loaded. For the same reason, observations concerning beardedness and beardlessness could be extremely tendentious.⁶⁹ In clerical and monastic writing, well-rehearsed arguments for and against beards were often put vehemently and with recourse to the same kinds of derogatory images. Critics of fashionable shaving habitually condemned the practice as morally suspect; smooth cheeks and a chin denuded of its manly hair represented nothing other than the vile attempt to look like a woman or even a hermaphrodite.⁷⁰ On the other hand, and depending on who was wearing them, long beards could always be denounced as misleading, as a false sign, and no guarantee of wisdom or piety,⁷¹ leading to various derisive insults, the most widespread by far being that of the goat comparison.

Already a commonplace of satirical poetry in late antiquity,⁷² from a medieval perspective the derogatory goat comparison was effectively authorized by St Jerome, who characterized false holy men as sporting 'goat-like beards' ('hircorum barba') and poured scorn on one of his opponents (Jovinianus) by declaring him to be a sinful goat whether he chose to remove his beard or not.⁷³ Jerome's view of beards and goats was famously cited at the Council of Worms (858–67) in defence of the Western clergy's practice of shaving (which had been met by Greek Orthodox incredulity).⁷⁴ Religious controversy of a different kind is a feature of Burchard of Bellevaux's own enthusiastic discussion of goats (*Apologia de barbibus* III, 219–322). The abbot begins harmlessly enough with natural science (both male and female goats have beards; goats are bearded at birth) and religious symbolism (sin and man's bestial state; wisdom and Redemption), but ends by justifying why Jews are often

mocked as goats: their long, dangling beards prevent the 'truth' from entering their hearts.⁷⁵

Not all such jibes were so bitterly serious, however. Goat comparisons are ubiquitous in vernacular literature in a variety of narrative contexts (see [Chapters 4 and 5](#)). Moreover, light-hearted aphorisms and fables, several of which had Greek and Roman antecedents, continued to be transmitted throughout this period.⁷⁶ Odo of Cheriton's early thirteenth-century fable of the dispute between two sheep (one white and one black), an ass and a goat is outstanding in this respect, with these animals standing for different monastic orders and their misguided pretensions to superiority: the idiotic goat (signifying both Grandimontensians and Cistercian lay brothers) thus prides itself on the length of its beard ('barbam prolixam').⁷⁷ From the songs of Eugene II, archbishop of Toledo (d. 657) to the 'facetiae' of the sixteenth-century German humanist Heinrich Bebel (d. 1518), goat quips came to lead a life of their own as examples of admirable wit.⁷⁸

Courtly culture: beards and shaving

Beards were commonly understood in the Middle Ages to be quintessentially masculine, but beyond that their cultural significance varied considerably, as different groups within medieval society subscribed to different ideals in relation to beardedness and shaving.⁷⁹ Ideals are not quite the same as historical or material realities. Even in the ecclesiastical sphere, with its established tradition of tonsuring and its extensive codification of rules concerning hair and beard growth, not least in opposition to the beard-friendly Greeks, beards were far from uncommon among higher churchmen as befitting their seniority and doubtless also their age.⁸⁰ In addition, the conditions of being bearded and shaven were probably more relative than we tend to imagine. By the mid-thirteenth century Cistercian monks, who were shaving more frequently than most, were required to do so 26 times a year.⁸¹ The attractiveness of the clean-shaven ideal, wherever it arose, must have been enhanced by the fact that in this period, for most adult men, it was so difficult to maintain.

In respect of the laity, courtly society was particularly susceptible to changes in fashion, which for noblemen necessarily involved deciding what to do with their beard. This was not just a matter of means. Cultural refinement was an aspiration shared by the nobility across medieval Europe, who had a vested interest in setting themselves apart, not least by clothing (and sumptuary laws) and the length of their hair.⁸² As far as

beards were concerned this aspiration seems to have translated itself into the widespread practices of shaving and beard-trimming until older age.⁸³ That being said, the local influence of leading individuals and their personal preferences cannot be ruled out, and collective tolerance for beards certainly fluctuated over time, with the fourteenth century most especially witnessing a resurgence in the fashion for beards (in various styles) at many courts including those in southern Germany.⁸⁴

Some of the earliest literary evidence pertaining to courtly shaving is 'German' in origin although penned in Latin.⁸⁵ In the second half of the eleventh century the Benedictine monk Otloh of Sankt Emmeram (in Regensburg) chose to illustrate worldly vanity with the story of a nobleman who fails an ordeal by water (and thus is found guilty of a crime he did not commit) because he shows contempt for God's laws by shaving his beard 'as if he were a cleric'.⁸⁶ Although the nobleman swears never to let a razor come near his beard again, he soon changes his mind, believing he can get away with it on a technicality: 'Verily, I made no [such] promise in respect of a knife'.⁸⁷ God's retribution, however, is swift and terrible: the nobleman's enemies capture him and gouge his eyes out. Otloh is most dogmatic: 'no layman should shave his beard'.⁸⁸ A rather more humorous approach is adopted in the (fragmentary) 'epic' poem known as the *Ruodlieb* (c. 1040–70), which was most likely composed in the Benedictine monastery of Tegernsee.⁸⁹ Here, the monastic poet undermines the masculinity of his protagonist, having presented him in entirely laudatory terms up to this point, when depicting Ruodlieb's ablutions before a banquet: the heroic knight removes his facial hair so very thoroughly, the poet sardonically comments, it was impossible to tell whether he was 'a cleric or a woman or a beardless schoolboy, so delightfully girlish was his face'.⁹⁰ When both clerics and laymen shave disorder threatens, as the two no longer look wholly different, thus giving rise, in Robert Bartlett's terms, to an error in the 'symbolic grammar' of hair.⁹¹ This new-found desire to shave seems indicative of the rise of an increasingly self-confident secular culture, against which some churchmen were still railing towards the end of the eleventh century.

Conversely, and should the circumstances require it, monastic critics were also perfectly capable of launching vituperative attacks on young noblemen who had long hair and beards. In the first half of the twelfth century fashionable Anglo-Norman society aroused the ire of the Benedictine monk and chronicler Orderic Vitalis in his *Historia ecclesiastica* (completed c. 1141).⁹² Castigating young men at court as both effeminate and licentious for their absurd shoes and outrageous garments, Orderic denounces them further for their 'little beards'. If in the past long beards

always used to be worn 'as an outward mark of [their] penance, or captivity, or pilgrimage', these days, Orderic expostulates, courtiers' beards are the 'tokens of their filthy lust', these courtiers being no different to 'stinking goats'.⁹³ Later on, the logic of this polarizing argument leads to a re-evaluation of shaving as manly, as something soft young gallants refrain from doing for fear of scratching the faces of their mistresses with their bristly stubble.⁹⁴

