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# From *antlütze* to *Angesicht*: Identity, difference and the existence of the individual in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* and Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's *Der abentheurliche Simplicissimus Teutsch*

by

Brent James Holland 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Germanic Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics

Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies

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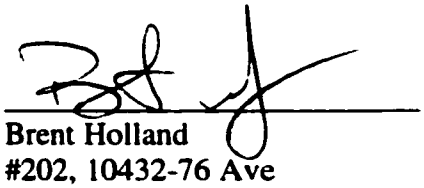

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "From *antlütze* to *Angesicht*: Identity, difference and the existence of the individual in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* and Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's *Der abentheurliche Simplicissimus Teutsch*" by Brent James Holland, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Germanic Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics.

Dr. Holger Pausch

Dr. Marianne Henn

Dr. Andrew Gow

April 9, 2002

## Abstract

The notion of cultural identity has always been an intriguing property of human society. The product of the confluence of discursive economies and fundamentally a function of language, identity embodies prevailing schemes of social order. At the center of this framework of cultural economies and culturally intelligible language lies the body, a sort of permeable membrane between internal and external, which serves as the locus of identity production and reproduction. Of course, the type of identity with which we are today most familiar is that of the individual, but while we are becoming quite aware of the relationship between the configurations of the modern body and the individual, the cultural body of earlier periods is less familiar. Examining the body and its affects in Wolfram's *Parzival* and Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, for instance, reveals a much different vocabulary of identity, ranging from corporate identity to the first murmurings of individual differentiation.

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Once again, I owe you all my greatest appreciation.

## Table of Contents

## 1.1 Identity and the modern individual

The concept of individual identity, with its intricacy of function and seemingly limitless permutations, has provided a rich topic of discussion for scholar and layperson alike. Ultimately synonymous with the individual[1] itself, though, and this is a very important point, not with individuality,[2] it is difficult to overstate the integral role which it plays in modern culture.

The identity of the individual, in a few words, can be understood as the semantic field surrounding the subject *I*, a field that is constantly present throughout history and which formed concomitant with the formation of the Indo-European language to divide the world into subject, object and predicate. Naturally, the content of this semantic field has changed with time, and its expression as an identity along with it, and yet, surprisingly, no substantial, definitive corpus of work has yet addressed the question of the dynamics of identity formation and identity change in its entirety throughout human history.[3]

As individual identity continues its seemingly inevitable ascent to the pinnacle of organizing principles in modern society, the need to answer the question of its origin clearly gains a measure of urgency. For better or for worse, the romantic notion of the rugged individualist has become a kind of founding myth of the modern age, infiltrating even the most mundane aspect of daily life, and setting the individual in a

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[1] Here I would draw a distinction between the individual, who is simply a representation of numerical singularity, and the individual, who displays all the necessary physical and psychological attributes, which one customarily affords the term.

[2] I prefer to view *individual identity* and the *individual* in terms of the culmination of a cultural process, taking into account their place in relation to the greater whole. *Individuality*, on the other hand, tends to be employed as a subjective expression of a person's differentiation from the whole, but is vague and indistinct.

[3] See the fundamental essays "Individuum/Individualismus," "Identität/Unterschied," "Ich," and "Subjekt," in *Europäische Enzyklopädie zu Philosophie und Wissenschaften*. Ed. Hans Jörg Sandmüller. Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1990.

place of prominence unknown in any previous civilization.[4] Indeed, as a byword for such notions as inner growth, freedom, and creative expression, the exploration and promotion of the rights and privileges of the fully realized individual now define the modern conception of the *summum bonum*.

Yet, as central a concept as individual identity clearly appears to be, in the waning years of the late twentieth, and the waxing years of the early twenty-first century, it has come to a significant crossroads in its development. The adaptation to social conditions peculiar to post-modern society has threatened the integrity of its strictly modern conception, and it has become, therefore, increasingly difficult to speak of individual identity as a *de facto fait accompli*, that is, as a concept whose hegemony is guaranteed.[5]

Contemporary trends towards mass consumerism, computerization, and cloning,[6] combined with an accelerating desire and ability to demystify the universe through technology, ultimately prove antithetical to the fundamental belief of the individual that they are unique and non-duplicable. As mystery, myth, the personal, and the interior disappear in favour of the measurable, the externalized and the factual, the form, if not the nature, of identity must undergo a forcible change. Gone,

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[4] As Colin Morris observes, "it is true that Western culture, and the Western type of education, has developed this sense of individuality to an extent exceptional among the civilizations of the world" (1).
[5] While the body provides the battleground for this crisis, the media, consumer culture and the individual him/herself are its complicit combatants. As Featherstone notes, "advertising helped to create a world in which individuals are made to become emotionally vulnerable, constantly monitoring themselves for bodily imperfections which could no longer be regarded as natural" (175). Ironically, the principle for this relationship is the resurrection of the old inner/outer paradigm of beauty, which dates back as early as Plato. Once a visible reflection of inner beauty, i.e., a good soul, outer beauty now has become self-referential, literally a virtue unto itself. This contrariness of purpose manifests itself, according to Featherstone, in the ascetic body, which seeks "spiritual salvation" (170), and the body of the consumer, which seeks an "enhanced appearance and more marketable self" (171).
[6] Cloning presents a particularly unique challenge to the continued existence of the individual. It not only reproduces an exact duplicate of a body, but more importantly, it produces a blank body yet un-inscribed by social media.

for example, is the nineteenth century individual, who was a product of the emphasis on the validity of personal experience, self-development and reflection. In its place, stands the fragmented, post-modern, *fin-de-siècle* incarnation, the direct result of those very de-individuating processes mentioned above,[7] and perhaps it is not the result of this change, but rather the change itself that ought to tell us something about the nature and origin of identity.

### 1.2 Advertising the myth of nature: preserving the modern individual

Despite the increasing threat of mechanization and digitalization posed to the humanist individual, society seems unwilling to simply acknowledge the growing inviability of the modern conception of a singular, hermetically unique identity

There are, of course, valid reasons for this, the most prominent of which is our striking reliance, as a society, on individuals as the smallest indivisible unit of economic and social efficacy, a role previously occupied by the family unit. The alienation of individual identity would consequently sound the death knell for time-tested economic, social, and political regimes, which not only provide a vision of what is desirable, be that freedom, intellectual progress, material wealth etc., but also a framework within which this vision is achievable. The chief operating principle of democracy and free enterprise, for example, is the notion of individual autonomy.

By necessity, individual identity has had to develop an adaptive strategy for survival, and it has achieved this in a rather unusual way, that is by becoming a function of the two greatest tools of modern power discourse, consumerism and

[7] Of course, the conflict between human and machine goes well beyond the 20th century, as the Luddites of the Industrial Age demonstrate. Today, however, the level of biomechanical integration extends beyond the factories and fields into our offices, cars, homes, and even into our own bodies.

media. The first of these, consumerism/materialism, represents the new socio-economic basis of society, for without being cynical, we now live in a world dominated by multinational logos, brand names and objects with purely fetishistic value, where the different dimensions of identity are often expressable as a function of the multitude of consumer choices. Correspondingly, the language of identity has gradually, and almost imperceptibly, transformed itself from a languid vocabulary of wants, desires and yearnings into the impatient urgency of needs, which demand immediate gratification. No longer satisfied with wanting a holiday, a computer, or a car, for example, we now convince ourselves that we patently need these things, and we begin to define ourselves largely according to their accumulation.

Of course, as the Scylla is to Charibdis, so the media is to consumerism, and the ability of media images to drive the appetite of the consumer is well known. Yet, media representations achieve more than the promotion of goods and services, they also provide a means for reinforcing the production of identity through the infusion of an organic model, which is compatible with the purportedly organic nature of our identity. In the masterful hands of an advertiser, for instance, the binding constraints of mundane reality suddenly become fluid. Theoretically able to assume any shape, the mediated world is, oddly enough, most often transformed into a very predictable alternate reality of 'spring fresh' clothes and unlimited sexual availability, a dimension in which one bite of a particular brand of ice cream transports one from the concrete dullness of the anonymous city into a lush and verdant meadow.

Clearly, while the products themselves are not important, the basis of their appeal is. The consistent appellation to images of nature or to purportedly natural

processes (i.e, sexuality) produces a kind of conceptual transference of mythologies between the illusory world of the advertisement and the surprisingly illusory world of identity. Flatteringly juxtaposed against the grey, oppressive urban collective,[8] the 'natural' world is regaled as a place where individual expression is not simply permitted, but rather actively promoted, and where the individual, a sort of *homo naturalis,* can reclaim a birthright bestowed by nature itself.[9] As this process demonstrates, people are uncomfortable with the notion that identity does not emanate from within, but rather is the imposition of something from without.

The alluring simplicity of this image of the individual's bucolic origin nevertheless belies a significantly more complex system of culturally determined referents. In the words of Michel Foucault, power always attempts to conceal itself, and through the mediated eye, the modern conception of the individual has been subtly, but irrevocably, stamped by a power relationship which has subverted its true regulatory regimes into a function of nature, a phenomenon with whose logic and purpose one ultimately cannot argue. Yet, the notion of the 'natural' individual is no mere invention of the modern media, for it simply reinforces what we already believe to know, that each one of us is the source of our own unique dispositions. If so, from where does this specious origin then come?

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[8] The fear is that the unmitigated elevation of the collective at the expense of the individual inevitably brings disturbing results, and it has provided a compelling leitmotif for both modern film and literature. Take, for instance, the gloominess expressed in Orwell's *1984,* Huxley's *Brave New World,* or in Terry Gilliam's *Brazil.*

[9] Of course, the viewer understands, on a conscious level, that the advertisement is not real. On a subconscious level, however, something of the theme and of the subtle message, that this could, or even should, be you, gets through.

### 1.3 Language as destiny

In order to be an individual, one, naturally, must possess an individual identity, and the notion of a unique, self-generated identity has gained such a deceptively persuasive interiority, or *a priori* naturalness, that is has assumed the form of a social necessity. Indeed, the state of being an individual has become as natural as breathing, so much so that in any random sampling of people, most would probably not hesitate to describe themselves as individuals. Ask them, however, by what means they came to be so, and they would be less likely to give a coherent answer without resorting to such language as *inborn, innate, personal* or *natural.* Clearly, we unquestionably do think of ourselves "as people with frontiers, our personalities divided from each other as our bodies visibly are," and we are, at the same time, "aware that there is an inner being of our own; that we are individuals" (Morris 1).

Of course, this inner awareness can only stem from one source. Language is nothing if not the medium of thought, or, according to Jacques Derrida, thought itself, and the discursive production of the semantic word field *individual* is largely responsible for this embedding without our conscious knowledge or complicity.[10] Taking only the previous phrasing of personal identity in terms of *frontiers* and *divisions* as an example, the obvious sense of divisiveness and struggle inherent within these terms communicates the central prerequisite for the conceptual existence of the individual, that is the need to distinguish and maintain a clear boundary between that which lies within and that which lies without. Certainly, such an

[10] As of yet, I am not referring to the construction of identity through power discourse, though I will come to that topic shortly. Here, I am simply interested in exploring how the semantic choices of the word field *individual* not only reflect its supposed function, but also directly shape our perception of that function.

interpretation is not at all at odds with the semantic sense of the word *individual* as a visible singularity.

Naturally, the reflexive relationship between language and language user must also have consequences for the perception of identity itself, for it is a concept both conceived and expressed purely in linguistic terms. Through the employment of polemical terms such as self/other, inner/outer, or within/beyond, the language of identity establishes semantic binaries, which emphasize identity and difference, and each pair of terms represents the two fundamental antipodes in the dialectical relationship of society, that between the individual and the group.[11] As is the course of all dialectical relationships, out of the tension between an initial thesis and its antithesis, a synthesis emerges.

At one pole, society consists simply of the interaction of an arbitrary collection of physically separate, but nonetheless, faceless members, where the interaction is important, but who interacts is not. Thus, when one looks into a crowd, for instance, one does perceive a throng of individual *bodies*, but the term *individual* refers merely to number rather than quality. In its antithesis, however, society assumes a much different appearance, now populated with members, each of whom inhabits a distinct *body*.[12] The identity of the individual then is the sum of its differential qualities, and is considered, some would say erroneously, to be the

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[11] Interestingly, Walter Aub (15-18) likens the relationship of individual and society to that between energy and matter. With the two poles mutually co-existing and flowing into one another, the ascendancy of one ineluctably precipitates the descent of the other. Expanding upon the dynamics of this relationship, we can recognize that some historical periods are marked by an ascendance of the individual and others by an ascendance of the collective.

[12] This distinction in plurality should underscore two points. Firstly, the morphological submersion of the word *body* into *bodies* provides a natural metaphor for the problematic relationship ensuing from the individual's own submersion into the community. Secondly, I approach the subject from the point of view that the acknowledgement of individual identity hinges on whether or not the body "is also, and primarily, the self" (Synnott 1).

demesne of that organic core of a person's being which always remains intact and relatively unchanged, regardless of external vagaries, and in complete apposition to society.[13]

Since the fundamental condition of any dialectic is the existence of a spectrum with two diametric poles, neither absolute individual identity nor absolute group identity can ever truly exist, because to eclipse one pole would be to destroy the validity of the other. Consequently, the existence of the individual depends on the production of an identity, which, to a greater or lesser extent, "is generated in the dialectical tension between these two spheres [inner nature & empirical reality]" (Gray 321), but where this tension does not exist, the individual cannot exist either.

### 1.4 The principles of identity construction

In rebuff of an inquiry regarding the relationship between the good of the state and the needs of the monarchy, Louis XIV, the renowned Sun King of France, is said to have uttered the now famous phrase: *L'Etat, c'est moi*. Apart from being a self-justifying validation of rule, however, the sense of indivisible union suggested by his statement also proves an exceedingly fitting metaphor for the conceptual trinity of the individual, which consists of *individual identity*, *individual body*, and the *I*. With each singular *I* continuing to rule sovereign over its own unique domain (identity and body), the apparent unity between the three elements befits the ingrained degree of naturalness that the individual has attained.

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[13] This stability, however, is likely more illusory than real and is prone to collapse. In fact, the Self can become so deluged by the manifold external possibilities provided by post-modern mobility that "individuals, then, may find that they no longer have a central core with which to evaluate and act, but instead find themselves *decentered*" (Grodin & Lindlof 4).

Unfortunately, this dominion is a fallacy. Instead of being an expression of a singular, suzerain, and, above all, personal entity, i.e., the very embodiment of the concept *I*, the individual appears rather more as a *gestalt* synthesis of visibly disparate, but, nonetheless, integrally connected, cultural phenomena.[14]

While language authentically produces the dialectical barrier which serves as the foundation for the development of the individual, this identity cannot continue to function simply as an intangible linguistic extrapolation, but rather it must also make itself visible in or on the body of the individual. When one speaks then of the *individual*, or of *individual identity*, one is, in actuality, referring to a complex consisting of three primary states, the intellectual (identity), the emotional (personality)[15] and the corporeal (physiognomic identification).[16] For our purpose,

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[14] Despite the ever-expanding possibilities for personal expression offered by modern society, be it in art, entertainment, travel or career, I would strongly challenge the notion that modern individuals have had any more success in wresting back sovereignty over their bodies than their medieval counterparts had. Ultimate individuation or distinction from the group is simply illusory as long as society is the final, nay only, arbiter of acceptable modes of expression, and in the words of Ralph Linton, "the so-called free societies are not really free. They are merely those societies which encourage their members to express their individuality along a few minor and socially acceptable lines" (17).

[15] In order to avoid future semantic difficulties, I should clarify the relationship between the terms *identity* and *personality*. Personality refers to a collection of emotional/mental states, which, based on their frequency and duration, become attributions of character describing how a person is (i.e., jovial, morose, carefree etc.). Identity, on the other hand, is a cultural assignation, which identifies a person's particular position within a web of discursive associations. Although statements of identity and statements of personality both have a value assignment, in the case of personality it is primarily contextually determined, whereas identity already carries within itself a positive or negative outcome.

[16] This is, of course, my own taxonomy, and only one of many possible classification strategies. Anderson & Schoening, for example, suggest that the individual is the product of three discourses: identity, subjectivity and agency. Identity, in particular, they conceive as "a unity, a coherence that extends across time and situation," and which "can be the 'essence of the individual' that remains at the core of all particular manifestations" (207). For Stephen Lukes, on the other hand, the four hallmarks of the individual are: dignity, autonomy, privacy and self-development.

*identity* and *physiognomy*[17] are the most important instrumentalities for they are subject to the greatest discursive regulation.[18]

The cultural use and manipulation of bodies,[19] that is the imprinting and reproduction of identity through the three physiognomic vectors, is not only central to understanding how the body navigates the discursive streams of modern society but is equally important in deciphering the codes of construction for bodies in contemporary literature. The modern reader, once trained in the precepts and merits of the individual, soon accepts nothing less from the characters of their favourite books, and character development becomes, in a way, an exercise in harmonizing an author's creative imagination with the readers' expectation.[20]

Literature, in its turn, has responded with narrative strategies and techniques of characterization, which permit the reader intimate insight into a character's drives and motivations and which allow the author to more effectively deliver a wellrounded, psychologically complex literary creation of irrefutable authenticity.[21]

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[17] By physiognomy, I mean all aspects of the external appearance, from clothing and behaviour to the body itself.

[18] This is particularly true for identity, which, although "relatively substantial and fixed, still comes from a circumscribed set of roles and norms" (Kellner 141).

[19] The relatively young discipline of body theory has made the body itself the subject of intellectual inquiry, although it is not without its teething troubles. Caroline Bynum's essay "Why all the fuss about the body?" is critical of the standardized approach towards the body taken by the various disciplines, citing that the term *body* does not refer to an agreed upon set of experiences, behaviours or structures. Porter, on the other hand, decries the general ignorance of the methods by which both individuals and groups controlled and displayed their social bodies down through history.

[20] I am speaking here in generalities. I would not claim that every character in modern literature is an example of a fully realized individual.

[21] Tellingly, techniques such as first person narrative and stream of consciousness writing are comparatively modern and, naturally, neither the need nor the ability to elucidate the inner Self can precede their development. In contrast, Morris, who holds the position that the individual, in fact, emerged in the Middle Ages rather than in the Renaissance, claims that biographies, autobiographies, and novels, forms almost unknown in Classical times, fueled the West's burgeoning interest in what he terms 'personal character' (4). Unfortunately, of the autobiographies that were available between 1050-1200, ranging from Augustine's third century *Confessiones* to Peter Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum* in the twelfth, none were vehicles for individual characterization. Rather, they were didactic stories told in the light of personal experience and were meant to deflect the reader from the path of the individual

### 1.5 Teleology or rupture?

Continuing a moment longer on the topic of literature, Aristotle, the Greek philosopher and logician, once claimed that all good stories must have a beginning, middle and end. If we accept that identity is the unfolding story of cultural transformation, does it too, as Aristotle suggested, have a beginning, middle, and, at some future point, an end?

Of course, the answer to such a question can assume one of two forms depending upon whether one expects the answer to be yes or to be no. If no, then the conception of individual identity becomes one of an unbroken continuum, in which the individual, from the dawn of humanity to Modernity[22], has, does, and always will exist in some form. The theoretical underpinning of this continuum involves the teleological notion of a methodical, historical progression of the 'natural' Self. In view of this progression, the difference between the individual of Antiquity and the individual of Modernity can only be one of content, not of kind. There are, however, a number of fatal drawbacks to this method.[23] While it can adequately account for

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and into the community of God. Morris later seems to admit as much himself when he writes, "in a sense, these books, so far from being an expression of interest in the individual, are designed to point away from him to God" (84). Certainly, it did not lie within the ability of early biographers to grasp and crisply delineate personal character. From her exhaustive study of the historical biographies of the late Roman and early medieval period, for example, Vogt can only conclude that character portrayals remained *schablonenhaft* and nondescript.

[22] I use the term *Modernity* here purposefully, for it valorizes the terms *subject*, *individual*, and even *author*, whereas the post-modern gaze problematizes them.

[23] One onerous proof against this approach is the doctrine of the self-determining or self-responsible moral agent, for it is the belief of every individual that they can steer their fate. For Kant, in particular, self-determination was an indispensable pre-requisite for the kingdom of rational beings and as he writes, "man, and in general every rational being, *exists* as an end in himself, *not merely as a means* for arbitrary use by this or that will" (95). Such a concept is, of course, already inimicable to the literature of Antiquity, whose tragic heroes, for example, were powerless to struggle against their decreed fate. Shakespeare's tragic figures, on the other hand, though not yet fully self-determining, nonetheless, are

quantitative differences or differences in modes of expression, any qualitative differences or differences in the essence of expression destroy the validity of its approach, for it is simply not exhaustive in all cases.

The second, and perhaps most damning, failing is that the integrity of the method depends on the supposition that individual identity is an *a priori* attribute, for only if it comes from nature can it always have been present. Apart from the fact that I have already submitted arguments, which strongly suggest that individual identity is, in fact, an *a posteriori* effect rather than a first cause, there are still other grounds for the dismissal of its validity.

The possibility strongly exists that two individuals could, indeed, turn out to be separated by qualitative differences, or even that one of them could exist while the other does not. Therefore, the only truly logical approach must provide a fundamental basis for understanding how the concept and materialization of individual identity might come to drastically shift or how it might, for example, emerge, submerge and reemerge over time. To accomplish this requires the removal of the individual from the realm of 'natural,' *a priori* phenomena, and its subsequent repositioning as a construct shaped by social discourses,[24] as a manufactured personal dimension ruled

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far more personally involved in their own downfall, caused as it is by their own character flaws. In this instance, Morris justifiably views this distinction as a "concern with individuality" (4).

[24] Synnott remarks, "the body and the senses are socially constructed," and "with different meanings imposed and developed by every age" (1). Similarly, Kay and Rubin deem that our bodies are "assigned to us by social, political or scientific discourses" (3), and are "as much the product, as the site, of experience" (1). For proof that the body is, indeed, a discursive index of social desires, one needs merely to look to the growing popularity of plastic surgery and breast enhancement, or to the modern social pariah of eating disorders. While the confluence of discourses has clearly summoned the individual out of the abyss of nothingness, individual identity could not exist without a highly developed system of legible signs, which create the body as social text, a particularly interesting notion for the textual body, for it exists purely as a linguistic sign. According to Featherstone, "a culture dominated by words tends to be intangible and abstract, and reduces the human body to a basic biological organism, whereas the new emphasis upon visual images drew attention to the appearance of the body, the clothing, demeanour and gesture" (179).

by the interplay of signs which can and do only appear when social forces permit or demand its existence.[25]

Reexamining the examples of the antique subject and the modern citizen[26] in the light of this new conceptualization, we see that differences cannot logically be merely of degrees. Both subject and citizen inhabit bodies, it is true, but they inhabit vastly dissimilar bodies. Those potential attributes, which serve a descriptive and individualizing function within the modern body, are, both in number and in kind, fundamentally different from those that were available in Antiquity. A chameleonic surfeit of identities and psychological states, and the sundry paraphernalia of modern material culture have fired a process of radical differentiation.

### 1.6 Medieval cognitive lacunae

If the assumption, that individual identity belongs to the personal/inner sphere and is part of the indelible human prerogative (i.e., stems from nature), is indeed misconceived, then we must also disabuse ourselves of the notion that the distinct, identifiable, psychologically complex individual of our modern configuration transcends time and geography. Indeed, there are valid reasons for concluding that individual identity has not always been a characteristic of Western civilization.

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[25] Even the lowly suntan is a servant of discourse. In the Middle Ages, for instance, the pigmentation of skin became a status signifier. Where the tanned body was viewed as inferior because it was the sign of a labourer, people with pale complexions demonstrated that they had the resources to remain indoors. In the 1920's, an era of relative material prosperity, the suntan experienced a revival as a sign of athleticism and natural health (Featherstone 180-181). Today, while it is still associated with the 'healthy glow,' warnings from the medical establishment and increasing rates of skin cancer have forced it into a very ambiguous role.

[26] I am consciously drawing a distinction between *subject* and *citizen*, following a nomenclature expounded in Ullmann viii-x. While the *subject* prefigures the individual, the *citizen* is already a fully realized version of it.

As Don LePan, whose particular scholastic interests are self-evident from the title of his book, *The Cognitive Revolution in Western Culture,* notes, there is ample evidence to support the contention that a wide cognitive gap between medieval/primitive and modern Western thought processes exists. This rupture finds its chief expression in a wide array of medieval perceptions and beliefs, which would seem bafflingly non sequitur to our modern sensibilities.[27]

The medieval practice of trial by ordeal, for centuries the preferred juridical method for ascertaining guilt or innocence, is emblematic of this irrationality. Despite the variety of its procedures (oath taking, combat etc.), all ordeals shared one common feature; verdicts were never reached based on rational analysis of the factual evidence of a case. One particular ordeal,[28] for instance, required that the accused imbibe holy water before jumping into cold water with the verdict hanging on whether the accused floated or sank. Unfortunately, and ignorant of the laws of physics, floating was taken as definitive proof of guilt. From this we can only conclude that drowning must have attested to innocence! Clearly, any process, in which weighty issues are decided by arbitrary or impossible occurrences and where proofs of innocence and guilt are equally punitive, would seem to be illogical.

That the medieval mind firmly believed in the validity and the rationale of the ordeal speaks not only to their cognitive level but likely also to the medieval cosmology, which proceeded from two fundamental assumptions about the nature of

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[27] The 1993 film, *The Advocate*, also known as *The Hour of the Pig*, presents just such an example. A dramatization of facts purportedly assembled from medieval court transcripts, the story revolves around a Paris lawyer who travels to a parochial town to accept a job as magistrate and, as his first duty, must prosecute a pig charged with murder.

[28] See LePan 33.

the world. To make any sort of sense of the ordeal, the first and most essential assumption, which the medieval mind would have to draw, is that God both existed and cared and that they as humans occupied a particular place in the universal order. It would then follow that, by dint of this privileged position, there must also have been something inherent in them, which compelled God to judge them, and that something was their soul.

Although random from a modern perspective, the ordeal appears designed to allow God's will to become evident, which, of course, would explain the use of holy water in the ordeal in question. By casting the accused out of the water or by allowing an opponent to smite the accused, He pronounced their guilt or innocence. Ultimately, so long as God was judge, the verdict was fair and binding and its correctness, above all, inviolable.

Although a fine example, the ordeal is certainly not the only logical inconsistency in medieval thought patterns to which LePan draws our attention. He also maintains that the medieval mind showed no capacity to distinguish between past, present and future time, distinctions that the modern mind routinely draws,[29] nor did it employ any concept of expectation or probability, displaying only an illogical grasp of cause-effect relationships, the effect of which is amply evident in the mechanics of the ordeals.[30]

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[29] According to LePan, medieval thought processes lacked a historical dimension and were accompanied by a "general use, in speech, of the present indicative tense, without logical connections with past and future" (106).

[30] See LePan Ch. 8. I would suggest that this flawed grasp of the relationship between cause and effect is largely due to the lack of tense distinction. Logically, cause must always precede effect. Of course, where there is no distinction between tenses anteriority is impossible to determine.

Although LePan does not address the specific issue of individual identity amongst medieval or indigenous populations, one thing, nonetheless, becomes clear from his conclusions; the existence of such a diverse, historically distributed cognitive schism allows for the possibility that the absence of a medieval individual identity was due, at least in part, to the fundamental inability of the medieval mind to conceive or perceive it.

From a cognitive standpoint alone, it clearly follows that modern intellectual processes must contain a complexity of thought and of linguistic differentiation which would make any attempt to transpose a uniquely modern conception of individual identity onto earlier time periods and/or other cultures a cardinal error. Yet on the other hand, and especially for this reason, it would be enlightening were we able to trace the permutations of this form of identity back through time, in search of evidence of its existence and the peculiar alignment of social forces which engendered it.

### 1.7 Of text and society: A tale of two realities?

Despite having shed doubt on the uninterrupted continuity of the historically extant individual, the phenomenon of individual identity, nevertheless, must have a temporal, and perhaps even geographical, origin, and that leaves the provocative question of whether it is a strictly modern phenomenon unanswered.

While the modern disciplines of philosophy, psychology, and sociology have accumulated a prodigious body of work which probes, discusses, dissects, and attempts to qualify and quantify the concept of individual identity, these scholastic

works tend to remain esoteric, and are unable, as a result, to exert the kind of influence on the perceptions of the average person which they perhaps deserve. Think how truly strange it would sound, for example, were I suddenly to proclaim that I am an individual simply because I read it in a textbook.

