Tannhäuser

Thomas, J. W.

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Tannhäuser: Poet and Legend.

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Five of Tannhäuser's *Leiche* are *Tanzleiche*, apparently the earliest of this sub-genre. They were sung to accompany dancing\textsuperscript{12} — so much is clear — but whether sung only by a *Vorsänger* or by *Vorsänger* and dancers responsively, we do not know for certain. It is not unlikely that both methods of performance were used, the first part being sung by the *Vorsänger* and the second part by him and the dancers in turn. Consistent with their function, these *Tanzleiche* are lighthearted in mood with lively rhythms. There is an undercurrent of ironic humor which sometimes surfaces to a broad smile, but never becomes crude or coarse. They are carefully structured, with introduction, main theme, description of the dance, and conclusion — which usually admonishes the listeners to be happy. The audience for which Tannhäuser composed was courtly and sophisticated. It enjoyed clever eroticism, but not obscenity, and was sufficiently educated to appreciate the poet's humorous inventions in literature, history and geography. Some of his *Tanzleiche* were composed for the court at Vienna and might be considered the spiritual, perhaps even the historical ancestors of the modern Viennese operetta; a mixture of irony and wit, naive sentimentality, and joyful affirmation of the senses.

The first *Leich*, as it appears in the manuscript, is a panegyric on Duke Friedrich II of Austria, otherwise known as Friedrich the Warlike. The duke was Tannhäuser's patron, and, according to several of the *Sprüche*, a very generous one. A reference in the *Leich* to a crown for the monarch dates it as having been composed in the spring of 1245. The negotiations over the raising of Austria to a kingdom took place during the early months of that year; and in May Emperor Friedrich II gave the duke a ring as a pledge of the coming coronation. The *Leich* probably was composed for the specific purpose of announcing the momentous occasion and might have been sung and danced before the emperor, who was in Vienna when the commitment was made. It is the first instance of the *Leich* form being used for eulogy. History does not tell us why the duke was not crowned.

The work begins with a nature introduction which expresses the joy and delight of the spring season and has words of praise for an anthropomorphic May who has brought them. In the second versicle May is compared with the

\textsuperscript{12} Margarete Lang, *Tannhäuser*, Von deutscher Poeterey, 17 (Leipzig: Weber, 1936), p. 86, questions as to whether one really danced to *Tanzleiche*, but her argument is quite unconvincing.
duke, and in the following versicles Friedrich's accomplishments and princely attributes are lauded in fairly regular iambics and lines consisting primarily of four or more feet. Starting with versicle 15,\(^1\) a more personal side of the ruler is portrayed and we see him as a sponsor of festivals and even as a singer of Tannhäuser's songs at dances. He is the gay prince who seeks entertainment and shares it with his subjects. This view of him is accompanied by a change in the rhythm, which becomes somewhat faster, as indicated by a marked increase in trimeter and dimeter lines.

Versicles 15 to 19 inclusive form a transition in content and metrics. The narrator turns from the princely singer to the dance which is being sung. Short lines of one or two feet predominate as the narrator gives the invitation to the dance (which, of course, is already going on), tells of his sweetheart, and refers to the dancers by name. In the last versicle he tells the young people that, since God has given them voice and feet, they should sing, dance, and be happy. This admonition brings us back to the joyous season of the introduction. It has been suggested that the early part of this and of the other Tanzleiche, where the rhythm is regular and measured, was an accompaniment to the stately tanz, while the second and livelier part was sung to a fast-moving reio.\(^1\)

Technically, the incorporating of a eulogy into a dance song was successful, with transitions in content, mood, and metrics being carried out expertly, if somewhat abruptly. And yet there is a definite impression of incongruity; even more, the impression that a skillful artist is making fun of us by combining incompatible elements as if they belonged together. Another touch of irony is seen in the use of terms to describe Friedrich which are particularly associated with heroic and Arthurian literature: degen, belt, vermezzen, waleis. And when the singer maintains that no misfortune can befall anyone who sees the prince once a week, he is comparing Friedrich to the grail in Parzival. One scholar speaks of "die parodistischen Anspielungen auf das Epos."\(^1\) As will be seen, deliberate incongruity, straight-faced deception of his audience, and parody are basic characteristics of Tannhäuser's style. The effect on the Leiche is, of course, humorous, but the praise heaped on Friedrich does not seem to be the less sincere for that. The poet's haste to mention himself first among the poor whom his ruler is aiding and the use of diminutives in speaking of the dancers are also

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\(^1\) Since the manuscript does not indicate the limits of the separate versicles, there is some disagreement as to how the Leiche were divided. The references here are to the arrangement in the chapter, "Tannhäuser's Verse," of this volume.

\(^1\) Johannes Siebert, Tannhäuser: Inhalt und Form seiner Gedichte (Berlin: Vogt, 1894), p. 76.