By the end of the twelfth century such overtly critical voices from without courtly culture seem to fall silent.⁹⁵ Instead, commentary on courtly fashion and observations concerning the appropriateness of shaving, beards and long hair in general become a feature of satirical poetry in the vernacular as it developed in the course of the thirteenth century. In one of his strophes the 'Sangspruchdichter' Reinmar von Zweter (active c. 1225–50) derides a society in which monks and knights have lost sight of who they are and what they should look like. He sees 'Hâr unde bart' / 'Hair and beards' aplenty that are fit for the monastery but they are not being worn by true monks ('Ton' II, 129: 1–3). Neither truly one thing nor another, these new kinds of men leave him at a loss: 'von hovemünchen unt von clôsterrittern kan ich niht gesagen' / 'I simply don't know what to say about [these] court monks and monastery knights' (129: 6).⁹⁶ Several decades later the fashion among Austrian nobility of wearing their hair (and beards) long like Hungarians gives repeated cause for complaint in the work of a certain Seifried Helbling (composed c. 1282–1300).⁹⁷ One of several unusual dialogues the poet purports to have with his hilariously outspoken servant takes place in a bathhouse, where the latter proves his worth by calling for someone to tidy up his master's hair and shave his beard.⁹⁸

On occasion shaving is considered remarkable enough to be deemed worthy of mention in a chronicle. In Ottokar von Gaal's *Steierische Reimchronik* (c. 1310), in a section concerning the Bohemian king Ottokar's ongoing conflict with certain leading Austrian noblemen (c. 1269), the abject physical condition of the latter on being released from imprisonment is described primarily in terms of their facial hair: 'mit spannelangen berten / für den kunic kômens al gemeine' / 'with span-length beards they all went before the king' (10049–50). Only one Ulrich von Liechtenstein makes a point of acting as if he has suffered no inconvenience at all, presenting himself as entirely fit for court: 'sînen bart het er geschorn / und niwe kleider an gestrichen' / 'he had shaved and hurriedly put on new clothes' (10056–7). The king is suitably impressed and congratulates him publicly. Ulrich's performance reveals a cultural norm that would otherwise be passed over in silence; the

ordinary is rendered extraordinary by virtue of the circumstances in which it takes place. In another text from around 1300, one which claims to tell the true story of Thuringian landgrave Louis the Pious's participation in the Third Crusade, Louis is praised for his determination to live up to the courtly ideal even as he is dying of illness: 'sunder nâch lust hielt er sich, / der sûzgemuoter, wol gebôrn, / sinen bart abe geschorn' / 'instead he bore himself as if he were joyful, the sweet-tempered, high-born man, with his beard shaved off' (*Kreuzfahrt des Landgrafen Ludwigs des Frommen* 7724–6). Such shaving may be understood to express defiance on Ludwig's part, not just as an individual but as a representative of Western Christian courtly culture in conflict with the (bearded) heathen East.⁹⁹

In more obviously fictional texts the courtly norm of shaving, or of keeping a trim beard, is rendered visible by moments in stories which showcase its transgression. One such 'informative fissure', as this kind of plot point has been called,¹⁰⁰ is found in Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius* (c. 1185), when the poet draws attention to the good sinner's abject physical condition and appearance after twenty years spent chained to a rock in the sea (see [Chapter 3](#)). Another occurs in the fragmentary Merlin narrative *Der Rheinische Merlin* (c. 1250), when the king's steward tries to outwit Merlin by visiting him in disguise: 'Hei leis sinen bart stain / Inde wandelde sin ouerleit' / 'He grew his beard and changed his outer garment' (70–1). This ruse clearly only makes sense if the court official is normally shaven. The practice of shaving may otherwise be alluded to *ex negativo* by the description of mourning noblemen: 'ir hâr und ir berte lanc, / ungeschorn und ungetwagen' / 'their long hair and beards, unshaven and unwashed' (*Wigalois* 9116–17). To do penance is to punish and neglect oneself: in Konrad von Würzburg's romance *Partonopier und Meliur* (c. 1260) the protagonist becomes so full of self-loathing and despair that he locks himself away and allows his beard, nails and hair to grow 'unshorn'.¹⁰¹ For the same reason pilgrims are almost invariably imagined to be bearded.¹⁰² In fact, any extended period of time spent away from court – often envisaged as the experience of wilderness – is likely to be marked by beard growth.¹⁰³ Shaving duly belongs to the process of a knight's rehabilitation upon returning to civilized society.¹⁰⁴

Literary testimony to the fact that even courtiers who shaved were not always going to be free of some beard growth is harder to find. This reality is obliquely referred to in the *Frauendienst*, a first-person narrative by Ulrich von Liechtenstein (d. 1275), which is to say by the same individual whose act of shaving is lauded in the *Steirische Reimchronik*. This pseudo-autobiographical account of Ulrich's trials and tribulations

as a courtly lover includes an extensive account of a journey he undertakes dressed up as Lady Venus (complete with false tresses). On one flirtatious occasion he lifts his veil high enough to receive the kiss of peace from a lady (537,8), whereupon she exclaims in mock surprise: ‘wie nu, ir sit ein man?’ / ‘What’s this? You’re a man?’ (538,2) – a ‘revelation’ of gender identity, which arises from Ulrich being unshaven and unable to shave rather than from the fact that he is sporting a full beard (on his chin).¹⁰⁵ Elsewhere, awareness of the everyday reality of male facial hair shapes the idiosyncratic retelling of Achilles’s seduction of Deidamia which is found in Jans von Wien’s *Weltchronik* (composed c. 1270). Determined to disguise himself as a maiden but concerned that his beard growth might give him away, the young hero is advised by his guardian and tutor, the centaur ‘Schiro’, to rub a special medicinal root (‘wurze’ 14583) around his mouth, which will prevent even the tiniest of beard hairs from appearing.¹⁰⁶

Courtly familiarity with shaving is further evinced by a number of idiomatic expressions. In his poetic treatment of chivalric duties (*Aufgaben des Rittertums*) Der Stricker (active c. 1220–50) criticizes the knight who hears others speak ill of God and yet refrains from objecting, content instead to sit in silence ‘als man im sinen bart scher’ / ‘just as if he were having his beard shaved’ (191). A shaven appearance is all well and good and any knight can have this done, the poet seems to be implying, but some things (the religious side of chivalry) are more important and more challenging.¹⁰⁷ A different kind of failure is at stake in *Die Heidin*, a later thirteenth-century tale about a Christian knight’s pursuit of a heathen queen who is no less clever than beautiful. Apparently no match for her wits, the red-faced knight is described accordingly: ‘er saz, als im wer geschorn / der bart ane schermesser’ / ‘He sat there just as if he had had his beard shaved without a razor’ (version IV: 1374–5). Some things really are easier than others, although in this case the knight eventually has a bright idea of his own and wins his prize.

