

The Art of Recognition in Wolfram's *Parzival*

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1

Possibilities

If this is a difficult book to read my plea must be that it deals with a difficult text. Wolfram was quite conscious of the difficulties he created for many of his listeners, for he said of those he dismissed as *tumbe liute* that *sine mugens niht erdenken* (1,17). If we accept the implied flattery that we belong with the *wiser man* rather than the *tumbe liute*, then we cannot avoid the obligation of *erdenken*, of thinking through Wolfram's *Parzival* to its ultimate conclusions. In doing this we may rightly ask, as did Wayne Booth of the search for irony,¹ just how far we can take this process. Certainly not as far as did the late Mergell, for whom not one detail in the whole work was out of place in a fine mesh which connected it with everything else,² for this would mythologise Wolfram as much as in the *Wartburgkrieg*, where even the magician Klingsor attributes supernatural assistance to the poet: *Ich wil gelouben, daz den list | ein engel vinde, oder daz der tiufel in dir ist.*³ Yet the danger of such an extreme, as long as we are aware of it, need not stop us following the poet's invitation, seeing how far he provides us with the means to *erdenken* his work, how far his clues take us in this intellectual quest.

As might be expected of a poet who sets great store by his own ability (cf. 4,2ff.) and who composes primarily for the *wisen* in his audience, Wolfram makes considerable demands of his listeners. Some may doubt whether a German audience around 1200 could live up to such demands and may therefore suspect that we are imposing on the work a degree of complexity foreign to the literary situation in which the poet worked. Such doubts have been voiced about the ability of a medieval German audience to cope with the

1. Booth, *Irony*, p. 190.

2. Cf. the critical comments of Henzen, *Parzival*, pp. 192 and 214, and Schröder, *GRM* 40 (1959), 330.

3. Cf. Ragotzky, *Studien*, p. 53, and Johnson, *Beauty*, p. 273.

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difficulties of irony,⁴ and an ability to respond to complicated aesthetic demands of any kind has even been denied to medieval German listeners on principle.⁵ The best reply to such arguments is to ignore a dogmatic *parti pris* and to pay attention to the text.⁶ If the poet builds into his text points which demand a complex response, then we must assume such a response, as a possibility catered for if not always as a fact realised, on the part of the medieval audience. If a sophisticated artistry presupposes a wish or hope to train at least some members of the audience to appreciate it, we must recognise that the medieval courtly poet did not regularly compose in the abstract, without any chance of contemporary appreciation.⁷ How much he hoped for close attention to his words is shown in Chrétien's *Yvain*, where Calogrenant addresses his audience in a way we should have expected from the narrator in his prologue, appealing for more than just perfunctory listeners (150: *Cuer et oroilles me randez! | Car parole oie est perdue, | S'ele n'est de cuer antandue*).⁸ That Chrétien is speaking for more than himself alone is confirmed by the adoption of the same appeal in Hartmann's *Iwein* (249: *man verliuset michel sagen, | man enwellez merken unde dagen. | maneger biutet diu ôren dar: | ern nemes ouch mit dem herzen war, | sone wirt im niht wan der dôz, | und ist der schade alze grôz: | wan si verliesent beide ir arbeit, | der dâ hæret und der dâ seit*).⁹ To listen not just with the ears, but with the heart or mind is the precondition of Wolfram's invitation to *erdenken*, to think out the implications of his narrative.

The way in which I have chosen to follow up these implications involves combining five different approaches. These are the

4. Mertens has expressed doubts about this on the grounds of the sophistication of contemporary response it presupposes (*ZfdA* 106 (1977), 350, fn. 5). The question to ask, however, is not whether we are prepared to attribute this in theory to a medieval audience or not, but whether the evidence of a medieval text takes us towards that conclusion.
5. E.g., Huby, *RG* 6 (1976), 17. On Huby's whole approach and his dogma of the *adaptation courtoise* see my review, *MLR* 65 (1970), 666ff., and especially the demolition performed by Wolf, *GRM* 27 (1977), 257ff.
6. Cf. Wolf, *GRM* 27 (1977), 262.
7. See Hellgardt's justified criticism of what, in the case of numerical symbolism, he calls 'literarische Bauhüttengeheimnisse', *Grundsätzliches*, p. 27.
8. On the function of Calogrenant's 'prologue' as an unexpected replacement for the poet's see Gallais, *CCM* 7 (1964), 491.
9. Cf. Ragotzky and Weinmayer, *Identitätsbildung*, pp. 215 and 226. On *herze* as the seat of the intellectual faculties in Hartmann's *Büchlein* see Gewehr, *Früh-scholastik*, pp. 112ff. See also Kaiser, *Textauslegung*, pp. 19f., on a passage from Gottfried's *Tristan*.