Instead, the ordinary individual's conception of their own identity comes from a much different authority, namely their own sense-datum experience of the world, in which Foucauldian power discourse plays a predominant but naturally, unseen, role. This experiential subjectivity colours both their perception of other individuals as well as their perception of what constitutes identity. Unfortunately, this reliance upon sense impressions as a mechanism for delivering an ordered and meaningful universe leads us into a methodological cul-de-sac as soon as we attempt to apply its principles within a medieval context.

In order to prove that the individual did or did not exist before the onset of Modernity, it is necessary to shift our gaze into the shadowy mists of the past. For obvious reasons, however, first-hand experience of the Middle Ages or of the Early Modern period is utterly denied to us and we are solely reliant on surviving textual or other similar ethnographic evidence. Although, as LePan remarks, the literature of any given period "may provide an exceptionally accurate reflection of the collective representations of a people" (45), due to the fact that it is "shaped by the force of convention, literary convention in the first instance, and social convention in the second" (50), such a conception is not without its epistemological obstacles.[31]

[31] Like LePan (212), we can draw a distinction between popular literature, which reflects the normative cognitive abilities of the average citizen, and literature aimed at a smaller educated elite. The validity of such a distinction, however, falters under the consideration that surviving medieval texts were singularly directed at the elite, leaving the history of the majority of the population largely unwritten.

There is, of course, also the relationship between text and society to consider, and it is this bond, which LePan refers to when he speaks of a literary reflection of people (i.e., society). Its integrity, however, depends greatly on the type of text under deliberation, for the diversity of content and purpose between historical text and literary text is significant. Where historical texts, for instance, aim to illuminate a given period through the ordered presentation of factual evidence such as specific social, political and/or economic formations, conditions, processes etc., literary texts are seldom written as purposive and accurate historiographies,[32] and are, therefore, susceptible to unintentional socio-historical inaccuracies, exaggerations of authorial license, and wishful idealizations.

Despite this caveat, literary texts do prove to be an invaluable resource in reconstructing the hidden cognitive functions and intellectual sensibilities in the societies of other timeperiods, so long as one knows not so much where to look, but rather how to look. Its value resides in the integrity of the reflexive relationship between text and reader, also known as text reception. Though it is unreasonable to expect literary realities to conform verbatim to social realities, texts, as Foucault has extensively demonstrated, must faithfully reproduce the social values and

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Of course, we could, as LePan suggests, "focus on the language itself" (44), but such an approach is also not without its difficulties. Text, for instance, is language, but in the post-structuralist, post-Saussurian era the dominion of sign and referent has been permanently sundered. Language no longer mimics reality, but rather it generates it. Since literature now "as an instance of linguistic utterance, cannot transparently reflect a world outside itself, since that 'world' is only a linguistic construct" (Spiegel 61), its aim becomes directed at "the construction of social meaning, rather than the transmission of messages about the world" (Spiegel 61).

[32] Again, I apply this term cautiously, since both the goals and the methodology of history as a discipline have, of late, come under scrutiny from literary theorists for erroneously projecting modern perspectives/assumptions onto historical events, and for seeking to develop causality, a so-called *grande recit*, between event phenomena. I would hasten to mention, however, that since there are still a great many practicing historians about, this controversy clearly has not sounded the death knell of this discipline. I believe that historical methodology still has something constructive to offer and I will attempt to make some small use of it.

interactions, which resonate intelligibly within the readership, else they are not read.[33] In other words, and formulated in the language of LePan's thesis, a text must produce a level of comfortable association between reader and topic which may not exceed the readers' cognitive ability to process the situational information it presents.

If Foucault's position holds true, then even highly romanticized depictions of social formations, such as those found in medieval courtly literature, can still be informative, for even if an idealized representation of society is not commensurate with reality, it certainly is, nevertheless, a very telling depiction of how that society would like to see itself.[34]

In the case of identity, the consequences of such a relationship for historical research are clear. If psychologically complex individuals populate contemporary literature because it accurately reflects the cognitive expectations of the modern reader, or at the very least, an idealized version of it, then we may also assume that the presence or absence of individual identity in medieval and early modern literature is equally significant. Using the example of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, I intend to argue against the existence of individual identity in the Middle Ages. In its stead, I suggest that medieval textual identity never developed beyond universal cultural paradigms based on social role.[35] Consequently, both the internal and external

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[33] Compare LePan 173.

[34] Jacques Derrida, too, defends the integrity of the text, positing that textual realities cannot step beyond the framework of what is thinkable in the society which produced them. Knowing this, we can ultimately make educated inferences about the nature of that society based purely on the studied observation of the inclusions and exclusions of its texts.

[35] This paradigm is evident in the claim that the literary achievements of the Renaissance were contrastingly silhouetted against the "Hintergrund der festgesetzten Typologie des Mittelalters (Ritter, Freibauer, Wirt, Bettler, Pfaffe, Mönch, Nonne, Kaufmann, Zimmermann, Weber, Müller, Schmied usw.)" (Pausch 42).

development of characters remained restricted to a limited stock of routine physical descriptions and normalized modes of conduct.

To counterbalance this medieval example, we must traverse farther afield in the literary spectrum. A consideration of the characters in Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's *Der abenteurliche Simplicissimus Teutsch* should yield a quite different result. Instead of the traditional medieval paradigms, in which every character trait serves only to reinforce the impression of a particular universalized type, we expect to find more fully rounded characters with psychological depth and whose individualizing traits are clearly legible on their bodies. To accomplish this result, we will require an analysis of both texts according to the three physiognomic identity markers: body, clothing, and behaviour. Interestingly enough, all three strategies depend heavily upon optical perception, and considering the cultural visibility of bodies, should only further corroborate the place of the body as a site of identity transmission.[36]

### 1.8 The requisite methodological framework

To this point, we have occupied ourselves with fixing the identity of the individual in a predominantly modern context, but since it is our intent to begin with an examination of the *Parzival* text, we ought also to address the problematic status of its medieval counterpart. Addressing this subject, the political historian Walter Ullmann suggests, for example, that medieval writings deal rather fully with the functions and

[36] It is not by oversight that I have yet to mention perhaps one of the most philosophically intransigent terms often bound with the notion of the individual: consciousness/awareness. It would be suspect to think that, without awareness, one could still speak of individuals. Nevertheless, it is not the concept of awareness, which directly interests us here, for consciousness neither causally precipitates nor precludes the development of the individual.

rights of kings and popes, legislative processes etc., "but of the individual himself one reads extraordinarily little" (viii).

The visible absence of and lack of emphasis on what should be an essential cultural concept illustrates the central obstacle inherent in seeking the individual in the pages of medieval literature, and it is one, which we must endeavor to negotiate. If we are to unequivocally evidence its presence, or absence, as a significant social variable, where then do we start looking for possible footprints of the medieval individual? The intuitive answer would be, of course, to look in those same nooks and crannies where one expects to find traces of the modern individual.

In this regard, the earlier description of the individual as a congeries of cultural and, to a lesser extent, personal instrumentalities, is not only a fitting definition but it also appears to offer an appropriate methodological model for our analysis, particularly in terms of visualizing the intertwining of identity and body as functions of social discourse.

Of course, as the institutions, human economies, and cultural representations of modern society manifestly show, if the concept of individual identity is extant, it will always leave a visible residue in the political, social, economic, demographic, intellectual, theological, and literary discourses which pattern its life and structure its meaning.[37] This residue is as evident in the socio-political notion of the *cult of personality*, for example, as it is in the economic emphasis on the individual consumer or the presence of the individual both as a subject in, and a subject of,

[37] Again, this is evidence of that medieval cognitive gap noted by LePan. Clearly, if a concept such as individual identity is foreign to the intended audience, then it is logical to assume that they would not comprehend its function in the text.

literature, art, and drama. Logically, if the medieval individual were to exist, we ought to see a similar distillation of its presence in precisely the same set of medieval economies. With our approach to its existence being one of skepticism, although important, it is neither exhaustive nor even merely sufficient simply to dash open *Parzival* and proclaim, voila, the individual does not exist here. Rather, it is far more convincing if we can also prove that, at the time, individual identity did not exist anywhere in medieval culture.

To round out this procedural framework, we might also mention two empirical particulars, which are unique to the medieval situation. For instance, it is certainly relevant to note that *Parzival* is an exemplary model of medieval courtly literature, a genre characterized by very specific thematic leitmotifs and written to reflect the desires and expectations of its intended audience, the nobility. When we speak of medieval inhabitants or medieval literary characters then, realistically, we are only speaking of the nobility or of the higher ranks of the clergy, for only they were wealthy and influential enough to make themselves socially visible. Although a particularly prevalent phenomenon in medieval literature, this singular emphasis on courtly life also extends into other fields of medieval endeavour. Essentially, we read and see very little of the poor peasant, and, as a result, whatever conclusions we may draw concerning the presence or absence of medieval individual identity could only ever hope to represent the condition of one very privileged class.

Furthermore, we might also preface our inquiry with a remark to the manifestation of the medieval body itself, that enigmatic entity which stands, so to speak, at the crossroads between Antiquity and the Renaissance. Since the social body

truly is "the prime symbol of the self, but also of society" (Synnott 4), it would be remiss not to include it as a locus of inquiry quite apart from its literary representations.[38] Indeed, while a legible body is key to understanding the literary production of character, the moreso since these bodies are never visible but rather only visualized through descriptive language, a close reading of the body is also integral to any understanding of the cultural validity of the individual in general. In cases where a physical body is not distinctly present, however, we will still have recourse to another type of cultural body, namely the metaphoric body, and as we shall see, its particular conception as a corporate or communal entity found prodigious favour amongst medieval thinkers.[39]

Since the notion of the body and its parts is already inextricably interwoven into the constituent fabrics of its parent culture, however, I will not attempt to treat the body as an object distinct from the discourses, which spawn it, but, instead, will approach it from the point of view of the political, theistic, or economic body.

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[38] The role of the face as social sign must also be included in any survey since it is, at least in its modern incarnation, "the prime symbol of the self" and in it, "we recognize each other, and identify ourselves" (Synnott 73).

[39] The terms *corporate*, from the Latin *corporare* meaning to shape into the form of a body, and *communal*, from the Latin *communis* meaning common, are fitting epithets for the medieval approach to identity and to social organization.

## 2.1 The myth of the *Dark Ages* and the dynamics of high medieval culture

The principal problem which befalls any analysis of medieval culture is, of course, the tendency to speak of the *Middle Ages* as a coherent, organic unity when it is, on the contrary, a disparate and, above all, artificial collection of historicities. Chiefly localized in Western Europe and spanning approximately from the fifth to fifteenth century, the unwieldy scope of the term and the convolution of those currents, events, and processes deemed 'medieval' obfuscate most reasonable attempts to perceive uniformity of thought and action within it and, consequently, make it impossible to speak of a medieval subject with universal validity.[40] To ameliorate this problem to a degree, I shall restrict my inquiry to those changes which affected Germany and, where relevant, France in the period known as the High Middle Ages, circa 1100-1300.

Less homogeneous than its terminology at first suggests, the Middle Ages were also far less static than their equation, in common parlance, with the Dark Ages. Of course, even today, the notion persists that, apart from the privileged nobility, the vast majority of medieval inhabitants endured a wretched existence of servitude and that, illiterate and hungry, they suffered the whims of an oppressively class conscious, socio-political hierarchy and an ironly dogmatic church. While not patently untrue, we must also accept that medieval society, like any society, must have been much more fluid and dynamic than this freeze-frame image is capable of capturing. Indeed, as one scholar noted, "research shows us the Middle Ages less dark and less static, the

[40] Again, refer to my previous explication of the problem of historiography.

Renaissance less bright and less sudden, than was once supposed" (Haskins, *Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* vii).

Mindful of these common impressions, it is not my intention to randomly cobble together this and that historical phenomenon, nor to revise medieval history, but rather to introduce for discussion only those particular events or processes, which might foster or, respectively, hinder the conceptual development of a medieval individual.

### 2.2 A question of politics

The utility of any political system resides, above all, in its position as a locus of social organization and regulation, and considering, as Foucault suggested, that systems of power and law also tend to produce precisely those types of citizens which it can most effectively govern, political economy assumes a new significance vis-à-vis the condition of the individual within it.

The dominance of the concept of the individual in modern society, for example, ensures its prominence within the language of political expression, for it is the very essence of this individual that ultimately lies at the heart of democratic constitutional declarations, which attempt to define and entrench its rights and freedoms.

In contrast, medieval political organization struck no definitive roots into the soil of charters and guaranteed rights of person, and as such, it would certainly appear to be fundamentally detrimental to the emergence and/or flourishing of the individual. In this light, the brief sketch of the medieval political system presented above is just

that, a brief and deficient outline, but it is one upon which we now have the opportunity to expand.

### 2.3 The medieval political background: Feudalism and beyond

In contrast to the modern geo-political bodies of France and Germany, which are nation states characterized by stable borders and cultural hegemony within those borders, the make-up of medieval Germany and France was rather that of a loose association of states, consisting of principalities, bishoprics, duchies etc., which were rife with internecine squabbles. What these diverse states did share, however, was a desire for territorial expansion fueled directly by the necessities of the medieval political apparatus. An outgrowth of the earlier Carolingian system, Feudalism represented a hierarchical political system based on the cession of land in exchange for allegiance.

It would be incorrect, however, to speak of Feudalism as a simultaneously ubiquitous political force in France and Germany. On the contrary, from their initial inception after the dissolution of Charlemagne's empire, the areas of Germany and France travelled distinct paths. Thanks to strong continuity in leadership and a close, but at times problematic,[41] relationship to the Italian papacy, Germany, for example, weathered this disintegration with its central authority still relatively intact. In contrast, France, hastened by the effete leadership of the last of its Carolingian

[41] Certainly, there was not always harmonious agreement between church and state and the tension between the two crystallized during the War of Investiture in the latter half of the 11th century. The conclusion of this struggle saw the Church succeed in wresting control of the election of bishops and archbishops out of the hands of the emperor, an event, which seriously compromised his authority and contributed to the general disintegration of the empire. See Burns, Lerner and Meacham Ch. 11, Thompson Ch.11, and Dill Ch. 1.

kings,[42] fell victim to the tensions produced by strong decentralizing feudal tendencies.

This trend was gradually to change over the next two and a half centuries, however. The ascension of the first Capetian king to the throne in 987, for example, signaled the growth of a stabler, more unified French state,[43] whereas Germany, for a number of reasons,[44] began to descend ever further into the abyss of feudalism, from which it would not recover for many centuries. This tendency to centralization, which would soon make France the most envied and powerful European state of the time, would ultimately culminate in the political phenomenon known as Absolutism. More than simply a shift in political structures, however, this movement would also exert, as we shall see, a particular influence on forms of social identity.

### 2.4 The medieval body politic

In this light, I would like to draw the work of Norbert Elias into the discussion, in particular, his concept of the *Monopoly of Violence,* its role in the socio-genesis of the early modern European state, and the latter's contribution to the inception of the individual.[45]

As Elias elucidates in *The Civilizing Process,* France, from the Middle Ages through to the Early Modern period, experienced a gradual shift away from Feudalism

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[42] See Burns, Lerner and Meacham Ch. 11, Morris 48, and Thompson Ch. 12.
[43] The French throne employed a variety of means to ensure its political hegemony, including the outright purchase of competing territories, inter-marriage, annexation, as was the case with Langeduoc early in the thirteenth century after the Albigensian Crusades, or, in the cases of the former English fiefs of Normandy, Anjou, and Poitou, military conquest. See, in particular, Thompson Ch. 18.
[44] These include the aforementioned War of Investiture, the destruction of Saxony and the removal of the Seat of Power to Sicily. See Thompson 512-516; also Burns, Lerner and Meacham Ch. 11.
[45] It is not so much that Elias' method and assumptions are beyond challenge, but rather that he raises some rather salient points concerning humans as political and social beings, which we might incorporate.

towards Absolutism. This displacement acted as a catalyst for a profound change in the nature of the socio-political relationship between the feudal nobility and an increasingly powerful king, capable of asserting his will to a previously unknown extent.

A system of binding mutual obligations between king and vassals based on land held the traditional feudal order in place. Indeed, the king was often more dependent upon the political or military support of his vassals than vice versa. In the particular case of France, however, as centralization began to erode this system an abandonment of feudal structures became a necessary reaction to the monopolization of power into the hands of one ruler or ruling family. It created a new order in which the vassal was now heavily dependent upon the king and his court,[46] and the Monopoly of Violence comes as a direct consequence of this power shift.[47]

In its broadest application, this monopoly forced formerly autonomous feudal vassals to radically re-examine their relationship to the central monarch and to one

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[46] It was more than simply this amassing of power by the king, which actuated the decline of the nobility, however. The shift in emphasis away from an agrarian barter economy and the increase in urban population density were both cause and effect of the advent of a money economy and the birth of a new social class, the bourgeoisie. With land now no longer the prime unit of value, the importance of producing capital exposed the vulnerability of the nobility, as its members were notably slow to get involved in the windfalls of the new economy. As Thompson states, "the nobles preserved their social prestige but had lost political power to the crown and economic power to the bourgeoisie" (495). Later catastrophic devaluations in land and in currency value caused many of them to fall heavily into debt. This led inevitably to a stronger dependence on the central monarch for their livelihood. Elias remarks that, "as the relative social power of the nobility diminishes with the advance of monetary integration and monopolization, the kings shift some of their weight back to the side of the nobility [via paid positions at court]" (192). With their acceptance of these positions, the monarch could now better control them, for "money payment keeps all recipients permanently dependent on the central authority" (Elias 222).

[47] See Elias 239. With an increasing monopoly of political, economic and military power at his disposal, the king becomes the sole authority, or arbiter, of physical violence within his domain. This means that belligerents, who previously might have settled their disputes through war or duel, can no longer do so without explicit royal consent. More importantly, this control by the State also satisfies a necessary condition for the development of a market economy, for as Elias states, "it [monopolies] is the precondition for the restriction to economic, non-violent means, of free competition" (114).

another. The resultant struggle to regulate their 'drive economies,'[48] first by external threat, later by internal fears, is termed *courtization*,[49] and it is this process which gives birth to a courtly culture dominated by increasingly complex codifications of social behaviour.[50]

For our purposes, the final political structure is less important than its effects upon the appendages of that structure, however, as nobles now had to realign themselves vis-à-vis a new centralized web of interlocutors. Out of the former feudal vassal, who had previously enjoyed wide ranging freedoms of person and action, emerged a courtier, who had to subsume previously unfettered drives to a higher authority, namely the king. Such a re-alignment naturally necessitated a new way of problem solving since the sword was no longer the quick and simple answer.[51]

Unfortunately, the trajectory of the movement between these two political positions has the deceptive appearance of a denial of the seemingly unilateral personal freedom of the feudal lord in favour of a strictly regulated caste-like social system.[52] Viewed from this perspective, it would certainly seem to bespeak a decided tendency away from the individual, rather than towards it. Feudalism, however, was

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[48] I take this to generally mean libidinous impulses.

[49] See Elias 296-98. Courtization represents a process of "advancing integration, increased differentiation of social functions and interdependence" (Elias 88).

[50] Correspondingly, medieval society, from the twelfth century onwards, experienced a great proliferation of books written on the subject of courtly etiquette. Bumke (196-199) mentions a number of such works, from Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina Clericalis* from the beginning of the twelfth century, and von Zirklaere's *Der Wâlsche Gast* ca. 1215 to Tannhaeuser's *Hofzucht* dating from the middle of the thirteenth century.

[51] The need for peaceful conflict resolution gives birth to a new political strategem, that of 'surveillance.' As Elias notes, this art of observation, "is never concerned with the individual in isolation, as if the essential features of his behaviour were independent of his relations to others," but instead ensures that "the individual is always seen in his social context" (274). The ocularcentrism of the terms *surveillance* and *observation* suggests the presence of a courtly 'gaze,' in which visual cues strongly influence social behaviour.

[52] We are also required to keep in mind that these freedoms were strictly the province of the nobility, not of the common man.

clearly both politically and economically a communal enterprise,[53] and increasing social regulation seems to be a necessary component, not in the suppression of individual expression, but rather, in its encouragement within that communal framework.[54] Courtization is, therefore, not simply a description of the process of becoming a courtier, but rather it has much deeper connotations. It is a transformative process whereby coercive social, economic, and yes, political forces necessitate a radical rethinking of a person's position within his/her 'web of dependencies.'[55]

This rethinking, whether arbitrarily or causally, takes the form of a greater opportunity for the development of individual identity and its modes of expression. At this point, however, it would be rather precipitous to proclaim the birth of the individual. The shifting configuration of the aristocratic court, for example, while it provides both a pattern and a *raison d'être* for the potential emergence of individual identity amongst its adherents, by no means represents an exhaustive process. Of course, such an admission suddenly invites a host of other objections to the application of Elias' case for the socio-political becoming of the courtly individual to

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[53] Wherever there is a strict social hierarchy in place, there is also a forced sense of community. If one cannot voluntarily step outside of this influence then one is, by default, a member of it, and according to Elias, feudal relationships display "a strong tendency towards individualization" (60), but this individuation is always "relative to the feudal unit, the guild unit, the class unit, and, again and again, to the family unit" (61).

[54] This process involves becoming "embedded in the human network quite differently from before," and being "moulded by the web of dependencies," to the extent that it "changes the structure of individual consciousness and affects, of the interplay between drives and drive-controls" (Elias 270). Through this process the individual gets "attuned, from infancy, to a highly regulated and differentiated pattern of self-restraint; only in conjunction with these monopolies does this kind of self-restraint require a higher degree of automaticity, does it become, as it were, *second nature*" (Elias 235). The terms *automaticity* and *second nature* would seem to confirm the contention that individual identity is a learned process.

[55] Distinctiveness becomes one particular adaptive strategy for economic and social survival, and is not only characteristic of the courtiers but is also evident in inter-class relations (i.e., between courtier and bourgeois). Attempts at separation often produced concrete results, as is the case with the French sumptuary laws, which sought to curb the social mobility of the affluent bourgeoisie by imposing restrictions on the amount and type of luxury goods, which they could legally possess and consume.

the medieval period, and I shall need to justify the inclusion of his model as an analytical method before we proceed further. I can immediately think of three grounds upon which one might cast the relevance of Elias' conclusions in doubt, and I shall address them in no particular order.

The first objection arises from the fact that Elias posits the development of the courtly individual in the future Absolutist state of seventeenth century France to the detriment of any analytical emphasis on the Middle Ages. Although certainly a valid concern, I would hasten to point out, however, that his emphasis on the beginnings of the individual in the Early Modern rather than in the medieval period only strengthens my argument.

Technically more difficult to rebuke, the second objection is rooted in Elias' particular conception of the individual, who not only functions within a web of dependencies but whose very identity is a function of these dependencies. Though not ontologically problematic in itself, it is difficult to reconcile this conception with that of the individual, who, according to Charles Taylor, believes to have broken free of this web and who now lives in splendid isolation. Since two different types of individual appear to exist or to have existed, is it possible, that Elias overlooked the medieval individual, who perhaps had a less recognizable configuration?

The acceptance of the fact that the parameters and social meaning of the individual naturally tend to change with time abuts my entire argument, and such an approach, of course, must allow for the possibility of the individual existing in the Middle Ages. Possibility, however, is not proof, and while the distinction between the

two definitions does not definitively preclude a medieval individual, it certainly does nothing to promote it either.

Finally, Elias' claim that the conclusions of his study apply only to the example of France, since England and Germany experienced much different sorts of cultural processes, raises the very pertinent question of relevance. Can we, for instance, apply this model to Germany, or must we say that the individual developed earlier in France than in Germany? Of course, the answers are yes and no respectively, for there are mitigating factors, which allow us to expand the relevance of his findings beyond the French case. For instance, although Germany did not attain an Absolutist state like the French, this did not signal a lack of centralized courts within the separate territories, where the civilizing process was undoubtedly also proceeding. The second, and, perhaps, most decisive, relationship between the two cultures, however, was forged on the basis that courtly France became, to a certain degree, the social and cultural model for German court life, and this is reflected by German borrowing in literature and in many other spheres of French courtly culture.[56]

In summary, although we must take a measured approach to applying Elias' conclusions, they are, nevertheless, important in their demonstration of how the

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[56] Bumke states that conditions in France and Norman England were not comparable to those in Germany. In France and England, for example, gradual social changes led to the organic development of courtly society. In Germany, however, the courtly ideal "was adopted to a large extent as a literary import from France" (276) and was not limited "to details of material life and the modern forms of etiquette; it was just as much directed at the transfiguration of the image of society in the ideal of chivalry and love" (276). This transfiguration provided the thematic motif for any number of German works of the period, foremost amongst them *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parzival*, *Iwein*, and *Erec*. This notion of cultural appropriation is misleading, however. While it is certainly true that "für die Ritterdichtung wird die Bindung an französische Vorbilder zur Regel" (Žmegač, Škreb and Sekulić 29), it is equally true that German poets were not in the habit of simply transcribing the French content verbatim. On the contrary, their reworking of the source material meant that although "they sometimes produced romances featuring the same subjects and characters, the Germans are united in rejecting implicitly or explicitly the praise of adulterous love, in glorifying married love, and in subjecting material borrowed from the French to a more penetrating psychological analysis" (Colish 197).

confluence and interaction of multiple discourses, amidst a transformation from feudal to absolutist forms, can necessitate the emergence of a new social configuration, namely the identity of the individual. More significantly, however, his analysis also suggests that the medieval socio-political framework was not yet ready to provide the necessary space or, for that matter, the generative language required for the conception of the individual.

### 2.5 The politic medieval body

According to LePan (80), when a word for describing a particular concept is absent in a culture's vocabulary, it is generally indicative of the absence of the concept itself. In the present instance, this notion has a particular relevance in terms of how the language of medieval political expression conceptualized, on a broader scale, the relationship between ruler and ruled, and on a smaller scale, the state of the political subject him/herself. Plainly, under such circumstances, Elias' sociological model, while an eminently useful tool for drawing attention to the specific combination of political, economic, and social forces, which propelled the gradual shift in emphasis from the medieval subject to Walter Ullmann's citizen, is not equal to this task.

Instead, the key to revealing this language ultimately lies in the medieval propensity to reify political order by appropriating the body as a "ready-to-hand source of allegories of order and disorder," which serves as a "central metaphor of political and social order" (Turner 5), and also as a "privileged site, vehicle, and metaphor of political struggle" (Kay & Rubin 5).[57] In fact, the tendency to clothe

[57] They also sound one note of caution, however, since this particular political 'body' is, essentially, redolent with the "language of privilege, of ruling groups in justification of the order which has

external phenomena in terms of body functions and to utilize the body as an organic template for organization extends throughout medieval society and is indicative of an overarching medieval *Weltanschauung*, one which placed tremendous value on the body as a central and transparent explication of otherwise disordered human experiences. Consequently, if we can determine to what use the medieval body was put, then we can also decipher the state of the subject who was inexorably attached to that body.