On a different textual level, idiomatic reference to shaving occurs in the speech of narrative figures (‘Figurenrede’) too. In Wirnt von Grafenberg’s Arthurian romance *Wigalois* (c. 1210–20) the last foe to be faced, a rash and brutal knight by the name of Lîôn, is openly contemptuous of Wigalois as a threat: ‘sîn zorn unde sîn gerich / ist mir als daz boeste hâr / daz ie man von im geschar’ / ‘His anger and his vengeance are as feeble in my eyes as the most pitiful hair he has ever had shaved’ (10176–8). What would appear to be a slight on Wigalois’s manhood simultaneously sheds more light for us on the status of shaving in a chivalric context. There is little sense here of the age-old suspicion

that shaving is somehow effeminate. Instead, Lîôn is casting aspersions on the vigour of Wigalois's beard growth, having made the assumption that even such a weakling as Wigalois shaves. It is perhaps telling that when Wigalois's messenger returns with Lîôn's defiant response, the latter's words are subtly altered and in turn rendered less provocative or offensive to Wigalois. Lîôn, it is reported, cares about as much for all of the knights assembled (together with Wigalois) as he does for 'daz boeste hâr / daz ie man von im geschar' / 'as the most pitiful hair that he [Lîôn] has ever had shaved' (10320–1). This time the antagonistic hyperbole attributed to Lîôn takes as its point of reference Lîôn's own beard and the (many?) years he has been shaving.

More often than not, it would seem, secular courtly literature perpetuated the notion that noblemen of a certain age should shave (more frequently) or at the very least trim their beards. If anything, illustrated manuscripts of such literature tended to reinforce this message. The famous Codex Manesse (Heidelberg, UB, Cpg 848, ('Grundstock') c. 1300), for instance, contains numerous colourful author portraits featuring for the most part beardless or clean-shaven men engaged in all sorts of courtly activities.¹⁰⁸ Where they occur, beards typically signify age difference or various types of authority (kings, fathers, masters).¹⁰⁹ Indeed, this 'Minnesang' collection is opened by the strikingly majestic picture of Emperor Henry VI (fol. 6r), who is portrayed, in good Hohenstaufen tradition, as a full-bearded (brown-haired) ruler, crowned and seated on his throne, sceptre in hand.¹¹⁰ In the context of courtly culture, however, even an emperor's image could be subjected to a makeover. The rough-and-ready picture of Henry VI which opens a slightly later and more modest collection of love songs, the 'Weingartner Liederhandschrift' (Stuttgart, HB XIII 1, c. 1300–25), subscribes to an alternative thematic programme. Here the seated emperor is without beard (fol. 1r), unambiguously conforming to the figure type of the golden-haired, beardless gallant that recurs throughout the codex.¹¹¹

Literariness

Reading references to beards and shaving for cultural norms is one approach, but it hardly does justice to the literariness of any single text, the investigation of which brings its own set of questions. One of the earliest, if not *the* earliest, known beard references in secular (vernacular) literature occurs in the *Kaiserchronik* (shortly after 1152?), in an episode which characterizes the rule of Charlemagne (Karl der Große). The beard

in question does not belong to Karl but rather to a chaplain sent ahead to Karl's court by the blinded Pope Leo (who has fled Rome and is in dire need of his brother's assistance): 'er wainte alsô harte, / daz im daz pluot uber den part ran' / 'He was weeping so hard, the blood ran down over his beard' (14451–2).¹¹² The priest's beardedness, an exceptional condition, may well serve as a sign of the arduous journey he has been on, and Karl immediately assumes that he is a 'pilgrîme' / 'pilgrim' (14455) who has suffered some wrong. A beard soaked by tears of blood, however, represents something more. It introduces a highly dramatic moment, lending poignancy to a turn of events so painful that the priest can hardly put it into words.¹¹³ The priest's face, we understand, lends weight to his odd request (for Karl himself to seek out the priest's fellow 'pilgrim'), and there is also the sense that it prefigures that of Leo, whose appearance is only really described in terms of its drastic effect on Karl when the two first meet.¹¹⁴ Considering that the *Kaiserchronik* chronicles the lives of 55 emperors and kings, it is perhaps extraordinary that this should be the only beard reference in the text – and yet it is. Such detail would seem to be largely incompatible with the grand scale of this particular historiographical project. Other chronicles find more space for it.

Generic observations aside, the literary analysis of references to beards (and beardlessness) necessarily involves interpretation of their thematic significance in the immediate narrative or poetic context. In some cases, especially when beards are alluded to in more than one passage, this significance extends to the work as a whole. For this reason it is important to recognize what form beard references take, which figures are being foregrounded (social and literary types, role in plot) and at what points in the work in question such beardedness is drawn to the audience's attention (structural implications). Any, or all, of these factors may have constituted more of a priority than socio-cultural 'realism'.

In general we cannot help but observe that medieval (narrative) literature is highly selective in terms of the visual detail it provides recipients.¹¹⁵ Audiences were thus frequently obliged to fill in the gaps and build up mental images for themselves by drawing on other resources, whether this be social experience in general (adult men grow beards), specialist learning (theological, medical, legal) or generic awareness based on the knowledge of certain literary traditions (bachelor knights are beardless).¹¹⁶ Very often the particulars we do get are conventional, with figures conforming to type. This is not to deny that there were other poets – like Wolfram von Eschenbach (see [Chapter 3](#)) – who trod their own path. Received wisdom tells us that this is a symptom of the dubious status of individuality in this period,¹¹⁷ when even in the visual arts (where facial

likeness was more readily achievable) portraiture was dominated by norms and ideals rather than actual physical idiosyncrasies and perceived imperfections.¹¹⁸ Be that as it may, the widespread use of types facilitated the collective reception of this literature; listening to these texts was at its heart a social activity designed to strengthen the group identity of the audience. Furthermore, no matter how formulaic or conventional many (but by no means all) visual particulars may appear to us, the fact that they are included at all is often significant: such visualization, it turns out, was a reliable means of drawing attention to a moment or a scene marking the beginning or the end of a sequence of action.¹¹⁹

The most formalized descriptions of figures are those which follow the guidelines of medieval Latin handbooks of rhetoric. The device of *descriptio personae* gave poets the opportunity to expand upon their received material, finding new ways to say the same (old) things.¹²⁰ Full-blown laudatory descriptions of this kind tend to work downwards from head to toe, attributing to each physical feature a quality normally associated with beauty (hair like gold, skin like ivory, lips like roses). This rhetorical scheme dovetails with the bigger idea that outer appearance mirrors moral character, that beauty is the outward manifestation of virtue.¹²¹ In theory at least, detailed descriptions of beauty were considered more appropriate with reference to women than to mature men,¹²² since men were to be defined rather by their actions.¹²³ In literary practice, however, this distinction was not always upheld. From late antiquity onwards it was not unusual for chroniclers to pen portraits of outstanding rulers.¹²⁴ Emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa), for instance, is glorified in this way by Rahewin, who rounds off the final book of the *Gesta Frederici* with a flattering description of the emperor's person – referring among other things to his 'barba subrufa' / 'reddish beard' (IV, 86) – and personal conduct.¹²⁵ As is so often the way with these verbal portraits, much of the detail here (excepting the colour of Friedrich's beard) is recycled from somewhere else and is thus not particular to this individual.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, for Rahewin it probably represented the final piece in the jigsaw, ostensibly allowing the reader to get to know the emperor as a mortal man, having been told all about his great deeds.