narrator's use of a point of view technique, one specific problem concerning the medieval reception of his work, a procedure best described as 'revealing while concealing',¹⁰ the technique used in naming characters, and the theme of recognition in *Parzival*. A brief survey of what is meant by these approaches will show that each has come up for discussion before, but not always taken far enough or free of misinterpretation, and nowhere in combination with one another, as the following chapters attempt to do.

The narrator's point of view technique

Although much work has recently been done on Wolfram's narrator, none of it answers the questions raised by a combination of the five approaches just mentioned. Pörksen restricts his analysis to *Willehalm* alone, Curschmann discusses the function of the narrator in *Parzival*, but goes no further than the first six Books, whilst the usefulness of Nellmann's survey lies more in his factual presentation of material than in interpretation.¹¹ Moreover, each of these scholars tells us simply about the information which the narrator passes on to his listeners, whereas what will concern us more is the rate of instalments by which this information is fed to us, allowing us sometimes to share the narrator's omniscience, but sometimes forcing upon us the relative or total ignorance of a character in the narrative. This shifting technique thus operates with a shift in the point of view from which we are allowed to behold events.

How this point of view technique enables the listeners to recognise the facts of a situation which may escape the characters can be seen in the preliminaries to Keii's joust with Parzival when lost in his love rêverie. Keii judges by externals: since this knight is visible with upright spear (290,12: *mit ûf gerihtem sper*), this must represent a challenge to combat (290,7: *der gerte tjoste reht als ê*). That Keii is wrong in going by appearances, however, is made clear to us by the narrator's comment that Parzival is lost to the world outside (290,26: *der truoc der minne grôzen last*), so that a wish for combat is far from his thoughts and the way in which he grasps his spear must be purely fortuitous.¹² Yet this very gesture, wrongly interpreted

10. Cf. Poag, *Mære*, p. 72.

11. Cf. Pörksen, *Erzähler*, p. 235, *s.v.*; Curschmann, *DVjs* 45 (1971), 627ff.; Nellmann, *Erzähltechnik*, *passim* (for a criticism of two details of his interpretation, see below, pp. 28ff., and for a third, Christ, *Rhetorik*, pp. 47ff.).

12. On the full implications of this gesture, see below, p. 126f.

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by Keii but explained to us by the narrator, can also illustrate how careful we must be in assuming a difference in point of view between ourselves and a character. When Gawain looks in the magic *sûl* at Schastel Marveile and sees a knight approaching (592,21ff.) we are shown things from Gawain's point of view,¹³ but are then given a detail about the distant knight's intentions (592,30: *nâch im diu reise wart getân*; 593,6: *tjostieren was sîn ger*) which apparently cannot be known to Gawain and must therefore come from the narrator. But the reversion to Gawain's point of view after this¹⁴ shows us that he can indeed see enough to be able to judge of the other knight's intentions: from the fact that he rides *mit ûf gerihtem sper* (593,24) Gawain surmises that Lischoys is seeking combat (593,27), so that, as the new ruler of Schastel Marveile, Gawain regards such an armed approach as a direct personal challenge (594,15ff.; 595,3f.). Unlike Keii, Gawain interprets appearances correctly, so that what appeared to be a narrator's interpolation about Lischoys is in fact a reflection of Gawain's thought processes in which his reading of the signs, unlike Keii's, in no way differs from the narrator's omniscient view of things.

