Tannhäuser

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Tannhäuser: Poet and Legend.

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In his didacticism Tannhäuser shows what is most representative of his times, in his humor he reveals what is most typical of himself. A basic element of his humor is the intent to convey a meaning other than that seemingly expressed. When examining this irony one needs to remember that we are forced to judge the poet through a medium for which he did not compose, the written word. Tannhäuser composed with a performance in mind, one in which the verses themselves often would serve only as a foil for gestures, smiles, and knowing winks that let the audience know how he really felt — or deliberately confused it as to his meaning. This presentation soon disappeared, but one can safely assume that there was a great deal more irony in the original dramatic version than can be reconstructed from the bare text and that it was the more sophisticated, subtle, and unexpected ambiguities and contradictions which have been lost. The chief objects of Tannhäuser's irony were the standard conventions of courtly literature, lyric and epic, and one must therefore assume for his compositions a highly literate audience which was thoroughly familiar with the works of the Hohenstaufen chivalric period. Humor was drawn from the conventions either by violating them with incongruent or incompatible material or by exaggerating them through parody. The first of Tannhäuser's Leiche presents incongruence to the point of grotesqueness when it combines a eulogy with a dance and makes Duke Friedrich share the stage with a pretty dancer. A similar mixing of genres appears in the two following Leiche with the unexpected consummation of the love of the narrator and his sweetheart, an act not foreign to epic verse, but quite contrary to the minnesong or Minneleiche tradition. The incongruence of the fourth Leich consists primarily in the narrator's comparing his sweetheart with famous queens and goddesses, and then describing her nude form in an affectionate, but quite irreverent manner. Other incongruities appear in the intentional confusion of literary heroes and deeds. The baroque contrast of disparate elements is particularly marked in the fifth Leich where, after presenting an imposing list of great men and exotic places, the narrator turns to his own heroic accomplishments on a nearby meadow with his sweetheart. The humorous inconsistency of the following Leich is that the narrator promises to name the epitome of all princely virtue, and does not. Incongruence is seen in the last Leich not only in the fact that it does not supply answers to its riddles, as many other such songs did, but that it so crowded them together as to make them almost undecipherable. Incongruities in the minnesongs and Sprüche include another
description of a nude form, a crusader who is more concerned with hard biscuits than God's cause, a Gebrspruch from a confessed wastrel, and the picture of the nobleman who has a manor house and estate — both in complete ruin.

Tannhäuser parodies several established literary conventions of the courtly literature of his day and with considerable success. He most frequently attacked the cataloguing tradition by means of which poets satisfied the thirst of their audiences for all sorts of information and established themselves as men of vast experience and erudition. It was also commonly used as a literary device to emphasize a particular point. Tannhäuser exploited this practice with ostentatious registers of meadow flowers, beautiful women of literature, exotic lands, German princes, names of dancers, details of the female form, rules for behavior at court, traits of his narrator's character, cities and rivers, names of winds, topics for songs, causes of the narrator's poverty, and examples of the ruin of the latter's estate. One might even suspect that the long list of the virtues of Friedrich II in the first Leich was not entirely free of humorous intent.

Another literary convention which Tannhäuser parodied was the affected adornment of German verse by means of French. Here again he goes far beyond the others, employing their borrowings, bringing in new ones, and in places composing a true Kauderwelsch. Tannhäuser's parody is particularly obvious since he uses French words in lyric verse, which till then had been almost free of them. He also sometimes follows a flood of loan-words with a markedly pure German for contrast. His poems contain some seventy French words, among which his favorites are: amis, bel, clar, creature, dulz, fores, massenie, parolle, tschantizeren, and tschoie, words which are closely associated with the French pastoral tradition and the highly stylized love affairs of the German Arthurian novels. Since he uses them most frequently in the narrative sections of Tanzleiche, just before the German folk dances begin, it is apparent that the poet is inviting comparison of the pretentious borrowings, and the superficial manners connected with them, with native songs and customs. However, as if to prove that there was nothing chauvinistic about his irony, Tannhäuser also subjected the opposing trend, exemplified by Walther's intimate Mädchenlieder, to parody. This appears especially in the Christmastide song, which is filled with such endearing, very German diminutives as: lökkel, mündel, öngel, wengel, kelli, spengel, tökkel, sitüü, suezel, vuezel, beinel, and meinel.

Tannhäuser's most obvious and effective parody appears in the three songs in which he ridicules the concept of service of ladies by listing all of the impossible


80 Walter Sandweg, Die Fremdwörter bei Tannhäuser (Diss. Bonn, 1931).

81 Other noncourtly elements in Tannhäuser's verse are treated by F. Mohr, pp. 60-68.
demands the lady fair makes as the price of her favor. Everything is recounted with a straight face, and the narrator, though expressing his grief, gives no indication that he believes her unreasonable. In two of the songs the humor is underscored by a refrain which stresses his eternal affection and constancy. Since the refrain is traditionally a part of joyous songs, its use here by the frustrated lover adds more irony to the situation. This is ridicule not only of the minnesong as such, but also of a basic idea of chivalry. As far as is known, Tannhäuser is the first German lyric poet to parody it directly, although Neidhart and the anonymous author of the goliard song, "Ich war ein chint so wolgetan," present caricatures of Minnedienst. But Tannhäuser's laughter was without bitterness or design. He certainly had no such Cervantine goal as the destruction of a false romanticism, for his two summer songs are quite traditional.