Another literary set piece used to foreground male appearance is that of the collective review, consisting of a series of thumbnail sketches at a single narrative juncture. In accordance with their principal Latin source (the spurious eyewitness account attributed to Dares the Phrygian) medieval French and German retellings of the Trojan war (Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Herbort von Fritzlar) line up the principal Greek and Trojan actors in this way, offering their respective audiences a veritable 'who's

who' before battle is joined.¹²⁷ Dares, medieval storytellers repeatedly told their audiences, compiled all of these details during a truce when he had the opportunity to visit many of these men in their tents. An equivalent passage is to be found in the Old Norse *Thidrekssaga* (c. 1250), in which a 'gallery' of bearded Germanic heroes is presented approximately halfway through the text.¹²⁸ This collection of heroes is ostensibly motivated by a banquet hosted by Thidrek. Its underlying function is revealed, however, by the fact that two of the heroes portrayed (Sigurd and Sifka) are not even in attendance. The same device has an expository function in the 'General Prologue' of the *Canterbury Tales*, where Chaucer takes considerable pains, by means of more detailed descriptions, to characterize his cast of pilgrims and storytellers at the outset.¹²⁹

In principle, the more rhetorically accomplished such descriptions, the less integrated they are in their narrative context. The term 'portrait' is a telling one, conveying something of the tableau-like character of these passages. It is no coincidence that poets sometimes took the shortcut of likening a figure (in its appearance) to a painting.¹³⁰ Other kinds of reference are more fleeting, but they are also more dynamic, being embedded in the course of events, forming part of the action itself. Such embedding can take the form of a ritualized or symbolic gesture conveying contemplation, anger, or distress and grief.¹³¹ In the so-called *Rappoltsteiner Parzifal* (dated 1331–6), when King Karade learns of the misfortune of his presumed son Karados, his anguish is plain for all to see: 'er roufte sin hor und den bart' / 'He tore at his hair and beard' (5202). Alternatively, detail pertaining to appearance may crop up quite unexpectedly, as determined by an extraordinary incident, such as when Parzifal, later in the same text, fights a devil: 'er brande Parzefalen, wissent daz, / die ougbrouwen und darzuo sinen bart' / 'He burned Parzifal, know this [for a fact], his eyebrows and his beard as well' (31469–70). In the interests of narrative economy beards need not have been mentioned already as an attribute of the figure in question. References such as these may either confirm recipients in their assumptions (kings are bearded) or take them by surprise (Parzifal is bearded?!). Unexpected references to a protagonist's beard growth later on in their story can also serve to illustrate the passing of time.

A different kind of embedding occurs when aspects of appearance are verbalized in the direct and indirect speech of the narrative figures themselves. In first-person narratives this would seem to be an entirely natural development, an inventive means of gaining an external view of the narrator-cum-protagonist which would otherwise be denied to the listener or reader. Beard references of this type are especially provocative

in dialogue with a female antagonist. Ulrich von Liechtenstein's *Frauendienst* contains one notable instance of this (see above), as does Dante's *Divine Comedy*, when Beatrice mockingly questions (the shaven?) Dante's courage: 'alza la barba' / 'now raise your beard' (*Purgatory XXXI*, 68).¹³² In third-person narratives male characters may refer to their own beards in exclamatory fashion ('Shame on my beard!'),¹³³ or when making an oath, such utterances being akin to verbal gestures in lieu of or as a complement to an actual gesture: 'So mir dirre min bart' / 'I swear by this beard of mine'.¹³⁴ By the same token, one figure may pass comment on the appearance (and beardedness) of another.¹³⁵ This device lends itself to tendentiousness, such as when the (bushy-bearded) Green Knight dismisses Arthur's court contemptuously as 'berdlez chylder' / 'beardless boys' (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 280). Employing direct speech like this enables the poet to present a clash of values for his audience's consideration without revealing his own hand. A rather different effect is achieved in texts where the same set of (traditional) values is endorsed by all voices, including that of the author-narrator.¹³⁶ In terms of narrative economy, drawing attention to one figure's appearance via the speech of another simultaneously thematizes the act of perception involved. In cases of mistaken identity, where women are wrongly believed to be young – beardless – men, or vice versa, the humorous effect is enhanced by the speaker's misinterpretation of the evidence of their own eyes.¹³⁷

Appearance in general – and beardedness more specifically – is most obviously meaningful in relation to main protagonists. But the distribution of such detail in the first place between figures of primary and secondary importance can be quite unpredictable. On the one hand, protagonists are left 'blank' surprisingly often. Typically understood to be handsome or beautiful from the outset, their particulars often go unremarked beyond the odd formulaic reference. James A. Schultz has even identified a tendency for narrative poets (c. 1200) to avoid sexual differentiation (by means of references to beards or breasts) when it comes to communicating erotic attractiveness.¹³⁸ Within poetic schemes like this, changes in appearance may nevertheless be considered noteworthy, especially when used to dramatize thematic developments. Thus, in Konrad von Würzburg's tale of male friendship, *Engelhard*, it is only in the context of affliction (when one of the two handsome protagonists – Dietrich – is struck down by an awful disease) that recipients are given any actual physiological detail: 'im wurden hâr unde bart / dünn unde seltsaene' / 'His hair and beard grew thin and abnormal' (5150–1). No sooner has Dietrich been restored miraculously to health than his description reverts to type: 'der vil süeze jungelinc' / 'the sweetest young man' (5676).

On the other hand, it is not uncommon for secondary figures, including those who only play a role in one episode, to be introduced with reference to physical features which tend to emphasize age, beauty or ugliness.¹³⁹ In Heinrich von dem Türlin's Arthurian romance *Diu Crône* (c. 1230), for example, the most detailed descriptions in the text belong not to Gawan (the protagonist) but to Blandachors, an elderly host who embodies elegant courtliness in old age,¹⁴⁰ and to a hideous squire whose whiskers and sparse beard growth are dripping with pus,¹⁴¹ a miniature study in repulsive ugliness.¹⁴² Such apparently extraneous detail enables the audience to come to a quick judgement as to the relative status of these secondary figures (for the purposes of positive and negative identification respectively), although by no means every secondary figure in the text receives such treatment. It also lends colour to one or two of Gawan's many encounters and adventures, while the protagonist himself is handed over to the audience members, as it were, who are free to imagine him as they see fit. Recipient engagement with Gawan would therefore seem to rest primarily on the ideals he represents and on his actions.¹⁴³

Diu Crône is just one text; but it should alert us to the fact that medieval narrative strategies, especially in longer texts, are not always easy to unpick. Offering a convincing explanation as to why the physical appearance (or beard) of one figure should be described and not that of another can prove tricky. To a degree the functionality of beard references in shorter texts such as 'Mären' is easier to pin down, not least because the principle of narrative economy is normally so very evident here. Two strategies in particular stand out. (1) Description as exposition, where the protagonist is clearly identified as such at the start of the story by the attention paid to his physical appearance: beardless (and courtly); first beard growth (and sexual maturity); ugly (yet virtuous).¹⁴⁴ (2) 'Dramatic' effects, where the protagonist's beard is thematized at a crucial moment in the story: wicked daughters kiss their elderly father's beard in a false show of affection; young nobleman returns home but goes unrecognized (because of his beard); knight's hair and beard are turned grey by a terrifying experience.¹⁴⁵ These techniques are of course to be found in other literary forms too.