\(^1\) Ernst Bernhardt, "Vom Tannhäuser und dem Sängerkrieg auf der Wartburg," Jahresbilder der Königlichen Akademie gemeinnütziger Wissenschaft zu Erfurt (Erfurt: Carl Villaret, 1900), p. 96.
amusing. Other medieval poets who eulogized Friedrich in their verse are Neidhart von Reuenthal, Ulrich von Liechtenstein, and Bruder Werner.\footnote{Neidhart in the song, "Owe lieber sumer diner süeze bernden wünne;" Ulrich in his \textit{Frauendiens}; and Bruder Werner in the song, "Ich han geklaget unde klag ez an."}

The second work in the manuscript is just as unique in medieval German verse as the first, however in quite different ways. It, too, begins with a nature introduction, but here the description of the beauties of nature is much longer. Then comes the main body of the composition, and this time it contains a true narrative. While wandering over the heath the singer encountered a maiden whose charm was such that he immediately fell in love. He greeted her, begged for her favor, and told of his complete devotion. They walked together through the clover, embraced, kissed, and at last fully consummated their love. At this point appears a brief reference to the dance in progress, which, however, does not hold the singer's attention. Thrilled by the memory of his experience, he praises women's goodness and declares his eternal loyalty to his ladylove. With this, the singer announces the end of the dance, advises the maidens to reject false sorrowing, and (with propriety) to be joyful. He promises that the men will join them in so doing.

The poem is very symmetrical in structure and its separate parts are carefully balanced. The number of verses in the nature introduction is exactly one-half the number in the love story, is equal to that in the dance section, and is three times that in the conclusion. The poet has been just as careful and meticulous in joining the separate parts and giving a unity of mood and theme to the whole. The nature description of the introduction carries over to the main narrative and even to the dance section. The latter looks back to the love story and comments on it. A springtime mood prevails from beginning to end with no discordant or extraneous notes.

The metrical pattern of the composition is the most uniform of all the \textit{Leiche}. Indeed, the work may not be a \textit{Leich} at all.\footnote{De Boor, p. 372: "Es ist eher ein Erzähllied als ein Leich."} If one were to omit two couplets, the work would fall naturally into 25 four-line stanzas with iambic tetrameter lines and alternating rhyme. The only metrical variations between these stanzas would be those which are found in most minnesongs: masculine versus feminine rhyme and presence or absence of an \textit{Anfakt}, neither of which has any significant effect on the melody. Without the two couplets there would be no reason to suspect that the composition was not a minnesong except for its position between two \textit{Leiche}. And since the scribe who put it there may never have heard the work sung, this is not an adequate basis for classifying it, particularly because the similarity of the content to that of \textit{Leich} III would explain their being placed together.

The location of the two couplets strengthens the evidence against the work being a \textit{Leich}. One of them comes at the very beginning. Manuscripts with notation show that some songs are introduced by musical embellishments, which
are sometimes assumed to be instrumental preludes and sometimes to be vocal flourishes that employ the vowel of the initial syllable of the text. Tannhäuserei may have supplied such an initial embellishment with a full text of its own: the first of the two couplets. The second couplet appears in the love story after the narrator has declared his devotion and just before the love-making begins. And immediately in front of the couplet in the manuscript stands the only paragraph in the composition. The singer paused here, presumably repeated the initial flourish with a new text, and then went on with the regular melody. If one does not count the verses of the nature introduction or of the conclusion, the second couplet stands exactly in the middle of the composition. With regard to content, it leads directly to the climax of the work and marks the point at which it takes another direction, one which has no precedent in German courtly verse. What lies between the first and second couplets is a traditional minnesong; what follows the second couplet is a new type of courtly love song, which is set off from the first by the musical embellishment. Another and perhaps more plausible explanation for the two couplets is that Tannhäuser used a melody — maybe not his own — which had a refrain and that he used the music of this refrain as a prelude to the two parts of his composition. He could have gotten the idea from the rondeau, which occasionally begins with a two-line refrain. In any case, the work probably should be considered a Lied, rather than a Leich. However, the traditional designation will be preserved here for convenience.

Since the conventional minnesong or Minneleih tells of the longing and frustration rather than the fulfillment of love, it is customary for scholars to call Leich II an imitation of a French pastourelle\(^\text{18}\) or of a goliard song, such as the seduction songs in the Carmina Burana.\(^\text{19}\) One supporter of the latter thesis presents this work and Leich III as evidence that the poet was not a knight, but a Spielmann or goliard.\(^\text{20}\) The comparison of Tannhäuser's composition to a pastourelle or goliard song is not particularly apt. The poet may well have been familiar with such works, but his verse was not significantly influenced by them. The pastourelle is specifically Standesdichtung: it tells of the attempt of a knight to seduce a shepherdess. It is a humorous contest in which one of the participants is discomfitted. The erotic goliard song does not necessarily have a knight as its hero, but in other respects it resembles the pastourelle. It emphasizes wit and humor, which is often coarse and sometimes obscene. Tannhäuser's work differs from both in that it is a story of courtly lovers, even though class itself is not


\(^{19}\) Carmina Burana: Faksimile-Ausgabe der Benediktbeuerer Liederhandschrift, ed. Bernhard Bischoff (München: Prester, 1967), fol. 73v, 91v, 96v-97r, and others.