The use of a point of view technique by Wolfram's narrator is nothing new in the medieval romance, for we also find it employed by his German predecessor, Hartmann,¹⁵ and in his French source, Chrétien's *Perceval*. Indeed, the difference in this respect between Chrétien and Wolfram has been regarded as a major formal distinction between their two works. With very few exceptions¹⁶ Chrétien has organised his narrative on an inductive principle, beginning *in medias res* in the forest scene so that we know as little of Perceval's origins as he does himself and leading us, together with the hero, by gradual stages from the unknown to the known.¹⁷ This narrative principle is fully adequate to the theme of an inexperienced youth to whom the world presents a sequence of discoveries which he has to make, but by presenting events from Perceval's initially restricted, but slowly widening point of view Chrétien has ensured that his audience's progressive enlightenment largely keeps pace with the

13. Cf. 592,22 (*sach*), 24 (*schouwen*) and 25 (*dûht in*).

14. 593,10 (*sach*), 22 (*sach*) and 23 (*her*).

15. Harms, *Kampf*, pp. 124 and 129, has shown how in the case of Erec's second combat with Guivreiz and of Iwein's with Gawein the narrator informs his listeners who the combatants are, whilst they themselves remain in ignorance about their opponent.

16. One example is adduced by Bertau, *Literatur*, p. 775.

17. Cf. Frappier, *Chrétien*, p. 174, and *Graal*, pp. 64ff.

hero's. By contrast, Bertau suggests that Wolfram has abandoned this technique in favour of a narrative in the natural (chronological) order, in which the questions raised by Chrétien's opening scene have already been answered in Wolfram's preceding narrative and in which, as far as possible, everything is named at its first appearance.¹⁸ I think that Bertau sees Wolfram's technique too much as an absolute contrast with Chrétien's, for in taking over this subject-matter the German poet was partly bound to a similar technique of progressively enlightening both hero and audience, even though he complicates the structure of his work in that the audience's progress towards enlightenment need not always be at the same pace as Parzival's, there are occasional vantage-points from which they can see further ahead than the hero.¹⁹ We shall have ample occasion to discuss such cases, but for the moment it may suffice to register that the point of view technique plays a central rôle in how we are to view things in the German romance.

This last point needs to be stressed, if only because the importance of point of view has not always been realised in interpretation. Sometimes this is because a failure to distinguish between what the narrator tells us and the information available to a character can lead to a straightforward error, as Weigand has shown in the case of Fourquet at one point.²⁰ The French scholar criticises Wolfram for concluding the combat between Parzival and Orilus in Book V without having his hero reproach his defeated foe for being the killer of Schionatulander and the enemy of his dynasty, and draws far-reaching conclusions from this omission. Weigand rightly rejects these conclusions and the hypothesis on which they rest, for although in the course of the episode we learn from the narrator that the hero's opponent is none other than Orilus,²¹ it is nowhere suggested that Parzival too was apprised of this. Nowhere in the dialogue between Parzival, Jeschute and Orilus which is reported to

18. Cf. Bertau, *Literatur*, pp. 779f.

19. How far Bertau's statement (p. 779: 'Alle Dinge werden möglichst gleich bei Namen genannt') is from being true, even just in the literal sense, I hope to have shown in *Namedropping*, pp. 116ff., where I discuss the interval between the introduction of several characters in *Parzival* and their naming. When Bertau also refers in the same context to the complex kinship relationships of the work (p. 780), it needs to be stressed that these are made clear to the audience only very gradually. On the kinship affiliations of Gawain and Parzival and on the listeners' slow enlightenment on these see below, pp. 151ff. and 214ff.

20. Weigand, *Parzival*, pp. 88, fn. 18. Fourquet's argument occurs in his *Wolfram*, p. 128.

21. See below, pp. 118ff.

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us is this opponent's name actually mentioned, and if Parzival comes to recognise Jeschute and therefore to realise that his opponent must be her husband, this takes him no further since the name Orilus was not mentioned by Jeschute in her earlier meeting with Parzival or mentioned elsewhere as that of Jeschute's husband.²² Parzival has therefore no occasion to link what he has learned of the knight called Orilus with the knight he has just defeated, they are connected only for us because the name is used by the narrator in his comments on each scene, so that the correct interpretation of the combat depends on our realising that what is revealed to us is concealed from the protagonist.