The essence of narrative, which is to depict actions and events successively, allows meaning to develop and accrue over the course of a story. Some types of work are extremely episodic. However, by virtue of repetition any single narrative detail can grow in symbolic significance. As Harald Haferland and Armin Schulz emphasize, these narrative symbols ('Erzählsymbole[n]') were used by poets as a way of making abstract ideas or complex arguments more concrete, more comprehensible

for their audiences.¹⁴⁶ Designating this kind of narration ‘metonymisches Erzählen’, Haferland and Schulz make a virtue out of the elliptical tendencies of much medieval literature. And this basic point remains valid irrespective of whether we too want to view metonymy as the defining characteristic of pre-modern thought.¹⁴⁷ The more familiar the perceived association (crown/kingship), the more immediately thought-provoking and affecting such narrative detail could be for listeners. Given the wealth of secondary meanings that beards had, it should come as no surprise that certain poets throughout the German Middle Ages did choose – in spite of everything else – to draw particular attention to this aspect of male appearance.

Some texts are evidently more beard-friendly than others, which might lead us to conclude that some story materials were more conducive than others to representations of beardedness. In medieval works which espoused an aggressively ‘masculinist’ ethos the beard was always liable to function as the perfect heroic metonym. Certain Old French *chansons de geste*, not least the *Chanson de Roland* (see [Chapter 2](#)), are prime examples of this. The same goes for the Castilian epic *El Poema de Mio Cid* (c. 1200), where the glorifying principle of ‘the greater the beard, the greater the man’ is realized across all textual levels in respect of the titanic Campeador by means of epithets, descriptions, defiant gestures, the hero’s own words, and the words of others.¹⁴⁸ For sheer pogonophilia, nothing else really comes close, which is not to say that the same heroic approach to beards does not make itself felt at times in vernacular German texts too.¹⁴⁹ Following Simon Gaunt’s discussion of gender and genre (with reference to Old French literature), one wonders just how decisive plot type was when it came to the poetic interest invested in female and male figures.¹⁵⁰ As will become clear from our study of a wide range of texts, beard references could be used to thematize relationships not just between men and other men (fathers and sons, kings and other kings, lords and vassals, masters and apprentices), but also between men and women (lover and beloved, husbands and wives, fathers and daughters). Furthermore, literary beards are not necessarily a sign of a preoccupation with masculinity for masculinity’s sake. At times the poetic depiction of beards evinces to striking effect a concern with humanity.

Contents and approach

In order to develop a better understanding of how and why medieval German poets referred to beards, the following study is organized

around close readings of a number of paradigmatic literary works or textual milestones. That is to say, each of this book's four main chapters takes as its starting point one particular work or body of lyric poetry, in which beards, beardedness and beardlessness play a prominent role in respect of certain key themes and issues: majesty and rulership (Chapter 2: Pfaffe Konrad's *Rolandslied*); masculinity and humanity (Chapter 3: Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm*); wisdom, teaching and learning (Chapter 4: 'Sangspruchdichtung'); and laughter and comedy (Chapter 5: Heinrich Wittenwiler's *Ring*). Each chapter contextualizes its milestone work by taking into account cognate material of various kinds, such as sources or later versions of the same story, manuscript transmission and miniatures, and further notable instances of a specific beard motif or type of beard reference from the same period. The chapters are arranged in rough chronological order, although it will on occasion prove necessary to trace interpretative lines backwards as well as forwards.

The headline themes and issues which are investigated here do of course overlap, and thus these chapters are designed to complement each other. Critical discussion of the literary representation of bearded majesty and bearded humanity is ongoing throughout the book (and not just restricted to Chapters 2 and 3). Similarly, the distinction between didactic and comedic approaches to literary beards implied by the chosen topics of Chapters 4 and 5 is not a strict one; the boundaries between these two interests, if they exist at all, are rather more fluid. The interdependence of the beard's various connotations and poetic treatments is epitomized by literary portrayals of arguably the single most important beard in the Middle Ages, that of Jesus Christ. Chapter 6 therefore comprises a short review of the different ways poets from across a wide range of text types drew attention to this emblematic feature of Jesus's face and to the different effects (emotive – instructive – comedic?) involved.

Given that the beard's most fundamental meanings remained intact from the twelfth century (and long before that) to the later fifteenth century (and long after that), the varying uses to which beard motifs were put can also help to shed light on changes in the workings of vernacular literature as it expanded and diversified over the centuries. That said, this remit sounds grander than the author of this project would like. When we focus on a single motif or set of motifs, it is easy to forget that many of the works in question consist of numerous meaningful details. Doing literary beards justice involves recognizing that they invite special but unexaggerated assessment.¹⁵¹

Notes

- 1 Müller, *Höfische Kompromisse*, 6–41; Schnell, 'Text und Kontext', 2008, 97–8.
- 2 Müller, 'Einleitung', VII; Schnell, 'Text und Kontext', 2008, 138.
- 3 Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, 203.
- 4 Haubrichs, 'Bilder, Körper und Konstrukte', 1995, 31; Müller, 'Literarische und andere Spiele', 2004, 294.
- 5 Schnell, 'Recht und Dichtung', 2011, 21.
- 6 Schnell, 'Text und Kontext', 2008, 98.
- 7 Worstbrock, 'Wiedererzählen und Übersetzen'.
- 8 For the crux of this debate see Schnell, 'Kulturtheorien und Lektürepraxis', 2016.
- 9 An exemplary analysis of this kind is offered by Schnell, 'Narration und Emotion', 2014.
- 10 For more on these narrative levels see Barthel, *Empathie, Mitleid, Sympathie*, 57–80.
- 11 Clark, 'Fashionable beards', 2014: 'Although Westerners had little compunction with shaving their faces in actual practice, Western beards in literature retain a similar depth of symbolic meaning to Eastern ones' (98).
- 12 See also Reuvekamp, 'Hölzerne Bilder', 2014, 116.
- 13 Bumke, 'Autor und Werk'.
- 14 Vetter, *Textgeschichte(n)*, 57–95.
- 15 Manuwald, *Medialer Dialog*, 20–49.
- 16 Manuwald, *Medialer Dialog*, 163–4.
- 17 The only literary reference to Joachim's beard growth prepares us for his marriage to Anna: 'Als er zweinzi iar alte wart / unt im chume erspranch der bart' (*Maria D*, 337–8). Joachim is beardless in the miniatures until he gets married (fol. 8v); thereafter he is consistently portrayed with a cropped, jawline beard (9v, 10v, 15r, 16r, 17r, 18r, 19v, 21v). The manuscript can be viewed online: <https://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=159362>. Accessed 4 March 2021.
- 18 Joseph is characterized by his (grey) beard at two points in the text: on his first appearance as an unwilling 'suitor' for Mary's hand ('sin bart was im lanch vnd gris' 1882), and when he is appalled to learn of Mary's pregnancy ('Der grise mit dem barte' 3009). In the miniatures he is represented by the same (long-bearded) figure type throughout (fols 34r, 53r, 63r, 78r).
- 19 Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, 202–3. The generational template is used as early as fols 27r (strangers greeted by Mary) and 37v (temple priests).
- 20 Henkel, *Lesen in Bild und Text*, 36–62.
- 21 On the manipulability of visual representations of hair see Jolly, 'Cultural representations'.
- 22 For just one of the many influential publications by Horst Wenzel in this area see 'Hören und Sehen. Zur Lesbarkeit von Körperzeichen in der höfischen Literatur'.
- 23 Kellner and Kiening, 'Einleitung: Körper – Kultur – Literatur (1200–1800)', 2009, 5.
- 24 Easton, 'Gender and sexuality'.
- 25 Chinca, 'Women and hunting-birds', 199.
- 26 As exemplified by Moshövel, *Effemination*, 13–54.
- 27 Sieber, 'Gender studies'.
- 28 See Kinney, 'The (dis)embodied hero', 55–6. A more measured approach is adopted by Weichselbaumer, *Der konstruierte Mann*, 259–65.
- 29 Moshövel, *Effemination*, 420.
- 30 Lees, 'Men and *Beowulf*', 130.
- 31 For monologic (and dialogic) constructions of gender see Werthschulte, 'Erzählte Männlichkeiten', 269.
- 32 Reuvekamp, 'Hölzerne Bilder', 2014, 130.
- 33 Constable [and Huygens], 'Introduction', passim.
- 34 *De opificio Dei* VII (PL 7, col. 33). Cf. also Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XXII, 24, 4 (PL 41, col. 791).
- 35 'sicut unguentum optimum in capite quod descendit in barbam barbam Aaron quod descendit super oram vestimentarium eius' / 'Like the precious ointment on the head, that ran down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron, which ran down to the skirt of his garment' (Psalm 132: 2).
- 36 *Enarrationes in Psalmos* CXXXII, 7: 'Barba significat fortes; barba significat juvenes, strenuos, impigros, alacres. Ideo quando tales describimus, barbatus homo est, dicimus' (PL 37, col. 1733).
- 37 'Ex illa barba erat Stephanus sanctus' (PL 37, col. 1733).
- 38 Constable [and Huygens], 'Introduction', 75–7.