Perhaps the key to Tannhäuser's irony lies in the ambivalence of time which has been mentioned in connection with the Tanzleiche. His narrator never so loses himself in the memory of his Arcadian adventure that he completely forgets the dance in progress. At the same time the dance does not keep his mind from wandering back to his wonderful experience, the dream-like nature of which is conveyed by foreign words and an idealized milieu. In a similar manner his creator moves back and forth from the world of minnesong and King Arthur — the sphere of courtly literature — to that of thirteenth-century Vienna, sometimes painting the one by the light of the other. The best humor results when romanticism is described by a realist, but the realist must have his romantic side or he will not understand what he sees.

The poet's humor grows out of a realism which is most unusual in the lyric verse of the time. This is seen not only in his interest in the contemporary scene — politics, manners at court, geography — but also in his unique attention to detail. The standard heroine of the minnesong has red lips, a lovely form, and no name. Tannhäuser's heroine is Kunigunt. She too has red lips — and also rather short, curly, golden hair with a silken texture; regular, white teeth; slender fingers; tiny feet; etc. She sometimes wears a peacock hat, a white shawl, a brooch at the throat, and a belt, in addition to the rose wreath with which other ladies of minnesong are decked. When she and the others dance, it is to the music of bugle, drum, fiddle, flute, harp, or tambourine, and the manner in which they dance is rather carefully described. Details particularly abound in the Spruch-cycle of the sea. The knights who have remained in Italy spend their time with falconry, hunting with hounds, walking to the fountain, and riding about with ladies to see the sights. Meanwhile, during the five-day storm near Crete, the winds almost drove the hero's ship on a rock, the oars were broken, the sails torn to pieces, and he got seasick. It was no wonder, for in addition to bad weather, his drinking water was stale, the biscuits hard, the meat too salty, the wine mouldy, the peas and beans unappetizing, and the smell from below decks most unpleasant. The unique character of the Spruch which lists the narrator's property in Vienna has been mentioned. In the one that
follows, the itemizing of the decay of his estate also presents a sharp contrast to the typical medieval generalization.

Tannhäuser's treatment of love has been cited as a significant outgrowth of his realism, and certainly with some justification. However, a distinction must be made between realism and the parody of romanticism. His lovers consummate their love, not because it is the natural thing to do, but because this normally does not take place in the minnesong or Minneleib. And the circumstances under which the consummation takes place are by no means realistic. There is no vital eroticism in Tannhäuser's works, his love scenes are idyllic and slightly burlesque. More closely linked to realism is his merry affirmation of the world about him and an indomitable lightheartedness which can joke about poverty, storms, and a homeless life. The situation of his narrator often seems hopeless, but never very serious, which justifies as well as anything else the claim that Tannhäuser is the first genuine realist among the German lyric poets of the Middle Ages. 82 Although the impression of realism that he gives is largely a result of content and attitude, to a certain extent it is also the product of his style. The numerous exclamations, short sentences, comments to the audience and himself, the anaphora and correspondence of verse and grammatical units, even the occasionally irregular and careless rhythm, all lend immediacy and verisimilitude to his work.

Tannhäuser was the most original of the lyric poets of the midthirteenth century and was influential in leading courtly song in new directions. However, much that appears novel in his works is itself a part of traditions which, in some cases, can be linked directly or indirectly to him. Possible connections with the French pastourelle and mal mariée songs or the goliard seduction songs have been mentioned in connection with the narrative sections of Tannhäuser's second and third Leiche. In addition it should be noted that detailed descriptions of feminine charms are not unusual in Middle Latin lyric verse, as, for example, No. 109 and No. 118 of the Carmina Burana, nor are catalogues, such as the long register of birds and wild animals in No. 97. And a German song, No. 117a, compares the sweetheart of the singer with a series of goddesses and queens in much the same manner as Tannhäuser's fourth Leich. There is also parody: parody of the minnesong in No. 146 and erotic parodies of certain Biblical passages in No. 50. 83 None of these songs resemble those by Tannhäuser to the extent that one can assume a specific influence, but they do indicate a source from which he may have drawn.

Of greater importance to Tannhäuser was the verse of his famous colleagues, Wolfram, Walther, and Neidhart, with whose works he probably was well acquainted. He seems to have been especially interested in Wolfram, for there are frequent references to the characters and places of Parzival and Willehalm

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82 Heinrich, p. 828.
83 Carmina Burana, fols. 60r, 63r, 56r, 62v, 72, 31v-33v.
in his songs. Indeed, all that is distinctive in Tannhäuser's works can be found in those of the older poet. Wolfram's narrator, too, describes himself comically as a knight with an impoverished fief. He, too, makes ironical comments about himself, his situation, and his characters; directly addresses himself, his characters, and his listeners; and skips about in time and place. Like Tannhäuser's narrator, he has a ladylove who is unkind to him and about whom he composes some bitter verse.