On other occasions failure to take this kind of distinction into account leads rather to an emphasis which can give rise to a false impression, as with Parzival's first visit at the Grail-castle. Schröder says of the atmosphere of grief and suffering here that it could not possibly have remained concealed from the visitor, and quotes several details to substantiate this,²³ but these details are comments made by the narrator to his listeners and as such unavailable to Parzival.²⁴ The hero can see the grass in the courtyard (227,10), but is not privy to the explanation given us (227,9 + 11: for grief no tournaments are held here).²⁵ Grief is conveyed to us by the narrator's choice of descriptive adjective in the case of Anfortas (230,30: *der wirt jâmers rîch*) and his retinue, of whom it is expressly said that they concealed this by putting on a front of courtly rejoicing (228,26: *die trûregen wâren mit im vrô*). Even the most emphatic remark about Anfortas's sickness (230,20: *er lebte niht wan tôude*) is again made by the narrator to us, at a point before Parzival has even been received by his host,²⁶ so that on two scores it is withheld from him. This is not to say that no hints at all are given to the hero, for that would make his understanding of the situation impossibly difficult, but what is suggested to him is much less than what we are expressly told.²⁷ By means of these narratorial com-

22. Jeschute thus refers to Orilus simply as *mîn man* (132,12), whilst Sigune's reference to Orilus by name (141,9) is silent about his being the husband of Jeschute.

23. Schröder, *ZfjA* 100 (1971), 121.

24. See below, pp. 93ff., and also Hirschberg, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 128 and 160.

25. Even the later explanation (242,4ff.) quoted by Schröder is given by the narrator to his listeners and, since it bypasses Parzival, is strictly irrelevant.

26. Only in 230,21ff. does Parzival enter the hall in which he joins his host. See below, p. 110.

27. The first explicit hint to Parzival of the suffering at Munsalvæsche (229,17) is carefully given little emphasis (cf. below, p. 95), so that 231,23ff. is the first explicit and emphatic indication which he receives.

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ments the listeners are enabled to recognise the vital fact of the situation earlier and more emphatically than can Parzival. This technique confirms what Bertau suggests about the difference between Wolfram and Chrétien, but such an insight is blurred if we argue that Parzival is just as well apprised of the facts as we are in our privileged position.²⁸

Elsewhere the different amounts of information available to listeners and character are clear only when we pay heed not just to the information itself, but to the sequence in which it is gradually released. In her discussion of Orgeluse²⁹ Zimmermann interprets Cundrie's hint in Book VI that the adventure awaiting Gawan at Schastel Marveile will be a 'Minneabenteuer' (318,15ff.) as suggesting to the listeners that the reward of love will be granted him by Orgeluse rather than by any of the queens at that castle, because each of these queens is closely related to Gawan. This argument correctly states the facts of the narrative, but it is based on a retrospective knowledge supplied by later stages of the action, it is not knowledge on which the listeners can call when they first hear the Cundrie episode recited.³⁰ Soon after Cundrie's announcement Gawan in fact learns who these four queens are by name (334,16ff.) and realises how closely related they are to him, but at this point these names mean nothing to the listeners, who learn only very much later that they are relatives of Gawan.³¹ In short, Zimmermann's statement is correct as an assessment of the total course of Gawan's quest for the adventure of Schastel Marveile, but invalid if it is meant to recapture the audience's reaction on first hearing a recital of the Cundrie episode. But this example also suggests the limitations to Bertau's absolute contrast between Chrétien's and Wolfram's techniques, for whereas in the episode of Parzival at Munsalvæsche the listeners were supplied with infor-

28. Hirschberg, *Untersuchungen*, p. 123, has also criticised Curschmann's suggestion that the scene of Parzival at Munsalvæsche is depicted 'ganz aus der Perspektive des Helden' (*DVjs* 45 (1971), 636). Although Curschmann rightly goes on to talk of another perspective which the narrator opens up for the listeners, his examples confine this to a view of the narrator (Abenberg, Wildenberg, his poverty), he nowhere suggests that the perspective revealed to the audience also concerns the events at the Grail-castle, thus putting them in a superior position to Parzival.

29. Zimmermann, *Euphorion* 66 (1972), 141.

30. This is not to say that the position may not be drastically different at a second recital, but Zimmermann is not considering this possibility at this point. On the way in which a subsequent recital can alter the audience's reception of a particular episode or detail see Green, *Irony*, pp. 259ff.

31. See below, pp. 151ff.

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mation withheld from the hero, now in the case of Gawain's adventure they are denied vital information which is available to him almost from the outset.