\(^{20}\) Brauns, pp. 194-95.
stressed. Moreover, in spite of some timidity on the part of the lady, the love scene is by no means a casual seduction. A deep and lasting attachment is formed which evokes in the narrator a feeling of great joy rather than of triumph. The consummation of love is only touched upon, and then with tact and restraint. One is reminded particularly of Walther’s “Under der linden.” Even the background is treated differently than in the typical pastourelle or goliard song. Tannhäuser does not describe merely a rural scene, but rather an ideal landscape of springtime beauty which serves as a leitmotif. The blooms of the heath, just as the wreath of red flowers on the maiden’s head are symbols of youth, high spirits, and joyous dancing.

When one considers the popularity of Mädchenlieder and courtly Dorfpoesie in thirteenth-century Germany, it is strange that the Romance pastourelle was not adopted by Tannhäuser or one of his contemporaries. But no shepherdess appears in any minnesong or Leich. However, if Leich II is not a German pastourelle, it is also not a conventional minnesong. Its frank, though discreet treatment of love’s fulfillment is considered by some to be a sign of the decadence of chivalric ideals, an indication of a decline in good manners at the court of the undisciplined Duke Friedrich II.21 One scholar considers the work to be autobiographical, a product of the poet’s own relationship to “die flotten Wiener Mädchen.”22 Actually, it tells a fresh and natural story which must have been a delight to a society that was surfeited with fifty years of plaints from frustrated and languishing lovers. It is this tradition which supplies the song with its subtle humor, for when the author unexpectedly exceeds the limits of the courtly lyric and allows a fine lady to respond to love, the effect is a sympathetic, but amused surprise. Tannhäuser’s penchant for irony is expressed in the implied ridicule of the artificial conventions of the minnesong. With respect to the dancing which the composition accompanied, one should assume it to be of a single type, the tanz, because of its unvaried and moderate rhythm. In general, however, works with a spring setting were sung to reien.23

Leich III also presents a love story against an Arcadian background of flowering spring. It begins with a nature description which gradually becomes a tale about the narrator and his sweetheart. He relates how he had crossed the blooming heath and entered a forest which rang with bird song and was traversed by a brook. He had followed it and found by a pool his lady, whose physical charms are described in intimate detail. He had declared his love and she had gladly submitted to him. In thinking back over his adventure he is filled with joy and praises her as the best of women. He then speaks to the dancers and refers to the instruments which accompany their singing, but he cannot stop thinking

21 De Boor, p. 371.
22 Bernhardt, p. 96.
23 Wolff, p. 359, calls Leich II “einen ausgelassenen Wintertanz.” However, Bernhardt, p. 96, maintains that all Tanzleiche were intended for reien.
of his loved one. Suddenly the breaking of the fiddle's string brings song and dance to an end.

Like Leich II, this work can be taken as simply an idyllic love story. However, the irony is a little more pronounced here and there is some parody. The narrator dwells on the love scene a bit longer and mixes some light wit in with his expressions of affection, as in the passage: "si iach si litte es gerne. dc ich ir tete als man den frowen tut dort in palerne." This, together with the slightly daring description of the lady's person, contrasts sharply with the treatment of ladies and love in the traditional minnesong and thereby produces a humorous effect. The suspicion of parody is awakened when the conventional prayer of the knight that God may watch over the lady is extended to include the hope that no one else is watching over her, also by the lady's suggestion that he sing her a song about the beauties of May when it is obvious that he has something quite different in mind. However, not until one notices the unusual vocabulary of the Leich does the intent to parody become clear. The object of Tannhäuser's irony now is not the minnesong, but courtly epic verse. The first part of the Leich is adorned with a baroque display of French borrowings. There are over twenty of them — words such as tschoie, dulz, schantieren, parlieren — some of which are used several times. Since all of this préciosity is restricted to introduction and love story, leaving the dance section in the author's usual simple and unaffected speech, the contrast is such as to place both the language and the eroticism of Arthurian romance in an amusing light. A reference to tavel runde and massenie leaves no doubt as to the comparison which Tannhäuser seeks to evoke. Once more he has produced humor, not by ridiculing his characters, but by tricking his audience: by treating a literary convention with which it was familiar in a manner that it did not expect. It has been suggested that the author intended his irony to cover not only euphuistic art, but also the pretentious language and superficial manners which — it is assumed — characterized the courts of the mid-thirteenth century. The objections to this thesis are simply that the medieval poets were considerably less inclined to associate literature and life than the Romantic scholarship of modern times has supposed, and that there

24 Wolff, p. 361, writes, "Der 3. Leich parodiert die höfische Neigung, sich mit romanischen Fremdworten einen prunkenden Mantel umzuwerfen." De Boor, p. 373, agrees, "Solche ohrenfällige Häufung kann nur bewußte Absicht sein, und eine andere als eine parodistische ist bei diesem Dichter nicht denkbar." However, Siebert, Tannhäuser: Inhalt und Form, p. 82, disagrees, as does Lang, p. 49.