Catalogues are as typical of Wolfram as of Tannhäuser. In Book XV of Parzival, he lists kings and lands (some invented by himself) as does the latter in Leich V, and he gives a register of snakes in Book IX and precious stones in Book XVI which is comparable to Tannhäuser's inventory of flowers in his third Leich. When Gahmuret enters Patalamunt and Arthur approaches Schastel Marveile, we are told which instruments are being played, as in the third and fifth Leiche. Although Wolfram does not give a catalogue of heroes and heroines of literature like that in Leich IV, the total number which he mentions is equally large and indicates a similar pride in his familiarity with contemporary verse.

Both Wolfram and Tannhäuser are humorists, and their chief source of humor is Frauendienst. At times the former bitterly attacks this tradition as senseless and dangerous, and relates several tragedies which it has caused: the deaths of Isenhart, Galoes, and Schionatulander, and the suffering of Anfortas. But mostly he treats it with ironical humor, as in Gawan's relations to a series of females. Indeed, the entire Gawan action makes up a minne parody that contrasts with the more natural and more idealistic devotion of Parzival and Condwiramurs. In the Obilot episode the Frauendienst tradition is distorted to a child's game, amusing partly because of the comic explication of chivalric acts as the product of two beings in one body and partly because the innocent child does not realize the erotic implications of the phrases she uses. The slapstick comedy of the Antikonie adventure is a burlesque of Frauendienst from another standpoint, in that its actual goal is revealed, which in the minnesong is veiled. At first sight Antikonie invited the hero's attentions with a kus unngastlich and as soon as they were alone they got at the business of lovemaking without any preliminary formalities. The scene in which Antikonie aided her lover by throwing chessmen at the enemy while he fought with a door-bar as a sword and a chessboard as a shield is a caricature of the romantic union of arm and spirit which Gawan had explained to Obilot.

Wolfram's third parody of the minne tradition in literature is the episode where Gawan spends the night at Plippalinot's home with Bene watching over his sleep. Even though she would have readily responded to his advances, Gawan ignores Bene and goes to sleep. And the huote, in the person of her father, does not try to protect her, but actually encourages a love affair and is disappointed that

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her virginity has been preserved. The parallel to the dawn song is underscored by the ambiguous comment on Gawan’s situation at the end of Book X:

got hüete sīn, sō kom der tac.85

The most obvious minne parody in Parzival, of course, has to do with Gawan and Orgeluse. His complete devotion puts him at the mercy of an unreasonable lady who enjoys his difficulties. Her request that he fetch a wreath from Gramoflanz’ tree, together with the spectacular adventures at Schastel Marveile — certainly a part of Gawan’s service for Orgeluse — may well have inspired the fantastic demands made by the heroine of Tannhäuser’s minne parodies. Other ironical treatments of minne by Wolfram appear in his lyric poem, “Ursprinc bluomen, loup uz dringen,” where he uses the motifs of the traditional love song to ridicule its shop-worn content,86 and in his anti-dawn-song, “Der helden minne ir clage,” in which he compares the sorrows and dangers of stolen love with the pleasures of marital love. All in all, there is more parody of the courtly song and of the Frauendienst tradition in general in the works of Wolfram than in those of any other contemporary or predecessor of Tannhäuser. One can assume that here, as with his catalogues, the latter was influenced by his famous colleague.

Other instances in which Wolfram may have left his mark on Tannhäuser’s verse have to do with French words, rules for behavior at court, and riddles. Wolfram was the first Middle High German poet to make liberal use of French borrowings, and he does this on such a scale that one is inclined to believe that he, as well as Tannhäuser, was at times striving for a comic effect. In any event, the latter must certainly have been thinking of Wolfram when he exaggerated this tendency. Indeed, one scholar maintains that Tannhäuser was ridiculing Wolfram and Gottfried specifically.87 When reading Tannhäuser’s Spruch in which the wise man gives his son rules to follow in order to be well accepted at court, one thinks at once of the advice of Gurnemanz to Parzival. Not that the two sets of precepts are similar, but because they are the only ones in German up to that time which are tailored especially for a courtly society. Tannhäuser’s slightly ironical tone also reminds us of that which Wolfram imposes on Gurnemanz’s dry didacticism. The riddle with which Tannhäuser’s last Leich begins is, as has been noted, the only one of the five which does not appear elsewhere in Middle High German literature. However, two similar riddles are propounded in Parzival. In Book IX Trevrizent recounts that an offspring of Adam and Eve deprived his ancestress of her virginity. He then explains that Adam’s mother was the earth, which retained its virginity until Cain spilled his

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85 Leitzmann, 552, 30.
87 Bernhardt, p. 95.
brother's blood on it.\textsuperscript{88} The difficulty here is, of course, how a virgin could have offspring. In Tannhäuser's riddle it is a matter of how a dead woman could have children. The second riddle in \textit{Parzival} comes in Book XIII where Arnive tells Gawan of a mother who had a child who became the mother of its mother. There are two answers: water and ice, and joy. Following this double riddle is an answer to a third riddle: the ship which is driven by a strong wind moves rapidly, but the man who walks on its deck goes even faster.\textsuperscript{89} It was perhaps Wolfram's posing of three riddles in succession which gave Tannhäuser the idea for his \textit{Rätselleich}.