From a theoretical viewpoint, the conflation of body and politics achieves two results. On the one hand, it politicizes the body, i.e., brings the body into the purview of politics and in so doing encapsulates the totality of its subjects in the term *body politic*. On the other hand, and more importantly, this newly politicized body, by co-opting functions and relationships once common only to the body itself, succeeds in creating an organic synthesis between bodily regime and political regime, conjoining a product of divine nature with the product of human ingenuity. The natural result of such a hybrid is, of course, the creation of an apparently *a priori*, irrefutable, and self-justifying model of political rule, whose validation mechanism ran along the lines of the following syllogism: if the head controls/regulates the functions of the body because it is the undisputed seat of the intellect, and if the king is acknowledged as the head (*caput*) of secular government, then the king must control the political body (of subjects) with as much natural/divine right as the head does its body. Under such taxonomy, it logically follows that the remaining members of society would also reap

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endowed them with power" (Kay & Rubin 5). Of course, the unwriting, or obvious absence, of the medieval lower classes in historical literature is a damning indictment against any account of the Middle Ages which would purport to enjoy an all encompassing validity.

the benefits, or respectively the disadvantages, of those particular bodily members with which they became associated.[58]

The finest medieval example of this utilization is found by John of Salisbury, whose political treatise, *Policraticus*, exploits the full range of the body's explicatory and validatory powers.[59] Within this body idiom, the prince "occupies the place of the head, and is regulated solely by the judgment of his own mind" (69), and is, furthermore, subject "only to God and to those who act in His place on earth [i.e., the clergy], inasmuch as in the human body the head is stimulated and ruled by the soul" (67).[60] The remaining members of his hierarchy then receive those bodily designations, in descending order of course, which are considered to be most in harmony with their social uses. Thus, to judges and provincial governors he apportions the eyes, ears and mouth, while minor officials and soldiers receive the hands.[61] To those who trade in lucre, i.e., treasurers and record keepers, he ascribes the rather unenviable portions of the stomach and intestines, too much of which, and it is difficult to overlook his moralistic tone here, engenders illness in the body.[62] That

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[58] The distinction between the respective qualities and responsibilities of the head and the body also found purchase on the subject of gender relations. As Blamires notes, the "hierarchical gender doctrine designating man as 'head' and woman as 'body'" (13) was "inherited from patristic writings," which represented "a simple, memorable and conseqently powerful reinforcement of gender hierarchy" (20). The model reinforced the claim to gender segregation for much the same reasons as it authenticated political order, it was difficult to contest based on the current state of theological and natural science inquiry.

[59] According to Bumke (277), although the *Policraticus* followed in the footsteps of earlier Carolingian *Mirrors of princes*, it was not strictly written as a vehicle for princely education. Its ambitious scope included a comprehensive social and political doctrine, one, which would influence later mirrors.

[60] The metaphor of the 'governing' head is popular with Salisbury and makes its reprise in the story of Saul, who was "lifted up over the community of the people upon their shoulders," for no other reason than that, "he who ought to preside over others must extend his heart and head almost as if he were able to embrace the whole breadth of the people" (69).

[61] For the complete hierarchy, see p. 67.

[62] See Salisbury 67.

leaves only the peasants, who, in keeping with their lowly station, and by dint of their putatively close association with the soil, equate to the feet.[63]

After such a description, one might be justified in concluding that John is, perhaps, espousing more than just a justification of contemporaneous political authority, for adjunct to its politicized reference to the medieval *raison d'état*, his hierarchy also functions as an encompassing social and moral model clearly organized according to factors of class and prestige.

Now the one natural enemy to the stability of such a rigid, vertical model of authority is, of course, the threat of rebellion from below, be it from plebes, proletariat or power hungry nobles. Yet, medieval theorists, on two accounts, did not seem to perceive this as a fatal flaw. For one, it was generally acknowledged that only the king, as *caput regni*, combined the necessary *scientia* (knowledge), a trait required for good and just rulership, with the grace of God. Since possessing only one or the other was insufficient, there was, hence, none other than he who could assume this position. According to John, even tyrants, as a result, must simply be suffered.

What is more, John also apparently recognized this potential weakness and took explicit steps to preserve the hegemony of the *caput* by addressing the specific topic of what we might colloquially phrase as 'upward mobility.' Regardless of how harsh or onerous a particular social function might seem, he stresses that every member "be content with his own situation and endeavors, prescribing to urbanite and suburbanite, and also to peasant and rustic, their particular location and endeavors"

[63] The feet demand supervision by the head because they "more often meet with accidents while they walk on earth in bodily subservience" (Salisbury 67).

(10).[64] Even so, as long as this particular body model found favour, this threat would clearly always exist. In fact, both the longevity of this model as well as the continual presence of the threat are attested to by a similar admonition, which was delivered some two centuries later by Jean Gerson, the chancellor at the university of Paris. Addressing the result of potential power shifts within the hierarchy, he stated that, "l'ordre du corps mystique de la chose publique seroit tout subverti" (qtd. in Kantorowicz 219).

This Achilles heel notwithstanding, the obvious advantages of applying this model more than compensated for any shortcomings which were likely more theoretical than real. The fundamental benefit was that political rule, through its association with the body, could be cemented as a sign of unassailable functions purposively bestowed by divinity, for God was, after all, the origin of the human body. This etiological difference was, in fact, indispensable for its conceptual validity, for as Brian Tierney notes, "humans find it consoling to imagine that the order imposed by their rulers reflects a divine ordering of the universe" (8).

Salisbury's body model had, of course, another less obvious asset, namely the intrinsically specious logic of its assumptions, for does not knowledge naturally reside in the head [king], are judges not literally the eyes of the king's law, and are not soldiers much like hands used to actuate the will of the head?[65]

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[64] Of particular note is his admonition that "every person will receive the fruits of nature, labour and industry strictly according to merit. No one will usurp that which is another's, remaining inclined towards love of all without distinction" (11). Interestingly, this meritorious love of all appears to preclude any attempts at distinction.

[65] The symbolic power of this model even survived the close of the Middle Ages, however. Note, for instance, its renewal in Henry VIII's statement, "we be informed by our judges that we at no time stand so highly in our estate royal as in the time of Parliament, wherein we as head and you as members are conjoined and knit together in one body politic" (qtd. in Tierney 83).

In conclusion, Salisbury's model achieves not only an intellectualized affirmation of the moral certitude of the feudal hierarchy but it also provides a confirmation of the one overarching truth in the medieval universe, that of the inescapability of the whole. The lessons of medieval life and of the medieval body itself taught that no single part of the body could survive alone.[66] Indeed, as I have already suggested, the orderly maintenance of such a hierarchy insists upon conformity and homogeneity, rather than individual identity, as its fundamental organizing principle. Part of the process of achieving conformity lies in the subjection of the social body to a visible, paradigmatic stratification, consisting of universal classes such as king, peasant, soldier etc. whose social mobility[67] is vigourously suppressed. The result, not surprisingly, is a communal social structure, which displays a paucity of individualistic emphasis.

Finally, having already established that the individual is as much a corporeal phenomenon as a metaphysical one, the exigencies, on which this vision of social, political, and moral harmony is predicated, are clearly inimical to the individual on both counts. The language of its political expression does not bring the individual into focus, but rather it achieves the opposite effect, the further corporatization of society and its imprisonment in a metaphorical flesh, whose 'natural' laws are just as

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[66] John probably had this interdependence in mind when he wrote that a body without "the aid of the feet does not proceed under its own power, but either crawls shamefully, uselessly and offensively on its hands or else is moved with the assistance of brute animals" (67).

[67] As Elias notes, when "property relations are ossified," it becomes "more and more difficult to rise in society" (58). The likely impact of this ossification on the development of the individual becomes significantly clearer in light of the belief that, "increasing social and geographical mobility and technological change facilitated the development of an egocentric [individualistic] universe" (Synnott 19).

ineluctable as those of its more material role model, and as everyone well knows, the feet can no more rule the body than the head can digest a meal.[68]

### 2.6 Economics, demography and society

From a purely anthropological perspective, humans form societies as an adaptive survival response, in order to secure the basic requirements of life more effectively. How a particular society solves these problems is partly a function of its economic ability, and its economic possibilities are often, in turn, a function of population density and distribution. As was the case with politics, I will need to preface the discussion with a very brief presentation of the economic, demographic, and social changes, which occurred during the period, before attempting to draw any conclusions as to whether these conditions fostered the growth of individual identity.

Medieval economic conditions really embody a tale of two paradigms. In the first, which represents the initial stages of the twelfth century, France and Germany were still mired in a predominantly manorial economy predicated on subsistence agriculture. There were a number of reasons for this, but the most significant limitation was imposed by the scarcity of food. Due primarily to harsh climate conditions in Northern Europe and inadequate farming tools and techniques, the land to yield ratio during this period was extremely poor and agricultural production, as a result, meager. Coupled with the demands of a feudal power structure, the insuperable limitations of this agrarian economy naturally dictated which types of social

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[68] The key to understanding the hierarchical representation of a medieval state appended from the head is to remember that, "medieval physiology conceived of the human organism as a union of like and unlike parts in which the central and higher organs controlled the lower ones" (Camille 70).

structures could flourish.[69] In this case, it was small, decentralized units which thrived at the expense of larger, more centralized ones. As a result, the fundamental economic and social grouping of this society assumed the form of the manor, an isolated, functionally self-sufficient community, producing only for its own needs.[70] What little may have been needed from outside sources was generally acquired through bartering, for money, although known, was not yet in common circulation.

Aside from the obvious limitations imposed by food scarcity, there were other extenuating factors, which kept human communities small and rather remote. The establishment of regular routes of communication and trade between countries, counties and even between manorial communities, for example, was made immeasurably more onerous by factors such as the difficult, time consuming and 'subjective' nature of bartering, the lack of a standardized system for weights and measures, appalling road conditions, rudimentary means of travel, and unsafe highways. Except for the feudal lord, who might travel to and fro between his various seats, the bulk of the medieval population was restricted to a life lived in the isolation of their own particular manorial community.[71]

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[69] According to Elias, the presence of this type of economy had a direct correlation to the style of political rule. Vassals "fed themselves and their retinue from the land with which the central authority had invested them" (16). The fact that the prime unit of production was land, enfiefed to vassals by the central monarch, explains "how indissolubly this specific form of rule [i.e., feudal] and its apparatus of government were bound to a particular economic structure. To make this explicit: as long as barter relationships predominated in society, the formation of a tightly centralized bureaucracy and a stable apparatus of government working primarily with peaceful means and directed constantly from the centre, was scarcely possible" (26).

[70] This was only possible because the satisfaction of material needs, at that time, required no full-scale industrial production.

[71] This isolation seems to have provoked a particular human sociological response. Compare, for instance, the finding that "the ideal of community valorizes the tightly knit, exclusive, highly structured, hierarchical, small town or rural community," in which, "individuals are seen as codependents, mutually complicit, molded into an organic unity of similarity" (Anderson and Schoening 206).

The exigencies of agricultural toil also imposed their own set of restrictions on the peasant population. Limited availability of implements and beasts of burden resulted in an emphasis on community labour and resource sharing.[72] This high degree of interdependence typical of subsistence societies with a low division of labour would certainly suggest one reason why conditions, particularly amongst the working class, did not promote the emergence of the individual, for it was simply not necessary for survival. Subsistence living itself might provide another clue, for it is difficult to find time to ruminate on oneself, to develop Lukes' aforementioned four tenets (i.e., autonomy, dignity, privacy and self-development) of the individual, when one must constantly work to feed oneself and all means of self-improvement are fundamentally lacking.

In the mid to late twelfth century, this old economic and social order was inching towards the verge of collapse, soon to be replaced by a much more dynamic and interactive organization of society. Of the many reasons posited for this change, two, in particular, stand out. The groundwork for this process was initially laid, above all, by gradual advances in agriculture, which helped to maximize crop yields.[73] Since secure food supplies are not only the most basic fundament of economic exchange, but are also indispensable for sustaining dense urban populations, greater per capita yields meant that fewer peasants needed to be involved in actual food production. This freed up manpower that would later be instrumental in urban industrial production.

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[72] See Burns, Lerner and Meacham 294-295.

[73] The innovations included, for example, the introduction of the three field system of crop rotation, which reduced fallow land and thus increased yield, the heavy plough, which saved labour, the padded horse collar, which allowed the horse to exert more force in pulling, and the water mill, which accelerated the turnover of grain into edible products. See Burns, Lerner and Meacham 286-92.

Many, however, would prefer to cast the Crusades,[74] which spanned the years 1095-1291, in the crucial role of the economic and social prime mover of the age, and I am not willing to argue the point, except to say that the Crusading movement likely actuated more dormant potential than it itself created. More than that need not be mentioned though, for we are less interested in how the paradigm change was wrought and rather more intrigued both by its results and by medieval society's necessary adaptive reaction to those changes.

Of course, this skipping to the end, as it were, might seem a strange and abrupt departure from the methodology I have to this point pursued, and I should perhaps just briefly defend this exclusion. The point I was trying to establish in my examination of the political conditions of the Middle Ages, was that the process of political change was more important than the results, especially since the 'payoff' exceeded my timeline by several hundred years. In this case, the results simply outweigh the process, and thus make their elucidation expendable.

Having said that, there is one aspect to the Crusades which merits mentioning in terms of identity formation and the emergence of the individual, and it is a very brief point; that is, the notion of community action. The Crusades offered the first significant opportunity for participation of otherwise disparate social classes in one venture simply because the supposed nobility of the cause transcended all class divisions. While the great bulk of the armies were, of course, still composed of

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[74] Historians have cited a number of inner stresses within Europe at the time of the outbreak of the Crusades as possible reasons for the zeal with which the banner was taken up. Firstly, growing population rates and heavy enfiefment had left land, still the main source of livelihood and the requisite for nobility, extremely scarce. Secondly, the laws of primogeniture had recently been reenacted. Thus, only the eldest noble son was eligible to inherit the family lands. This left, obviously, a large number of disgruntled, disinherited sons who were forced to become itinerant knights. For them too, the availability of land in the East was attractive.

knights and Lords, practically every level of society took part, at some point, in the Crusade, as both the Peasant's Crusade and the Children's Crusade attest. In fact, Westfall Thompson goes as far as to call the Crusades "the greatest expression of that awakening collective consciousness, or the group mind" (380). His use of the terms *group mind* and *collective consciousness* are not antithetical to my emphasis on the communal quality of medieval social formations, and we will be reacquainted with these qualities, or synonymous ones, again and again in different medieval guises.

Consequently, whatever its particular causes, by the end of the Crusading era the outlook of the medieval West had undergone a dramatic transformation in every sector. The development of money as the new basic unit of value and exchange, for example, stimulated international trade, which had previously been hindered by the limitations of a barter economy. This partnership of trade and money also produced the ideal conditions for the development of an infant market economy, whose profitability would later secure the emergence of a new social class, the bourgeoisie. The growing economic preponderance of towns attested to their role as a nexus for commerce and banking, making them also very attractive destinations for rural agricultural labour looking for emancipation from the manor. These new arrivals not only had the effect of increasing the town's population and tax base, but they also created a new, ready-to-hand workforce, which was an essential asset for the further continuance of urban economic growth primarily directed towards industrialization. In time, the continuing intensification of these social and demographic trends would send the remaining vestiges of feudal economic and social isolationism into its death

throes, thus proclaiming the dawning of a new era of greater integration, conglomeration and globalization.

Yet, out of this groundswell of change, new social problems inevitably arose as its distillate. In fact, the very two trends, which were proving to be such a boon for urban economic strength, namely population growth and industrialization, soon began to produce equally baneful side effects, exerting enormous social pressures for which already outdated feudal structures had no contingency. Urbanization, for instance, brought with it the fundamentally new problems of urban poverty, overcrowding, inadequate housing and unemployment.[75]

Industrialization, the counterpart to urbanization, stimulated by the combination of progressing technology and increasingly complex market demands, also imposed its own unique fragmentary demands on society. The requirements of industrial production brought vocational diversification and heterogeneous, more task-specific work units where formerly there had been only a homogeneous workforce.

Naturally, such obstacles required a cultural response either through the imposition of strict regulations or through some other form of mediated amelioration. Since feudal structures had already proven themselves as ineffective remedies for the situation, a completely new configuration, therefore, needed to emerge.[76] To solve the problems of business and labour, they resorted, in uniquely medieval fashion, to the one model with which they were familiar, the corporate. It bears mentioning,

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[75] Thompson (793) suggests, in fact, that urbanization was, in many ways, a much less desirable way of life. While the town inhabitant had to deal with poverty, crowding and unsanitary conditions, the peasant usually always had food, shelter and wood for the hearth.

[76] This is, perhaps, the very reason why the town movement was so anti-feudal in its approach (Thompson 783).

however, that the medieval formulation of the corporation, which, in this instance, took the form of the commercial and industrial guilds,[77] is completely unlike the version we know today. Such modern terms of corporate expression as asset, stock and liability, for instance, would not have been understood in the medieval context. Indeed, the original bodily connotation inherent in the medieval use of the word *corporation* exists now only vaguely in the term *head office*.

As has already been mentioned, medieval inhabitants found it desirable to superimpose the inherent patterned order of all sorts of bodies, both material and mystical, onto their own social ceremonies and processes. In this case, however, the form of the guild model is more than just another example of the possible uses for this body template. In point of fact, we also see in the antecedents of this particular form (i.e., the guild) evidence of another visible medieval impulse *sui generis*, that is, the assumption of classical forms and authorities which are subsequently adapted to cover uniquely medieval problems. For example, the classical form with which the medieval guild shares similarities is the Roman *collegia*. Yet, unlike the collegia, which were primarily social associations, the medieval guild was adapted into a comprehensive organizational/administrative structure responsible for the regulation of both the social and technical aspects of a vocation.

In its barest essence, the guild was a community of members unified by a shared vocation. Simply put, it was an occupational corporation. The advantages of

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[77] The earliest industrial guild in Germany, according to Thompson (501), was the weavers' guild of 1112 in Köln. As the twelfth century advances, an increasing division of industrial labour becomes evident as the original weavers' guild expands into guilds for "wool-combers, cloth-shearers, fullers, cloth-binders, cloth-stretchers, dyers, etc." (Thompson 501). The appearance and subsequent proliferation of these guilds, economic orders with strict regulating practices, is once again typical of the medieval communal rationale. The guild ascends to the ultimate economic expression of medieval *corporate* thinking, which oversees the introduction of a consumer culture in its infancy.

such an organizational morphology are to us self-evident, and they seem to have been equally apparent to medieval craftsmen and merchants as well. The guild benefited, for instance, from self-regulation and the application of its own methods for adjudicating disputes; furthermore, it provided apprenticeship training, controlled admission to the vocation via entry into the guild, set prices and wages, regulated all aspects of production and distribution and, above all, provided security for its members through solidarity. In fact, particular attention should be given to this notion of security, the importance of which cannot be overestimated in a society, which did not otherwise guarantee the rights and safety of person.

One might even be tempted to say that the structure and function of the guild appear, in many respects, vaguely reminiscent of the modern trade union. Yet, simply on that account, we ought to be extremely wary of such a false sense of familiarity with this medieval expression of collectivity, for the integrity of the parallel exists only on the most superficial level. Unlike the modern union, the guild association had, for instance, overarching executive power over both the personal and occupational lives of its members, and as a result, influenced its members to a degree unknown today.

Although it might sound platitudinous to our ears, a medieval vocation was more than a job, it denoted an entire lifestyle, and whatever else one might have been, one was, above all, a butcher, a tanner or a weaver. The communal bond between members was only enhanced by the fact that all guild members lived in the same quarter of town and generally shared the same education, gained through the apprenticeship. This complex ring of shared interests and life prospects was also not

anathema to the nature of the guild itself, and we must bear in mind that the modern distinction between owner and worker did not exist in the case of the guild. Of course, the guild-master sat atop the organizational hierarchy, but this hierarchy was more filial than divisive, particularly since apprentices often lived with their masters, receiving both technical as well as moral education. Thus, in the very real sense of an extended family, the guild was more than a loose association of workers, and more than a loose association of economic producers, it was a commune.

I might also make mention of the fact that the trade union and guild function according to conspicuously different governmental principles. Modern unions, on the one hand, are democratic with each member theoretically entitled to one vote. The medieval guild, as stated above, took the form of a kind of familial hierarchy. These alone are decisive enough differences. Yet, we must also ask ourselves why each functions as it does, or better said, why each *must* function as it does. The union has to operate democratically because it is, after all, a collective of individual identities, and they remain so independent of their membership in the organizational structure of the union.

This individual identity, however, was certainly not a conceptual component common to the medieval guild members and there is a very specific reason for this. The rediscovery of the Roman concept of corporation allowed medieval society to transcend its earlier feudal isolationism and achieve the level of corporatism. Yet, the new communal structures and consequent corporate *mentalité* were, at least at this juncture, incapable of promoting society's ascension to the next level, which in this case would be humanism, just as their feudal counterparts had not furthered the

development towards corporatism. The humanistic evolution would have to wait, after all, for the Renaissance.

To summarize, the effects of economic and social changes on the life chances of the individual did not increase appreciably during the Middle Ages. As Elias had already pointed out, new economic realities, like new political ones, ushered in a realignment of social forces based on the new paradigm of power, in this instance, money.[78] The birth of the market economy, however, did not bring with it the birth of the individual, who is such an important piece of this economy today. It did, however, bring new problems and novel challenges to medieval order, ones which medieval inhabitants solved by reinventing the corporate model in a uniquely medieval conception, a process, which they would subsequently repeat in every sector of society.

## 2.7 Individual *in absentia*: The intellectual arts and the foundations of medieval culture

Since the idea is the fundamental unit of intellectual currency, a period is often best evaluated by the uses and originality of its ideas. With this in mind, one can hardly come to speak of the High Middle Ages without alluding to the zenith of medieval intellectual expression known as the Renaissance of the twelfth century which was a broad-spectrum cultural blossoming characterized by new economic vistas and a

[78] Here we begin to see the true degree of interdependence between politics and economy, which Elias had noted as an influential factor in the socio-genesis of France. As economic fortunes changed, nobles, the chief power rivals of the king, became poorer, while the king became richer and acquired more territories. The extension of his influence allows for general pacification of the areas under his control, which creates a more lucrative atmosphere for trade and commerce, stimulating infrastructure growth. Since the basic assumption is that war is inimical to stability, prosperity and growth, its abolition, or at least tighter control, should have the opposite effect.

renewed intellectual vigour which would pose new challenges for secular and ecclesiastical thinkers alike.[79]

Appropriately or not, scholars apply the term *Renaissance* precisely because the events of this period represent such a paradigmatic shift in thought caused by such a bountiful infusion of novel ideas that it burst the placid banks of the staid medieval intellectual world. Suddenly, hosts of new theological, epistemological and ontological questions, from the merits of Aristotelian logic to the nature of knowledge itself, were being raised and debated. At the same time, much older questions, with which thinkers had grappled for centuries, received a fresh interpretation in light of this new knowledge and long held doctrines suddenly had to be dusted off in order to fend off challenges to their hegemony.

The almost singular source of all this controlled chaos was the repossession of the philosophical and literary heritage of the classical Greeks, which had been lost to the West for centuries.[80] The challenge of evaluating all this knowledge and absorbing only its relevant points resulted, in combination with the confluence of other concomitant economic and social variables, in the transformation of ecclesiastical Cathedral schools such as the one in Paris[81] into an institution unique to medieval Europe, the university.[82]

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[79] Both Colish (Ch. 12) and Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, treat these changes.
[80] Although the Crusades brought the West into closer contact with the East, the bulk of Classical Greek knowledge did not come into the hands of Western intellectuals via the captured Levantine cities, nor even from Byzantium, which could trace its lineage directly to the Greeks. Instead, the conquest of Moorish Spain, highlighted by the capture of Toledo in 1085, stimulated this intellectual blossoming as the West, for the first time, came into possession of Arabic translations and commentaries of Greek texts.
[81] Universities in Bologne and Oxford were also important centers, but they were not outgrowths of Cathedral schools.
[82] The word *university* derives from the Roman word *universitas*, whose particular definition, as we shall later see, is rather emblematic of the organization of this medieval institution. Universities

As a result of the renewed flourishing of intellectuality at the universities and the stimulating effects of the Greek cachet, new disciplines were fostered which had previously either never existed or else had languished in obscurity under the intellectual sluggishness of the Early Middle Ages. This rebirth thus witnessed, for instance, the revival of the art of dialectic and the accretion of Aristotelian methods of logic and natural science, which, in tandem with the teachings of the Church Fathers, gave rise to the Scholastic method. As interest in Latin and vernacular writing waxed, the study of jurisprudence, with branches in Canon law and Roman law[83], also became a discipline whose utility aroused much interest among intellectuals.

In truth, no avenue of traditional intellectual thought remained untouched by the influence of the new knowledge. Yet, out of all this change, the growing emphasis on jurisprudence and Canon/Roman law, and the reception and processing of Aristotelian writings had, perhaps, the single most immediate and significant impact on medieval patterns of thought. As I will discuss in an upcoming section, this impact was acutely felt in the fields of theology, Christology, and eschatology, where novel ideas brought welcome revelations but also precarious new questions.

Simultaneously, within a medieval church, which had increasingly assumed the form of a complex, ecclesiastical corporate body whose hegemony and preferment, in opposition to the secular powers of the Emperor, could only be maintained through exacting and litigious rules of primacy, the need arose to redefine

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functioned primarily as a training ground for careers in ecclesiastical and court administration. Consequently, as the apparatus of the medieval church grew in complexity, and as its administration became more dependent on the interpretation of biblical law, so the study of Canon law became a means to ecclesiastical preferment and the ranks of its students increased apace. Law (civil) and medicine were acknowledged faculties, but theology, especially at Paris, was still the *grande dame*, or as Haskins writes, "Madame la haute science" (*Rise of Universities* 19).

[83] Haskins claims that Roman law fulfilled the "demand for some 'common law' wider in its application than mere local custom and based on principles of more general validity" (207).

its parameters and purpose of existence in juridical terms. It was this need for able lawyers, above all others, which drove the revival of medieval jurisprudence.

Yet, despite this renewed emphasis on learning, medieval education certainly still centered around universities, Cathedral schools, and, to a decreasing extent, monasteries,[84] all of which offered an esoteric and vocationally oriented program. Consequently, the majority of the population was unable to partake in this learning.[85] In fact, this unseen majority was not only excluded from higher learning, but they also did not likely benefit, now as before, from any education at all, although this varied by land and by class.[86] Thus, when I speak of the unseen majority, I am really referring to a familiar medieval drift, which cyclically reasserts itself. To borrow a page from John of Salisbury's model, when we look at medieval society we see the head and upper body quite clearly, but when we look down the lower limbs and feet are largely missing.

Against this very general backdrop of the educational landscape, two particular points of greater interest begin to take shape, namely the question of the organizational nature of the medieval university and one particularly contentious debate concerning the nature of knowledge and the mechanism of its reception. The

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[84] Monasteries had previously been the hotbed of intellectual thought, but were now being outpaced by these other institutions, which took less dogmatic approaches to intellectual material.

[85] As Haskins writes, "the intellectual life of the Middle Ages was not characterized by spontaneous or widely diffused power of literary expression. Few were able to write, still fewer could compose a letter" (31).

[86] Bumke notes that the French lay nobility tended to be fairly well educated, although there were discrepancies even within France itself. In northern France, for example, only the greatest noble houses tended to be educated, while in southern France, even small noble families were literate. Basic literacy skills were considered so essential for rulers that one abbot claimed that, "a prince who is not distinguished by any knowledge of letters is as unworthy as a peasant" (429). The situation in Germany was markedly different, however. Bumke remarks that, "evidence indicates that the German princes in the second half of the twelfth century were usually uneducated" (431), and that even by the end of the thirteenth century " the better part of the nobility still could not read or write" (432).

solution to the first, and the nature of the debate in the second, shall only confirm once again the medieval reliance on the benefits of the group identity and the medieval inability to develop a concept of individual identity out of it.

### 2.7.1 University life

To begin, while the modern university, as a center of learning, is unquestionably the spiritual heir to the medieval university, there are as many irreconcilable differences between the two namesakes as similarities. Note, for example, that while the modern university strives to offer an almost limitless variety of courses, the medieval university had a comparatively limited and very strict curriculum. Modern disciplines such as neurobiology, chemistry, comparative literature or anthropology had no true counterparts amongst the medieval programs of study such as medicine, Canon and Roman law, theology and Aristotelian logic, to name the most important.[87]

It is, however, not the course offerings, in particular, which we should find so compellingly germane to our stated objectives, but rather the composition of the university as expressed in the organization of its staff and student body and in the place of its instruction. Naturally, we tend to have already very fixed ideas, based on our own linguistic and social experiences, as to what a university is, and it is in response to these preconceptions that we might reveal the medieval semantic and

[87] Education in the monastic and Cathedral schools of the Early Middle Ages had previously centered around a curriculum based on the so-called seven liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric and logic, which composed the *trivium*, and arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music, which composed the *quadrivium*. With the rediscovery of Ptolemaic astronomy, Euclidean geometry and Aristotelian logic, all these disciplines enjoyed a resurgence in originality. This resurgence, according to Haskins, was only brief. In the universities, Aristotelian logic became the centerpiece of study, leading to the general subordination and/or neglect of the remaining six disciplines. Logic, due to its multipurpose functionality, "was not only a major subject of study itself, it pervaded every other subject as a method and gave tone and character to the medieval mind" (*Rise of Universities* 30).

symbolic significance of the Latin term *universitas*. Obviously, its primary meaning denotes the sum, the whole or the universal, and I say obviously because it is this sense of universality, intimately connected with a belief in education as a universal right, which also colours our modern conception of the term and of the institution itself. However, a second, and more revealing, application of the word *universitas* also existed, although its preponderantly medieval usage has since ceased to be meaningful. In this connotation, it functioned as a juridical designation for a body, a guild or a corporation, whose inexorable nature was immortalized in the phrase *universitas sunt non singulorum* (the whole, or accordingly, the body, does not exist singularly).