25 It is quite possible that Tannhäuser was thinking in particular of the flowery description of the idyllic scene at the Cave of Love in Tristan, for Gottfried also refers to "Artuses ravelrunden und alle ir massenie." The lines are 16900-01 in Friedrich Ranke, ed., Gottfried von Strassburg, Tristan und Isold, 14th ed. (Dublin and Zürich: Weidmann, 1969).

is little evidence to prove that Tannhäuser's society was more decadent than that of the preceding generation.

The more obvious eroticism of *Leich* III as well as the stronger overtone of humor has caused it to be associated not only with the *pastourelle* but also with the mal mariée songs. With regard to the former, one may object once again that there is no shepherdess; with respect to the latter, that there is no husband. Nevertheless, the composition does reveal similarities to the mal mariée songs in the emphasis on the consummation of love as well as in the use of a background of field and forest beauty. The unswerving and sincere devotion of the narrator to his sweetheart, however, establishes a tone which is quite dissimilar to any previous songs of seduction in either French or German. The division of this *Leich* into definite units on the basis of content is not as clear as in either of the preceding works. The nature introduction mentions not only the lady of part two, but also the dance of part three, while the last versicle — except for the final three lines — is devoted to the narrator's love instead of to the dance or its conclusion. A separation into parts on the basis of rhythm is also not obvious, for short and long lines, iambics and dactylics are scattered fairly evenly throughout the work. References to *springen* and *reien* indicate the type of dance to which the last three versicles were sung, and it is quite likely that the entire composition accompanied a *reie*. There is nothing in either *Leich* II or *Leich* III to indicate when or where they were composed.27

As do a host of minnesongs, the following *Leich* begins with the praise of a lady and a declaration that none has been so highly acclaimed as she. With this introduction, a long and impressive catalogue of famous women of literature unfolds which is liberally padded with names invented for the occasion. Characters and events of courtly literature are paraded at length, but many of them are deliberately scrambled. However, everything is related in such a factual manner that even today there is little agreement as to the extent of Tannhäuser's fabrication.28 Parzival enters the story of Troy by breaking down the city's wall; Wigamur takes Gahmuret's place as the hero of the tournament at Kanvoleis; and Tristan fills in for him as the husband of Belakane. *Eneide*, *Der Trojanerkrieg*, *Lanzelot*, *Tristan*, *Wigalois*, *Die Krone*, and other medieval works contribute characters and incidents, sometimes accurately, sometimes in deliberate confusion.

27 Kummer, p. 67, states that the *Leiche* are arranged chronologically in the manuscript, but presents no evidence of this. Oehlke, p. 41, presents the theory that *Leiche* III, V, and IV were composed in that order, because it reflects the increasing complexity of the motif of the broken string or bow at the end.

28 Siebert, *Tannhäuser: Inhalt und Form*, p. 86, is reluctant to believe that Tannhäuser invented characters: "Es entzieht sich denn auch noch manches der Erklärung, ohne daß daraus der Schluß gezogen werden darf, der Dichter habe einziges einfach erfunden." Lang, p. 66, also assumes that the poet is referring to works which have been lost. However, de Boor, *Die höfische Literatur*, p. 373, thinks it improbable that Tannhäuser is naming characters from literature which has disappeared and speaks of "bewußte Verdrehungen von barocker Lustigkeit."
The *Leich* not only reveals Tannhäuser's familiarity with the epic verse of his day, but also tells something of the literary background of his audience. For a humorist profits little from private jokes.

At last the narrator turns from the heroines of the past to his sweetheart, who is as lovely as any. Her beauty is portrayed with enthusiasm and, once more, in somewhat intimate detail. She is not only physically very attractive, but has also the other virtues poets laud: good manners, constancy, and kindliness. Above all she possesses that which Tannhäuser values most, a joyous spirit: "ir zimt wol dc lachen." However, although the narrator is extravagant in his praise, the appearance of his loved one is not at all what the listener was led to expect. After the procession of goddesses and queens — Juno, Pallas, Venus, Medea, Helen, Dido, and others — the audience is presented with a young dancer with a flower in her yellow hair, who is described affectionately, but in quite irreverent terms. After telling of his sweetheart and declaring his love, the narrator turns from the one dancer to the dance itself and to others who are or should be there. The final stanza announces the conclusion of the festivities, opposes whoever would spoil the happiness of the dancers, and ends abruptly with the breaking of the fiddler's bow.

*Leich* IV has more sharply defined segments than do the two preceding works and the parts are meticulously balanced. Counting dimeter lines as half-lines, there are 4 lines in the introduction, 58 in the parade of celebrities, 58 devoted to the narrator's sweetheart, 22 to the dance, and 8 to the conclusion. This means that the two main sections are exactly equal in length and the conclusion is twice as long as the introduction. If the *Leich* is divided into two parts instead of five, there are 120 lines devoted to the main theme and 30 to the dance, a ratio of precisely four to one. Such figures are to some extent a result of chance and could be slightly altered by a different partition of the work. However, they do indicate that Tannhäuser was a careful craftsman who, though he may not have counted verses, was interested in creating a symmetrical work of art.