Another riddle-like expression in \textit{Parzival} that is apparently reflected in Tannhäuser's verse is the risqué comment which the narrator makes about the wedding night of Orgeluse and Gawan:

\begin{verbatim}
er vant die rehten hirzwurz,  
diu im half daz er genas,  
sô daz im arges niht enwas:  
diu wurz was bi dem blanken brûn.\textsuperscript{90}
\end{verbatim}

The last line recalls Tannhäuser's enigmatic playing with color in stanza two of his first winter song:

\begin{verbatim}
guten trost han ich von ir.  
mehte ich der blanken.  
machen brvn ir roten gris.
\end{verbatim}

If Tannhäuser's verses were borrowed from Wolfram, it is quite possible that they comprise an ironical riddle which conceals a similar, erotic meaning.

The influence of Wolfram on Tannhäuser is largely a matter of viewpoint and style; that of Walther has to do principally with types of songs. Most of Tannhäuser's verse was composed in genres which Walther either invented or popularized among the courtly lyric poets of medieval Germany: courtly songs of natural love, humorous songs, political \textit{Sprüche}, and autobiographical \textit{Sprüche}. Although some of Walther's songs of natural love resemble the French \textit{pastourelle} in that the heroine is a peasant girl, in others he anticipates Tannhäuser either by making her a noblewoman or by ignoring the matter of class. The older poet is, to be sure, somewhat more discreet in telling of the consummation of love, but he too exploits the titillating potential of eroticism. As in Tannhäuser's \textit{Leiche} and minnesongs, this consummation results from mutual desire, rather than a clever seduction. In general, one can say that Tannhäuser's songs of natural love are more courtly than those of Walther.

Tannhäuser probably also learned something about humor from Walther.

\textsuperscript{88} Leitzmann, 464, 11-20.
\textsuperscript{89} Leitzmann, 659, 23-660, 5.
\textsuperscript{90} Leitzmann, 643, 28-644, 1.
Judging from the thirteenth-century verse tale, the predominant form of humor at that time was one in which a clever character outwits and takes advantage of a dull one, who is made to appear ridiculous. Walther's humor, however, is more genial, and, like that of Tannhäuser, is based largely on surprising the audience by adding an unusual, incongruous ending to a traditional situation. In "Si wunderwol gemacht wip," Walther presents the highly conventional eulogy of his lady, and it is not until the last line that we discover him to be a Peeping Tom, describing her as she leaves her bath. The idyllic scene and exalted dream of "Do der sumer komen was" is disturbed first by the cawing of a crow and finally by the ridiculous interpretation of the dream. In like manner, his fond hopes of being favored by his lady, in "In einem zwiwellichen wan," turn out to be based on nothing more substantial than the child's game of she-loves-me-she-loves-me-not. There are certainly the beginnings of minne parody in Walther, and one of his lover's plaints — "Min frouwe ist ein ungenaedic wip" — may well have inspired Tannhäuser's second minne parody. Especially the line where the narrator says that he would have given the lady stars, moon, and sun, if he could, remind one of the later song. Tannhäuser may also have borrowed some devices for humor from such political satire as Walther's derisive song about Otto IV, "Ich wolt hern Otten milte nach der lenge mezen," or the advice to Philipp II in "Wir suln den kochen raten."

Since Walther was the only Middle High German lyric poet before Tannhäuser to compose an appreciable amount of political verse, one may safely assume that the older poet influenced the compositions of the younger in this area, at least to the extent that he established the political song as a standard literary form. Actually, however, the two were in complete agreement as to the overriding issue of their time: the power struggle between the Empire and the papacy. It has been noted that Tannhäuser criticized the attempt of the pope to bribe electors and proclaimed his loyalty to the Hohenstaufen. In Leich V he also boasted that he had often seen the emperor (Friedrich II), admonished Wenzel I of Bohemia to support the Empire, and objected to the pope's attempt to depose the emperor as king of Sicily. Leich VI began its parade of German rulers with a eulogy of Friedrich II and his sons Konrad and Heinrich, and included only one ecclesiastical prince, who was a supporter of the emperor.

Although it would be too much to assume that Tannhäuser borrowed his politics from Walther, one may certainly expect that the latter's example could well have affected Tannhäuser's choice of subject matter. The fact that Walther praised Leopold VI of Austria in several of his Sprüche may have inspired Tannhäuser to devote an entire Leich to a eulogy of the duke's son, Friedrich II. And when Walther dated the beginning of his misfortunes from the death of Duke Friedrich I, it could easily have reminded Tannhäuser that his own difficulties, which began with the death of the duke's nephew, were equally worthy of recording. The personal element behind his political expression is as controversial in the case of Tannhäuser as with Walther. On the one hand, it has been assumed
that Tannhäuser's support of the Hohenstaufen party came from patriotism, on the other hand, he has been damned for being a mere flatterer and opportunist.