- 39 As exemplified by Rhabanus Maurus, *De Universo* VI, 1 (PL 111, col. 152).
- 40 'CHRISTVS ist sacerdos . also aaron uuas . unde houbet sīnero ecclesie. Ab imo ran spiritus sanctus in apostolos . die sīn bart sint . uuanda sie gomelīcho an imo uuāren . unde ne-hein leīd ne-forhton umbe in ze līdenne' (500,13–16).
- 41 *Christherre-Chronik*: 'Daz heilige olei er im goz / Vf sin houbit daz ran / Vf den bart dem reinin man / Als an dem salter noch stat / David da von gesprochin hat. / Als daz salb daz da schone / Ran zu tal Aarone / Von dem houbite in den bart / Vnd vurbaz ran nach sinir art / Biz an sinis cleidis ort' (18108–17).
- 42 Constable [and Huygens], 'Introduction', 70–5.
- 43 *Expositio in Leviticum* XIX (PL 164, col. 444).
- 44 *Mitrale* II, 1 (PL 213, col. 59).
- 45 For a summary of the *Apologia* see Constable and Huygens, 'Introduction', 137–49.
- 46 Cf. *Apologia de barbis* III, 1490–1592. The notion of spectacularly white hair, as revealed by Burchard himself, is taken from the Book of Revelation (1: 14).
- 47 For a table of all the relevant references see Burchard, *Apologia*, ed. Huygens, 225–6.
- 48 For instance, in *Apologia* I, 116–23 Burchard homes in on the repetition contained within Psalm 132: 2: 'sicut unguentum optimum in capite quod descendit in barbam barbam Aaron'.
- 49 For an overview see Casagrande and Vecchio, *I peccati della lingua*.
- 50 Cf. Rupert of Deutz, *In Leviticum* II, 25 (PL 167, cols 812–13).
- 51 Berthold pushes the metaphor to its limits when he goes on to discuss the 'leprosy' afflicting men and women in respect of clothing (118,3–121,6) and housing (121,7–122,39).
- 52 In this sermon Berthold has already mocked men who grow their hair long for being like women: 'Pfi dich, Adelheit, mit dīnem langen hāre' (114,30–1).
- 53 Bearded women thus belong to the numerous marvels of the world listed for Otto IV by Gervase of Tilbury (c. 1215): *Otia imperialia* II, 4; III, 76. Cf. also Ulrich von Etzenbach, *Alexander* 22074–7. The figure of a monstrously ugly wild woman, with whiskers down to her feet, is used for comic effect in the heroic epic *Wolfdietrich* (version A: 471,3).
- 54 *Etymologiae*: 'Barbam veteres vocaverunt, quod virorum sit, non mulierum' (XI, 1, 45).
- 55 'Unde et sanctas mulieres, quae plerumque animi fortitudine viros superant, rectissime barbatus dicere solemus' (PL 164, col. 444).
- 56 'Huic autem cum valde ignea conspersio corporis inesset, ceperunt medici dicere quia nisi ad amplexus viriles rediret calore nimio contra naturam barbas esset habitura, quod ita quoque post factum est' (PL 77, col. 340).
- 57 Burchard even explores why Gregory used the plural 'barbas' to refer to Galla's beard (III, 90–102), suggesting that it conveys the fullness and density of her beard growth ('pleniberbis') (III, 127–35).
- 58 See Wallace, 'Bearded woman, female Christ', 2014.
- 59 The same story is told a century later by Jacobus de Voragine in his *Legenda Aurea*; see Moshövel, *Effemination*, 147–9.
- 60 Cf. I, 38; II, 59; II, 149; III, 176. See also Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 181–3.
- 61 Constable [and Huygens], 'Introduction', 61–2.
- 62 'Man sol im grīfen an den obern munt unde der nasen: vindet man dā kleinez hār, daz ist ein geziuge' (L27). Hidden hair ('under die vohsen', 'ob sīner geschäfte') counted as well. The text of the *Schwabenspiegel* is taken here from Jones and Jones, *The Oxford Guide to Middle High German*, 583.
- 63 'Welchiz mannes alder man nicht en weiz, hat her har in dem barte unde nidene unde under itlichem areme, so sal man wissen daz her zu sinen tagen komen iz' (I, 42).
- 64 Hopwood, 'Highlighting hair', unpublished dissertation, 172.
- 65 Cf. *Lex Frisionum*: 'si granonem ictu percussam praeciderit, duobus solidis conponat' (XXII,17); *Leges Alamannorum*: 'Si enim barba alicuius non volentem tunderit, cum 6 solidis conponat' (LVII,30). Other medieval legal traditions preserve similar rulings; see Hopwood Griffiths, 'Self and society', 40–1.
- 66 *Landfrieden* (of 1152): 'Si quis alium ceperit et absque sanguinis effusione fustibus percusserit vel crines eius et barbam expilaverit, decem libras ei, cui iniuria illata esse videtur, per compositionem impendat et iudici viginti libras persolvat' (§4).
- 67 'unde sleyt he ene ok, edder knuppelt ene, edder toge ene by deme barde ofte haren, wert he dar umme beclaget dat he dat hebbe ghedan myt vorsate, unde en wil he dar nicht vor sweren, den vorsat schal er der stad beteren myt twintich marken' (I,106 II).
- 68 Constable [and Huygens], 'Introduction', 64–5; Schmidt-Lorssen, 'Der Griff an den Bart'.