Since the medieval universitas was a body of sorts, the first question we might logically ask of any body is, where was/is it physically located? By today's standards, such a routine question would be relatively easy to answer. Indeed, we automatically imagine the university as a very specific geographical location consisting of buildings and grounds, often to the detriment of its students and academic staff who receive only a secondary consideration. Perhaps this lies in the fact that staff and students constantly come and go, whereas edifices always remain as more visible and salient signs of intellectual achievement. Yet, whatever the cause, this place-fixedness is symbolic of the nature of the modern university.

Determinate location, however, was antithetical to the spirit and means of early universities. In answer to the question: where is the university, a medieval inhabitant would likely have replied: wherever the students and teachers happen to be. This is because the medieval university had neither buildings nor physical assets. In

consequence, teachers had no option but to turn rented halls, taverns, churches, and, even at times, their own accommodations into provisional classrooms.[88] Thus, university was not a reference to place but rather to people. This lack of a *where*, and the subsequent focus on *who*, was both a direct function of limited urban space and limited financial wherewithal as well as a result of a much older tradition of intellectual itinerancy.

Moreover, this movable intellectual feast had no boards presiding over it, nor, according to Marcia Colish, any kind of "supra-university accrediting agencies to provide norms and guidelines" (268). As a result, all those duties, such as the regulation of teacher accreditation and awarding of degrees, which today would fall under the purview of administrative personnel, fell, at that time, strictly to the students or to the masters. [89]

As a response to this paucity of material and administrative apparatus, which we take for granted, the medieval mind had to devise another means both of organizing hundreds of students and teachers and of standardizing instruction and accreditation. The solution, which most logically presented itself, was not without prior medieval precedent, and was, above all, consanguine with contemporary medieval thinking concerning the most effective form of social organization. Not surprisingly, they chose to form corporations, and these were of two types, either a

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[88] In fact, it was incumbent upon the professor not only to set the rate of tuition, but also to collect the fees himself.

[89] As Colish (267) notes, this ability to self-regulate makes the organization of the university very similar to another medieval corporation, the craft guild. Self-determination, furthermore, provides the key demarcation line between the medieval university and the modern one. Although there is still a union of university professors, and even a nominal students' union, all administrative control has been usurped by a non-partisan third party as a balance between the two. Without control of the administrative apparatus, the influence of both parties has been largely curtailed to a leveraged bargaining position.

society of students as in Bologna, or a society of masters such as that at the university of Paris.

As in the case of economic guilds, the advantages of group membership were clear: self-regulation, adjudication, and the security of the group *par excellence*. In fact, the security of the university body was ensconced in "collective legal rights usually guaranteed by charters" (Colish 267), to the extent that students and masters were privileged under the law. The university at Paris provided perhaps the clearest example of this treatment, when, after a number of violent town and gown clashes, the king decreed that students and masters could only be tried on an offence before an ecclesiastical court, whose punishments inclined to the spiritual rather than the corporal.

In direct comparison, the members of modern universities, regardless of their status as student or professor, are regarded strictly as individuals before the law and are thus treated on a per case basis. Yet, this preferential treatment, which the medieval university member received, was bestowed on the group not on the individual. Regardless of any cognitive gap between medieval thinking and our own, there was clearly no ratiocinative failing in their understanding of the value of corporative effort. That having been said, even in highly intellectual circles we are left with the distinct impression that the medieval mind could not transgress beyond the group dynamic because it lacked the linguistic/discursive ability to penetrate the dialectical barrier between group identity and an, as yet, ineffable individual one.

To conclude, since the only residue of the individual members of these university bodies is the corpus of their writings, what does an examination of these

writings tell us about their authors, both master and student alike? History is, of course, already familiar with the great masters of the period such as Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), William of Ockham (ca. 1285-1349), and Albertus Magnus (d. 1280), but their posthumous works tended to have rather stylized forms and doctrinaire purposes which are not necessarily exhaustively descriptive of everyday life, nor did they ever train their academic acumen on the topic of the individual. Naturally, in such formal writings one does not expect to see many signs of the individual who wrote it. There is, however, also a lesser known corpus of work left behind by students consisting primarily of letters home in request of money. With such letters, one would naturally hope to discover uniquely personal writings in which the particular needs and experiences of the letter writer are plainly legible, along with some sense of their individual identity. Unfortunately, this is not the case. As we have already begun to discern, the medieval mind battened readily onto prefabricated forms and types, and this is very much the case in letter writing as well. As Haskins notes, the medieval letter was "less an expression of individual feeling and experience than it was the laborious copying of a letter of someone else, altered where necessary to suit the new conditions" (*Rise of Universities* 76). Once again, we see that returning idea of the adaptation of pre-existing forms to new conditions, which was similarly evident in the development of the guild.

### 2.7.2 Out of a universe of knowledge the individual?

Of course, if the unique incorporative organization of the university is a function of preponderant medieval schemes of thought, then the content of that university, that is

the exchange and disputation of knowledge, must be equally revealing. From the latter half of the twelfth century onwards this knowledge became increasingly dominated by the reception of translated Greek and Arabic works.

The appropriation of ideas, which were written from the theological and scientific viewpoint of the Greeks and subsequently coloured by the cultural perspective of the Arabic commentators, however, almost inevitably lead to confrontation with widely held Christian principles. While some discordant theories remained fundamentally irreconcilable,[90] others could be adapted or reworked so that they accorded harmoniously with Christian dogma.

In the twelfth century, one particular line of theoretical inquiry inherited from the Greeks became a central and contentious issue within Christian intellectual circles, although it had never received a great deal of elucidation from the Greeks themselves. This was the debate over the existence and nature of universal propositions and it has special relevance for the identity of the individual.

This epistemological debate, which split thinkers along two lines, Nominalism and Realism,[91] was essentially the crystallization of medieval uncertainty as to how humans received and processed information from the external world, not so much in a materialist sense but rather in a metaphysical one. The core question could be developed out of the following statements of fact: Plato was a philosopher but also a man. Aristotle, likewise, was both of these things too. Apart from being self-evident observations, however, these statements also foment the more complex question as to

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[90] The Platonic theory of metempsychosis, for example, would certainly fit into this category. Plato's relocation of the soul into another material form after death endangered the sanctity and uniqueness of the soul and was therefore antithetical to Christian eschatology.

[91] There was, actually, a third position, a kind of synthesis of the two poles called *conceptualism*. This theory considered that universals do have an existence of sorts, but only as words in the mind.

how we know that Aristotle and Plato are men yet not one and the same man. In other words, by what mechanism are we able both to grasp their similarities as well as their distinctions?

Despite the fact that neither Plato nor Aristotle ever directly addressed this specific question of cognition in their writings, the two medieval positions are in some ways still adducible from them. Realism, for example, derived its position from Plato's theory of a universe of Form or Ideas, in which reality is merely a shadowy reflection of objects in this other universe. On this basis, realists argued that universals were real, *a priori* entities while individual objects were merely *a posteriori* abstractions which were unable to exist independently from the original and more important universal.

Nominalism, on the other hand, proceeds from Aristotle's materialist rejection of this Platonic otherness. Though not a unified theory, for not every Nominalist shared exactly the same position, one basic proposition ran through all its various shades; we gain knowledge of the world and its phenomena through an examination of individual objects independently of any universal concepts, which do not exist anyway but only signify insubstantial names. In other words, universals do not exist as objects of knowledge or perception.

The result of the debate, however, is ultimately immaterial. Instead, it is the cognitive rationalization of the positions themselves, which are so informative. Taking an essentialist approach, Realism attempts to extract, from every individual object, be it a man, a horse, or an urn, the traces of its universal antecedent. Those characteristics that are not part of the morphology of the universal are then

conveniently ignored as inessential, Aristotelian accidents. Nominalism, on the other hand, appears to defend the sanctity and primacy of the individual object against the totalizing influence of universals. Yet, here we must be very careful with our definition of individual, for it does not denote anything, which we might otherwise remotely associate with individual identity. Instead, it is simply one pole in a dialectical relationship.[92]

As I have consistently stated and attempted to prove, language conceives the individual and it is upon the generation of language alone which individual identity thrives. Plainly, neither position was capable of producing that language. In fact, where one might expect a valorization of individual identity, one instead finds no acknowledgment to any degree that this identity even existed as a significant variable.

### 2.8 The Catholic Church as body and of the body

To this point, medieval thinking in the fields of politics, economics and education has demonstrated a tendency both to theorize itself in terms of bodily metaphors, and to treat the practical apparatus of organization as a collective body, and the medieval church was just as willing to appropriate these forms.

It was during the period of the High Middle Ages that the medieval church, after having survived years of corruption, simony, and internal strife, as well as an investiture struggle with the Emperor, first consolidated its position as a papal monarchy controlled from Rome. Under the leadership of the Pope, the Church now

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[92] In fact, the modern conception and semantic employment of the word *individual* did not exist at all in the Middle Ages. Rather, the medieval mind was only familiar with the term *individuum* in a dialectical context. It did not denote, as Caroline Walker Bynum notes, "a particular self, a self unique and unlike other selves" (*Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?* 4).

enjoyed considerable spiritual and secular powers, as it now controlled education, ecclesiastical preferment, and the seconding of trained clerks to the secular courts of Europe.

To exercise control over such a vast area and to ensure the universal validity of its dogma, the Church relied on the standardization and codification of the theoretical and practical applications of its religious doctrine. This, of course, required the deployment of a complex, highly centralized, and, above all, doctrinaire administration supported by a church appointed judicial apparatus capable of trying cases according to Canon law.[93]

At the time of this consolidation, the Church, like its secular counterparts in the empire, sought a model, which could provide a lucid theoretical and practical basis for its organization as well as a justification for its exercise of power. It found such a model in the image of the corporate body of Christ, which merged aspects of Roman corporate law with Christian mystiscism and symbolism.[94]

On the one hand, the church now functioned as a governing body in the juridical sense and Canonists justified "the doctrine of papal headship in terms of the Roman law of sovereignty," and "the collegial structure of the church in terms of the Roman law of corporations" (Tierney 19). On the other hand, the Church also needed to entrench its spiritual primacy, and to this end, it again appropriated the notion of a corporation. The image of Christ's body presented a natural vessel not only because

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[93] The enormous manpower need, which such vast machinery demanded, resulted in the study of Canon law eclipsing Roman law at many medieval universities.

[94] At this time, the Eucharist became the most important sacrament and represented both the symbolic and, after the doctrine of transubstantiation, the physical joining of the individual human body to the community of Christ's body. For this reason, "the eucharistic elements stood primarily not for nature, for grain and grape, but for human beings bound into community by commensality" (Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* 48).

of its spiritual allure but also because its hierarchical properties harmonized with the day-to-day medieval experience. According to Kantorowicz, Christ's body assumed the properties of an "organism acquiring social and corporational functions: it served with head and limbs, as the prototype and individuation of a super-individual collective, the Church as *corpus mysticum*" (201), whose head "was Christ and whose limbs were the archbishops, bishops, and other functionaries of the Church" (200).

Clearly, as with the other discursive elements of medieval society, patterns of religious expression were dominated by the idea of a group body and stressed the sublimation of the individual body into the identity of that group.

## 2.9 Conclusion

As we have seen, the medieval mind consistently tended to conceive, categorize and understand its place in the universe strictly in terms of a hierarchically organized group dynamic, which did not create a cultural space conducive to the emergence of the individual.[95] On the contrary, social discourse provided, in lieu of individual identity, a rather fertile soil for a diametrically opposite identity whose language expressed itself in the vocabulary of the universal, the paradigmatic and the corporate. Whether this holds true for medieval literature, of course, remains to be seen. If, however, as Rivers states, "the body is central to the functioning of many works of narrative fiction, that these works are full of instances of body reading, and that the

[95] At this point, I should qualify the ambiguity inherent in this statement. I do not mean to impute that medieval society actively suppressed the individual because, of course, there was no individual to suppress. It is simply a case, in which the necessary alignment of social forces/variables needed to generate the individual was not yet available.

body is as legible and as illegible a text as any other" (4), then we should expect to find evidence of this group mentality in the bodies of *Parzival*.

### 3.1 Comparative introduction to the two texts

To begin, the primary reason why *Parzival* and *Simplicissimus* recommend themselves as such excellent models for comparison lies in the more than superficial similarity between the experiences of the two title characters. Parzival and Simplicius, for instance, both begin life as naïve, parochial simpletons, who live a remote existence in ignorant bliss of the human society that surrounds them. Indeed, nothing is so wholly damning of the cultural void in which they subsist than their state of almost pre-natal namelessness. The absence of a meaningful designation, the quintessential component of social recognition, group membership, and self-identification, consigns their bodies to the void of mass without form, trapping them in a state of perpetual becoming from which only a creative act of inscription can release or actualize their potentiality.

This written performance, however, can take place only after Parzival and Simplicius have embarked on a personal *Bildungsreise* or, more precisely, an *Identität bildende Reise*,[96] through which they earn a name and with it, a destiny. Of course, to the casual eye, this journey serves as a vehicle by which both characters accumulate wisdom and expand their self-awareness. Yet, this voyage of discovery, masquerading as the familiarly ritualistic passage from boyhood into manhood, also serves a more pervasive and, simultaneously, less discernible purpose, of which even the respective authors in question were likely unaware. It is the inevitable exposure to

[96] This is a notion not all that different from one which Wolfgang Spiewok posits, although in his excellent explanation of the hero's developmental process, with specific reference to *Parzival*, he does not yet possess the necessary language to describe the journey, in so many words, as one of identity inscription. He writes, for example, that the epic hero "entfaltet nicht mehr lediglich die a priori gegebene und so oder so stimulierte heroische Vorbildhaftigkeit, sondern diese Vorbildhaftigkeit wird gefährdet und muß daher in einem Entwicklungsprozeß erst *errungen* werden. Demgemäß wird das vorbildhafte Profil des positiven epischen Helden bereichert, vertieft, verinnerlicht" (662).

dominant socio-cultural influences, mores and patterns of thought that drives both Parzival's and Simplicius' process of acclimation, and which also provides the vector for the process of physical and psychological identity inscription, which will secure their membership in society.

This apparently close kinship between the two figures is disturbed, however, by the one unshakable difference, which separates them, notably the nature of the identities that the respective societies project upon them. As I have already alluded to, identity, as a nexus entity, receives concurrent input from diverse discourses. Individual identity, however, happens to be one of these many discursive/causative social formations, and its cultural presence was a stimulus to which Grimmelshausen had to respond in the construction of Simplicius, but it was a discourse, of which Wolfram, in contrast, had no knowledge.

Yet, apart from this one glaring disparity, the orbits of development of both characters bear an otherwise striking similarity. Primarily, and for this reason, an analysis of both textual constructions according to the three physiognomic norms of cultural transmission, namely the depiction of the body, fashion, and behaviour, is not only a valid approach, but also a very desirable one. Before we begin, however, it would prove fruitful to first consider the position of the *Parzival* text within the greater context of medieval society.

### 3.2 Discourse, feudal society, and the parameters of medieval text reception

As far as the literature of the medieval German *höfische Epik* is concerned, *Parzival* may well be the example *par excellence* of the genre. In it, Wolfram has woven a

textual world that vividly brings very particular aspects of medieval life alive through a deft synthesis of feudal social structures, courtly aesthetics and Christian moral values. Interestingly, this choice of textual arrangement is decidedly reminiscent of several of the medieval discursive processes which have been the subjects of discussion to this point, and this is not unexpected when one hearkens back again to the notion of reader expectation.

In the case of *Parzival*, discursive influence has migrated from the realm of the real into the realm of the text and has made itself visibly felt both on the level of thematic material as well as cultural depiction. For example, behind the jousting, the strong emphasis on *Minnedienst*, and the universal knightly code of comportment typical of the Arthurian fellowship lies Wolfram's homage to the status driven feudal order of kings, vassals and retinue, an organizational hierarchy whose politics subtly imprint every relationship in the text.[97] Explicit and implicit reflexes of Christian cosmology also crisscross the work. The entire episode with the society of the Grail, for instance, demonstrably arrogates the values of the secular knight to the highest calling of Christianity, namely the notion of *Gottesdienst* and the role of the *miles Christi* within it.[98] At various places in the text, Wolfram further alludes to the genesis of Adam and Eve, Christ's assumption of bodily form, the importance of God's exemplary nature as a role model for human, and especially knightly, behaviour, and, of course, the symbolic redemption of Feirefiz by baptism.

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[97] The reinstatement of the law of primogeniture, for example, by which only the eldest son of a noble family might inherit its lands and titles, finds its way into the text and provides the pretext for Gahmuret's journey abroad.

[98] The depiction of these soldiers of God is also an expression of the exclusively noble composition of the medieval audience. As Spiewok notes, "die Rolle des *miles Christi* ist aber einzig dem Vertreter der herrschenden Klasse vorbehalten. Somit wird bereits im Anfangsstadium feudalhöfischer Epik der literarische Held sozial fixiert" (654).

Despite the ostensible abundance of such evidence, it would, nevertheless, be a mistake to conclude that Wolfram's text is simply the cumulative result of all those aforementioned discursive filaments of medieval society, i.e., the political, theological, economical etc. Instead, for the purposes of textual confrontation, it is critical that we, in this instance, consider the textual identities of the characters in *Parzival* to be both cause and effect. In other words, Wolfram's rendering of his characters does reflect, in the first instance, the intrusion of real life power discourse into the text, but those discursive elements, namely body, comportment, and clothing, which shape identity within the text itself, also belong to that text, and as such, each represents, according to Judith Butler, "a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce, demarcate, circulate, differentiate, the bodies it controls" (*Bodies That Matter* 1).

Such an approach, i.e., viewing text as a harmonically sympathetic, but not necessarily authentic, producer of discursive values, might prevent a number of otherwise unavoidable conflicts, which might arise from being too effusive in the praise of *Parzival* as a studied contemplation of medieval courtly life and its most crucial social constellations. For, while there is an undeniably perceptible interlocutory relationship between the medieval reality of the early thirteenth century and Wolfram's text, it is not on the order of a one to one ratio. Anyone even remotely familiar with the period, for example, would certainly scoff at the suggestion that a textual society based on moral virtue, selfless *Minnedienst*, material wealth, and Christian compassion could ever accurately reflect the reality of a medieval society,

which, in stark contrast, consisted of belligerence, brutality, misogyny, and material privations of every conceivable ilk.

Although viewing the text as its own discourse obviates some problems, it does also create a few new ones, for, as Elke Brüggen admits, the medieval courtly poet seemingly did not write with the express intention of delivering a "zuverlässiges Bild der Wirklichkeit" (18). How then are we to analyse textual representations of medieval culture and successfully extrapolate them to the realities of medieval life? To answer this question, we must set aside, for a moment, the question of authorial intention and reflect instead upon the actual manifestation of that intent. Upon deeper deliberation, what had been a seemingly fundamental objection to depictions, which could stake no ostensible claim to reality, now exposes itself simply as a specious argument. Textual representations of medieval life are, in fact, grounded in reality and represent, again according to Brüggen, a reflection of that, "womit sich die adlige Gesellschaft umgab oder was ihr als vorbildlich galt" (18).

In the case of *Parzival*, then, Wolfram's romantic vision of feudal society, likely for reasons of reader aesthetics, and the consequent challenge it poses to the accurate legibility of textual representations of cultural identity, brings us full circle to an examination of the target audience. When one asks, for whom was *Parzival* written, the answer must always be, the nobility. Indeed, the relationship between the target audience and the dimension of social veneration, which inheres in *Parzival*, is not negligible.

Since a degree of embellishment appears to be an essential element in most every work belonging to the German *oeuvres* of the *roman courtois*, it might well be

symptomatic of a broader social agenda amongst medieval poets, who were, perhaps, intrigued by the *erzieherisches Potential* of the idealized social portrait, and employed it as a type of cultural exhortation.[99] Joachim Bumke also considers social improvement as the purposive goal of authors such as Wolfram, Gottfried and Hartmann, for he states, for example, that, while the poets made their listeners "aware of the gap between the ideal and the reality of their own day," we can, nonetheless, not ignore the fact that "the courtly ideal of knighthood was also meant as an appeal to live up to it" (312). Since the text is such a highly integrated mixture of *Realitätsbild* and *Wunschbild*, whose respective qualities are difficult to separate, we must assume, accordingly, that both the real and the imagined are significantly expressive about the state of medieval society.

### 3.3 The thematic sequence of Parzival's passage from peasant to king

To extricate the influence of social discourses on character development from the thematic material that it underpins presents us with an equally challenging task. In truth, the effect of medieval discursive processes are never explicitly stated within the text; rather they merely form the unspoken backdrop of the story, for as with any text, the author, in this case Wolfram, presumes a certain requisite level of extratextual cultural familiarity from his audience. Since textual themes might well provide positive insight into the workings of these discourses, we might start our analysis with

[99] One scholar notes, for example, that one of the earliest feudal epics, *Das Rolandslied*, displays a marked tendency to create fictive ethical values that "die harte Wirklichkeit feudalen Fehdewesens und feudaler Expansionskriege mit einer verklärenden Aureole umgaben, die aber auch ein kulturell aktives, ethisch-erzieherisches Stimulans darstellten" (Spiewok, *Das Menschenbild um 1200* 655).

a brief overview of the thematic dimensions of Wolfram's work situated within a modular framework.

Traditionally, Parzival's journey through the world has been conceptualized in three stages. Each stage has a concrete representation, usually designated by Parzival's association with a particular sphere of influence (*Bauernhof*, *Artushof*, *Gralshof*), which acts as a gauge by which to measure his inner development. Whereas Parzival's initial *ignorantia*, for example, corresponds with his humble peasant life, his later *conversio* is linked with his ascension to the Arthurian court, while his final achievement of *perfectio*[100] turns upon his entry into the circle of the Grail.

There is, however, another model that we might employ, which is more germane to our current undertaking, and it is one suggested by those very words *ignorantia*, *conversio*, and *perfectio*. I refer, however, not to the actual meaning of these words per se, but rather to the simple fact that they are words. Proceeding from the notion that identity is a function of discourse and that discourse is language, young Parzival, who is very much on the same cognitive level as a child, can only become a functioning member of society once he has been versed in the mysteries of identity language. In this sense, his social acculturation represents more than a journey from ignorance to wisdom or from the secular to the ecclesiastical; it is a

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[100] Raudszus 100-139 suggests these three stages. To this taxonomy, we might also append Cicero's model of moral goodness, which consisted of four pillar attributes: *scientia* (knowledge), *liberalitas* (sense of justice), *fortitudo* (strength), and *modestia* (temperance). Only through demonstration of these four characteristics can Parzival prove he is worthy to assume the mantle of the Grail kingship. See Jean-Claude Schmitt 129 for a more detailed explanation of the Ciceronian model, minus the *Parzival* context.

voyage through the realms of the linguistic representations of identity, which displays a gradual movement from the external to the internal.

Briefly encapsulating the text according to this model, we notice that, at the point of Parzival's entry into the narrative, all conceptions of identity are foreign to him. He simply lives in a state of pre-linguistic ignorance, in which he processes new information very literally. Parzival's *Narrenkleid*, in which his mother dresses him in the futile hope that the resulting mistreatment and embarrassment will drive him home, is a graphic illustration of this *Jugendstadium*.

During this stage, Wolfram, furthermore, avails himself of every opportunity to underscore those actions, which most effectively highlight Parzival's childlike simplicity, and whose consequences later form the core of his resultant *Schuldfrage*. Indeed, nothing is more symbolic of the painful process of acculturation, which Parzival must undergo upon penetrating a new cultural sphere, than the errors, of varying degrees of severity, which he commits because he is not competently fluent in social forms and etiquette.

In his first encounter with brightly armoured knights, for example, he innocently mistakes them for gods because, to his mind, they resemble his mother's description of God, who appears "noch liehter denne der tac" (119,19).

Later, upon encountering, for the first time, a female other than his mother, namely the Lady Jeschute, he accosts her and forcefully appropriates her ring, again having misconstrued the meaning of his mother's words: "swa du guotes wîbes vingerlîn / mügest erwerben unt ir gruoz / daz nim" (127,26-8). Yet, unlike his earlier confusion of the knights, which was merely the result of an error of recognition, this

brazen robbery/molestation points to a more fundamental cognitive error. Given his limited understanding, Parzival cannot possibly fathom the significance of winning a Lady's ring, i.e., that it is symbolic of *Minnedienst* or marriage, and he is equally unfamiliar with the strictly observed social forms by which one may come into its possession.[101] In short, he is linguistically unprepared to acknowledge and interpret the discursive information which other bodies are sending, and which infuses otherwise empty social ceremony with meaning.

Finally, Parzival aggravates his already doleful condition by committing a mortal sin; he murders his kinsmen Ither, whose splendid red armour he covets. That Parzival has not only failed to follow the chivalric rules of engagement and has used a peasant's weapon to strike Ither down only further accentuates the disparity between Parzival's barely functional level of socialization and the strict demands of noble society.

By appropriating Ither's armour,[102] though not without great inconvenience, Parzival succeeds in effacing all surface traces of his former *tumpheit*,[103] and with it signals his entry into the *Übergangsstadium*, the society of the feudal court. The armour itself, emblematic of knighthood, is charged with symbolic functions, which operate simultaneously on a number of different levels. On the one hand, the armour signals Parzival's new relationship to wordly, material phenomena and serves as a *pars pro toto* symbol of his membership in an elite social group characterized by very

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[101] Unlike its treatment in earlier French and German epics, *minne* is now "zum Inhalt der Ehe geworden," because "Minneidee und Feudalehe werden zusammengeführt" (Spiewok 659).
[102] Considering that Ither was a superlatively noble and virtuous knight, the effect this appropriation has on Parzival's further development takes on interesting new possibilities when viewed in the light of Alison Lurie's statement that "to put on someone else's clothes is symbolically to take on their personality" (24).
[103] See Raudszus 109.

rigid norms of behaviour. On the other hand, the armour, which is the colour of blood, also stands as a graphic indictment of Parzival's sinful condition and points to the looming difficulties that he must soon confront, namely the expiation of his sins and a reconciliation with God.

In contrast to the previous pre-vocalic phase, however, Parzival, thanks largely to Gurnemanz' tutelage, has begun to grasp the rudiments of grammar, upon which, through his various adventures, he will continue to build. Having acquired the specialized vocabulary of the knightly order, Parzival can now orient himself according to the principals of nobility and loyalty and to the demands of *Minnedienst* and courtly ceremony.

Despite the familiarity and facility with which Parzival appropriates the etiquette and social restraints of the court,[104] Wolfram nevertheless makes it clear that this stage is a transition and not a terminus. Viewed from the perspective of linguistic development, Parzival has grasped the morphology or outer shell of words but has simply not yet comprehended their meaning. Though he always comports himself in a manner befitting a knight, this noble carriage can do nothing to erase the enduring image of the motley *Torenkleid*, whose symbolism continues to haunt him. From the very moment he puts on the armour up to, but not including, his encounter with Trevrizent, everything Parzival does, sees, and experiences attests to his incompleteness, be it, for example, his failure to ask the requisite question of Anfortas, or his surrender to despair and eventual renunciation of God.[105] While he

[104] This is reminiscent of Elias' notion of drive control.
[105] Compare Raudszus 109.

may have exchanged the crude outer skin and mannerisms of the *Bauerntölpel* for those of the genteel knight, his inner turmoil still betrays the roots of his *ignorantia.*

It is only in the *Endstadium*, a turning point marked by his meeting with Trevrizent, that Parzival finally achieves the level of true semantic understanding. By doing so, he surpasses the ephemeral vocabulary of the *courtois* world and seizes the enduring, everlasting lexis of ecclesiastical grace. Yet, for Wolfram, the necessary and desirable ascension to this ecclesiastical sphere as the highest cultural achievement does not occasion the complete abjuration of secular values. The rejoining of Parzival, Grail King, with his wife, Condwiramur, for example, or the conjoining of Feirefiz and Repanse de Schoye, provide ample proof of Wolfram's interest in marrying the best aspects of both spheres, rather than sundering them.[106]

Were we, perhaps, seeking a thematic leitmotif, one, which would sum up the spirit of the work, Wolfram might well have provided it himself in his story of the phoenix, which, through death, ultimately finds renewal. In fact, Parzival's entire journey mirrors the process of socialization and the imprinting of identity, which every member of society undergoes, a course which progresses from the void to socialization into material culture, and finally, to initiation into the immaterial world of religion.