Walther's development of the autobiographical Spruch to a literary form contributed to his age a type of song which was of particular value to a humorist. For embarrassing jokes on oneself have always made up a considerable part of the repertoire of humor, particularly that of live performance. Tannhäuser seized upon the medium and also some of Walther's content for his own use. When, in "Ob ieman spreche, der nu lebe," the latter tells of the generosity which he was shown in Vienna, one is reminded of Tannhäuser's account of the property in that city which he received from Friedrich. When Walther, in "Der hof ze Wiene sprach ze mir," has the Viennese court recount its decay — the roof is rotten, the walls are cracked, gold, silver, horses, clothing are gone — one recalls Tannhäuser's Spruch of the impoverished nobleman. Walther's verses which begin, "Sit willekomen, her wirt," compare the situation of home owner and wanderer and plays with the words, wirt and gast, as do the first two Sprüche in Tannhäuser's first cycle. And his discussion of the different types of songs, in "Ich traf da her vil rehte drier slahte sanc," brings to mind Tannhäuser's poem which lists the things of which he would sing if he had a melody. In both instances the narrator asks assistance with his composition. Echoes of Walther's autobiographical Sprüche are heard also in Tannhäuser's minnesongs. The elegy which begins, "Owe war sint verswunden alliu miniu jar," compares the drab present with a happier, more courtly past in nostalgic language quite similar to that of Tannhäuser's second summer song, which possibly was likewise influenced by Walther's "Muger ir schouwen waz dem meien."

Although Tannhäuser's style resembles that of Walther in several ways, they share only one stylistic peculiarity which is sufficiently pronounced to indicate an influence. This is in the use of diminutives. Walther occasionally employs such words as däkkelin, fride, frödelin, frouwelin, trästelin, and zörnelin in his songs to add an intimate, endearing touch and also perhaps to give the impression of a folksong. Tannhäuser uses diminutives for the same reasons and in addition to achieve an amusing effect. When the narrator of his Christ-

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93 One also thinks of the lines in Walther's Spruch, "Von Rome vogt, von Püle künec, lat iuch erbarmen," which read (Lachmann, Die Gedichte Walthers von der Vogelweide, 28, 4-9):

\[\begin{align*}
&\text{zähiu wiech danne sung von den vogellinen}, \\
&\text{von der heide und von den bluomen, als ich wilent sanc!} \\
&\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots...
mastide song has words like löckel, mündel, wengel, kelli, spengel, and sitüli in his description of the sweetheart whom he addresses so respectfully, the result is ironic humor. Needless to say, Tannhäuser greatly exaggerates this characteristic of Walther, and one might even suspect him of mimicking the Mädchenlieder of the older poet.94 It is significant that no diminutives appear in Tannhäuser's relatively traditional summer songs or in the minne parodies. His inclination toward cataloguing may have been reinforced by his familiarity with Walther's songs, although this trait is not nearly as strong in the latter's verse as in that of Wolfram.95

Neidhart, the last of those who made a significant impact on Tannhäuser's works, was, like Walther, a predecessor of the younger man as court singer in Vienna and thus was connected to him by similar cultural traditions. Critical opinion differs greatly as to the extent of his influence on Tannhäuser, varying from the claim that the latter was little more than an imitator to the doubt as to whether his verse was in any way significantly affected by Neidhart.96 The probable answer to the question is that Tannhäuser received considerable inspiration from the older poet, but that his aims, point of view, and manner of composition were so different that their works have only a surface similarity. Both men were primarily humorists, and their chief source of humor was the parody of the conventional minnesong. Neidhart moves the scene to the village green or village tavern, substitutes a rustic maiden for the courtly lady, and brings in a cast of rough and pretentious country bumpkins to fill the role of the formerly nebulous nidere and provide an amusing incident. Tannhäuser's milieu, when it is described, is an ideal Arcadian one, and his characters are essentially classless. Neidhart's humor is basically malicious, and consists of ridiculing either his peasants or his impoverished knight-narrator or both. Tannhäuser's humor is more benevolent and literary, consisting largely of the ironical treatment of the poetic convention itself, and the butt of his jokes — where there is one — is likely to be his audience and the formal, ceremonious culture of which it was a part. The common denominator in their work is the dance, for which practically all of Neidhart's verse and most of Tannhäuser's was composed. And it is in the combination of narrative and comments on the dance itself that the significant influence of Neidhart is seen. From him Tannhäuser learned both how to form smooth transitions from one to the other and how to mix the two so as to produce a

94 Neidhart also employs many diminutives, but he does not use them quite as Walther and Tannhäuser do: to emphasize the contrast between intimate and more formal expression.

95 Examples of Walther's catalogues are found in the Spruch, "Die wisen ratent, swer ze himelriche welle," where six highwaymen on the path of life are listed, and in the Spruch, "Ich muoz verdienen swachen has," which names six counsellors.

96 Among those who stress Tannhäuser's dependence on Neidhart are Meyer, pp. 62-63; Reuschel, p. 654; and F. Mohr, pp. 60-62. Conversely, Siebert, Der Dichter Tannhäuser, pp. 32-33; and Ehrismann, pp. 265-66, do not think the influence of Neidhart on Tannhäuser was significant.
humorously incongruous effect. This exploitation of the grotesque he got from Neidhart, but Tannhäuser's grotesqueness is more refined and less striking. The same thing can be said of his other violations of the conventional minnesong tradition. When he refers to parts of the female form which are not mentioned in the older courtly lyric and when he tells of sexual intercourse, he does so to surprise, rather than to shock his audience. Such references in Neidhart's songs are often intentionally crude, in keeping with his unpolished characters. Tannhäuser makes no use of dialogue, which is so important in many Neidhart songs, but he does add to the folksy nature of his dance Leiche by speaking of the dancers by first name or nickname or by addressing them directly — devices characteristic of the older poet.