Another example of the need to pay close attention to the point in the narrative where an informative statement is made by the narrator is provided by Cundrie's second appearance before the Round Table, when she announces that Parzival has been called to kingship of the Grail. Schroedel has drawn attention to some of the links between this scene and the occasion when Cundrie first appears, to denounce Parzival before the same company.³² He mentions verbal links such as *noch* and *dennoch* (780,15: *si fuorte och noch den selben lîp*; 780,19: *ir ougen stuonden dennoch sus*) and a detail which echoes her appearance when she first appeared by the Plimizœl (780,24: *si fuorte ân nôt den tiuren huot | ûf dem Plimizœles plân*). All such parallels are quite correct, but what they leave out of account is the fact that these explicit links are made by the narrator only after Cundrie has cast aside her hood and been recognised (780,7ff.), whereas before this point other parallels have been made only implicitly,³³ so that it is left to the listeners to recognise their force, to suspect a connection between the two scenes and to see that Cundrie has entered the scene again. As with Chrétien's overall technique, the narrator expressly mentions Cundrie's name only at the point when the Round Table realise her identity (780,11), but unlike Chrétien he also gives us hints, however concealed, to recognise her before this point.

These illustrations of the narrator's point of view technique suggest that we have to ask not merely how much we in the audience know by contrast with a character in the action, but also at what points in the narrative sequence such information is released to us by the narrator. This last point is also particularly important in connection with the medieval reception of Wolfram's work.

The medieval reception of 'Parzival'

Under this heading I wish to take up a point once made in passing by S. M. Johnson, but nowhere developed to the extent which it merits.³⁴ He observes, when discussing the carefully orchestrated surprise which Gawain organises in Book XIII, that this surprise is

32. Schroedel, *Erzählen*, p. 106.

33. See below, pp. 250ff.

34. Johnson, *GR* 33 (1958), 285f.

largely spoilt for the modern reader by the detailed information and explanations given by present-day editors. We thus learn from footnotes the identity of a new character and the salient points in his biography as soon as he appears in the text, whilst the medieval listener received his information in carefully controlled instalments, dependent on how much the narrator was prepared to let him know at any point. The medieval listener therefore received his rations of enlightenment from the narrator, acting as the poet's mouthpiece, so that he was under the poet's indirect control and was brought by stages towards full awareness only as the poet thought fit, whereas we today are subjected to the whims of an editor who blurts out all at once what was originally meant for gradual release. Two examples may show how the editor's concern with factual helpfulness can conflict with what the poet has in mind.

Towards the end of Book III, when Gurnemanz recounts the fate of his three sons to Parzival, he mentions the circumstances under which Schenteflurs met his end (177,30: *dâ Cundwir âmûrs | lîp unde ir lant niht wolte gebn, | in ir helfer flôs sîn lebn | von Clâmidê und von Kingrûn*). At this point the Bartsch-Marti edition has a footnote commentary on the first line, telling us that *dâ* refers to the place where Condwiramurs rejected her suitor and specifying this place as the city of Pelrapeire, soon to be the site of the action in the following Book.³⁵ Being thus apprised in advance by the editor, the modern reader knows when he comes to 180,24f. in Book IV (*dô vander | die stat ze Pelrapeire*) that the city reached by Parzival belongs to Condwiramurs. By contrast, neither the medieval listener nor Parzival himself can have realised this at this early stage. This can be shown by the fact that no mention was made at the close of Book III of Brobarz or Pelrapeire (either by the narrator or by Gurnemanz), so that their early mention in Book IV (180,18 and 25) is not enough to provide a link back to what had been recounted by Gurnemanz. Conversely, whereas the name of Condwiramurs had been mentioned by Gurnemanz, she is not at first referred to by name when Parzival arrives at Pelrapeire.³⁶ By withholding any explicit link between these two scenes the narrator ensures that his medieval listeners are not just provided with information, but are

35. Bartsch–Martí, fn. to 177,30.

36. On the anonymity in which the narrator initially keeps Condwiramurs in Book IV see below, p. 73, and on the careful avoidance of any informative link between Gurnemanz's words and the start of the Pelrapeire episode see below, *ibid.*, but also p. 84.