- 69 Emphasized by Platelle, 'Le problème du scandale', 1975, 1083–9.
- 70 The same line of insulting argument is found in texts ranging from the second century (Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* III, 3) to the sixteenth (Valerian, *Pro sacerdotum barbis*). In his *Apologia de barbis* Burchard compares fashionable (lay)men who shave their beards but keep their moustaches to monstrous hermaphrodites (II, 57–60).
- 71 Burchard presents this sentiment as a vernacular saying ('illud vulgare proverbium'), before rendering it in Latin: 'In barba non iacet sapientia' (III, 689–90).
- 72 Cf. Lucian: 'If you think that to grow a beard is to acquire wisdom, a goat with a fine beard is at once a complete Plato' (LCL 85: 276–7).
- 73 *Epistula* XXII, 28 (PL 22, col. 413); *Adversus Jovinianum* II, 21 (PL 23, col. 316).
- 74 *Responsio Episcoporum Germaniae Wormatiacae Coadunatorum*: 'De hoc quod reprehendunt cur barbas nostri clerici radunt, respondemus cum beato Hieronymo, quia si sanctitas est in barba, nullus sanctorum est hircus' (PL 119, col. 1212).
- 75 Burchard further degrades his target by describing how their beards are typically covered in grease (the antithesis of the holy ointment of true Christian faith) (III, 314–19). Later in the *Apologia* Burchard cites the goat jibe as an example of malicious ridicule (III, 1153); evidently Jews were the exception to this rule.
- 76 Cf. Phaedrus, *Fables* IV,9, where a fox tricks a bearded goat into taking its place at the bottom of a well. In the version of the fable contained in Heinrich Steinhöwel's Latin-German *Esopus* (first printed c. 1476) the fox adds insult to injury with reference to the goat's beard: 'Wärest du mit so vil wysheit begabet, als mit vil haeres dyn bart gezieret ist, so wärest do nit in den brunnen hinab gesprungen' (nr 100, p. 246).
- 77 Odo of Cheriton, 'De contentione Ovis albis et Ovis nigre, Asini et Hirci' (*Fabulae* nr 52).
- 78 Cf. Eugene of Toledo, *Carmina* 89, 4: 'Si barbae sanctum faciunt, nil sanctius hircus' (MGH Auct. Ant. 14, 266); Heinrich Bebel, *Fazetien* I, 30.
- 79 A comprehensive overview is given by Constable [and Huygens], 'Introduction', 85–130.
- 80 Constable [and Huygens], 'Introduction', 113–14.
- 81 Constable [and Huygens], 'Introduction', 117. The first Cistercians only shaved seven times a year; see Platelle, 'Le problème du scandale', 1975, 1073.
- 82 Friedman, 'Hair and social class', 137–43.
- 83 Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, 201–3.
- 84 See also Jennings, 'Chaucer's beards', 1978, 364. The trend for long(er) beards at court leaves a mark on German literature in the fourteenth century, not least in the poetry of Heinrich der Teichner (see [Chapter 4](#)).
- 85 See also Platelle, 'Le problème du scandale', 1975, 1073–6.
- 86 *Narratio Othloni de miraculo quod nuper accidit cuidam laico*: 'quasi clericus' (PL 146, col. 243).
- 87 'pro novacula vero non promisi' (PL 146, col. 244).
- 88 *Narratio Othloni*: 'quod scilicet nemo laicorum radere barbam debeat' (PL 146, col. 244).
- 89 For more on this text's critical attitude towards its worldly content see Braun, *Studien zum Ruodlieb*, 41–4.
- 90 *Ruodlieb*: 'Barbicium scabit, quod non pilus unus ibi sit. / Quod tam nemo vafer sit, qui discernere possit, / Clericus an mulier inherbes an esset alumnus, / Est tam iocundae tam virgineae faciei' (XIII: 1–4).
- 91 Bartlett, 'Symbolic meanings of hair', 1994, 44.
- 92 Orderic's furious commentary on courtly fashion is principally located in VIII, 10.
- 93 'Olim penitentes et capti ac peregrini usualiter intonsi erant, longasque barbas gestabant: indicioque tali penitentiam seu captionem uel peregrinationem spectantibus pretendebant. Nunc uero pene uniuersi populares cerriti sunt et barbatuli: palam manifestantes specimine tali quod sordibus libidinis gaudeant ut foetentes hirci' (VIII, 10).
- 94 This observation is attributed to the bishop of Seez on the occasion of his dramatic intervention (with a pair of scissors) at the court of Henry I (XI, 11).
- 95 Platelle, 'Le problème du scandale', 1975, 1083.
- 96 Cf. also Reinmar von Zweter II, 128: 1–3, where ecclesiastical beards are connoted with avarice and greed. See Lauer, *Ästhetik der Identität*, 191–2, 244–5.
- 97 *Seifried Helbling* XIV: 14–16; I: 225; III: 226–8. Cf. also the references to Hungarian warriors in Ottokar von Gaal's *Steirische Reimchronik*: 'die mit den langen berten' (16236); 'mit iren langen berten' (26386).
- 98 'nú dar, her scheraer, / stríchet scharsach unde schaer, / ebent hâr und scheret bart!' (III: 77–9). See also Wolf, *Kunst zu lehren*, 108–9.