One of Tannhäuser's compositions, his first Leich, was apparently directly inspired by a Neidhart song ("Owe, lieber sumer, diner zieze bernden wünne") in which Duke Friedrich II is praised as the last refuge of courtly joy. Both works are divided into eulogy and dance sections and have several minor motifs in common.97 In most respects, however, they are quite different. Neidhart's crusade song and Tannhäuser's first Spruch cycle also have several elements in common: they stress the pleasures left behind, the difficulties of the pilgrimage, and the sea which separates the narrator from his homeland. But one takes the form of a message to sweetheart and friends and the other that of a soliloquy on the nature of life.

One critical opinion states that Neidhart's influence on Tannhäuser was negligible and that the similarities in their works are the result of the effect of the folksong on both of them.98 Others also assume that Tannhäuser drew extensively from this source for his dance Leiche and dance songs. This school of thought believes that the folksongs which accompanied dancing in the thirteenth century were humorous, rather uncouth, and openly erotic;99 their form was supposedly quite simple and their rhythm somewhat irregular. And Tannhäuser's frankness in sexual matters, his uncomplicated strophic patterns, and the occasional dactyls in his iambic lines are assumed to be a part of this folksong heritage. Such Tannhäuser conceits as that which associates the joy of the dance with spring and love and that which insists that only the happy should come to the dance are likewise attributed to the folksong. In addition, certain expressions which appear in the dance sections of his Leiche and minnesongs may have been standard formulas in the popular dance songs of Tannhäuser's time. These include the summons to the dance, questions as to the whereabouts of the dancers, a roll call of girls' names, the invitation to be happy, the reference to the end of the

99 F. Mohr, p. 62, and Siebert, Tannhäuser: Inhalt und Form, p. 12. However, J. Wahrer, in a review of Siebert's book in ZfdPh, 28 (1896), 385, maintains that the "indecente Schilderung der Reize der Geliebten" was as foreign to the folksong as to the courtly minnesong.
dance, an admission that the dancers are displeased that it should end, calls of “heia hei!”, and the assertion that a fiddle string or bow has broken.\textsuperscript{100}

It is highly probable that Tannhäuser's dance sections were significantly influenced by the popular dance songs of his day, and it is even likely that he introduced the most typical folk expressions as an ironic contrast to the formal language of the courtly minnesong. However, in estimating the effect of the folksong on Tannhäuser's verse, one must not overlook the fact that no thirteenth-century folksongs are extant. Indeed, all that we surmise about their nature is based on that material in the songs of Tannhäuser, Neidhart, and others which to modern ears sounds folksy.

The important sources from which Tannhäuser drew were Wolfram, Walther, Neidhart, and the noncourtly dance song of his day. In addition, he is said to have borrowed from Bruder Wernher, Herger, Neifen, Raumsland, Sigeher, and Veldeke,\textsuperscript{101} but these poets certainly contributed little, if anything, to his art. The influence which Tannhäuser exerted on later poets, although no doubt considerable, is more difficult to determine. The mere existence of such an unrealistic literary convention as \textit{Frauendienst} is an invitation to parody, and one probably should not assume that all of the numerous \textit{minne} parodies which followed those of Tannhäuser were inspired by him. The courtly songs which tell of the consummation of love and those which give risqué descriptions of feminine charms might also have had other models than his songs. However, the style which characterizes Tannhäuser's treatment of these and other matters is sufficiently unique for his time that one can in some cases detect specific influences.

The most significant influence of Tannhäuser's verse can be seen in the dance \textit{Leiche} of the priest and nobleman Ulrich von Winterstetten, one of the most prolific of all the minnesingers. Although highly talented with respect to metrics and rhyme, Ulrich lacked originality in subject matter and borrowed quite freely from other poets, especially Walther, Wolfram, and Tannhäuser. Three of Ulrich's five \textit{Leiche} are traditional \textit{Minneleiche} which present in many variations the lover's lament. They contain nothing to indicate that they were sung to dancing, but they may have been. The other two (III and IV) are dance \textit{Leiche} in Tannhäuser's manner, with nature introductions, references to the dance, admonitions to the dancers to be happy, a roll call of the girl dancers, the cry, “heia hei,” and the breaking of the fiddle string. The main change is that Ulrich substitutes a declaration of love and a lover's lament for Tannhäuser's narrative. Other differences are that Ulrich preserves the tradition of conventional \textit{minne} and includes no consummation of love, irony, or parody. Nevertheless, the lament is not very sad and the overall mood is lighthearted, in keeping with the occasion.

\textsuperscript{100} Siebert, \textit{Tannhäuser: Inhalt und Form}, pp. 16-21; F. Mohr, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{101} Wolff, p. 359, mentions Wernher and Herger; Wallner, rev. of \textit{Der Dichter Tannhäuser}, by Johannes Siebert, p. 177, lists them and the others.
Although Ulrich’s debt to Tannhäuser for his dance *Leiche* is generally recognized, one critic attributes the similarities to the hypothetical formulas of folksongs.\(^{102}\) However, since the works of the two share distinctive words and phrases which have nothing to do with standard formulas, one must assume that one was directly influenced by the other. In his third dance *Leich* Ulrich, who uses almost no French, employs an unusual French word which appears in a Tannhäuser dance *Leich*. Also in the third *Leich* Ulrich adds to the motif of the breaking string by saying that his heart will break with it, and in his fifth *Leich* — which does not mention dancing — the heart replaces the string and breaks as he cries, “heia heil!” However, the connection between heart and string is already established in Tannhäuser’s third *Leich* when the narrator speaks of his deeply wounded heart just before the fiddle string breaks.