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[106] This harmonious synthesis of the sacred and the profane is, however, not a true reflex of prevailing social conditions, as it tends to contrast rather sharply with the reality of medieval life. As Brüggen notes, "die Bejahung von Prunk, Luxus und Schönheit, Stimuli des 'hôhen muotes', jenes Hochgefühls, das die Grundlage des höfischen Daseins bildet, setzt dieses von einer Laiengesellschaft entwickelte und getragene Ideal in einen eklatanten Widerspruch zu der Gesellschaftslehre der Kirche, der das Geschlechtliche und Schönheit und Luxus als sündhaft galten" (77). Compare also Raudszus 116.

### 3.4 Wolfram and the general medieval conception of the body

Upon reading *Parzival*, the singular curiosity which immediately strikes one's eye, apart from the fact that there is no first person narrative, are the purely ornamental and, above all, programmatic bodies with which Wolfram has invested his characters. At first, it might sound implausible to maintain that the characters in *Parzival* are wanting in all discriminative bodily features. Indeed, one might well ask how an author could possibly manage to imbue his/her characters with graphic richness if s/he eschews the first and most fundamental basis of description. Yet, even by posing such a question we admit to being mislead by cultural and cognitive assumptions, which simply do not hold true in the medieval case.

By modern standards of psychology and neurobiology, recognition of, and differentiation between, individuals is a physical and cognitive process coordinated by the eye and the mind, and it is achieved through an integrated image of the entire facial context, rather than the perception of isolated features.[107] Facial signals, such as emotion or intent, are often received and deciphered subconsciously, to the point that we are unaware that we have even processed information. While the materialist aspect of sight, namely the stimulation of the retina and optic nerve through the reception of light and images, is arguably a naturally occurring physical process, its functionalist dimension, perception, or what we see and how we interpret images, is not 'natural' but rather learned. The ingrained patterns of cultural thought to which we are exposed from birth are laden with discursive codes that provide us with the necessary lexicon of signals and significance, which we need in order to function within the group.

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[107] See Bruce and Young 153.

As a result of this surreptitious socialization, when inquiring after someone we have not yet met, or simply someone whom we have not seen in a long time, it does not strike us as peculiar that we tend to pose the oft-heard questions: how do they look, or what do they look like? In response, we expect very particular sorts of answers, often formulated according to cranio-facial descriptors, body type etc., and where the accuracy and coherency of morphological features is at a premium. In the context of *Parzival*, however, such questions would merit only a perfunctory and somewhat puzzling response, undoubtedly leaving us to wonder how to distinguish Parzival from Gahmuret, Gahmuret from Gawan, or Gawan from the remaining knights paraded throughout the text.

Fortunately, this multitude of characters does not make the task of analysis more difficult, for although Wolfram populates his medieval world with a great number of primary, secondary, and even, tertiary characters, we need not devote equal attention to every single one. In fact, concentration upon only a few key figures and on the diversity and expressiveness of the language of their particular bodies will provide a reliable and predictable cipher for understanding the bodies of all of Wolfram's characters. We are able to do this because Wolfram develops each of his characters within a framework of recognizable social typologies, the most prevalent of which are the knight, the ascetic, and the courtly lady. Proceeding from a system of comparative pairs, an examination of the knightly bodies of Gahmuret and Parzival, the abstemious bodies of Trevrizent and Kahenis, and the courtly bodies of Condwiramur and Orgeluse should yield the root social and morphological identifers

pertinent for each class.[108] Now and then, we might also reinforce, or complement, the expressive boundaries of these typologies with supplemental information culled from the remaining characters.

### 3.4.1 Wolfram's designation of the knightly body

It is an elementary and universally recognized law of nature that no two material bodies can occupy the same physical space at the same time. Seemingly as inexorable as this law is the notion that an individual human body, since it, too, cannot coexist simultaneously with another, must therefore leave a visible and unique record of its presence, either materially or textually, as it travels through space and time.

The first body to pose a challenge to this notion belongs to Parzival's heroic father and dispossessed knight, Gahmuret, and as we sift through the residual evidence of his textual presence, we are immediately confronted with a dishearteningly vague and confusingly patchwork body. Wolfram, for example, extols his corporeal virtues with such offerings as, "der junge Anschevîn" (17,9), "der gehiure Gahmuret"[109] (38,20-1; 21,26), "der was sô minneclîche gevar"[110] (23,25),

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[108] I would gladly have added an analysis of the peasant archetype had that been feasible. Unfortunately, the figure of the peasant does not exist in *Parzival*, although it does feature strongly in two other notable works, namely *Der arme Heinrich* and Wernher der Gartenaere's *Meier Helmbrecht*. According to Hayden Bell (5), the gradual economic integration of the peasant class in the thirteenth century contributed to their greater visibility in medieval texts, although their role was seldom positive.

[109] *Lexers Mittelhochdeutsches Taschenwörterbuch* defines MHG *gehiure* as "nichts unheimliches an sich habend; lieblich" (57).

[110] According to Lexer, *gevar* means "aussehend, beschaffen" (69). The Kühn translation of Parzival renders this line as "sein Anblick war so liebesschön" (445), while Spiewok has translated it as "er bot einen so herrlichen Anblick" (45).

"sine gesaehen nie helt sô wünneclîch"[111] (36,19), and "sîn munt was rôt unde fier" (75,30).

While Wolfram is clearly at pains to ensure that the reader perceives Gahmuret as a beautiful, indeed almost perfect, figure, such one-dimensional particulars are glaringly inarticulate and inadequate when employed as physical descriptions of a character. In fact, it is not until much later into the narrative that the reader is provided with the first and only extended outline approximating Gahmuret's morphological features. As Wolfram writes:

> zwên stivâl über blôziu bein.
> sîn munt als ein rubin schein
> von roete als ob er brünne:
> der was dicke und niht ze dünne.
> sîn lîp was allenthalben clâr.
> lieht reideloht was im sîn hâr,
> swâ manz vor dem huote sach (63,15-21).
> Vil dicke aldâ gevrâget wart,
> wer waere der ritter âne bart (63,27-28).

Yet, even this descriptive zenith fails to deliver an anatomically specific and exhaustive account of his external appearance. Instead, what the modern reader is left with is the unshakable impression of a character, which resembles a collage of

[111] Kühn: "der schönste Held, den man je sah" (455); Spiewok: "nie solch glänzenden Ritter erblickt" (65).

singular, *sinnentleerte* body parts, which have been cobbled together with no apparent regard for context. Certainly, it is useful to know that he is beardless, with blond curly hair and red lips, but the rest of his body, his height and weight, for example, or the size of his arms and chest, eye colour etc., is noticeably missing. Even more significant than the truant body, however, is the conspicuous absence of a coherent face whose defined contours have been carved by the psychological traits and desires of its owner, and which serves in the capacity of a culturally significant artifact, or *Bedeutungsträger*, of individual identity.

These apparent shortcomings cannot be attributed to any lack of poetic talent on the part of Wolfram, however. Quite the contrary, for as Schultz writes, "medieval 'regulatory schemas' will have produced bodies different from ours, bodies in which morphological features that matter to us may not have been culturally intelligible and, in that sense, simply did not exist" (92). In other words, if the modern *Sehvorgang* is the result of discursive processes, so medieval power schemes also likely dictated the scope and meaning of those objects, which fell within its field of vision.

For this very reason, I was careful to restrict the obviously culturally biased character 'impression' to the modern reader, for bewilderment was likely not the response which such descriptive passages elicited from Wolfram's contemporaries. Indeed, how could the medieval reader raise objections to *Körperbeschreibungen* so ornate in style but so deficient in substance when the concept of the psychologically significant face/body simply did not exist in their lexical/cognitive inventory of body concepts? In this light, Wolfram's seemingly redundant allusions to lips and legs, beauty and perfection become sensible textual reflexes of the discursive limits of

medieval body language.[112] Unfortunately, we can only conclude from this language that, where there is no distinct face and no discrete body, there can be no individual identity either.

In respect of anatomical completeness, Gahmuret's son, the focus of the work, fairs no better than his father does. Of "Parzivâl der gehiure" (709,2), we are initially told, for example, only that "sîn lîp was clâr unde fier" (118,11), "sîn lîp ist ouch wol prîses wert" (290,2), or that "nie mannes varwe baz geriet / vor im sît Adâmes zît" (123,16-17), and that this "liehten lîbe" (126,27) and "süezer lîp" (146,5) provide a scandalous contrast with the shameful *Narrenkleid* that covers it. Further descriptive passages reveal that he displays "tugent / gêret sî dîn süeziu jugent / unt dîn antlütze minneclîch" (139,25-7), that his "lîp sô wol gevar" (146,8) is "der wâren minne blic" (146,9), that he possesses "blanken handen fier" (155,24) and "liehter varwe" (244,4), that "sîn munt dâ bî vor roete bran" (168,20), that he was "der aller ritter bluome" (109,11), that he "trüeg sô clâren lîp / den gerne minnen möhten wîp" (700,11-12), and finally, that "doch truoc der werde Parzivâl / den prîs vor ander clârheit" (723,24-5). Other descriptors of Parzival include, in no particular order, "ir tragt geschickede unde schîn / ir mugt wol volkes hêrre sîn" (170,21-2), "der junge süeze âne bart" (174,23; 227,28), "Dannen schiet sus Parzivâl / ritters site und ritters mâl / sîn lîp mit zühten vuorte" (179,13-15), "dô het er der sunnen / vercrenket nâch ir liehten glast" (186,4-5), "sus saz der minneclîche wine / gar vor allem tadel vrî" (228,6-7), "si enschuohten bein, diu wâren blanc" (243,16), "sîn munt was sô rôt" (244,8; 306,23), "dô was er fier unde clâr / [. . .] / er waere gebluomt vür alle man" (306,25-7), and

[112] It is interesting to note that Wolfram himself plays with the idea of the limits of language within the text. For example, Parzival, after having reconciled with his half-brother Feirefîz, declares, "nu bin ich leider niht sô wîs / des iuwer werdeclîcher prîs / mit worten mege gehoehet sîn" (749,5-7).

lastly, "dô truoc der junge Parzivâl / âne vlügel engels mâl / sus geblüet ûf der erden" (308,1-3).[113]

As we saw in the case of Gahmuret, Wolfram tends to isolate and elevate particular body parts completely independent of the rest of the body, and again only provides an interlocking cascade of bodily descriptors much farther into the story, as follows:

> wan craft mit jugende wol gevar
> der Wâleis mit im brâhte dar.
> swer in ze rehte wolde spehen,
> sô hât sich manec vrouwe ersehen
> in trüeberm glase dan waer sîn munt.
> ich tuon iu von dem velle kunt
> an dem kinne und an den wangen:
> sîn varwe ze einer zangen
> waer guot: si möhte staete haben (311,13-21).

As father and son, Gahmuret and Parzival plainly share a number of common attributes, the same beardless bloom of youth, for instance, not to mention the same red lips, and finally, the same general air of *vollendete Schönheit.* Yet, despite the

[113] This entire corpus of physical details was not, however, the idiosyncratic invention of Wolfram's creative wit, but rather represented universally accepted body traits indicative of knightly status, a fact which is borne out by a comparison with the chivalric body as described in Konrad von Würzburg's *Engelhard.* Similar to Parzival, the title character is distinguished by his "werdiu jugent," and "keiserlîchiu tugent" (2247-48), and is described as "der reine wandels frîe" (2463) and "ein engel gezieret was mit golde" (2768-69). Moreover, Engelhard speaks with "liehtem munde rôsenrôt" (4350), and folds his "hende blanc" (3679) delicately like a young girl. Finally, of his skin Konrad pronounces, "sîn varwe ân allen wandel schein" (3686).

emphasized filial relationship between Gahmuret and Parzival, their shared group of traits is neither restricted to their characters alone nor to their broader kinship group. Gawan "der valsches vrîe" (668,30), who was, in the eyes of other knights, a "manlîch spiegel" (692,13), is described as having a "lieht antlütze und hôhe brust" which make of him a "ritter wol gevar" (361,22-3). In addition, there was Maurin "mit den schoenen schenkeln" (662,19), Gentilfleur, who was "mannes schoene ein blüende rîs " (195,4), and similarly Isenhart, who, before his demise, was "tugende ein bernde rîs" (26,11). Finally, Kaylet had earned the distinction of being the "bluome an mannes schoen! / sîn varwe an schoene hielt den strît" (39,22-3), and Cidegast, Orgeluse's "clâre süeze beâs âmîs" (613,1), was said to be a "quecbrunne der tugent / mit alsô berhafter jugent" (613,9-10), while Turkoyte was "der werdekeit ein bluome" (598,7).

Despite these apparently universal features of knighthood, Parzival, in contrast to Gahmuret and the other aforementioned characters, and commensurate with his greater narrative importance, is the recipient of an expanded vocabulary of anatomical attributes, whose range evidently surpasses that of the other knights. For Parzival alone, Wolfram supplements the stock physical profile of the knight with further attributes such as white legs,[114] white skin, and a love inspiring appearance, and he has his reasons for doing so. Indeed, the extolling of his regal and angelic appearance represents Wolfram's purposive foreshadowing of Parzival's ascension to the

[114] According to Bumke 146-149, and Brüggen 103-105, men's legs were an object of fetishistic fascination in the Middle Ages, a point which is displayed through the many textual references to knights' legs found in the literature of the period. This may well have been the result of the new French cut for men's pants, which, fitting snugly around the thighs and ending at the knee, showed this attribute to best advantage. Apart from Wolfram's mention of Parzival's white legs, Gahmuret, upon his entry into Kanvolais, also calls attention to himself by swinging one leg over his saddle in a deliberate display of ostentation designed to entice the eye of Herzeloyde (63,13-64,6).

rulership of the Grail community and the subsequent convergence between the worlds of the court and the Church.

Yet, for all that, the reader is still left to mentally reconstruct his body using only the disparate elements such as skin, legs, lips and not much else. Consequently, although the quantity of anatomical description is superior with Parzival, the quality clearly is not. Parzival is no more the owner of a distinct, identifiable body than any of the other knights, but rather is simply the most representative example of the class.

In fact, even when Wolfram seems to take a step towards our modern position by ascribing to Parzival a *lip* replete with *kinne* and *wangen*, he immediately takes a step backwards by withholding any further supplementary details. Neither the modern nor the medieval reader knows, for instance, whether his chin is pointy, or perhaps square set, nor whether his cheeks are rosy, ruddy, or simply sallow, although only the modern reader is likely to pose such questions. Interestingly, these three 'facial' points adumbrate a later dramatic scene in which three drops of blood in the snow remind Parzival of Condwiramur and, while these drops are traditionally emblematic of her red lips, one could further imagine that they also circumscribe the three points of her medieval 'face'.

Considering the sum total of descriptive details examined to this point, a clear pattern of approach begins to take shape, one, which valorizes the bodies of its characters through platitudes of beauty and perfection, which are typical for medieval poetry on the whole. Corporeal depiction consists simply of an enumeration of otherwise hermetically separate body and facial elements, a technique, which Adolf Behre refers to as "Schilderung durch Aufzählung der einzelnen Teile" (21). There is

no attempt by the author to establish a logical connection between the elements themselves, nor do these elements conceal any deeper underlying meaning, which would provide insight into the character. Consequently, and although they may belong to the same body, these features function independently with no mention of how the qualities of the cheeks, chin, or lips, for instance, might reciprocally influence the perception of the other parts. Since they do not combine to form an integrated unity, they are no more indicative of a psychologically decipherable face than the reference to Gawan's *antlütze* is,[115] and Parzival, I think, proves the truth of this contention. When asked to describe his brother's face, he can only answer with, "als ein geschriben permint / swarz und blanc her unde dâ" (747,26-7).

Although the textual assembly of the knightly body resembles a puzzle with most of the pieces missing, those select few bodily members, which came to represent the medieval body in a *pars pro toto* relationship, did not utterly eschew their culturally dependent sign functions. On the contrary, the signals that they transmitted were as valid and meaningful as those, which our bodies today convey. It is simply the case that, due to the vagaries of cultural identity and difference, we may have difficulty in decoding those meanings.

On what cultural referents are these bodies then based? In the case of Gahmuret and Parzival, for example, Wolfram goes to great lengths to accentuate

[115] In fact, the MHG term, *antlütze*, had no claim on the modern face, and instead saw usage only in the restricted connotation of "Gestalt, Anblick, Aussehen, Ansicht, Erscheinung, Äußeres," because the connection to the legible face "wurde noch nicht hergestellt, da es vom beobachtenden Blick als Individualitätszeichen und Merkmal von persönlichen Unterschieden noch nicht erfaßt werden konnte" (Pausch 21).

their youth and vigour, two qualities which are certainly not undesirable for a knight whose highest purpose was to win fame through prowess in combat.

The cultural desirability attached to the body, which possesses these qualities, is only further underscored by the textual presence of its antitheses, the ill or infirm body, which assumes an integral thematic function not only in *Parzival* but also in *Der arme Heinrich*, the work of Wolfram's contemporary, Hartmann von Aue. The symbolic resonance, which resides in medieval conceptions of illness and decrepitude, is a reflexive of the Judao-Christian notions of commission of sin and punitive suffering. Through the woeful examples of the Grail King, Anfortas, who has pursued unsanctioned *Minnedienst*, and Heinrich, who has been stricken with leprosy because his hubris is an affront to God,[116] Wolfram and Hartmann employ descriptions of bodily infirmity as indices of spiritual corruption, whose only remedy is the redemption of the stricken soul through the expiation of sin.[117]

Furthermore, although to modern eyes, the colour white has no underlying value, neither in its application to people nor objects, the medieval reader would have identified with Wolfram's emphasis on the whiteness of Parzival's hands and legs. Within its application to people, white, on the one hand, divides the occident from the orient and underscores differences in racial origin. Consequently, Feirefiz, a child of mixed origin, is graphically described as being half black and half white rather than simply a lighter shade of black. On the other hand, paleness of complexion also had

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[116] Leprosy also played a prominent role in *Engelhard*.

[117] Illness in the Middle Ages reflected not only a corruption of the body, but also, above all, of the spirit. Consequently, the afflicted body quickly became the socially stigmatised body, which functioned as a text through which "various forms of social tension could be mediated. This is seen in the body of the leper, in whom the tensions of sin and sexuality were resolved through a symbolic death and rebirth" (Gilchrist 49).

very practical value as an indicator of social prestige, for it visibly set members of the nobility, the only characters who benefit from such a designation, apart from the labourer class, whose exposure to the sun while toiling in the fields likely gave them a noticeably darker pigmentation.

Applied to both people and objects, whiteness was also a highly prized quality within the Christian belief system, for it was thought to be the colour of purity *sui generis*. The medieval colour scheme, as Gabriele Raudszus affirms, served as "optisches Vehikel von Bedeutungen, als Sinnträger von theologischen Aussagen und Ideen," and the colour white, in particular, was understood in the sacral context "als Farbe des ungetrübten Lichtes," and in the profane as "Sinnbild für Reinheit und Unschuld" (220-21). Thus, those people and objects, which displayed exemplary whiteness, would elicit a particular predetermined identity response amongst the readers.

Lastly, having already mentioned the combative social function of the knightly class, we can now turn to another equally urgent social obligation imposed upon the courtly knight, namely the provision of *Minnedienst*. It is in this context that characteristics such as red lips,[118] beauty, perfection and youth achieve their full significance as sensual signifiers, which mark men, and as we shall see, women too, as eligible combatants for *minne*. Since the umbrella term, beauty, plays such a significant part in this cultural process as proof of eligibility, the medieval context of the beauty concept deserves a brief elucidation.

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[118] To quote Raudszus again, the colour red "wird psychologisch als aktive, warme Farbe empfunden und versinnbildlicht auch wegen der naheliegenden Assoziationen mit Blut das Leben, daneben auch Feuer und die Liebe" (222).

From a purely anthropological perspective, for example, physical beauty is often a certification of good health, yet it is also a material sign whose operation reveals the influx of discursive elements into its cultural matrix. Plato laid the initial foundation for the prevailing medieval *Schönheitsideal*, and St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas later built upon it. Thus, beauty, according to the initial Platonic formulation, equated to Truth and Goodness, and only later, under Augustine and Aquinas, did it become inexorably linked with the presence of God's divine grace.[119]

As the earthly manifestation of this conceptual triumvirate of Truth, Goodness and Divinity, the presence of physical beauty came to be understood only as a material reflection of inner goodness and spiritual beauty. Therefore, by constantly regaling the reader with culturally resonant portrayals of beauty, Wolfram succeeded in creating characters who, for medieval readers, were paragons of physical and spiritual perfection, qualities that, from a secular standpoint, unassailably affirmed both their innate moral goodness and their subsequent social superiority, and from a spiritual perspective, justified their lofty position within the transcendental hierarchy, which existed between Heaven and earth.

### 3.4.2 The spartan build of the ascetic body

In comparison to the cultural signs, which define the second body category in *Parzival*, namely the ascetic, the above descriptions of the knightly body appear positively effusive. Indeed, the anatomical detail of the ascetic body, if it can still be considered a body, conspicuously distinguishes itself from that of the knightly paradigm by displaying a quality of evanescence that operates in direct proportion to

[119] See Synnott 83.

the degree of devotional austerity, which the character demonstrates. This principle of 'variable visibility' is evident in the depth of lexical development dedicated to the two representatives of this particular typology, the pious pilgrim Kahenis, and Trevrizent, the monastic hermit.

Kahenis is portrayed as an aging knight, who, with his wife, two daughters and entire household retinue in tow, has set out upon his yearly pilgrimage, a cleansing ritual to which few other courtly subjects devote themselves. Of the two ascetic figures, and indeed of all the characters in *Parzival*, save, of course, for Parzival himself, it is Kahenis, who balances a devotion for his family, on the one hand, with a dedication to the Lord, on the other, that most plainly straddles the threshold between the two medieval spheres of influence, the secular and the spiritual. This duality is borne out in the few, but nonetheless semantically laden, descriptors with which Wolfram chooses to paint him. For example, he is described as the "grâ man, der mich [Parzival] wol enpfienc / als tet sîn massenîe / der selbe valsches vrîe" (457,6-8), whose beard "al grâ was gevar / dâ bî sîn vel lieht und clâr" (446,11-12), and who traveled "barvuoz" (446,21). Both the beard and its colour[120] are important symbols of age and wisdom, and the fact that he has abjured travel by horse in order to walk barefoot is a gesture of his humility. Yet, for his seemingly advanced age, Wolfram does not forget to include a confirmation of his moral perfection nor his light, clear complexion, qualities which firmly designate his nobility in the same way

[120] Although Gurnemanz too has "grâwe locke" (162,30), there is no specific mention that he is bearded. The gray bearded knight (513,25), who warns Gawan about the dangers of taking up with Orgeluse, is the notable exception to the otherwise uniform use of this trait. All those characterized as gray do share one commonality, however; they dispense cautionary warnings against the actions of exuberant youth.

as they do for Parzival and the other knights. Aside from this foggy outline, however, no further clues to his appearance are forthcoming.

In comparison to Kahenis, who likely only occasionally eschews the comforts of the court, Trevrizent leads a much more austere existence as a forest hermit. In concordance with this greater degree of asceticism, Trevrizent's ephemeral manifestation, i.e., his body, has become so ineffable that Wolfram can only momentarily, and even then only partially, reveal it as a ghostly echo from his courtly past when he was a willing, but misguided, servant of *minne*. Of his former appearance, Trevrizent only recalls the following: "man muose ouch mir vür wâr dâ jehen / daz nie schoener mannes bilde wart / dannoch was ich âne bart" (497,28-30). From this negative image, to borrow the photographic term, we can deduce little more than that he currently has a beard. Whether he still remains the most beautiful image of man is uncertain, but since, as James Schultz maintains, "beards are not part of the desirable male body" (94), apparently because they are discordant with the favoured image of desirability as a combination of youth and beauty, it seems unlikely to be the case.

Once we have condensed the respective descriptors, it becomes evident that the ascetic body reveals itself as somewhat of a paradox. In comparison with other characters, the ascetic body is noticeably absent, its entire production of meaning appended on only one sign, the beard. Yet, this is also a very clever choice of referent on the part of Wolfram, for with it he invites comparison with the iconic *Mosesbild*, and such a spartan depiction is not inconsistent with the nature of the characters, particularly Trevrizent, who has foresworn the material world for the spiritual. In this

way, the beard, at least within the confines of *Parzival*, becomes both the *sine qua non* of the ascetic body and, at the same time, its only universally recognizable feature.

### 3.4.3 Of Condwiramur, Orgeluse and the female *corpus*

Although the masculine body follows a rigidly restricted set of prescriptive qualities, one might logically expect, due to the obvious anatomical differences between the sexes, that female bodies ought to be unambiguously distinguished from the male, even if these selfsame descriptors do nothing to distinguish one woman's body from another. While it is true, on the one hand, that female bodies in *Parzival* are subjected to a process of selective *Zergliederung* and de-contextualization similar to that which the male body underwent, it is not true that their resulting morphological homogeneity greatly distinguishes them from men.

Taking the narrative depiction of Condwiramur as an example with universal validity, Wolfram proceeds to praise her "minneclîch antlützes schîn / dar zuo der ougen süeze sîn / von der küneginne gienc / ein liehter glast" (186,17-20). He continues by pointing out the following: "diu truoc den rehten bêâ curs / Der name ist tiuschen >Schoener lip<" (187,22-3; see also 333,24), "Lîâzen schoene was ein wint / gein der meide diu hie saz / an der got wunsches niht vergaz" (188,6-8), "ûf erde nie sô schoener lîp / wart geborn von menneschlîcher vruht" (441,8-9), and "die kiuschen lieht gemâl" (742,28).

Orgeluse, in comparison, has a "süezer munt," and "liehtez vel" (622,28), and is referred to as "diu herzoginne lieht erkant" (624,12). Her description is completed

by the following passage: "ein alsô clâre vrouwen / [...] / aller wîbes varwe ein bêâ flûrs / âne Condwirn âmûrs / wart nie geborn sô schoener lîp / mit clârheit süeze was daz wîp / wol geschict unt kurtoys" (508,19-25).

At this point, the volume of evidence for the linguistic isolation which Wolfram employs, sometimes repeatedly, to map the bodies of the remaining female characters attains significance. For example, the reader is made acutely aware of the importance of the area of the lips and mouth, as in the following: the pilgrim's daughters' "munde wâren rôt, dicke, heiz" (449,28), Sigune's "dicker munt heiz rôt gevar" (435,26), Antikonie's "munt was heiz, dick unde rôt" (405,19), in fact, it was so red that "den bluomen nam ir prîs" (426,29), Liaze, whose "lîp was minneclîch" (176,11), and to whose mouth "was wol viures varwe kunt" (176,10), Jeschute, "die senfte süeze wol getân" (273,15), who "truoc der minne wâfen / einen munt durchliuhtic rôt" (130,4-5), and finally, the countess of Tenebroc's mouth, which "nâch viures roete schein" (233,4). Since the cultural significance of women's lips does not deviate substantially from the meaning ascribed to men's lips, we might move on to another frequently cited attribute, the colour white, often, but not always, used in combination with a description of the hands.