Unlike the first three *Leihe*, this work does not have a nature introduction. Yet, references to crocuses, roses, and bird song in the conclusion identify it as a spring song — which is reflected in the rhythm. Metrically, the composition is divided into two distinct parts, the second beginning with the discussion of the narrator's sweetheart. What goes before is told for the most part in iambic tetrameter lines which show little variation in tempo; what comes after is largely in dimeter and trimeter lines, with only enough longer lines to provide contrast. The frequent omission of the *Aufakt* in the second part also serves to vary the rhythm. Once more one might assume that the *Leich* accompanied first a *tanz* and then a *reie*.

The transitions between the five segments of the work are made more quickly than in the two preceding *Leihe*, but are done smoothly. The last line of the introduction — "Ich gehorte nie wib so wol geloben, als man si tüt" — is enough to shift the attention from the narrator's lady to those of literature. The
final line of this segment and the first of the following one bring us back to the heroine. The narrator’s joy in his love leads to his joy in the dance and thus ties in with the following section. Allusions to the beauties of spring connect the dance with the conclusion.

Except for the dance section, the content of Leich IV differs considerably from that of the first three, even though the ironical treatment of the content is quite similar in all. Here it takes the form of parody. Where other poets have compared their ladies to Dido or Isolde, Tannhäuser lists twenty-two such famous beauties, including new inventions. Where others have demonstrated their learning by references to episodes in fiction, he runs the full gamut of the courtly epic of the day, purposely confusing characters and events as he goes. There is throughout a carefully calculated mixture of the familiar and the bizarre, designed to achieve an effect which has been called grotesque. 29 Ironical humor appears again in the poet’s exceeding the limits of courtly propriety in his descriptions of the female form.

Most important with regard to Leich IV is the fact that its melody is extant, although perhaps in a form slightly different from the original. A late thirteenth-century musician’s handbook in the Munich library contains among other compositions a Latin conductus which begins with “Syon egredere nunc de cubilibus” and ends with “eia et eia, quia nunc dictaturi: Der sait der ist enzwai.” A comparison of the music with the text of Leich IV shows that the conductus melody fits Tannhäuser’s verses somewhat better than the Latin ones, indicating the priority of the secular setting. The melody consists largely of similar variations on a single theme, but it is pleasant, and has been praised as the most beautiful of all extant Leich melodies. 30 It is the only extant music for a dance Leich.

The fifth Leich resembles the preceding one, but instead of a parade of great ladies and lovers, there is a travelogue of exotic lands. In rapid succession we hear of Morocco’s mountains of gold, of the mighty rulers of Persia and India, of colorful Bagdad and Jerusalem. After more geography of the Middle East, the narrator turns to Southeast Europe: to Constantinople with its famous sea nymph, to Bulgaria, Hungary, and Russia. He then jumps to Western Europe: France, England, the five kingdoms of Spain, and Ireland — each with its special characteristic or interesting bit of history. Then, by way of cold Norway and Denmark, the narrator moves to the familiar territory of Austria and Bavaria. After a brief tribute to the dead Friedrich II of the former and the living Otto II of the latter, the travelogue is finished and the love story and dance begin.

29 Ferdinand Mohr, Das unhöfische Element in der mittelhochdeutschen Lyrik von Walther an (Diss. Tübingen, 1913), p. 67; Wolff, p. 360.
30 Hans Spanke, “Eine mittelalterliche Musikhandschrift,” ZfdA, 69 (1932), 63. Siebert, Der Dichter Tannhäuser: Leben, Gedichte, Sage (Halle: Niemeyer, 1934), pp. 58-68, reconstructs the melody as he thinks it was before it was adapted to the Latin text. Hugo Kuhn, Minnesangs Wende (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1952), pp. 110-19, gives an extensive discussion of the musical structure.
This latter section, unlike those of the previous Leiche, is not restricted to a purely local scene, but starts by telling of great men — Saladin, Ermerich, Roland, and others — whose prowess, however, was no greater than that of the narrator when he discovered his sweetheart alone. Shifting rapidly back and forth in time from the girl of his adventure to the same one who is now dancing with him, he tells of her beauty and charm. He calls for the musicians: flutist, tambourinists, trumpeter — but the fiddler's string breaks again and thus signals the end of the song. Thereupon the narrator encourages himself to be happy and to dance merrily wherever there is singing.