Ulrich borrowed from Tannhäuser not only for his *Leiche*, but also — to a lesser degree — for his songs. In the latter’s first *minne* parody, the lady fair desires the grail; in Ulrich’s Song II, she is said to be as desirable as the grail. Tannhäuser’s second *minne* parody has in its refrain the lines: “Ich han den mīrt. swc si mir tūt. dc sol mich alles dunken gōrt”; while the refrain of Ulrich’s Song V goes: “Mīn frouwe Ist guot, swie sī doch tuot mich ungemuot.” And Tannhäuser’s favorite description of his lady, “ir zimt wol dc lachen,” frequently characterizes that of Ulrich, most closely in the lines of Song XVIII: “Wer gesach ie frouwen līp/ der ir lachen alsō wol gezāme?”\(^{103}\) Many other verbal parallels can be seen in the works of the two poets.

A second thirteenth-century poet who was in some respects a pupil of Tannhäuser was the wandering minstrel, Meister Boppe. Their relationship is especially apparent in the latter’s single minnesong, a parody which imitates Tannhäuser’s second *minne* parody, using the same format, including some of the same impossible tasks, and even beginning with the same line: “Mīn frouwe diu wil lonen mir.” One has the impression that the composition is a parody of a parody, that the poet assumes his audience knows Tannhäuser’s song and is attempting to show he can think of even more fantastic demands for the lady to make. A more significant influence on Boppe’s verse, however, is seen in his use of repeated, parallel phrases and of catalogues, literary devices which are developed to a distinctive trademark of the author. One of his *Sprüche* begins eight successive clauses with “ob”; a second starts ten clauses with “barminge”; another begins thirteen phrases with “durch”; a fourth introduces sixteen clauses with “die milte”; and a fifth uses “die kerge” as the subject of seventeen clauses in an eighteen-line stanza. Other *Sprüche* employ parallel repetition to a lesser, but still noticeable extent. Boppe’s catalogues are even more imposing, and sometimes resemble those of Tannhäuser in content as well as in method. His *Spruch* I, 22\(^{104}\) presents a long list of the virtues and talents of famous men —

\(^{102}\) Kuhn, p. 110.


\(^{104}\) The designations of Boppe’s *Sprüche* are those appearing in Friedrich von der Hagen’s
Solomon's wisdom, Absalom's beauty, Virgil's magic, etc. — which are worth less to him than the affection of his sweetheart. This recalls Tannhäuser's fourth *Leich* and its register of the beautiful women of history and literature who were no better endowed than his loved one. In *Spruch* I, 25, Boppe counts off the European lands from whose princes he has received no pay, and then names two from whom he has hopes of support. One thinks at once of Tannhäuser's sixth *Leich*, which parades the living and dead rulers of Central Europe, grades them on their generosity, and ends by promising to name the one of those living who most deserves praise. Boppe's *Spruch* I, 26 lists the nationalities of mighty kings of Europe, Asia Minor, and North Africa, as does Tannhäuser's fifth *Leich*. Also reminiscent of this *Leich* is Boppe's *Spruch* I, 24, which recites the thirty-seven lands (sometimes incorrectly) whose kings were slain by Joshua. Among many other Boppe catalogues are a list of the virtues of Charlemagne, an inventory of God's creation, and a flood of terms of abuse which are directed at an adversary.\(^{105}\)

In addition to minne parody, repetitions, and catalogues, the influence of Tannhäuser on Boppe can be seen in the latter's tendency to mix truth and fiction by inventing birds, animals, precious stones, mountains, and lands. Boppe's exploitation of his own poverty for humor in *Spruch* IV also reminds one of the older poet, especially since he gives a long list of improbable happenings which will come to pass before his poverty is alleviated.

The works of a number of other thirteenth-century poets contain echoes of Tannhäuser. The Viennese merchant, Jans Enikel, praises Duke Friedrich in his *Fürstenbuch* with language drawn in part from Tannhäuser's first *Leich*. Several of Konrad von Würzburg's nature introductions, especially that of Song XXI, are based on Tannhäuser's Song VIII. Both the nature introductions and the natural love of the songs of Count Konrad von Kirchberg remind one of Tannhäuser, as does also the summons to the dance, the listing of the given names of fifty-three girl dancers, and the question as to the whereabouts of dancers in his Song V. In addition, Steinmar and Marner,\(^{106}\) Taler, Friedrich der Knecht, Neune, Johannes Hadlaub, Duke Johann von Brabant, and Duke Heinrich von Anhalt\(^{107}\) are said to have been influenced to some extent by Tannhäuser.

Also poets of the late medieval period were familiar with Tannhäuser's verse. The fourteenth-century Meister Altswert copied his style and used some of his subject matter. And mastersingers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries reworked


\(^{106}\) A survey of the subsequent development of cataloguing among the later minnesingers and the master singers is given by Roethe, *Die Gedichte Reinmars von Zweter*, pp. 317-18.

\(^{107}\) Siebert, *Tannhäuser: Inhalt und Form*, p. 97.