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invited to *erdenken* the implications of the clues he does give them and to reach their conclusion independently. I do not of course wish to deny the relevance and helpfulness of such explanatory editorial footnotes, but would stress that they constitute a difference between our reception of the work and that which the poet had in mind for his contemporary audience. As with Zimmermann's remark about Gawain's 'Minneabenteuer' with regard to Orgeluse rather than the four queens at Schastel Marveile, we can only assess what the narrator has in mind with his audience at any point if we disregard what we learn retrospectively from a reading of the whole work, whether our own or the editor's.

Orgeluse also plays a rôle in my second example. When in Book IX Trevrizent explains how Anfortas was wounded he relates that this was a punishment for transgressing the rule of chastity by involving himself in a love-affair, but takes care not to mention the name of the Grail-king's mistress, saying only that he *kôs im eine friundîn, | des in dûht, mit guotem site. | swer diu was, daz sî dâ mite* (478,18ff.).³⁷ The hermit may have his own reason for silence over this (he shows courtly tact in not mentioning the lady's name in this kind of context and since her identity is unimportant he sees no point in unnecessary scandal), but so has the narrator in keeping his listeners as ignorant as Parzival. By releasing this information three Books later (616,11ff.: Orgeluse tells Gawain that she had once sought to gain vengeance for the death of Cidegast by accepting the love-service of Anfortas, who was wounded as a result) the narrator has carefully placed this delayed piece of information in close conjunction with another revelation (618,19ff.: still seeking vengeance, Orgeluse had later also set her cap at Parzival, but met with failure). This conjunction of two revelations brings it forcefully home to us how different Anfortas and Parzival are in this respect, how easily Parzival avoided the temptation to which Anfortas succumbed, in other words in how much better and safer hands Grail-kingship will be with him than it was with Anfortas. The force of this contrast is conveyed to us by the close conjunction of these two revelations in Book XII, so that here we can observe the narrator serving his own ulterior purpose by having Trevrizent keep silent about the lady's name for reasons of courtesy in Book IX. But all

37. The narrator, too, preserves discretion when he later refers to Anfortas sending a gift to Orgeluse (519,27: *dô sande der sîeze Anfortas, | wand er et ie vil milte was, | Orgelûsen de Lögroyt | disen knappen kurtoys*) by attributing this innocuously to generosity, rather than to the special nature of their relationship.

this is jeopardised by the kind of footnote we find in the Bartsch–Marti edition, where the hermit’s tactful reticence is commented on by the revelation that this is a reference to Orgeluse de Logroys.³⁸ This may be factually correct and helpful for the beginner, but why should this consideration take priority over the poet’s intentions with his audience? Only by disregarding what the editor thrusts upon us can we learn to appreciate the poet’s technique.³⁹

Revealing while concealing

Under both the previous headings we have come across cases where the narrator equips his listeners with some information, but not enough for them to grasp the whole situation at once, so that he may be said to be ‘revealing while concealing’, a phrase which I take from Poag.⁴⁰ Something similar has been suggested at greater length by Harroff,⁴¹ who makes the point that the underinformed hero is accompanied by the underinformed listeners who must attempt to interpret the narrative as it unfolds without at first grasping that the narrator has placed certain vital facts in inconspicuous positions, thereby concealing them.⁴² By making the listeners privy to certain events as they occur, whilst withholding from them their overall significance, the narrator creates for them a tension between knowing and not knowing as real as it is for Parzival himself.⁴³

38. Bartsch–Marti, fn. to 478,20.

39. Other examples which can be illustrated from the Bartsch–Marti edition include the following: fn. to 257,4 (the editors disclose the identity of Jeschute in advance, cf. below, pp. 119ff.), fn. to 333,30 (they reveal that Parzival descends from the Grail-dynasty on his mother’s side, cf. below, p. 217), fn. to 334,19f. and 21f. (they tell us in detail of Gawan’s kinship with the four queens at Schastel Marveile, cf. below, p. 153), fn. to 574,5 (we are reminded that Arnive is Gawan’s grandmother, contrary to the narrator’s technique of keeping this still concealed from us, cf. below, p. 154), fn. to 778,13 (the anonymity of the new arrival before the Round Table is broken by our being told that it is the Grail-messenger, cf. below, pp. 252f.). In the same edition Book XV is headed ‘Parzival und Feirefiz’, so that the identity of the unknown knight whom Parzival soon encounters is revealed to us in advance, again in contradiction to the narrator’s technique (cf. below, pp. 246ff.).