The Leich shows fewer and less distinct divisions than the preceding ones. The travelogue starts without introduction and proceeds in general from the remote to the familiar until it ends with the praise of Otto. The narrator's joy in having found, as he hopes, a generous sponsor leads to his joy in his lady, and so the second segment begins. This is not really a love story, but rather a listing of heroes which is introduced and concluded by references to his sweetheart. The transition to the dance section is made when the narrator invites others to take a partner as he has done. However, he had referred to the dance several times before and he continues to speak of his lady, so no clear separation is apparent. This is also true of the dance section and the conclusion, for he has already mentioned ending his song before the string breaks.

Rhythmically the Leich falls into four parts, the first two of which coincide with the travelogue, the last two with lady's section and dance section respectively. The first eleven versicles have essentially the same Ton, which consists of four hexameter lines — occasionally with interior rhyme. The following six versicles have a somewhat livelier Ton that is made up of two heptameter lines — usually broken by interior rhyme — and a trimeter line. One of the versicles of this group has a variant of the second Ton which repeats each long line once. The third part includes the next five versicles, which are composed in four different variants of the second Ton. The last part has eight versicles, each with a different Ton that is made up almost entirely of short lines. The concluding verses are distinguished by the prominence of dactyls. The development from part to part is consistently in the direction of increased complexity and diversity. The tempo — as indicated by short lines — also gradually increases. The first two parts taken together are twice as long as the last two.

Leich V has received particular attention from those scholars who have attempted to put together a biography of Tannhäuser. One suggests that it was composed as a greeting to Otto II when, in 1247, he was appointed governor of Austria after the death of Friedrich. Others assume that the verses,

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\begin{align*}
\text{ich gesach nie fursten me so milten noch so richen} \\
\text{so rehte lobelichen.} \\
\text{heia tanhusere nv la dich iemer bi im vinden.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{Wolff, p. 362.}\]
indicate that the poet was for a time a protégé of the Bavarian duke.\textsuperscript{32} It has also been assumed by some that Tannhäuser is telling facts about himself when his narrator says he has been in a few of the lands he lists, and they connect these travels with participation in a crusade or pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It has even been suggested that the \textit{Leich} indicates his route there (through Bulgaria and Constantinople)\textsuperscript{33} and back (by way of the Western Mediterranean, Spain, France, England, and Denmark).\textsuperscript{34} One scholar cites the \textit{Leich} as proof that Tannhäuser took part in the Cyprian War of 1231—1233.\textsuperscript{35}

Actually, the work tells little about either the poet or its composition. A comparison of the brief mention of Otto here with the long eulogy of Friedrich in \textit{Leich} I makes it seem unlikely that \textit{Leich} V was composed as occasional verse. And though the lines quoted certainly indicate that the poet was looking for a patron, there is no evidence that he found one. As far as travel in the Middle East is concerned, the \textit{Leich} offers less support for than against the assumption of such a journey. For the confused geography which it presents, together with the inclusion of fictional lands from courtly novels and the poet’s own imagination, weighs against any personal knowledge of the region. To be sure, Tannhäuser’s editors have labored valiantly to put his geography in order and to identify all of the places he mentions with actual cities and countries, but the results have been largely unconvincing. The one indisputable biographical fact which comes from the \textit{Leich} is that it was composed between 1247 and the year of Otto’s death, 1253.

The humor of \textit{Leich} V stems largely from parody of the literary vogue of exotic lands. The crusades had stimulated interest in far-away countries and strange customs, and the poet who could tell of them from first-hand knowledge would not lack an audience. The so-called Spielmannsepen were set in distant kingdoms, and even works the action of which took place primarily in Western Europe often exploited the charm of exotic lands and people. Tannhäuser’s narrator is determined to surpass all others as he displays his gazeteer of regions that he has seen or of which he has heard, mixing the actual and the fictional in a truly surrealistic manner. References to characters in Wolfram’s \textit{Willehalm} suggest that this work may have been the special object of the mockery. The parody carries over to the story of the narrator’s sweetheart. In \textit{Leich} IV he had paraded the famous ladies of literature. Now he tells of great heroes (including one of his own invention) and indicates that he could have told of many more had


\textsuperscript{35} Wolff, p. 357.
he wished. Additional humor is provided in the love story by the pretentious use of French, such as: bel amye, bel amur, foret, and Schampenio (MS spellings).

To the comic effect of parody is added that resulting from the narrator's inconsistency in the use of time, place, and person. When he first speaks of his sweetheart, she is dancing before him. Then he tells of finding her alone in the forest. Once more she is at the dance, again back in the forest, and again at the dance. Sometimes he speaks of her in the third person, sometimes he addresses her directly. The result is an amusing confusion, similar to that produced by the mixing of real and invented places and historical and fictional heroes.

The matter of a patron, which appears briefly in Leich V, is central to the sixth Leich. In an introduction the singer bewails the deterioration of a society which has lost its joy, shows no appreciation for his songs, and has seen the death of princely generosity. This munificence becomes the theme of the following verses as the poet first presents a list of open-handed rulers of the immediate past and then a catalogue of living nobles, whose virtues seldom include a readiness to share their wealth. The gallery of portraits begins with those of Emperor Friedrich II and his sons, King Heinrich and King Konrad, all three of whom are lauded as models of royalty, whose passing the singer laments. Then other German princes who have died during Tannhäuser's lifetime are brought forward and praised, one by one, especially for their milte.