Oehlke, pp. 42-45.
the first of his minne parodies (IX) and the first, second, and fourth Spruch of his first Spruch cycle (XIII). A mastersong lists him as fourteenth among the old masters, and a citizen of Magdeburg in 1558 places him nineteenth in a long register of medieval poets. The Kolmar Liederbuch contains four songs in “Tannhusers haupt ton od gulden tone.”

By the end of the sixteenth century Tannhäuser, together with the rest of the Middle High German poets, was forgotten and remained so for two centuries. When he and the others were finally discovered, it was not by performers seeking to expand their repertoires, but by scholars and writers, who were intent on creating a medieval past according to preconceived, Romantic ideas. They believed the unselfish service of ladies to be not only the dominating literary motif of the secular medieval lyric, but also a significant factor in the actual life of upper-class society. These scholars missed the clever, erotic ambiguity in the language of courtly minne, and it took on for them an idealized quality which originally it never had, even in the verse of such an anemic theorist as Reinmar von Hagenau. They could forgive Walther his so-called Mädchenslieder, because the love stories in these songs transpired — they maintained — in a noncourtly setting and formed, in essence, folksongs. Even Neidhart could be tolerated, because his specifically peasant milieu removed him from the courtly scene. However, Tannhäuser, with his outspoken parody of minne, his frankness in sexual matters, and his failure to place his “excesses” in a markedly peasant society, could neither be misunderstood nor forgiven. Irony and humor were qualities which the interpreters of the Middle Ages had not sought and did not wish to find, and Tannhäuser, when not completely ignored, was branded as a decadent and uninspired composer of vulgarities and obscenities.

This evaluation of the poet prevailed throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, with criticism of his verse usually turning on its lack of idealism and alleged immorality. In 1869 Joseph Haupt damned Tannhäuser as a talentless composer of mechanical jokes, and some three decades later Richard Meyer maintained that it was precisely his poetic limitations which had made him a humorist, that what had ended in parody had begun as an awkward imitation of the masters. Tannhäuser was called a true epigone of medieval Romanticism, a thoroughly prosaic person who lacked the “inner form” of the true poet (Dichter). A similar insistence on measuring Tannhäuser according to the conventions which were the object of his irony continued on into the twentieth century. He was castigated for a lack of moral force even when granted poetic talent, and criticized for incoherence when that was

108 These are printed in Siebert, Der Dichter Tannhäuser, pp. 227-31.
109 Hagen, IV, 888, 892.
110 Ludwig Uhland, Schriften zur Geschichte der Dichtung und Sage, IV (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1868), 259-86, gives an account of the mastersingers’ use of Tannhäuser’s Töne.
111 Haupt, p. 315.
the particular effect for which he had striven. As late as 1934 Anton Wallner was suggesting that Tannhäuser's reputation among his contemporaries and with the mastersingers must have been based, not on his verse, but on his melodies.\(^{114}\)

But Wallner was behind the times, for others had begun to realize that courtly *minne*, either as cultural ideal or as mere literary convention, was too insubstantial and limited to dominate the medieval love song indefinitely. And some scholars had come to see that much of the best of medieval literature is amusing and should be judged by criteria specific to humor. In 1913 Ferdinand Mohr correctly indicated Tannhäuser's position in the history of lyric verse when he classed him with Walther and Neidhart as one of the three most original and versatile poets who undertook to revitalize the old courtly minnesong with new elements.\(^{115}\) And in 1931 Werner Lennartz protested that Tannhäuser's parody was not the coarse expression of inordinate presumption, but a fine smile of irony, carefully shaped and superior, which springs from his lines now that we can see what the experiential world of the minnesong was really like.\(^{116}\) Soon afterwards Johannes Siebert expressed the general view of recent scholarship when he asserted that we would have to rank Tannhäuser higher than previously now that we had to judge him as the representative of new sentiments and a new attitude toward reality, rather than as an imperfect epigone of courtly art.\(^{117}\)

The tools of Tannhäuser's irony were not unusual, and its sources were the obvious ones: the works of the most popular epic poet and the two most popular lyric poets of the medieval period. However, he was no mere imitator, for what he borrowed was worked into an art which was intrinsically his own. Tannhäuser was an innovator in several respects. He composed the first direct parodies in lyric verse of the idea of service of ladies; his were the first songs with a courtly milieu — except the dawn songs — to give a frank account of love's fulfillment; he initiated the use of repetition and catalogues as a deliberate stylistic device in lyric verse; and he was the first — as far as is known — to discuss the quality of food and drink in a song. If one were to assume that all *minne* parody, glutton songs, and drinking songs stem from him, then his impact on the lyric verse of the later medieval period was equal to that of Walther and Neidhart. And even if one considers only those works which show more specific influences of Tannhäuser, it is still apparent that his songs were in circulation for several centuries. In the modern period, his irony was offensive to the early, Romantic scholars of the minnesong, but it eventually found acceptance and appreciation. Nevertheless, the imprint which Tannhäuser left on modern literature was the result of a legend rather than of his verse.

\(^{113}\) Rottauscher, p. 39.

\(^{114}\) Wallner, rev. of *Der Dichter Tannhäuser*, by Johannes Siebert, p. 177.

\(^{115}\) F. Mohr, p. 68.


\(^{117}\) Siebert, *Der Dichter Tannhäuser*, p. 38.