- 99 Constable [and Huygens], 'Introduction', 97; Bartlett, 'Symbolic meanings of hair', 1994, 47–8; Phillips, 'Race and ethnicity'.
- 100 Bartlett, 'Symbolic meanings of hair', 1994, 59.
- 101 'den bart, die negel und daz hâr / liez er niht abe schrôten' (9700–1).
- 102 Cf. Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*: 'die wâren gote gebaere, / getaget unde gejäret, / gebartet unde gehâret, / alsô die wâren gotes kint / und wallaere dicke sint' (2624–8).
- 103 Cf. Gottfried's description of Rual's condition after his lengthy search for Tristan: 'von unruoche was sîn hâr / an houbete unde an barte / verwalken alsô harte, / als ob er wilde waere' (*Tristan* 4004–7).
- 104 Cf. Herbort von Fritzlar, *Liet von Troye* 1168–9; *Rappoltsteiner Parzifal* 6773–4; *Karl und Ellegast* 1798.
- 105 Linden, *Kundschafter der Kommunikation*, 108–12; Moshövel, *Effemination*, 440–1.
- 106 'liebez kint mîn,/ strich sie umb den munt dîn,/ dise wurz also guot,/ und habe des deheinen muot,/ daz dir nimmer dhein haerlîn/ wahset üz dem bart dîn' (14589–94).
- 107 Vogt, *Ritterbild und Ritterlehre*, 83–90.
- 108 <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg848>. Accessed 6 March 2021.
- 109 Cf. fols 8r, 10r, 124r, 158r, 213r, 323r, 383r, 407r.
- 110 Kellermann, 'Die körperliche Inszenierung des Königs', 2001, 168–70.
- 111 <http://digital.wib-stuttgart.de/purl/bsz319421317>. Accessed 6 March 2021.
- 112 In a Latin epic poem dated to 800–10, Leo appears to Karl in a dream with his eyes and face covered in blood, his tongue hacked out (*Karolus Magnus et Leo papa* 368–71).
- 113 'Nider cniet dô der êwart, / vil kûme gesprach der daz wort' (14459–60).
- 114 Only the intervention of Karl's men stops him from falling over in shock (14486–96).
- 115 Müller, 'Visualität, Geste, Schrift', 2003, 127.
- 116 Stock, 'Figur', 192; Reuvekamp, 'Hölzerne Bilder', 2014, 113.
- 117 Gerok-Reiter, *Individualität*, 1–22.
- 118 Kartschoke, 'Erkennen und Wiedererkennen', I, 2–5.
- 119 Manuwald, *Medialer Dialog*, 163–4.
- 120 Brüggén, 'Körperschönheit', 395.
- 121 Bumke, *Blutstropfen im Schnee*, 15–27.
- 122 Hence the established topic of female hair (in literature); see Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l'or*.
- 123 Cf. Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria* (c. 1175): 'Amplius, in femineo sexu approbatio formae debet ampliari, in masculine vero parcius' (I, 67). An exception to this rule can be made for handsome young men, Matthew concedes (I, 68).
- 124 Kartschoke, 'Erkennen und Wiedererkennen', I, 22–3.
- 125 'His person is well proportioned. He is shorter than very tall men, but taller and more noble than men of medium height. His hair is golden, curling a little above his forehead. His ears are scarcely covered by the hair above them, as the barber (out of respect for the empire) keeps the hair on his head and cheeks short by constantly cutting it. His eyes are sharp and piercing, his nose well formed, his beard reddish, his lips delicate and not distended by too long a mouth. His whole face is bright and cheerful. His teeth are even and snow-white in colour. The skin of his throat and neck (which is rather plump but not fat) is milk-white and often suffused with the ruddy glow of youth; modesty rather than anger causes him to blush frequently. His shoulders are rather broad, and he is strongly built. His thighs, supported by stout calves, are proper and sturdy' (translation by Charles Mierow).
- 126 Rahewin's model was Apollinaris Sidonius's famous description of the Visigothic king Theoderic II (d. 466): *Letters* I, 2.
- 127 Dares, *De excidio Troiae historia* XII–XIII; *Roman de Troie* 5093–582; *Liet von Troye* 2889–3298.
- 128 Coxon, 'Heroes and their beards', 2018, 33–4.
- 129 Lumiansky, 'Benoît's portraits', 1956, 431–8; Jennings, 'Chaucer's beards', 1978, 366–8.
- 130 Cf. the reference to Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied*: 'Dô stuont sô minneclîche daz Sigemundes kint, / sam er entworfen waere an ein permint / von guotes meisters listen' (B 286,1–3).
- 131 Schnell, 'Gefühle gestalten', 2016, 593, 603–5.
- 132 Shoaf, 'Dante's Beard', 171–8.
- 133 As found in several thirteenth-century medieval Welsh tales, known collectively as *The Mabinogion*, including *Peredur Son of Evrawg* (p. 229), a reworking of Chrétien's *Perceval*. Wishing shame on another's beard is also a standard (literary) curse in these texts; cf. *Owein* (Luned denounces Owein, p. 209); *Peredur* (old man curses lion kept as gatekeeper, p. 236).

- 134 As uttered by the elderly Nestor, outraged by Priam's offer of compensation, in Herbolt von Fritzlar's *Liet von Troye* (2024). This furious outburst is subsequently reported back to Priam by his envoy (Antenor): 'Nestor der alde man / Grein mich an vnd schutte sin bart' (2087–8).
- 135 See also von Matt, ... *fertig ist das Angesicht*, 198–200.
- 136 Müller, 'Episches' *Erzählen*, 197–242.
- 137 Cf. the myth of Karl's victory over a heathen force without having to strike a blow, as recounted in the *Sächsische Weltchronik* (c. 1230). The episode revolves around the erroneous report given to the Saracen king by his scouts as Karl approaches with an army of young women (all his warriors having been killed): 'Herre, wi hebbet de alden geslagen, de iungen sin na gekomen; si willet wreken ire aldermen; si sint alle ane bart, dicke umme ire bruste, wol geschapen to wige, du ne macht mit in nicht vechte; gif dich an Karles gnade unde wirt cristen' (151,26–8).
- 138 Schultz, 'Bodies that don't matter', 93–4.
- 139 The narrative functionality of secondary figures is explored in most depth by Dimpel, *Zofe im Fokus*. See also Schnell, 'Gefühle gestalten', 2016, 585.
- 140 *Diu Crône*: 'Natûr wolt in sô bewarn, / daz alters reht dâ kûm schein / an im, wan an disen zwein, / an bart und an hâre: / diu zwei het zewäre / ein graewe übergangen, / diu was aber bevangen / mit reitziere wîze. / die het er mit vlîze / ze strenen gewunden, / mit golde gebunden' (6875–85).
- 141 *Diu Crône*: 'Über bart und über gran / diu nezze ime al zît ran, / dar under was diu hût geblaet. / ime stuont der bart, als er gesaet / waere uf sîn wange; / er was von gedrange/ niht nâch der dicke gestalt, / man het ine allen wol gezalt. / dar zuo was er wol vinger lanc / und hât niergent einen gelanc / niht mêre denn ein scharpfe âl' (19677–87).
- 142 For ugliness and individuality see Kartschoke, 'Erkennen und Wiedererkennen', I, 2.
- 143 Reference to Gawan's beardedness is made (only) in the speech of a foe who threatens to tear the helmet from his head: 'wan sol ichz iu ziehen ab, / daz tuon ich sô ungewar, / daz beidiu bart unde hâr/ mir mit alle volget' (6294–7).
- 144 *Unser Frauen Ritter* 110–11; *Der Mönch als Liebesbote* A, 47–50; *Das Auge* 16–17.
- 145 Rüdiger der Hinkhofer, *Der Schlegel* 1072–5; Augustijn, *Der Herzog von Braunschweig* 889–90; *Ritter Gottfried* 344–6.
- 146 Haferland and Schulz, 'Metonymisches Erzählen', 2010, 11, 23. For balance see also Müller, 'Einige Probleme', 2013, 19–40.
- 147 Kropik, 'Metonymie und Vormoderne', 2012, 85–95.
- 148 Bly, 'Beards in the *Poema de Mio Cid*', 1978, 16–24.
- 149 Cf. the depiction of the elderly Wate slaughtering the enemy in the decisive battle in *Kudrun*: 'mit grisgramenden zenden zehant huob er sich dar, / mit schînenden ougen, mit ellenbreitem barte' (1508,2–3).
- 150 Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*. Gaunt deals with *chansons de geste*, for example, under the rubric of what he calls 'monologic masculinity' (22–70).
- 151 Engagement in literary analysis of this kind is neatly summed up by Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l'or*: 'c'est entrer dans les textes par la petite porte' (9).