The second group, the living princes, are treated with appropriate tact. They too have their virtues, but generosity is mentioned in connection with only two. At last the register of nobility comes to an end and the singer asks where he should look to find a lord who values fame and honor. For he will gladly spread the praises of one who is worthy and knows how to show appreciation properly. The singer then announces that such a prince exists and that he will name him. But what follows is a statement — in four unrhymed and irregular lines — that the kindness of charming ladies can help those who are held fast by the bonds of love. After this a blank space of almost nine unfilled lines appears in the manuscript.

Various opinions have been expressed with regard to the end of the Leich. One scholar believes that it is complete as far as content is concerned and that only the meter and rhyme of the final lines have been corrupted.\(^{36}\) Others maintain that Tannhäuser's ending was lost and that the last three or four verses were supplied by someone else.\(^{37}\) It is generally assumed that the Leich as we have it is almost complete and that the catalogue of princes is not followed by a love episode and a dance section. What may have happened is this: The Manesse scribe noted that the Leich, as it appeared in the manuscript he was copying, had no obvious conclusion like those of the preceding Leiche. He, therefore, left a space so that the final stanza or stanzas could be filled in later and went on. A search failed to turn up the missing ending and the scribe added one of his

\(^{36}\) Kück, p. 212.
\(^{37}\) Siebert, Tannhäuser: Inhalt und Form, p. 97; Oehlke, p. 12; Wolff, p. 363.
own. The main reason for believing that the Leich is essentially complete is its length. The previous five Leiche take up from one and one-half to a little more than two columns of manuscript each. Leich VI fills exactly two columns, so if the extant portion had been followed by a love story and a dance, the Leich would have been much longer than the others. Another reason to assume that little, if anything, is missing is that the Leich as it is shows the same general structural pattern that is seen in the other Leiche. The introduction is made up of three short versicles in a Ton which consists of dimer, trimer, and tetrameter lines, rhyming a a a a. Following the introduction come thirty-two versicles in a second Ton, that has alternate tetrameter and trimer lines which rhyme a b a b. Then a third Ton appears, of indeterminate length, which is made up of trimer couplets. There are nine lines in the introduction, ten lines in what appears to be the conclusion, and the main body is divided by its content into two fairly distinct parts. As with Leich II, one might well question as to whether this is actually a Leich. For it may have had a basic melody (repeated thirty-two times), which was preceded and followed by another melody which served as prelude and, in a variant form, as finale. The absence of any reference to dancing indicates that the work is not a Tanzleich.

Leich VI has been discussed primarily as an expression of Tannhäuser’s political sympathies in the struggle between the Hohenstaufens and the papacy. It has been noted that the work not only begins with praise of Friedrich II and his sons, but mentions primarily their supporters and includes only a single ecclesiastical prince — an ally of the Hohenstaufens. It has even been maintained that the presumably lost ending would have proclaimed Konradin, the last of the family, as the model of living monarchs. However, although there are indications in several of his other works that Tannhäuser favored the Empire over the papacy, it is a mistake to class the Leich as primarily a political document. For some of the princes listed and praised were opponents of the Hohenstaufens and others seem to have remained relatively neutral in the conflict between Empire and Church. It is much more probable that Tannhäuser, if he had a purpose beyond pure entertainment, was interested in his own well-being rather than that of the Hohenstaufens.

The preponderance of Hohenstaufen supporters among the higher nobility listed in the Leich can be explained as easily by geographical as by political considerations. For all the living princes mentioned were from the eastern half of the Empire, where the papal influence was less strong. The singer’s references to the courts of Saxony, Braunschweig, Brandenburg, and Silesia has led some to assume that Tannhäuser spent his later years wandering through Central and Eastern Germany. This may be so. However, the prominence of the area in the

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38 The manuscript indicates that the last four lines are in the same hand as the rest of the Leich.
39 Oehlke, p. 30.
40 De Boor, Die höfische Literatur, p. 370; Siebert, Der Dichter Tannhäuser, p. 26.
Leich may be due to the increasing importance of its princes in the political and economic affairs of Germany as well as by its relative proximity to Vienna — the only lasting residence of the poet, as far as we know. His nearness to Austria might also explain why the king of neighboring Bohemia is singled out for praise.