40. Poag, *Mære*, p. 72.

41. Harroff, *Wolfram*, *passim*.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 2f.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 61. When making the same point elsewhere (pp. 2f.) Harroff also effectively quotes Booth, *Fiction*, p. 293: ‘Leave the reader to choose for himself, force him to face each decision as the hero faces it, and he will feel much more deeply the value of the truth when it is attained, or its loss if the hero fails.’ I have made a similar point in connection with *Parzival* when discussing the pedagogic implications of irony (*Irony*, p. 388).

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How careful we must be in applying this insight is demonstrated unwittingly by Harroff when he argues that the listeners are deliberately put in the same position as the hero in his encounter with Ither, so that they too are ignorant of the red knight's blood-kinship with Parzival.⁴⁴ This is certainly true of Parzival, for he learns that he has unwittingly killed a kinsman only in the course of his conversation with Trevrizent, but it cannot be claimed that this is also a revelation for any but the less attentive listeners. Although he makes demands on their memory and perspicacity, the narrator certainly makes it possible for them to realise, at the time of the encounter, that the contestants are related to each other.⁴⁵ The significance of the references making this conclusion possible is not just that the narrator carefully establishes this kinship between Parzival and Ither (*via* Arthur), but that he gives his audience the means of realising this at the time when these two meet. Admittedly, this can only have been clear to the percipient and retentive listeners, but it was for them that the poet ultimately intended his work and it was they whom he wished to train to an even greater degree of critical receptiveness.

Our knowledge that Parzival and Ither are kinsmen is not given us by the narrator bluntly and emphatically all at once, but the facts on which it is built are conveyed discreetly in various stages which we have to correlate with one another if we are to grasp the significance of this encounter.⁴⁶ As with the narrator's point of view

44. Harroff, in both the instances just quoted (pp. 2 and 61), illustrates his point by a reference to the Ither episode. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 43: '... throughout the entire Ither episode Wolfram has given his audience only that information which was available to his hero, concealing from them any information about the blood relationship involved'.

45. See below, p. 83.

46. This interpretation of the encounter between Parzival and Ither differs from the approach of Velten, *Plan*, who uses such scattered references in the romance to throw light on its piecemeal genesis and the inner chronology of the separate Books. He argues in terms of a change in overall conception as the work progressed, deducing, for example, from the narrator's early silence on Parzival's kinship with the Grail-dynasty that the poet had not conceived this idea and from the later revelation of this relationship that he had by Book IX begun to operate with it. Significantly, Velten nowhere discusses the 'Bogen-gleichnis' or other passages in which the narrator alludes to his technique of consciously deferring the release of full information until a predetermined point (see below, pp. 27ff.). His thesis also suffers from the fact that, written in 1956 before work on the narrator in *Parzival* had been done (see above, p. 3, fn. 11), he makes no distinction between Wolfram the poet and the narrator. In the light of this distinction it is impermissible to suggest that, because the narrator is silent on a point, this means that Wolfram himself is ignorant of it (e.g.

technique we have to consider not merely what information is passed on to us by the narrator, but also the fact that it is released by stages or in instalments.

The importance of such a piecemeal revelation can be seen in the way in which it is made clear to us that Parzival is the beneficiary of preternatural guidance at the start of his journey, from Soltane to Munsalvæsche, and on a different level even afterwards. The poet's methods have been analysed in detail by Wynn,⁴⁷ who sees them comprising suggestions that the hero's single-minded effort, the haste and speed of his travel, take him along the correct path, as well as the use of gradation to strengthen the impression that he heads unflinchingly for the next event that awaits his coming. For Wynn, who is concerned to establish no more than the fact of preternatural guidance, it is perfectly legitimate to collect all the evidence that points in this direction, without further differentiation, but for anyone who is analysing the narrative technique by which this impression of guidance is given to the listeners it will instead be necessary to realise that the narrator suggests guidance by remarks which are deliberately ambiguous and only later allows us to grasp their full implications.⁴⁸