In this case, we find that the virgins of the Grail bear Parzival's wine "ûf henden blanc" (244,14), and the young maidens of Gurnemanz' household retinue, who are "an lîbes varwe minneclîch" (167,3), tenderly treat Parzival's wounds "mit blanken linden henden" (167,7). Cunneware, "diu fiere und diu clâre" (151,12), whose appearance is completed with "ir reiden hâre / ir lange zöpfe clâre" (151,23-4) and "ir minneclîcher munt" (151,19), also has "linden hende wol gevar" (332,22), and

slices her brother's meal "mit ir blanken linden hant" (279,13). In a similar act of ceremony, Gurnemanz bids his daughter, Liaze, to cut Parzival's dinner with "ir blanken hende linde" (176,18). Finally, Obilot's arm was "blanc unde blôz" (390,28), while Jeschute, the "minneclîche wîp" (130,24) with "ir süezen lîp" (130,23), has skin which is praised for its hue, for it is said to be "noch wîzer denne ein swan" (257,13). Her teeth, likewise, are acclaimed as being "von snêwîzem beine / nâhe bî ein ander cleine / sus stuonden ir die liehten zene" (130,11-13), and she too has the customary "langen arm und blanke hant" (130,25).[121] Clearly, all the above qualities are communal ones; there is no one attribute which would single out a particular woman for distinction amongst other women, nor distinguish any woman from any man for that matter, except perhaps Cunneware's long hair.

Yet, despite the frequent and purposive repetition of the same stock of universal characteristics, Wolfram does mention parts, which are the private reserve of the female body alone. Quite aside from her other qualities, Jeschute also has "hüffelîn"[122] (130,18), which form part of her outstanding figure which is "geschicket und gesniten" (130,21). In like fashion, the most exclusively feminine attributes of the body do not go unnoticed nor unmentioned. The breasts of Herzeloyde's "minneclîchen lîp" (102,27), which are described as "linde unde wîz" (110,25), twice

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[121] As was the case with the male body, many of the qualities of the female body are repeated almost verbatim, and in some cases surpassed, in Konrad's *Engelhard*. Note the reappearance of familiar features, for example, in this extended passage: "schoen unde minneclich gevar / als milch gemischet unde bluot / was ir liehtiu varwe guot / mit wîze und ouch mit rôte / und was ir hâr genôte / brûn unde reit bî disen zwein / ir nase was vil ebene / ir ougen lûter unde klâr / ir wangen roeselehten schîn / scharlachen rôt was ir der munt / und stuonden drinne kleine zene / die glizzen wîzer danne jene / ir zene blanc, ir mündel rôt / ir hende ân alle swerze / wâren lûter unde wîz" (2696-2971, 2976, 2980, 2986, 2988-2990, 2992, 3004-3005).

[122] Both Kühn and Spiewok have translated this line similarly. By Kühn, Jeschute's cover "reichte an die zarten Hüften" (509), while by Spiewok, her "Zobeldecke bedeckte sie nur bis zu den zarten Hüften" (225).

feature prominently in the story (104,13; 110,24-5), as do Jeschute's, which "stuonden blanc hôch sinewel" (258,27). The countess of Tenebroc and her companion distinguish themselves by being girded "mit zwein gürteln an der crenke / ob der hüffe an dem gelenke" (232,29-30), while Antikonie, who was notably "baz geschict an spizze hasen / [. . .] / [. . .] / zwischen der hüffe unde ir brust / minne gerende gelust / kunde ir lîp vil wol gereizen"[123] (409,26-410,1). Wolfram concludes this description by stating that, "irn gesâht nie âmeizen / Diu bezzers gelenkes pflac / dan si was dâ der gürtel lac" (410,2-4).

The problem with these apparently 'distinct' female *Körperglieder*, however, is that they remain the descriptive exception rather than the rule. In the predominant majority of cases, the female body is subjected to precisely the same standardizing norms and process of particularization as the male body.

In addition to that, these 'female only' members rarely carry the sexual charge that one might expect but rather, often as not, are simply listed off like so many ancillary parts. Thus, for every sexually suggestive description in the text, such as the scene in which Jeschute's breasts attractively heave when she weeps (258,27), we have innumerable counter-examples, which either contain no hint of eroticism, or in which the erotic signals do not hinge on the attractiveness, nor the explicit femininity, of the body. The latter is the case with Antikonie, since it is not her breasts and hips which arouse amorous feelings, although they too are mentioned, but rather the

[123] Compare Brüggen (74), who suggests that Wolfram's reference to the rabbit on a spit was an attempt to introduce a tone of irony or mockery into the depiction of the medieval *Schönheitsideal*. Gertrud Jaron Lewis, on the other hand, takes up a contrary position to this interpretation. She states, that the comparison between the svelte hare and Antikonie's slight build "verbindet die Vorstellung des am Spiess bratenden Hasen mit der hübschen Gestalt, wobei man [. . .] an das Appetitliche ihrer Erscheinung als *tertium comparationis* denken muss," but if one proceeds merely from the distorted slenderness of the hare, as Brüggen clearly does, "so bietet sich keine zufriedenstellende Erklärung dieses Vergleichs" (96).

slenderness of the area between them. Indeed, the most palpably erotic scene in *Parzival*, which, oddly enough, again pairs the figures of Parzival and Jeschute, makes no connection between sexuality and those organs, which today are so highly sexualized. Instead, the erotic effect flows from the contrast between the whiteness of Jeschute's teeth and the redness of her mouth, which, slightly open, "truoc der minne hitze viur" (130,9).[124] Similarly, Herzeloyde's breasts are not framed within a sexual context, but are, instead, portrayed as the necessary apparatus of motherhood, since both instances make a clear connection to breast feeding.[125]

Although there are inchoate signs in the *Parzival* text that hint at the first beginnings of a separate body paradigm for women, one which would later burgeon into a fully developed system of exclusively feminine body signs, the female body, as it is described by Wolfram, has not yet been developed to the point where it merits its own cultural identifiers. Thus, although Belakane has "wîplîchen sin / und was aber anders ritterlîch" (24,8-9), and Jeschute "glîch eime ritters trûte" (130,1), Wolfram never elucidates which particular physical qualities promote them to this feminine ideal, at least not in terms that do not equally apply to the masculine ideal.

### 3.4.4 The monstrous body and its role in *Parzival*

Before beginning a closing summary of the aforementioned three representative body classes, there is another type of body deserving of mention, although I have as yet

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[124] Whether this effect was the result of a purposeful contrast on the part of Wolfram, or simply the serendipitous by-product of the listing off of otherwise disconnected 'body events', is indeterminate. The modern eye certainly notices it, but Wolfram did not explicitly state such a relationship.
[125] According to Schultz, as beards were not a locus of desire on the male body, so breasts "play only a very occasional role in distinguishing the body as female, so that the standard of beauty for men and women is nearly the same" (94).

failed to do so, perhaps because it does not conform to any of the recognized social typologies which exclusively identify members of the medieval *bonne société*. It is the unmentionable or monstrous body that acts as the repository of all those physical attributes and features which stand outside the sunny scheme of the noble body, but which, nevertheless, were an undeniable fact of medieval existence and which clamoured for expression.

Functioning as a heterogeneous gestalt representation, this body does not have to conform to the same rigid conventions that ultimately govern the depiction of the ascetic, knightly, and courtly noble bodies. As such, its descriptive freedom is relatively unfettered, so that it operates simultaneously as a description of the supernatural, as in the character of Cundrie,[126] or as a depiction of the subhuman, as in the case of the hunger stricken citizenry of Pelrapeir.

Perhaps it is because such striking physical incongruence both demanded elucidation and elicited a morbid fascination amongst the readers that this creative freedom expresses itself, in stark contrast to the axiomatic noble body, in a finely crafted body, whose vivid attention to detail is entirely devoted to evoking a description of the grotesque. In the case of Cundrie, even before Wolfram has begun a physical description of her, he has already left subtle clues for the reader that there is something unusual about her, a suggestion later fully substantiated by her startling appearance. Not only is she a sorceress, but she is also a polyglot fluent in the arts of dialectic, geometry and astronomy, talents that take her far beyond the educational accomplishments of any other character presented in the text. In contrast to the typical

[126] As Joyce Salisbury notes, "ambiguous, marginal things that fall between two separate, distinct categories are always considered supernatural and taboo" (137), and this would seem to sum up Cundrie's position within the text.

parzivalian body, which is a paradigmatic construction of the noble *corps d'amour* and carries only those signals that highlight this function, Wolfram describes Cundrie in less than flattering terms. He writes:

> über den huot ein zopf ir swanc
> unz ûf den mûl: der was sô lanc,
> swarz, herte und niht ze clâr,
> lind als eins swînes rückehâr.
> si was genaset als ein hunt:
> zwên ebers zene ir vür den munt
> giengen wol spannen lanc.
> ietweder wintbrâ sich dranc
> mit zöpfen vür die hârsnuor (313,17-25).
> Cundrîe truoc ôren als ein ber (313,29).
> gevar als eines affen hût
> truoc hende diz gaebe trût.
> die nagele wâren niht ze lieht;
> [.....]
> si stüenden als eins lewen clân (314,5-9).

Clearly, Cundrie's every aspect resembles that of an animal, and with her coarse black hair, hirsute face, and wildly protruding teeth, she represents an

inversion or perversion of the image of the *schöne Hofdame*.[127] Yet, such a depiction would seem to stand in flagrant contravention of the formula to which Wolfram has heretofore adhered without deviation, namely the congruence between inner and outer beauty. What purpose does it serve, then, that such a learned and refined creature as Cundrie merits so ugly and so bestial a body?

To begin, the exaggerated repugnancy of her features likely reflects the narrative function of her character. The wild, almost dionysian disarray of her complexion provides, on a physical level, a dramatic foil to the ordered, polished, and divinely inspired body of the courtier Parzival. Yet, on the other hand, the reader cannot fail to notice that her function as *Gralsbotin* combined with her noble bearing, cultural refinement and, above all, *Pflichtbewußtsein*, places her on a collision course with the spiritually corrupt and disillusioned Parzival.[128] Thus, the excellence of her spiritual achievement only underscores the magnitude of Parzival's departure from his destined spiritual path. In this sense, Cundrie's ugliness is a metaphoric reproach of the ugliness of the crimes with which she charges Parzival.[129]

The reason why this ugliness finds its expression in strikingly bestial terms is the result of available language. The discursive expression of the medieval *Schönheitsideal* has already shown itself to be constituted of a very limited stock of intelligible signals, and the language of ugliness was even less varied. Consequently, the association of Cundrie's appearance with that of a beast enabled Wolfram to avail

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[127] As Salisbury states, "the concept of a negative human, one who embodied everything humans did not, must have presented a strangely comforting figure because it threw into focus precisely those qualities that defined humanity: rational thought, social behavior, cleanliness, clothing, etc." (152).
[128] Compare this with Salisbury's notion that "the term monster, derived from the Latin word *monstrum*, meaning to show, was used in the classical world to describe births of unusual form, and the significant thing about such births was that they were portents, 'showings,' signs of God's will" (144).
[129] Compare Raudszus 127.

himself of a ready-to-hand language of ugliness, which was otherwise not available to him. It stands to reason that if the noble is human, then the ignoble must be either completely inhuman or somehow less than human.

Of course, these two qualities (ugly, beastly) mark Cundrie as eminently identifiable and perhaps even individualize her body to a certain degree in comparison to other characters, but we must, nevertheless, ignore its richness of detail, and simply treat it as an anomaly. Cundrie's is not an individual's body for it is ultimately not a human body at all but rather a zoological jigsaw puzzle. It is certainly not a body, which provides a psychologically legible statement about its owner, for there is little correlation between her physical manifestation and her temperament.

The second appearance of the monstrous body comes not in the form of an individual figure but rather as a group. Like Cundrie, the famished citizens of Pelrapeir suffer from an all too vivid corporeality, which verges on the grotesque. Of them Wolfram relays, "die wambe in nider sunken / ir hüffe hôch unde mager / gerumpfen als ein Ungers zager / was in diu hût zuo den riben" (184,12-15). In the course of these four terse lines, Wolfram achieves a visual concretization of body, which has no parallel amongst the immaculate bodies of the noble figures. Ultimately, however, this example too must be discarded as invalid, for it not only represents a group body, but this mob body also appears to consist entirely of commoners, a lower order social class from whom the distinction of a noble bearing is neither expected nor desired. Thus, the ignobility of its physical plight can only serve to further accentuate the indelible beauty and indefatigable nobility of the body that preserves its *Liebreiz* against all corruption, as is clearly the case with that "geflôrierte bêâ

flûrs" (732,14), Queen Condwiramur, who, despite the withering effects of famine, manages to keep her physical charms intact.[130]

### 3.4.5 Drawing the body to a close.

Drawn strictly from an analysis of the text, the archetypal body in *Parzival* exists purely as a limited collection of semantically disassociated parts that are capable of delivering only an even more limited range of meaning. Since it is in the nature of every *body* to claim a nose, waist, legs, lips, cheeks etc., the noble body relies on the superlative physicality of its corporeal elements, rather than their mere presence, to generate the impression of beauty required to secure its membership in this elite caste. The emphatic whiteness of Parzival's legs, the fabulous slenderness of Antikonie's waist, and the incomparable redness of Jeschute's lips all serve to elevate their bodies from the morass of the common.

Of course, in terms of linguistic productivity, the grotesque and marginalized body displays a surprising loquacity in contrast to the consummately noble but disappointingly *wortkarg beau corps*, but this volubility immediately puts it at variance with the cultural requirements of the noble body, which demands representation by a rigidly organized and esoteric body norm, one whose sole purpose is to reinforce class uniformity and social conformity,[131] and upon which the ideological imperatives of noble society, namely the justification and edification of

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[130] Admittedly, Condwiramur does voice concern that she looks "vertwâlet" (188,27), and fears that Parzival will find her repulsive on this account, but this does not turn out to be the case.

[131] This exemplary medieval body operates on much the same principle through which fashion produces meaning, that is by first creating the "ideal incarnate body" (Barthes 258). The difference between the two, however, is that, while the modern body is individual and the fashion body abstract, a differential which, as Barthes notes, leads to a "structural discontinuity: that of Language and Speech" (258), the medieval textual body did not yet face this problem, since *Langue* and *Parole* were still one.

the ruling class, can be visibly realized.[132] The result of such a distinction is a universal body, whose self-evident noblesse remains, at all times, pristine and desirable, while the common body must bear the scars of its inevitably traumatic passage through life.[133]

While the parzivalian body might be a site of class struggle,[134] continually producing and reinforcing class distinction through the judicious repetition of noble/ignoble qualifiers, it is genuinely incapable of rendering any further useful distinctions, a fact which leads to its expressive transparency or muteness. With every noble body imprinted with the same generic features, the characters in *Parzival* do not display individual identity in any familiar sense, and were we, for example, to strip away these communal features in the hope of uncovering individual features, the product would be exactly what Herzeloyde is left with when she buries Gahmuret's

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[132] Spiewok explains the rigidity of literary depictions of noble life, in particular those, which he describes as *diesseitsorientiert*, as a reflex of "das (von der sozialökonomischen Entwicklung stimulierte) Streben nach kultureller Selbstbestätigung und Konsolidierung" (658). Similarly, Brüggen explains, "die vorübergehende Realisation des eigenen Wunschbildes hat für das Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstverständnis dieser Elitegruppe und als Indikator eines berechtigten Herrschaftsanspruches gewiß eine nicht zu unterschätzende Rolle gespielt" (18).

[133] The stigmatized body of Anfortas is, of course, an exception to this rule, as is Sigune's body, which also openly betrays signs of her suffering. To her wretched appearance, Parzival exclaims, for example, "ôwê war kom dîn rôter munt? / [. . .] / dîn reideleht lanc brûnez hâr / Des ist dîn houbet blôz getân / [. . .] / du hâst verlorn varwe unde craft" (252,27-253,5). Upon his third encounter with her, he again notes that "ir dicker munt heiz rôt gevar / was dô erblichen unde bleich" (435,26-7). Yet, Gawan's numerous contusions and sundry wounds, acquired from his trials at the Schastel marveile, do not represent a disfigurement of the noble body, for the very reason that these 'distortions' were sustained under extraordinary, indeed, even magical circumstances. That Gawan accepts Turkoyte's challenge in such a debilitated condition only increases his *ruom*. Nor is Parzival, who sports a sturdy bruise as a memento of his combat with Ither, a legitimate example. Since his injury was sustained during the commission of an ignoble act, it can be understood, in much the same light as Anfortas' injury, as a punishment. Lastly, Parzival's second encounter with Jeschute also tests the integrity of the noble body. Although her clothing hangs around her in tatters, a testament to her mistreatment and neglect, her body has nary a scratch to show for it. Indeed, she seems more radiant and alluring to Parzival now, than upon his first encounter with her.

[134] Compare, for example, Schultz, who claims, "class is written on the body more clearly than sex. Bodies differ in visible ways because they are noble or because they are beautiful" (96).

bloodied shirt and lance tip (111,30-112,2); that is, the symbolic representation of an otherwise absent body.

Questions of individual identity aside, there is also scant evidence to suggest that the manner of this body's construction is capable of generating the necessary linguistic differentiae required to sustain the divisive gender identities whose presence is plainly evident throughout the text. To be more precise, the physical identifiers, which give Wolfram's characters the semblance of form, and which also fixes their bodies within the social hierarchy, are, ultimately, only capable of distinguishing between a *minne* eligible body, itself a function of class, and an ineligible one.[135]

The vague and dislocated anatomy of the medieval body was a result of the linguistic and cognitive lacunae characteristic of the medieval experience,[136] but even to the extent that words alone could instill this mute body with life, its articulation would have been quickly stifled by the oppressive demands of a dominant cultural paradigm, in which only unremitting conformity "qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility" (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 2). Much like medieval cartographic maps, the medieval body was full of sketchy details where imagined monsters came to represent the unknown, unexplored reaches, and given such less than ideal conditions, there seems little choice but that men and women must inhabit the same bodies.[137]

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[135] Cundrie, for example, whose spirit is noble but whose body is not, is said to be "niht nâch vriundes minne ger" (313,30).

[136] As Rubin notes, the medieval body was "lived and experienced, *in parts*, rather than as whole" (101).

[137] As Gurnemanz instructs Parzival, "man und wîp diu sint al ein / als diu sunne diu hiute schein / und ouch der name der heizet tac / der enwederz sich gescheiden mac / si blüent ûz eime kerne gar" (173,1-5).

Yet, if these bodies are individually and sexually indistinguishable, there must be another discursive element, or elements, operating on them, which can assume the important task of gender differentiation. With this in mind, we would do well to frame the notion of the *lûter spiegel* (4712) of Konrad von Würzburg in a different context. If, for example, the body, like a mirror, merely reflects that which is projected upon it, while, at the same time, contributing nothing of its own essence, then logically, the visible reflection cannot be the body at all, but rather something altogether different.

### 3.5 Noble is as noble does: conduct and the production of conformity[138]

Having focused, to this point, exclusively on physical dimensions, we soon come to realize that the organic body, due to the limitations imposed by flesh, bones, and organs, can neither fully account for the production of its own cultural meaning nor for the application of that meaning in the form of regulatory schemes of hierarchical order. In other words, while appendages and organs provide the primary point of reference for the term *body*, they do not exhaustively define it; therefore, what a body does, for example, or what it wears must be equally important aspects of its definition.

From this perspective, indications of individual identity must express themselves through patterns of action or behaviour that draw attention to the social demarcation of the body that performs them, whereas indications of collective

[138] In order to avoid undue repetition, I have chosen to leave further analysis of the ascetic body out of consideration, and, instead, I will concentrate only on the courtly figures of the knight and the courtly lady. This exclusion presents no real methodological difficulties, however, since the conclusions drawn from the two examples of the courtly body will more than offset the small contribution of their ascetic counterpart.

identity will provide precisely the opposite, namely the complete veneration of social conformity. Consequently, the degree of a character's behavioural conformity, or, conversely, deviance, provides both an index of cultural expectations and gauges the acclimation and obeisance of individual bodies to those expectations.

Parsing through the *Parzival* text, for example, it becomes clear that, in contrast to its generic, unisex body 'events', its body 'performances' do draw the first tangible distinctions of a dichotomous sexual economy based upon the assignment of prescribed active/passive social roles. The positive or negative evaluation of behaviour then proceeds from the harmony or discord of a character's actions within this binary.[139] The male *courtier/Ritter*, for instance, primarily assumes the role of active agent in the narrative. Expected to seek adventure, fame, fortune, and, above all, *minne* in courts both near and far, the evocation of every aspect of the masculine must uniformly and demonstrably confirm him in this social function.

Since the construction and enforcement of divisive gender identities is a function of language use, Wolfram, in order to effectively convey impressions of masculinity through the affirmation of activity, strength and competence in martial, as well as *minne*, service, must repeatedly phrase the *descriptio* of his male figures in very particular and exclusive terms. The following are the most prevalent adjectival and nominal constellations employed by Wolfram as descriptors of model masculine conduct: *ruom/prîs/ritterliche werdekeit* (by far the most numerous),[140]

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[139] Compare the very similar notion that bodies "lived between the authoritative discourses which endorsed order and hierarchy through binary classifications and schemes of practice" (Rubin 115).
[140] See 4,17; 7,23; 11,6-7; 15,25; 18,16; 22,1; 24,7; 27,12; 44,10; 51,9; 52,12; 108,12; 108,25-6; 151,14; 172,8; 195,26; 253,23; 265,3; 288,12; 302,29; 328,26; 424,18; 656,20; 660,7; 676,22; 682,14; 751,6...

*ellen/ellenthaft*,[141] *küene/vrävel/vrechheit*,[142] *ritterschaft/rittertât/ritterlich*,[143] *manlîch/manheit/mannes wer/manlîche sinne/manlîche siten/ manlîcher ger*,[144] *triuwe*,[145] *êre/êren*,[146] and *vrechiu ger*.[147]

Whether as a direct appellation to the military *raison d'etre* of the knight, as an indirect allusion to codes of conduct contained in the *Ritterkodex*, or, finally, as a reference to the social obligations towards courtly women in the service of *Minnedienst*, each of the above word fields circumscribes a particular aspect of positive knightly activity. Of course, by elucidating acceptable comportment, Wolfram, by default, also delimits the unacceptable as well, and piecing together the various descriptive passages of Gahmuret, for example, these expectations and social responsibilities as stated begin to shift into focus. According to Wolfram, "strît und minne was sîn ger" (35,25), while Parzival claims of his father that Gahmuret "kunde in strîten / sînen prîs gewîten / und werdekeit gemachen hôch / elliu missewende in vlôch / er was wîben undertân" (751,5-9), and "er kunde ouch wol vercrenken / alle valschlîche tât" (751,14-15).

Yet, in terms of patterns of deviance and conformity, we could only validate the presence of the individual if we could locate within the text an example of a

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[141] See 16,1; 16,14; 20,9; 26,16; 38,18; 41,5; 43,2; 55,30; 60,23; 108,16; 112,30; 185,22; 196,22; 296,22; 325,25; 410,6; 542,3; 675,26; 701,20...
[142] See 4,18; 26,12; 26,16; 28,1; 32,13; 38,9; 41,2; 42,3; 42,19; 45,3; 49,13; 50,15; 54,17; 58,23; 59,14; 64,16; 66,14; 70,8; 171,25; 227,7; 296,13; 437,12; 542,3; 734,25; 744,12...
[143] See 5,28; 6,4; 11,7; 15,12; 15,20; 20,17; 24,17; 25,10; 30,6; 33,1; 35,28; 46,18; 48,15; 49,2; 51,6; 54,19; 59,1; 66,17; 111,28; 117,28; 195,3; 409,6; 663,30; 682,14; 746,16...
[144] See 4,12; 15,15; 39,3; 57,1; 92,19; 111,19; 112,30; 172,7; 185,15; 188,15; 196,23; 260,27; 291,6; 317,23; 319,5; 325,9; 364,29; 370,1; 410,6; 425,1; 451,4; 520,30; 527,30; 541,19; 665,19; 694,26; 698,10; 701,20; 712,15; 745,10...
[145] See 5,30; 6,11; 6,15; 7,13; 21,9; 26,13; 45,5; 141,4; 202,3; 317,23; 322,21; 345,3; 626,4; 675,30; 690,2; 749,20...
[146] See 11,26; 82,15; 149,16; 193,29; 224,9; 255,27; 258,7; 267,5; 280,10; 288,2; 304,11; 308,13; 309,16; 316,13; 321,26; 322,11; 323,21; 336,22; 398,7; 679,3; 719,17...
[147] See 32,6; 35,25.

knight who willingly defies convention by contravening the laws of combat and/or of good society. Unfortunately, since all knights are fashioned with the same virtues as Gahmuret, such an exception simply does not exist in *Parzival*. There are, of course, those rare figures (Gramoflanz,[148] Parzival,[149] and Feirefiz[150]), whose conduct appears to place them outside of the framework of acceptable noble practice, but in the course of the text, each receives or, respectively, achieves vindication. As a result, and with the lack of any significant departures from the prescribed model, it is safe to say that, in *Parzival*, one is either a virtuous and noble knight or else no knight at all.[151]

Juxtaposed against this image of the active, culturally mobile knight errant, the exemplary *Hofdame* excels as a social complement to the stoic, combative male. Loving and, in turn, love-inspiring, attentive and, above all, highly sedentary, this ideal female is is openly and frequently associated with the qualities of *trûren/trûre/trûreclîch/trûrec*,[152] *lîden/leide* (137,9; 272,9), *kumber*,[153] and *jâmer/jaemerlîch*.[154] Plainly, such terms resonate with the echoes of an emotional vulnerability largely denied men and this inequality creates a very particular

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[148] In the case of Gramoflanz, whom Orgeluse willfully paints as a monster, it becomes clear that this image is truly the fictive creation of Orgeluse's vitriol.

[149] Parzival does grievously breach both the etiquette of *minne* (his molestation of Jeschute) and martial protocol (his ignominious murder of Ither), but in neither case had he yet accepted the precincts of knighthood. Upon completion of his tutelage under Gurnemanz, however, he consistently acquits himself on the field of combat with nothing less than honour and distinction.

[150] Even as a heathen, Feirefiz receives the accolades afforded the honourable and noble fighter, one whose prowess, a match even for Parzival, inspires admiration. His baptismal conversion then should only increase his *ruom*.

[151] I am, of course, mindful of the example provided by Urians, the knight of the round table who has committed an act of rape. His subsequent banishment, however, has stripped him of noble rank and reduced him to the level of a brigand. Consequently, his conduct is no longer reflective of the principles of knighthood. By regretting his transgressions and seeking to redress them, Parzival avoids sharing Urians' fate.

[152] See 137,22; 137,25; 261,24; 270,22; 318,25; 365,16; 646,23; 709,30...

[153] See 10,23; 103,21; 137,28; 139,19; 167,30; 192,20; 258,23; 332,27; 373,6; 660,26; 710,3; 710,16; 726,14...

[154] See 26,29; 28,8; 28,19; 30,30; 55,23; 103,22; 117,6; 117,7; 117,11; 136,10; 137,21; 138,19; 139,24; 141,10; 141,18; 189,29; 193,15; 194,9; 253,4; 440,1; 694,13; 698,1; 710,15...

equilibrium between knight and lady. As the narrative attests, the urgent itinerancy of the knight's quest for fame and fortune, which, by the way, often ends in his demise, is matched by the emotional intensity of the women who are left behind to lament that death. Indeed, the element of grief prevalent throughout the text is so deeply feminized that the narrative is positively brimming with women, who are in the process of either bewailing the loss of their beloved or else, at the very least, the loss of a true servant of *minne*.[155]

Although certainly predominant, such emotionally laden terms do not singularly define women in *Parzival*. On the contrary, like their male counterparts, they too possess the noble qualities of *êre* and *triuwe*. Unlike masculine honour, however, which is a measure of a knight's acquittance in combat, or masculine loyalty, which circumscribes both the inviolate bond between vassal and liege and that between comrades-in-arms, feminine honour and loyalty both describe a woman's capacity to maintain her sexual integrity and with it her virtuous reputation.[156] Indeed, the application of *êre* and *triuwe*, in this instance, is ancillary to a much richer and more definitive language of the feminine. Operating on principles of subjugation and regulation, female sexuality, with a particular emphasis on pre-

[155] Against such prominent pairs of mourning women and mourned men as Belakane/Isenhart, Sigune/Schionatulander, Orgeluse/Cidegast, Herzeloyde/Gahmuret, and Condwiramur/Gentilfleur, there stands only one true example of a grieving man, namely the aging knight Gurnemanz, who mourns the loss of his three sons. Of course, lamentation, while a natural process for women, is foreign to the makeup of the knight, but there are mitigating factors, which would explain this atypical gender behaviour. The first, which speaks in his favour, is that he, at no time, attempts to dissuade Parzival from pursuing the path of the knight, despite that he fears for his life. Secondly, and more importantly, he is clearly no longer in the appropriate age group for *minne* service. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that what would be unseemly for a young knight is excusable for an aging father.