By checking the dates of the deceased princes against those of the living, the time of composition of the Leich has been established as being between the spring of 1264 and that of 1266. Tannhäuser was certainly no longer young then and, since no later date has been established for any of his works, may have been at the end of his professional career. The opening lines, which remind one of Walther’s “Owe war sint verswunden alliu miniu jar,” certainly give the impression of one who is nostalgically looking back on a period which was not only quite different, but is now rather remote. Nevertheless, neither Tannhäuser’s poetic techniques nor his propensity for irony have significantly changed. The accumulation of names of people and places, which characterizes the fourth and fifth Leiche is also a distinguishing feature of this one. He apparently did not invent celebrities in Leich VI as in the others — although this possibility cannot be entirely discarded, since not all those mentioned have been positively identified. The poet does make several errors with regard to relationship and to whether a prince was alive or deceased, but this could well have been accidental. Still, the irony of two passages is clear, and the ending may have been a joke on his audience. Certainly Tannhäuser had not become overly serious with age. His prayer that God may have mercy on the souls of those who are dead with generosity and honor is only another way of saying, “They’re practically deceased, why not bury them?” And the remark that the margraves of Brandenburg were very wise, especially at hanging on to their wealth, was surely good for a laugh at those courts which resented the rising power of Brandenburg.

It may be that the most amusing part of the Leich is the conclusion. For it is not necessary to believe either that the unrhymed final lines are a corruption of the real ending or that the real ending was lost. It may be that Tannhäuser intended to stop with the last lines which are indisputably his:

    ich wil den fursten nennen.
    ob ir in welt erkennen.
    Sin grus vnä och sin lachen.
    dc kan mir froide machen.

Such an ending is humorous in that it leads the audience on and then fails to satisfy its curiosity. The ending is also practical, for an additional couplet could immortalize any prince who cared to pay the singer’s price for fame. And the latter has already indicated that the space at the end was for sale. Apparently there were no satisfactory offers.

41 Wolff, p. 358, dates the composition between 27 April 1264 and 4 April 1266.
The last of the *Leiche* (XVI)\(^{42}\) is very short, consisting of five brief versicles each of which presents a riddle. Riddle verse was popular during the medieval period, and it appeared in various types of literature: sometimes as incidental inclusions in longer works, such as *Parzival* and *Der Wartburgkrieg*, occasionally in polystrophic songs, like "Das Traugemundslied," but usually in individual *Spruch* stanzas. Such *Rätselsprüche* were composed primarily by middle-class poets and were largely the product of a folk, rather than a courtly tradition. As a result the language used and the scenes described often lacked the refinement of courtly verse. The riddles were sometimes didactic and frequently drew from Biblical stories. This *Leich* is the only one of Tannhäuser's works which is not told in the first person. The first versicle relates that a woman killed her husband and all her children, which so enraged the former that he killed her in turn and all her servants; later other children were born to them. In the second we learn of a man, not born of woman, who took a wife who never had a father or mother. The third tells of a dog which barked so loudly that everyone living heard it. The fourth states that the earth is higher than the heavens, as wise masters have often learned in years past. The last versicle tells of a child which, while in its mother's womb, killed its father as he was singing of God and reading the truth to the other children.

As the work consists of only fourteen lines in all and the manuscript does not separate the versicles in any way, early nineteenth-century scholars assumed that it was a *Spruch* stanza which presented a single puzzle. Since no solution could possibly satisfy all of the conditions posed, it was classed as nonsense verse or as a teasing mixture of riddle and tall tale. Toward the end of the century, however, the poem was divided into versicles, and the individual riddles were soon solved by comparing them with other Latin and Middle High German versions to which answers are appended.\(^{43}\)

The first riddle is the only one which does not appear elsewhere, but there is fairly general agreement as to its solution: Eve caused the death of Adam and all her descendants by her sin; when Adam also sinned, this judgment on them was confirmed. One scholar objects that, since the second riddle treats Adam and Eve, the first must have another subject. He suggests night and day, which continually destroy and renew themselves and their offspring, the hours.\(^{44}\) Solutions to the next three riddles are: Adam was not born of woman, and he took a wife who never had parents; the dog in Noah's ark barked so loudly that

\(^{42}\) Where the arrangement in this study is different from the order in the manuscript, the latter will be indicated by the proper Roman numeral.


\(^{44}\) Loewenthal, p. 65.
everyone alive heard him; Christ's presence on earth in the Sacraments makes it higher than the heavens. The answer to the final puzzle is a little more involved. In 1170 Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral on the order of King Henry II. We see, therefore, that the child (Henry), while in its mother's womb (the Church), killed its spiritual father (the archbishop), while the latter was singing of God to the other children (ministering to the spiritual needs of his congregation).

One can imagine that the medieval performance paralleled the modern history of the Leich. Tannhäuser would probably have sung it straight through without a pause, with the result that no one would have been able to decipher it. When the perplexed audience protested that it had no meaning, he would have sung it again, hesitating after each versicle to allow opportunity to guess its meaning. Each of the five versicles has a separate Ton.

Tannhäuser is known primarily for his Leiche. Five of them are dance Leiche — probably the first in German literature — and have a lighthearted, joking mood which is appropriate to their function. This mood is evident also in the other two Leiche, although the sixth makes a more serious impression because of the narrator's nostalgia and his search for a patron. The versicles of the Leiche fall into groups which divide the works into more or less distinct segments according to content and sometimes according to rhythm. Relatively few different Töne are used, which gives several Leiche the appearance of Lieder and suggests that the poet was not very inventive with regard to music composition.