If the different problem with which she is concerned justifies Wynn in the use of a method which ignores the stages in which information is progressively released, the same cannot be claimed of what Mergell has said of the 'Blutstropfenszene' in which Parzival is reminded of his wife and which he regards as a token of God's grace extended to him (282,30ff.). He describes these words by Parzival as a 'Verherrlichung der göttlichen Führung . . . , der sich Parzival auf allen Stufen seines Weges, vom Waldleben bis zur Gralsszene and zur zweiten Begegnung mit Jeschute, unterworfen weiß'.⁴⁹ This statement may be true of this particular episode where the hero expressly acknowledges divine intervention, but we cannot infer from this that he is equally aware of the divine assis-

Velten, *Plan*, p. 48) or that his knowledge of the source did not yet extend that far (*ibid.*, p. 64). When Velten says that Wolfram was not so much a conscious planner, but wrote rather as the spirit took him (pp. 130f.), he stands apart from all recent research. Rejecting this view does not commit us to the opposite extreme of Mergell's mythologising or even to the suggestion that Wolfram is nowhere guilty of self-contradiction.

47. Wynn, *Speculum* 36 (1961), 393ff.

48. I have discussed the nature of these ambiguous remarks, and the way in which they are progressively clarified, in different contexts on several occasions: *Weg*, pp. 11ff.; *Viator* 8 (1977), 174ff.; *Irony*, pp. 150ff.

49. Mergell, *Parzival*, p. 89.

tance granted him at all other stages since his departure from Soltane. The position is more complex than this, instead of Mergell's unchanging state we have a threefold pattern: a first stage in which the listeners know for certain as little as Parzival; a second stage in which they realise more than he does; and a third stage in which the hero once more draws level with them. The result of this shifting pattern is that the listeners, sharing ignorance with Parzival, are invited to make his experience their own, but are also given the superior knowledge with which to ascertain his ignorance. The narrator's technique of concealing and revealing information by instalments draws his listeners now closer to the fumbling Parzival, now closer to the poet's omniscience. It is a technique more complex than either Mergell's suggestion or Bertau's view that Wolfram's method is simply the direct opposite of Chrétien's technique of progressive enlightenment.⁵⁰

The technique of naming

Under the second heading we saw that the narrator could sometimes withhold a piece of information by leaving the named identity of a character (Condwiramurs, Orgeluse) still in doubt. Whenever earlier scholarship was engaged with the problem of the names used in Wolfram's works, it was above all questions of etymology and sources which claimed most attention,⁵¹ whilst more recently aesthetic questions lie behind the renewed interest in the poet's use of names,⁵² as is also the case with recent work on the same problem with Chrétien and Hartmann.⁵³ Of special relevance to the question of revealing and concealing is the fact that the narrator in

50. Although the Bartsch–Marti edition (fn. to 333,30, commenting on 333,27: *schildes ambet umben grâl | wirt nu vil güebet sunder twâl | von im den Herzeloyde bar. | er was ouch ganerbe dar*) says quite simply that Parzival was descended from the Grail-family on his mother's side, this is by no means made unequivocally clear at this point, and in fact the listeners have to wait considerably longer for final clarification. See below, pp. 214ff.

51. Cf. Bartsch, *Germanistische Studien* 2 (1875), 114ff.; Heinzel, *Parzival*, pp. 1ff.; Martin, *Kommentar*, *passim*.

52. See Boesch, *DVjs* 32 (1958), 241ff.; Rosenfeld, *Gestaltung*, pp. 203ff. and *Herkunft*, pp. 36ff.; Fourquet in the FS for E. Hoepffner, pp. 245ff.; Lofmark, *Wolfram-Studien* iv, pp. 61ff. I have also discussed some of the functions of Wolfram's use of names in *Namedropping*, pp. 84ff. and in *Naming*, pp. 103ff.

53. On Chrétien see Kellermann, *Aufbaustil*, pp. 61ff.; Bezzola, *Sens*, pp. 33ff.; Ziltener, *Chrétien*, pp. 51ff.; Kelly, *Sens*, pp. 151ff.; Le Rider, *Chevalier*, pp. 94ff. Cf. also Duggan, *OL* 24 (1969), 112ff., and Schwake, *GRM* 20 (1970), 338ff. On Hartmann see Harms, *Kampf*, pp. 129f.; Mohr, *ZfdA* 100 (1971), 73ff.; Ruberg, *Schweigen*, pp. 187f., 193f., 216ff.; Steinle, *Kennzeichnen*, *passim*.