[156] Wolfram's narrative tirades against women who have shown checkered loyalty in love only serve to enhance the virtuousness of his female characters.

marital celibacy, is repeatedly delimited in forms such as *juncvrouw/juncvröuwelîn*,[157] *meide/magt/maget*,[158] and similarly, *kiusch/kiuscheclîch/magetuom/magtuomlîch*.[159] Even after a woman passes out of this pre-marital stage, however, the conditions imposed on her sexuality are unlikely to change. In fact, Wolfram draws little distinction between the value of this maidenly chastity, Jeschute's unconditional fidelity and submission to the physical and verbal indignities inflicted by her overbearing husband Orilus[160], Herzeloyde's praiseworthy celibacy, or the grieving Sigune's steadfast loyalty proclaimed in her words: "daz ist ob mîner triuwe ein slôz / vonme herzen mîner ougen vlôz" (440,15-6).

The establishment and repeated confirmation of these sexual and emotional parameters also helps to elucidate the significance of the multitude of references to *wîplîch/wîpheit/wîbes herze/wîplîche site/wîplîcher sin/wîplîch êre*[161], and were we, on this basis, to summarize the feminine, we could find no better example than the following description of Jeschute: "wîplîcher kiusche lobes cranz / truoc si mit armüete / si pflac der wâren güete / sô daz der valsch an ir verswant" (260,8-11).

Finally, as a complement to the linguistic circumscription of women, there is a spatial phenomenon evident within the text, the development of a 'feminine gaze' so to speak, which most clearly punctuates the overall position of women within the

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[157] See 33,8; 44,25; 167,2; 167,12; 167,25; 182,16; 189,10; 192,21; 232,15; 232,23; 234,9; 236,8; 243,21; 244,11; 244,15; 306,10; 407,22; 407,26; 408,2; 449,22; 683,16; 810,12...
[158] See 45,24; 60,15; 84,6; 182,17; 190,18; 192,3; 193,7; 198,26; 235,18; 236,21; 267,15; 267,24; 306,16; 313,1; 331,19; 333,11; 409,24; 410,11; 441,3; 441,18; 450,14; 477,13; 493,16; 493,19; 659,13; 710,12; 710,20; 710,27; 810,16...
[159] See 3,2; 27,11; 28,14; 103,5; 131,3; 167,12; 176,12; 192,3; 194,29; 195,25; 235,28; 238,28; 252,16; 264,9; 332,12; 367,27; 409,14; 440,7; 441,10; 446,20; 477,14; 526,29; 527,11; 732,3; 734,12; 742,28...
[160] Wolfram speaks thusly of her, "ir kiusche unde ir wîpheit / Sîn hazzen lîden muosten" (137,8-9).
[161] See 3,20; 4,11; 23,28; 24,8; 26,26; 27,9; 28,12; 28,13; 54,26; 110,28; 137,8; 264,6; 404,24; 526,27; 614,29; 696,1; 729,22; 734,12...

medieval social matrix. Banned from physical participation in such social rituals as jousting, it is, nonetheless, imperative that women 'see' or register the knights in this activity,[162] for positive visual reception and acknowledgement not only represents the feminine dimension of the *minne* contract, but it also constitutes an integral part of a knight's quest for *ruom*. In some cases, this gaze can take the form of an innocuous connection between women and eyes (4,20; 23,23; 29,1; 244,5; 311,28),[163] but in the majority of cases, it is the reason that women find themselves sequestered at windows, their participation reduced to an optical presence as in the following: "die vrouwen dennoch lâgen / zen venstern unde sâhen dar" (17,30-18,1), and "ob in saz vrouwen ein her / in den venstern ûf dem palas / unt sâhen kampf der vor in was" (541,20-2).[164]

Clearly, although men and women inhabit the same universal body, this body is subject to a behavioural dichotomy. The discrepancy, for example, between the unfettered display of emotion, sexual continence and purely receptive/ornamental social graces of the feminine, and the control of emotion[165] and activity expressive of the masculine sets a tangible boundary between the two genders that permits little transgression. Indeed, neither men nor women ever significantly veer from their

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[162] We could just as easily invert this order, however, and claim that women must 'be seen' by knights during their activity.

[163] Since the acquisition of *minne* and *ruom* was not the driving force behind the ecclesiastical Grail court, it is not surprising that a lowly page greets Parzival upon his arrival at the Grail castle, even though it was an event of momentous import. The women, whose eyes would normally gaze fondly at the *minneclîcher lîp* of the knight, are also significantly absent.

[164] See also 37,10-11; 38,15; 61,3-7; 69,22-3; 151,7-10; 182,16-18; 352,7-9; 357,27-30; 387,16-20; 534,27-30; 535,22-4; 553,13-14; 574,9-11; 597,11-12; 598,21-3; 623,1-2.

[165] While it is true that Parzival is associated with the notions of *trûren* (329,18; 442,5) and *kumber* (441,16; 442,6), as is Anfortas with *trûrig* (315,28) and *jâmer* (316,1), their condition of inner turmoil and misery is self-induced. In contrast, emotionally weighted terms are not only applied with much greater frequency to female characters, but their attendant and very evident grief appears to be a natural outcome of their social position and social value, i.e., as objects of *minne*.

socially approved gender course,[166] except, of course, for Cundrie and there are extenuating circumstances that would lead one to believe her's is an exclusive case. Even Orgeluse, to whom, at times, subtly masculine traits are ascribed,[167] is driven to these ends under mournful duress. Once her grief and thirst for revenge have been assuaged, however, she is free to expose a much softer, feminine side of her nature.

Aside from producing and/or reinforcing gender boundaries, however, the conduct of every character, viewed from the perspective of identity markers, evinces a formality, or uniformity of form, which is emblematic of the ethos that inhered in the closed society of medieval nobility. In an age that had not yet discovered the abundant multiplicity of individual identity, the partitioning of society into distinct homogeneous groups formed the bedrock of the medieval court and the backbone of the medieval social hierarchy. Only complete compliance with these partitions made such social divisions and distinctions feasible, and membership within them culturally intelligible. Indeed, great value was placed on the observation of ritual formality and ceremonial etiquette primarily because it was one of the cultural elements cultivated by the nobility that distinguished them from the lower classes and reaffirmed their social difference and superiority. Consequently, the portrayal of noble characters cleaves as strongly to an emphasis on behavioural orthodoxy as it does to a particularly recognizable idealized body type.

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[166] For this reason, Wolfram is careful to maintain Condwiramur's sexual integrity by prefacing her encounter with Parzival with the words, "ez brach niht wîplîchiu zil / mit staete kiusche truoc diu magt" (192,2-3), and "an vröuden verdorben / was diu magt: des twanc si schem" (193,6-7).

[167] For example, Orgeluse initially conveys an impression of strident hostility. Indeed, the manner in which she pins back the straps of her bonnet is reminiscent of a knight positioning his helmet before a joust (515,1-4), and her general attitude, "Orgelûs diu rîche / vuor ungeselleclîche / zuo Gâwân si kom geriten / mit alsô zornlîchen siten" (516,15-18), certainly bears resemblance to a wrathful Greek fury.

For this reason, the reader encounters the purposeful reiteration of a particular series of *handlungs/verhaltensbestimmende Terminologie* designed to enhance the impact of gestures and actions, as in the following: *curtôsîe/curteis/kurtoys*,[168] *minneclîch*, which can be used as a modifier of person, as in "ein minneclîch antlützes schîn" (186,17), but also finds frequent use as a modifier of behaviour,[169] and *hoflîch/höfschlîch/höfsch/höfscheit/hövesch*.[170] The most prevalent term *zuht*[171] denotes both a fixed set of articulate gestures as well as factors such as posture, manner or bearing,[172] and is, perhaps, best encapsulated by the English words *breeding* or *upbringing*. In this form, *zuht* functions as both an adjectival modifier of person and as an attributive object.[173]

The observance of ritual ceremony is such a significant identifier of social group that Wolfram employs adverbial forms of *zuht* (*mit zühten/zühteclîch*) in order to embellish otherwise empty gestures and thereby to elevate them to acts of cultural significance indicative of social refinement,[174] as in the following examples: "man

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[168] See 46,21; 62,3; 144,21; 284,11; 297,1; 312,22; 325,29; 327,16; 380,28; 593,12; 619,25; 651,5; 672,25; 723,12; 727,18; 735,2; 748,30; 753,29...

[169] See 17,5; 20,7; 20,20; 47,29; 48,2; 160,7; 227,29; 253,3; 258,30; 308,5; 352,23; 375,29; 670,22; 722,16...

[170] See 45,30; 61,21; 62,28; 169,25; 618,1; 643,6; 670,6; 671,30; 677,24; 699,22; 709,22; 717,1; 719,13; 728,9; 744,26; 756,22; 767,16...

[171] Kühn translates *zuht* alternately as *Haltung* (9,18; 26,14; 330,1; 451,4...), *formgewandt/formell/förmlich* (437,29; 551,4; 551,17...), and *Formvollendung/formvollendet* (220,30; 234,1; 493,18...).

[172] Schmitt, for example, views "gesture, attitude, and comportment," as "social acquisitions, the purposive or unconscious products of processes of learning or imitation" (129).

[173] See 8,5; 9,18; 12,24; 18,28; 24,18; 24,29; 26,14; 32,30; 57,1; 92,19; 94,23; 100,19; 143,28; 160,18; 162,23; 167,4; 176,24; 179,15; 186,30; 188,15; 189,3; 201,27; 225,16; 229,18; 232,8; 238,30; 239,10; 287,28; 305,12; 312,4; 319,5; 330,1; 367,5; 369,6; 386,4; 392,2; 415,24; 437,13; 450,28; 451,4; 544,18; 582,24; 637,14; 660,2; 727,13; 767,14...

[174] Part of this refinement includes an unspoken protocol of hospitality, the social obligation of the medieval noble to provide his/her noble guests, both friend and stranger alike, with food, shelter, and clothing. Parzival, of course, benefits immensely from this code, as Gurnemanz, Condwiramur, and the Grail King all receive him warmly and without reciprocal obligation, even bestowing him with new clothes on each occasion. Rather tellingly, however, Parzival must bribe the lowly peasant in order to secure lodging for the night (143,1-6).

truoc bescheidenlîche dar / den rittern und den vrouwen gar / ir spîse zühteclîche" (763,9-11), or "mit zuht diu magt zem venster gienc" (437,29). These adverbial uses also appear in combination with other demonstrative verbs: *eischen* (220,30; 544,21), *gên* (234,1; 235,4; 236,16; 446,29), *sprechen* (34,20; 50,21; 223,15; 693,6), *nîgen* (236,7; 240,19; 551,17), *tragen* (238,30; 240,22; 637,4; 777,29), *spîsen/asen* (279,15), *nâmen* (238,5; 809,25), *snîden* (551,4), *reiten* (381,4), *stehen* (405,15), *kunden* (493,18; 641,28), *tuon* (549,9; 581,29), *bitten* (663,23), *vrâgen* (194,10), *doln* (277,11), *enphâhen* (83,10), and *entwâpenen* (227,27). Not only, then, must characters possess the pre-requisite *zuht* of nobility, but even their most trivial actions must confirm this.

On a microcosmic level, the *Parzival* text must operate intelligibly and harmoniously within a socially sanctioned, codified system of binary opposites, which produces characters with archetypical gender and class identities.[175] While knight and courtly lady share a common need to be skilled courtiers, at the same time they must also represent polarized sexual categories with very divergent social objectives. As a consequence thereof, the nature of the female social identity, while

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[175] I am referring here merely to identity templates, not specifically to the Jungian notion of archetypes. For the application of these archetypes within the context of medieval literature, see Gerhard Giesa, who approaches Hartmann's *Erec* and *Iwein* from the perspective of Jung's notion of individuation, the process of self-realization in which one must confront elements of the unconscious, namely the Anima/Animus and the Shadow, before one can truly commune with the Self. Although I harbour no theoretical objections to this method, Giesa does draw some conclusions, which do not naturally harmonize with the intentions of this paper. For one, he is of the opinion that, unlike *Märchen*, some aspects of which, he states, are integrated into Hartmann's Arthurian epics, most notably their sequential structure, the epic poet surpasses the expressive capacity of the *Märchen* by creating a longer narrative work, which "die Entwicklung eines Individuums zum Thema hat" (155). Furthermore, Giesa refers to death as a process, which robs historical individuals of their memory and with it "ihre Individualität, nur die Helden (in unserem Fall Erec und Iwein) behalten diese, da ja ihre irdische Existenz bereits eine exemplarische ist" (161). Of course, the notions that the development of the individual was truly the intent of the medieval poet and that leading an exemplary life constitutes an individual are highly problematic and clash with my perception. To refute these claims would require more room than I have here, but suffice it to say, Giesa has apparently attached the quality of individual identity to the remembrance of a name not a person.

indelibly stamped by its *hövescheit*, is primarily constituted by qualities, which distinctively mark it as feminine, such as passive, sedentary, social, emotional, and sexually continent, while the masculine equivalent, which is equally *hövesch*, is active, mobile, martial, and pragmatic (in the sense conveyed by the word *sachlich*).[176]

In terms of appropriate conduct, then, men and women are shown to have very abiding, fixed social identity positions imposed upon them. The need to propagate and maintain stringent partitions of gender and class-consciousness promoted the cultivation of an esoteric language redolent with the principles of courtly nobility. The chastising spectres of *schande* and *spot*, and ultimately, the threat of complete social ostracism, awaited those who transgressed the proprieties of class, gender, or etiquette. On the basis of behavioural norms, therefore, we must conclude that not only do the characters in *Parzival* not look like individuals, but they do not act very much like them either.[177]

### 3.6 Clothing's signal function

In the words of Roland Barthes, the body and its clothing find themselves intertwined in a "relation of signification," in which the body "as pure sentience, cannot signify," but in which clothing assures the body's "passage from sentience to meaning" (258). To this explanation, however, I would quickly add one salient point, which Barthes

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[176] I have excluded continence from the list of masculine descriptors for a specific reason. Although there is no textual evidence to suggest that any of Wolfram's noble knights are promiscuous, chastity is simply not a quality emphasized as belonging to men.

[177] Of course, one might champion Parzival's first incarnation, the simple peasant, as an individual, since, in this guise, he is able to act autonomously without hindrance from a sense of social justice or duty. To this, however, I would reply that it is a telling sign of medieval society that the imposition of layer upon layer of prescriptive codes of conduct quickly erodes this apparent autonomy, effectively undoing what socialization normally creates, i.e., the individual.

does not otherwise explicitly make; alongside the aesthetic, symbiotic relationship which the two share, there exists an equally influential bond, that of physical proximity. Regardless of whether one is wearing loose, flowing garments, for example, or tight, form fitting ones, there are, at all times, multiple points of contact between body and clothing. It is this familiar nearness of clothing, almost to the point that we do not consciously perceive its presence, which elicits the reaction of a second skin or of a natural extension, and which ensures that clothing's semiotic function, that close connection between clothing and clothed, operates only when it is worn on a body.

When inquiring, then, as we eventually must, what Barthes means when he suggests that the significatory power of the body is rendered mute without the aid of clothing, two central concepts must eventually come to the forefront of discussion, namely access and valence. In the first instance, consider that the social body spends a considerable amount of its time clothed, so much so that nudity often requires an occasion (bathing, sex), or some other justification (nudist colony, surgery etc.), in order to be socially permissible. It follows then, that clothes, which may mask or highlight the body as required, must assume a substantial identificatory role within culture simply as a function of increased visibility. This ocular access would certainly define one aspect of clothing's function.

Yet, there must be more to its successful functioning than mere cultural visibility. Were that the case, then the body, given the same parameters, ought itself to reproduce the *passage from sentience to meaning*, thus rendering the sign function of clothing obsolete. Since the body evidently does not do this, there must be some

other dimension to clothing, which the body is unable to duplicate. Indeed, the importance of clothing lies not only in its intelligible visibility, but also, above all, in the condition of that visibility, which I have referred to as its valence. In metaphoric terms, think of the example afforded by a prism, in which the body denotes a beam of light and clothing a prism. As light travels through the prism (symbolic of passage), a single beam becomes refracted and, more importantly, seemingly multiplied as it breaks down into its component colours. In other words, wavelengths, which were previously present but invisible now become apprehendable by the eye. In much the same way, clothing augments what might otherwise be muted or unexceptional body signals.[178] Of course, it is entirely possible that Barthes had neither of these offerings in mind when he formulated his notion of fashion, but that does not alter the fact that the crux of his argument, in this specific case, revolves around clothing as a catalyst of cultural meaning, a point, which I have attempted to elucidate.

To understand those meanings, which clothing makes possible, we need to look to the social and situational purpose of dress. Aside, of course, from its obvious practical applications for human survival, clothing also contains a strong element of purely stylistic and ceremonial content. On a conscious level, for instance, it can signal who we are, or how we feel about ourselves, and it can afford us the opportunity to make individual statements. Do I wear a tuxedo to the opera gala, for example, or blue jeans?

Yet, the language of clothing is much more than a tool for the promotion of personal welfare, for as Lurie explains, "identification with and active participation in

[178] Think of the multiplicity of textures, materials, colours and cuts, which clothing offers, as enhancing the generally homogeneous colours, textures et al. of the human body.

a social group always involves the human body and its adornment and clothing" (16). It is this identification with the larger group which is of interest, for by far the most important contribution of clothing to social identity comes not from our conscious choices, but rather from those submerged, unconscious domains which continually announce our sexual availability, sexual orientation, marital status, gender, class, wealth, occupation, and origin, to name only the most prevalent.[179] In short, for as many functional uses as clothing has, it also carries an equal battery of signs it can relay.

Yet, these facilitative signals had a much narrower scope of influence in thirteenth century Europe than they do today. Unlike the modern body/clothing relationship, in which clothing enhances or enriches our lexical *oeuvre* of body gestures, the medieval body exhibited, at times, a strong tendency to be fully absorbed by its own material trappings, or, in other words, to be 'dissolved' in the meaning of its clothing.[180]

### 3.6.1 Medieval caste society: the relationship between identity and clothing

Taking the image of dissolution as leitmotif, we come finally to discuss the signal function of clothing in medieval culture, particularly as it is rendered in light of the generous examples provided in Wolfram's *Parzival*.[181] Of the multivalent functions characteristic of modern apparel (gender, origin etc.), a significant number find no

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[179] Returning to my previous example, I might well make a splash by choosing jeans over more formal clothing, but those jeans would more than likely be men's jeans, and not by my conscious choosing. Indeed, it would not seem to be any choice at all but rather a socially ingrained reflex.
[180] See Schultz 98.
[181] As Raudszus notes, it is the overall complexity and scale of *Parzival*, which gives birth to the "besonders komplexe, symbolträchtige und artifizielle Gewanddarstellung" (100).

comparable equivalent within the courtly literature of the high medieval period, sexual orientation, in particular, being absent. Of the select few that do have meaning, however, class, gender, and, for lack of a better designation, sphere of occupational influence were by far the most customary. Furthermore, in the eyes of the nobility, which represented the primary audience for these medieval texts, the establishment and maintenance of discrete class categories was clothing's most important function, and, as a result, its significance as an index of social status became its most consciously visible textual role.[182]

In contrast to clothing in an age of mass manufacture and consumption, medieval textile production represented a time and labour intensive process, which also demanded a significant investment of capital for the purchase finer materials, which often needed to be imported from other European centres or from the Orient.[183] As a consequence, clothing of superior cut and material was always prohibitively expensive, and the possession of such clothing, therefore, provided a natural language for the flamboyant display of wealth, which was as much a social requirement of nobility as good breeding. Indeed, caparisons of rich brocades, valuable gems, furs, and other more exotic fabrics became the standard textual *signe de reconnaissance* of the noble body simply because this was the one area, which most positively, and most inimitably, distinguished the aristocrat from the commoner. While the peasant, for example, might be endowed with a beautiful body, or the craftsman might ape courtly mannerisms, the sheer material value invested in clothing proved the ultimate

[182] Compare Brüggen 11.
[183] Compare Raudszus 230, and Brüggen 47.

symbolic barrier between social strata, and one, which thwarted all attempts at crossing.[184]

What distinguishes class markers from gender and occupational indicators, however, is not merely the narcissistic delight, which vivid sartorial displays evoked amongst noble listeners, but also the fact that it was a uniform signifier. Garments, be they a king's, vassal's, man's or woman's, never show variance in the one aspect which makes them so important, their luxury value. Consequently, in unifying one whole stratum, monetary value provides no real basis for distinguishing one garment from another, or, more importantly, the body underneath it from another.

Instead, this distinction is left to those markers, which specifically allocate gender and occupation. Based solely on an analysis of the examples provided in *Parzival*, the sanctioned roles and activities of males and females can be divided into two primary categories, the public and the private sphere. Each sphere is then respectively sub-divided into two further occupational castes, or fields of influence, corresponding roughly to the medieval activities with which the nobility busied itself. The resultant schema looks as follows, where a bracketed (M) stands for a sphere or field open to men and (F) for those available to women:

| **Public Sphere** | | **Private Sphere** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Military (M) | Political (M) | Religious (M/F) | Courtly (M/F) |
| | [Politico-religious (M)] | | |

[184] As Raudszus notes, however, this particular signal function of clothing only remains intact so long as the "kleidungsmäßige Abgrenzung zwischen Gesellschaftsgruppen ungebrochen wirksam ist" (194). While still intact in *Parzival*, this system of social delimitation is already visibly blurred in *Meier Helmbrecht*. This social and economic encroachment from below did not go unchallenged, however. The eventual enactment of so-called sumptuary laws, as a means to protect the right of the nobility to visible displays of pomp and prosperity, is a sign of the increasing social threat posed by the affluence of the bourgeoisie. For an explanation of the circumstances of these laws, see Raudszus 194, and Bumke 129-30.

The scrupulous maintenance of these four social groupings expresses itself in a refined *Kleiderordnung*, which determines not only the appropriate clothing for each field, but also, above all, which bodies are eligible to wear them.[185] While women are graphically restricted to courtly/religious vestments such as gowns, robes, head gear, bangles etc., and with them, to the private sphere, men have the freedom of both domains, either donning courtly costumes, ecclesiastical robes, and the mantle of leadership as they will, or doffing them in favour of lavish armour.[186]

Since the male body/masculine gender represents the principal *Handlungsträger* of the narrative, it should not be surprising that Wolfram chooses to concentrate his attention predominantly on the masculine artifacts of armour and its accoutrements.

### 3.6.2 The class of clothed bodies in *Parzival*

Turning now to the concrete examples of *Parzival*, all three of the aforementioned signal functions (class, gender, occupation) are evident in the textual treatment of clothing. Like the descriptions of courtly bodies, the optical rendering of clothing is achieved primarily through a concatenation of physical details, i.e., mention of cut, material, inlay, jewelry etc., with the notable exception that the quantity and descriptive exactitude of these particulars borders rather on the effusive than the

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[185] Schultz notes, for example, that the distinction between men's bodies and women's bodies results "not from any anatomical *sex* differences, of which there are none, but from vestimentary *gender* differentiation" (99).

[186] This masculine ease in both spheres seems to have been a characteristic of some French epics, as well. As Jane Burns remarks, "the armor that constructs the properly socialized body in the courtly world seems rather to connote both masculinity and its fundamental mutability. Knights can dress as men (armor) or cross-dress as women (in robes) without risking effeminacy or diminished social status" (124).

merely perfunctory. Indeed, Wolfram's finely wrought, almost painfully detailed, descriptions of medieval attire achieve a level of opulence which stands in stark contrast to the relatively generic sparseness of his descriptions of courtly bodies and their modes of conduct.

Yet, why is it so important that Wolfram explore the expressive possibilities of this particular cultural ingredient in such depth? Is it not sufficient to simply trot out a few nonspecific platitudes of beauty and perfection as was done with the body? Probably not, for as Raudszus rightly states, only through the impressive opulence of its account does clothing reach the level of "Symbol des Selbstverständnisses einer ganzen Gesellschaftsschicht," and, at the same time, "Ausdruck der Zugehörigkeit des einzelnen zu einer priviligierten Elitegruppe, die die Pracht und den Luxus zum Dogma, die Schönheit und die Ästhetik zum Ideal erhoben hat" (191). As the innate nobility of all bodies in *Parzival* is established and proofed according to conformity to behavioural and morphological norms, so too does clothing make a contribution to the overall social worth of its wearer. Unlike the other two nonverbal dimensions of *Körpersprache*, however, this one is simply more colourful, effusive and impacting, and given the importance of visual identity cues, garments present the most obvious point of external access to the mechanisms of character development.

### 3.7 The public sphere: the development of the *Ritterbild*

As stated previously, the spheres of activity in which courtly bodies could operate were not gender neutral, and the respective style and functionality of the vestments appropriate for each reflects this cleavage. The public sphere was reserved for those

bodies eligible for military and political action and was, therefore, the sole redoubt of the masculine; the emblems of this active masculinity were, in the first instance, the suit of armour, and in some cases, the *Herrschermantel.* Yet, nothing about the composition or the description of armour, nor for that matter of the *Herrschermantel*, evinces any inherently gendered traits, so how do these objects reinforce the impression of masculinity?

As is the case with all clothing, it is not necessarily the garments themselves, which are gendered, nor the bodies which wear them. Instead, there is a symbiosis at the heart of the clothing/body/gender relationship. Without clothing Wolfram's noble bodies are gender neutral, yet, without these bodies, clothing is also incapable of representing gender.[187] Armour, for instance, achieves its masculine sign value through a process of exclusion, which forbids women to don armour or bear arms. Considering the amount of concealment afforded by armour, and the consequent opportunity for misrepresentation, such an interdiction is of paramount import, since anyone who wears armour must automatically be considered as masculine.

As a result, the symbolic significance of armour is intimately bound with the importance of knighthood as the highest cultural aspiration of masculine nobility. With male primacy in the public sphere unchallenged, and with knightly trappings serving as an observable badge of this masculinity, it is little wonder that Wolfram

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[187] Again, this appears to be Barthes' assertion, that the actual artifacts or articles of dress, which physically represent the discourse of clothing, assure the *passage from sentience to meaning*, but produce neither that sentience nor that meaning. Of course, it would seem, at first blush, that I have mired myself in an epistemological contradiction by insisting, on the one hand, that medieval bodies displayed no morphological gender, yet, on the other, persisting in the notion that clothing cannot function as an index of gender without explicit application to gendered bodies. The answer, I think, is as follows. While it would be ludicrous to claim that the medieval mind did not recognize any physical differences between male and female bodies, the primary purpose of anatomical description was to construct the impression of a noble body. As such, the presentation of a unisex noble body renders a morphology tailored to the needs of gender superfluous.

pays such attention to the descriptive possibilities, which the splendor, magnificence, craftsmanship and overall functionality of armour offers. In the case of Gahmuret, Wolfram leaves very little to the imagination of his audience, noting, almost with observable zest, the finest detail of Gahmuret's dress, well in advance of even the first hint of the consummate body that lies beneath it:

> ûf sîne covertiure gesniten
> anker lieht hermîn:
> dâ nâch muos ouch daz ander sîn,
> ûf dem schilt und an der wât.
> noch grüener denne ein smârât
> was geprüevet sîn gereite gar,
> und nâch dem achmardî var.
> daz ist ein sîdîn lachen:
> dar ûz hiez er im machen
> wâpenroc und cursît:
> ez ist bezzer denne der samît.
> hermîn anker drûf genaet,
> guldîniu seil dran gedraet (14,16-28).[188]

[188] In comparison, Parzival's equipage, given him by his mother, appears even more pitiable: "sîn zoum der was bästîn / und harte cranc sîn pfärdelîn / daz tet von strûchen manegen val / ouch was sîn satel über al / unbeslagen mit niuwen ledern / samît, härmîner vedern / man dâ vil lützel an ihm siht" (144,23-9). Yet, this handicap, which ought to predispose unfavourably against him, cannot dampen his innate nobility. The peasant, who houses him for the night, exclaims, for instance, that "ichne gesach nie lîp sô wol getân" (143,12), and even the members of the Arthurian circle, nobility all, are awed by his beauty. Except for Cunneware's fit of untimely laughter, the gathered nobility pay little heed to his shabby clothing, and his appearance even moves Arthur to praise him with "du bist wol sô gehiure" (149,19).

This passage, although substantial, represents only a relative fraction of the total information given the reader concerning the stunning regality of Gahmuret's *habit*. We are later told that his anchor insignia is visible "ûf einem hermîn schilte / ichne weiz wie manegen zobelbalc" (18,6-7), the shield itself being made "mit golde von Arâbî / ein tiuriu buckel drûf geslagen" (70,28-9), its straps "ein unverblichen borte / mit gesteine harte tiure" (37,4-5), while "geliutert in dem viure / was sîn buckel rôt golt" (37,6-7). His warhorse too is fabulously caparisoned as it "truoc ein dach / [...] / dar ûf ein ander decke lac / [...] / daz was ein grüener samît" (36,23-7), his *surtout* was "ouch ein grüenez achmardî" (36,29), his head crowned with "ein tiure houbetdach" (63,22), his cape also of "grüene samît / ein zobel dâ vor gap swarzen schîn" (63,23-4), while the shirt underneath it was "blanc" (63,25), and, finally, his crowning glory was a helmet made of diamond inlayed with "edel gesteine / grôz, niht ze cleine" (70,23-4). In its entirety, these evocative segments form the fullest description of any costume in the text.[189]

Quite naturally, the emphasis on fine, even exotic, materials, rare precious metals and stones, and dynamic colour contrasts captivates the readers' eye and imagination, and the sheer excessive and indulgent extravagance of these elements clearly speaks for their elevated monetary worth and, thus, also for their prestige value. With so much hanging in the balance based simply on the perception of one's social standing, Gahmuret's *vêtements* are designed to make the statement to

[189] Considering that he is the central hero of the piece, it might seem surprising that the description of Parzival's red armour pales in comparison, but this is not a sign that Parzival lacks the noble station of his father. On the contrary, it simply underscores the fact that Parzival is fated to wear the *Herrschermantel* of the *Gralgemeinde* rather than the armour of a courtier.

onlookers, in the most immediate and unambiguous terms available, that, "dies sind höfische Kleider, die den ästhetischen Ansprüchen der gesellschaftlichen Etikette genügen" (Raudszus 115). Indeed, his visual opulence culminates in Wolfram's description that "ir gote im solten sîn gelîch" (36,19).[190]

Such magnificence is not employed solely for the edification of Gahmuret's social standing, however. The descriptive emphasis of other figures in the public arena, the pagan warrior Feirefîz, for example, or the Arthurian knight Gawan, also falls on the tireless elucidation of priceless jewels, furs and luxurious fabrics, whose noticeably foreign origin often merits mention, as is the case with Arabí, Arras (588,21) and Agrimonte (735,24). As Wolfram's attention to clothing plainly suggests, knighthood begins with looking the part, and in the words of Iwanet, who so wisely instructs the naïve Parzival, "diu ribbalîn / sulen niht under dem îsern sîn / du solt nu tragen ritters cleit" (156,25-7). However, since such attributes convey no intrinsically masculine qualities onto the armour and its salient accoutrements, it must be the function of the armour itself, i.e., the jousting or combat that takes place within it, that demarcates masculine priority and social hegemony.

Of course, implicit in the emblematic nature of armour is the question of whether it confers a degree of individualization upon its wearer. Gahmuret's ermine anchor, for example, is one of the most readily familiar symbols in the text, and through it, his bravery and military prowess become widely known. Parzival, too, is clearly distinct in his red armour, and so, in these limited senses, armour could be said

[190] Parzival, too, drew a comparison between God and the brilliantly sparkling knights.

to 'individualize' the wearer.[191] Yet, a strong proviso must accompany such a broad statement, for if individual identity were, indeed, so intimately tied to specific *wâpen*,[192] then we should expect a great deal of confusion to ensue when Gahmuret gives up the familiar anchor in favour of his father's traditional herald, the panther. Of course, this never occurs.

As for Parzival's unique armour, it is an emblem that was not originally his to bear, yet few recognize the difference,[193] and therein exists the objection against connecting particular armour to a particular person. Since armour conceals more often than it reveals, one never really can be sure of who is underneath it,[194] and, therefore, it would be incorrect to claim that knights are in any way individualized by the specific idiosyncrasies of their apparel, for as the *Parzival* text so plainly shows, they are not.

### 3.8 The private sphere: clothing the courtly male/female

In purpose and in content, the clothing typical of the social side of court life was, by necessity, far different from that required in public life. At leisure in the court, men and women both occupied the same cultural space, and their clothing reflects this, sharing the same functions for both male and female, i.e., the provision of social rank and the indication of social role. Unlike armour, however, which was, by default,

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[191] This is similar to Raudszus' claim that "Wappen diente dazu, den Ritter im Kampf zu kennzeichnen, der sonst unter der den Körper vollständig bedeckenden Rüstung unkenntlich gewesen wäre" (103; footnote 443). She later states, however, that "die Identifikation mit der Rüstung führt zur Namenlosigkeit des Protagonisten, was für das Mittelalter von tiefer Zeichenhaftigkeit ist; denn die Namenlosigkeit signifiziert die falsche Existenz, die Verfehlung der eigenen Identität" (113).

[192] These emblems tend to function on a familial rather than individual level.

[193] In fact, Parzival must relay the news to Gurnemanz of how he killed Ither and appropriated his armour.

[194] Despite traveling together, it is not until much later that Orgeluse finally catches a glimpse of Gawan when he removes his helmet.

masculine and, therefore, need never distinguish between genders, social clothing did need to make the distinction between male and female visibly clear. According to Lehmann-Langholz, however, "die Gewänder des Mannes unterschieden sich nicht wesentlich von denen der Frau," and instead, the difference consisted "hauptsächlich darin, daß die Gewänder des Mannes oft nur bis zu den Knöcheln reichten (abgesehen von der bodenlangen Staatsgewandung)" (33). With little distinction between the articles themselves, as Lehmann-Langholz indicates, it was the cut or tailoring of a garment that signalled gender by accentuating those body parts, which were desirably male, or conversely, desirably female. Examining a wide cross-section of masculine and feminine models from *Parzival*, we arrive at the following descriptions:

| Gawan | Gramoflanz |
|---|---|
| hemde und bruoch von buckeram: | phaewîn von Sinzester |
| [.....] | ein huot ûf sîme houbte was. |
| unt eine garnasch märderîn, | von samît grüene als ein gras |
| des selben ein kürsenlîn, | der künec ein mantel vuorte, |
| ob den bêden schürbrant | daz vaste ûf die erden ruorte |
| von Arraze aldar gesant. | iewederthalb die orte sîn: |
| zwên stivâle ouch dâ lâgen, | diu veder was lieht härmîn (605,8-14). |
| die niht grôzer enge pflâgen (588,15-22). | |

| Parzival | Anfortas |
|---|---|
| al wîz gewant im was bereit. | wît und lanc zobelîn, |

von golde unde sîdîn
einen bruochgürtel zôch man drîn.
scharlachens hosen rôt man streich
an in dem ellen nie gesweich.
Avoy wie stuonden sîniu bein!
reht geschickede abe in schein.
brûn scharlachen wol gesniten,
[.....]
beidiu innen härmîn blanc,
roc und mantel wâren lanc:
breit swarz unde grâ
zobel dervor man kôs aldâ (168,2-14).

sus muos ûze und inne sîn
der pelliz und der mantel drobe.
der swechest balc waer wol ze lobe:
der was doch swarz unde grâ:
des selben was ein hûbe dâ
ûf sîme houbte zwivalt,
von zobele den man tiure galt.
sinwel arâbesch ein borte
oben drûf gehôrte,
mitten dran ein knöpfelîn,
ein durchliuhtic rubîn (231,3-14).

Cundrie

ein brûtlachen von Gent,
noch blâwer denn ein lâsûr,
het an geleit der vröuden schûr:
daz was ein kappe wol gesniten
al nâch der Franzoyser siten:
drunde an ir lîb was pfelle guot.
von Lunders ein pfaewîn huot,
gefurriert mit einem blîalt (313,4-11).

Countess of Tenabroc

brûn scharlachen was ir roc:
des selben truoc ouch ir gespil.
si wâren gefischieret vil
mit zwein gürteln an der crenke,
ob der hüffe an dem gelenke (232,26-30).

Grail Virgins

röcke grüener denne ein gras,

Obilot

samît von Ethnîse.

von Azagouc samît,
gesniten wol lanc unde wît.
dâ mitten si zesamne twane
gürteln tiur smal unde lanc.
[.....]
ieslîchiu ob ir hâre truoc
ein cleine blüemîn schapel (234,4-11).

unversniten wât truoc man dâ mite.
pfelle von Tabronite
ûz dem lande ze Trîbalibôt.
an Kaukasas daz golt ist rôt (374,26-30).

Aside from the obvious social rank, which the presentation of these clothes establishes, the garments also share a number of other notable similarities. There is, for instance, little variation in either the materials, which both male and female may wear, including: *scharlachen/schürbrant*,[195] *brûtlachen/buckeram*,[196] *samît*, *sîdîn/blîalt*,[197] and *phaewîn*, or in the designation of the articles themselves: *roc/röcke*, *kappe/mantel*,[198] *hûbe/huot*,[199] *hemd* and *kürsenlîn*.[200] There are also clear indications that the clothing of both sexes was, at times, *wît und lanc*, and always *wol gesniten*.

[195] Lexer identifies *schürbrant* as "ein kleidungsstoff, vielleicht eine scharlachart" (qtd. in Brüggen 287).
[196] *brûtlachen* refers to "ein Wollstoff" (Brüggen 271) and *buckeram* to "steifes aus ziegen- oder bockshaaren gewebtes zeug" (qtd. in Brüggen 271).
[197] *sîdîn* is "Seide" (Brüggen 288), while *blîalt* refers to "golddurchwürkter seidenstoff" (qtd. in Brüggen 269).
[198] The definition of *mantel* is "Mantel, Umhang" (Brüggen 233), while *kappe* translates to "Umhang (mit Kapuze?)" (ibid. 229).
[199] Both *hûbe* and *huot* describe "Kopfbedeckung für Manner und Frauen" (ibid. 226-227).
[200] Although neither term appears in any of the examples of female clothing, which I have chosen, they are, nonetheless, unisex garments. The *hemd* functions as the "Untergewand der höfischen Dame und des Ritters" (ibid. 223) and the *kürsenlîn* as "Obergewand, aus Pelz oder mit Pelz gefüttert, von Frauen und von Männern getragen" (ibid. 231).

Where gender differentiation first becomes clear is in the application of such terms as *bruoch*, *hose*,[201] and *stivâle* for men, and, conversely, in the emphasis on *gürtel* for women. The narrow cut of the *bruoch* and *hose*, and the self-evident function of the *stivâle*, is designed to attract attention to the locus of male desirability, namely the strength and shapeliness of the legs. For women, on the other hand, the *gürtel*[202] encapsulates their femininity because "die Kleidung des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts sollte vor allem das Schönheitsideal der Zeit – die schlanke Gestalt – zum Ausdruck bringen" (Lehmann-Langholz 23).

Aside from gender differentiation, courtly clothing also possessed *minne* value, and the gender of a particular article determined its purpose. Consequently, articles of women's clothing, particularly the sleeves, became tokens of *minne*, or *Liebespfand*, which men took with them into the joust or onto the battlefield as good luck charms. In *Parzival*, for example, this is precisely the purpose Obilot's new garment is to have in the development of her relationship with Gawan: "einen pfell mit golde vesten / den sneit man an daz vröuwelîn / ir muose ein arm gebloezet sîn: / dâ was ein ermel von genomen / der solte Gâwâne komen" (375,8-12).

From the male perspective, however, the portrayal of *minnegër* often focuses solely on the relationship between the armoured knight and the courtly lady, and, in particular, on the deeds which make a knight worthy of such an honour. Yet, one particular scene in *Parzival* suggests that it is possible to transfer the *minne* value usually ascribed to armour onto other types of masculine clothing as well. After his arrival at Gurnemanz', for example, Parzival is undressed and given fresh clothing,

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[201] *bruoch* is a "kurze Hose" (ibid. 210), while *hose* is "Beinbekleidung der Männer" (ibid. 225).
[202] Of course, Parzival wears a *bruochgürtel*, but there is no mention of this emphasizing his waist. Instead, Wolfram concentrates only on his captivating legs.

and Gurnemanz concludes that his woeful condition "ist durch wîbe gebot getân" (164,28). The unnamed knight who has assisted Parzival, however, corrects him: "nein, hêrre: er ist mit sölhen siten / ern kunde nimer wîp gebiten / daz si sîn dienst naeme" (164,29-165,1). Although Wolfram refers specifically to the term *siten*,[203] we can conclude from the context of the passage that this includes his clothing, since it is the motley of his underclothes that provides the scandalous contrast to his knightly attire and removes him from *minne* contention as surely as his unknightly behaviour in the foreground of the scene does.

### 3.10 Conclusion

According to Brüggen, the medieval author wanted to draw the attention of the audience to the fact that "die Schönheit der Gestalt, Kleidung, Haltung, Bewegung, Gestik und Benehmen gemeinsam den höfischen Menschen definieren" (44). Unfortunately, when the reader draws these component elements together, the figure so defined remains, at best, impersonal and indiscriminate. While the material wealth, the gender, and the social role (i.e., knight, lady or monk) of a character are always visible, there is little within these three characteristics, which can distinguish one character from another. As the ultimate representatives of the conformative power of the group body, they do not evince any physical features or behaviours which would

[203] An interesting divergence occurs here between the Kühn and Spiewok translations, and it is one, which provides an interesting point of speculative argument. Spiewok takes the more traditional approach and translates the passage as: "O nein, Herr! Mit seinem Benehmen könnte er keine Frau dazu bewegen, seinen Ritterdienst anzunehmen" (281). Kühn, on the other hand, broadens the potential scope of the passage by expanding the meaning of *siten* beyond its strictly lexical definition, for he translates as follows: "Bestimmt nicht! Denn bei solcher Kleidung / ließ sich keine Frau erweichen / seine Dienste anzunehmen" (164,29-165,1). Certainly, there is ample evidence in the text to support both translations.

lead one to believe that the individual was either already extant or was soon to be in the offing.

### 4.1 A brief introduction[204]

Published around 1668, Grimmelshausen's account of the picaresque adventures of a young man during the Thirty Years' War arrived on a European literary scene, which was already familiar with the likes of Cervantes, Marlowe and Shakespeare, writers whose characters were distinguished by a hitherto unmatched level of introspection and individual identity. In philosophy, too, thinkers had begun to take strides in the direction of thinking up the individual; Descartes, for instance, had already written his discourses and meditations, and John Locke was shortly to write his seminal work on the forms of knowledge and the individual entitled *An Essay on Human Understanding* (ca. 1690). Thus, whether taken from the pages of *Don Quixote*, *Dr. Faustus* or *Hamlet*, new and profound questions were being raised concerning the human condition, and, in particular, the expressive possibilities inherent in the burgeoning form of individual identity.

Yet, of all the cultural innovations that doubtless contributed impetus to such a fundamental transformation in human thinking, one, above all, is germane to a comparison of these particular texts, namely the changing place and function of nobility in society. Indeed, the change in this one element is key to answering our current query, namely how, and to a certain point, why, the two texts, despite such similar starting points, manage to arrive at such completely different destinations.

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[204] Were I interested either in dutifully ascertaining the exact moment of the birth of the individual, or in documenting the minutiae of its emergence, I should not be able to simply gloss over the significant events of a 400 year transition period. Since, however, my intent is merely to diagram its absence, on the one hand, and its presence, on the other, I can afford a somewhat briefer summary of the intervening years.

### 4.1.1 The decline of the nobility as the impetus for social change

Without question, the vibrant depiction of noble life lay at the foundation of Wolfram's work, and in its own inimitable way, this grand, albeit utopian and somewhat narrow, vision of medieval society serves both as a paean to the virtues of the ruling class as well as a clear admonition to look beyond the baser material desires, which it cultivates. A seamless blending of courtly pageantry, gallantry and the humility of spiritual service, *Parzival* marries the secular power structure and material habits of the noble upper crust with the belief that human direction must ultimately be guided by the hand of God for any good to come of it. The result is a world in which the cherished harmony between the formerly polarized secular and spiritual worlds achieves its most pleasant realization, culminating in an exalted union between spiritual enlightenment and the ideals of courtly *minne*.

As he wrote *Parzival*, however, Wolfram could scarcely have imagined that the halcyon days of medieval nobility would soon draw to a close, and that, beginning in the Late Middle Ages, three significant events would effectively ensure the end of the medieval social model. No longer able to sustain the weight of its own cultural framework in the face of volatile economic and political changes, feudalism suffered a systemic collapse, throwing the fortunes of its prime beneficiaries, the nobility, into decline, and effectively catalyzing the dissolution of the medieval group dynamic.

As Norbert Elias had earlier endeavoured to demonstrate, the flagging fortunes of post-feudal nobility were both cause and effect of the emergence of another social, political and economic unit, the affluent bourgeoisie, to whom the

nobility gradually lost ground. An interesting, and unforeseeable, by-product of this social reversal, the slow bleeding of one social group into the other becomes an inevitability when the *nouveau riche* seek to consolidate their social position by acquiring noble titles, while destitute nobles seek to rescue hearth and home by acquiring new sources of income. With the integrity of class boundaries thus exposed as a fallacy, the prospect of unadulterated, self-evident, and, above all, innate nobility, a notion that underpins the glorification of nobility in *Parzival*, to the exclusion of all other classes, simply becomes untenable. Interestingly, it is the conceptual and practical transformation of nobility, which, at once, both binds and separates the two texts, and, while seemingly at odds (the one text concentrating solely on nobility, the other seemingly disinterested in it), the reason for both has its root in the same source, discourse.

It is in response to the demands of contemporary discourse, for instance, that *Simplicissimus*, although appearing to pluck similar thematic strands,[205] submerges the reader into a cultural vista, at times, subtly, and, at other times, dramatically different from its predecessor. Of all the shared narrative elements, however, it is the portrayal of nobility and its cultural signs, which will provide the most conspicuous index of social change.

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[205] Both texts, for instance, draw a parallel between disease and moral turpitude, although the link is more emphatic in *Parzival*; the notion of fate is also a common element to both narratives, although here, too, its nature varies, being a far more capricious and inscrutable companion in *Simplicissimus* than it ever was in *Parzival*.

## 4.2 Re-examining the parameters of the parzivalian body

### 4.2.1 Merchant and mercenary: heralds of the new social order

The first of the three traits, which fixed character identity in *Parzival*, was the product of an overt cultural bias towards images of regal pageantry and martial pomp, and towards behaviour, which substantiated its own vision of moral order. The result was the portrayal of combat, skill-at-arms, and warrior ethic as desirable cultural commodities embodying the pinnacle of civilized and, above all, genteel refinement.

Indeed, the strands of martiality and morality are almost impossible to separate. Yet, despite the obvious references to it, Christianity does not provide the main source of moral direction for the bulk of the characters. Instead, they orient their behaviour primarily according to the demands of *minne* and *ruom*,[206] which have been elevated to the highest cultural *desiderata*, although as Parzival himself proves, the two moralities are compatible. The method of attaining and enhancing these two virtues, always through feats of martial strength and displays of noble valour, ensured that combat, beyond its purely practical applications, would also assume a central and very positive social function.[207]

In comparison to this carefully cultivated image of the brave, pure-hearted, and socially refined warrior-knight, the oftentimes rather crude soldiery in *Simplicissimus* heralds a decline in the prestige of this once noble pastime. The

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[206] This is possible because there are only knights and ladies in the text. Were there representatives of the bourgeois or merchant classes, they, of course, would require different moral standards.

[207] Naturally, the modern reader might take issue with certain instances in the text where a futility with the destructiveness of human conflict seems to shine through (the deaths of Ither and Gahmuret as cases in point). Yet, it is in just such examples that Wolfram hammers home his moral point. Without the commission of sin, for example, the death of Ither truly would be senseless, for it would no longer provide the moral epicenter for Parzival's further growth. Likewise, in the case of Gahmuret, it is not his martial purpose (in the service of Christendom, no less), which proves lamentable, but rather the manner of his death at the hands of heathens, who abrogate the codes of chivalry and Christianity.

nobility, of course, still has its representation in the officer class, but their conduct is no longer beyond moral reproach, and for their sheer number footsoldiers and mercenaries outmatch their presence and significance. The most prolific attribute of the typical soldier is now vulgar coarseness, a trait matched only by a capacity for unconscionable villainy, as Grimmelshausen graphically illustrates in the opening scenes of the text.[208] Indeed, the condition of the common soldier, a circumstance in which Simplicius often finds himself, seems to be as miserable as his temperament, if Simplicius' crestfallen remark, "so ists wol ein elende Creatur umb einen Mußquetierer" (IV; IX; 317,19), is an accurate indication. Yet, if rogues and villains have nudged the noble knight out of the cultural picture, how then do we reconcile such a fundamental transition from indispensable instrument of cultural goals to target of pointed social critique, and what connection, if any, does this have to the development of individual identity?

While the difference between Wolfram's heightened idealism and Grimmelshausen's grim realism, undoubtedly, plays a part, alone it cannot provide the answer to the first question, for even in the Middle Ages combat was a nasty business, of which both reader and author could not have been unaware. Yet, the medieval reader was seemingly willing to overlook the omission of visceral details, likely because it was expedient within a culture, which took a positive view of martial acumen in the service of nobility.

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[208] To the events of this scene, one scholar remarks: "Berühmt ist diese Episode wohl vor allem deshalb, weil sie das spezifische Gewaltphänomen des Dreißigjährigen Krieges knapp und präzise festhält: das bestialische Wüten einer mordbrennenden Soldateska gegen die bäuerliche Zivilbevölkerung" (Merzhäuser 67).

Aided by the encroachment of all social ranks into a cultural space originally dominated by nobility, however, this critical transition renders the martial and cultural aspects of chivalry superfluous, and, as a result, almost all pretence to it has been abandoned in *Simplicissimus*.[209] The consequence of this obsolescence is a cultural gaze, whose field of vision now can, and must, encompass more than the exploits of the upper class, who, although they may yet remain in the foreground, suddenly must share the stage with formerly unmentionable members of society. Without this expanded social spectrum, it is doubtful that Grimmelshausen could have played with the question of Simplicius' parentage as he did. Merely by the fact that he allows the reader, for the greater portion of the text, to accept a peasant as their hero, he, in effect, rescues the underprivileged classes from centuries of literary oblivion and propels them even beyond marginalia into the starring role.[210]

The second noble trait, the approach to wealth as a status marker, in particular, its generation and display, further widens the already evident cultural gap. In *Parzival*, the ostentatious display of exotic furs, lavish armour, caparisoned steeds and bejeweled robes represented the mundane norm for the nobility. By its very nature, however, such bombast left no room for subtle variance or for ambiguity, and as evidenced by the narrative, there is no proximity, physical or cultural, between the noble class and those beneath them.

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[209] There are still references made to *Ruhm*, *Soldatensitten*, *Ehre* etc., but the context of their acquisition, namely *Beute erjagen*, *plündern* and *totschiessen*, and their contribution to the misery of the war darken such accomplishments.

[210] Even in the 17th century, having a commoner of no means as a principal character was not *de rigeur*, as *King Lear*, *Don Quixote*, or *Hamlet* would attest. Whether the eventual revelation of Simplicius' nobility represents, in some ways, a retreat by Grimmelshausen from his original stance is a moot point, as Simplicius never grasps the mantle of nobility as Parzival does.

While Wolfram took great pains in illustrating the visible material wealth of his characters, he, rather tellingly, ignored the mechanics of its accumulation. With the Grail as its most potent symbol, material prosperity simply sprung into being with all the facility afforded a *de facto* privilege of the noble condition. Of course, given the regimented hierarchy of the medieval economy, from liege lord down to indentured serf, there seems, indeed, little reason for Wolfram to elucidate so self-evident a topic.

Grimmelshausen, on the other hand, frequently inscribes the subject of taxes, commerce, capital, labour, trade, and other such signs of a diversified human economy, into the text as palpable cultural elements, which characters must navigate. These discourses not only provide the kind of realistic, extra-textual cultural intrusions, which readers would have expected and recognized, but they also become silent, but influential, players in the unfolding narrative.[211]

In this way, we arrive at the answer to our second question, how the transformation of nobility connects to the emergence of individual identity. Although the dissolution of the medieval group dynamic and the simultaneous decline of medieval power structures were merely the surface phenomena of much deeper changes in the economic, political and social fabric of medieval society, their disappearance effectively tilled the soil, in which this new identity discourse would later take root.

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[211] The scarce circulation of money, for example, plays a particularly central role in shaping the lives of all the characters. As Simplicius notes: "Die jenige / die wissen was das Geld gilt / und dahero solches vor ihren GOtt halten / haben dessen nicht geringe Ursach; dann ist jemand in der Welt / der dessen Kräfften und bey nahe Göttliche Tugenden erfahren hat / so bin ichs: Ich weiß / wie einem zu Muth ist / der dessen einen zimlichen Vorrath hat / so hab ich auch nicht nur einmal erfahren / wie der jenige gesinnet sey / der keinen einigen Heller vermag" (III; XIII; 243,21-27).

For this very reason, I have chosen to concentrate on nobility, for it not only firmly affixes the root social identity in *Parzival*, but it also provides the dimension of difference in *Simplicissimus*. While the two main characters are arguably of equal nobility, they ultimately encounter very different fates, simply because the respective merit of nobility holds a much different cachet in Parzival's culture than in Simplicius'. The appreciation of nobility, on the one hand, and its subsequent depreciation, on the other, is the only feasible explanation for this divergence. Born into a perfect social equilibrium, Parzival's positive reception into society and his ascension to its most desirable stewardship, despite his glaring handicaps (social ignorance, shabby dress, and culpable behaviour), is due to the enormous, albeit tacitly expressed, cultural largesse associated with noble blood lines.

By comparison, Simplicius' introduction into the world is much less luxurious and, at times, positively treacherous. In contrast to Parzival's spiritual struggle, Simplicius must eek out his living through toil and graft, and the obstacles, which confront him, such as disease, hunger, and war, are the products of a fundamentally more hostile environment. As we shall see, however, the influence of these social differences extends well beyond the circumstances of their lives, determining their bodies, as well.

### 4.2.2 The fallout of social change on the prime cultural product, the body: the decay of the noble body and the emergence of the plebeian body[212]

As the product of its cultural environment, the body must ultimately bear the impact of such profound changes. Since, as the previous material analysis of *Parzival* should have revealed, the body loomed as large in the foreground of the medieval text as it does today, we cannot expect to render the effects of these changes merely in +body/-body terms. Instead, we must seek the difference elsewhere, and it lies in the peculiar way that bodies are charted and navigated.

The primary function of the body in *Parzival* was the establishment and maintenance of absolute and uniform boundaries of the noble condition, and the tautological construction and factual inventorying of parts provided the means to this end. By its very nature, however, this purpose precluded the pursuit of individual identity in favour of collective identity, and it solved any potential problems of ambiguity or divergence through a strict process of selection and exclusion. Thus was born the noble paradigm.

In contrast, individual identity, in order to survive, flourish and eventually evolve, requires the creation of a body, whose diversity is capable of accommodating the cognitive demands of cultural impulses that were, for the first time, being grasped and encoded into language. Assuming for a moment that Grimmelshausen does inscribe his characters as individuals, it would not be practical for him to reproduce the medieval body paradigm verbatim, merely transposing it into a modern setting, for such regimented and unrealistic bodies would, by now, be far below the

[212] By the term *plebeian*, I suggest no binding reference to class, merely to the notion that this body is a helpless subject of the universal physical laws to which we all are bound.

expectation and cognitive ability of the baroque audience to digest. Indeed, as interest in, and knowledge of, the function and morphology of the body grew apace, particularly through the Renaissance period, the body moved more fully into view as a discursive object in its own right and its vocabulary deepened correspondingly.

In *Simplicissimus*, signs of this new body concept are immediately evident in the conditions of its environment. The strains of hunger and disease, which plague Simplicius, and his almost constant search for clothing and shelter, are all symptoms of a burgeoning understanding of, and interest in, the depiction of the daily life of the body, and this, combined with a vocabulary for its expression, permitted and promoted the transmission of information of an individualistic nature. Suddenly, more sophisticated techniques of bodily differentiation were possible.

Revisiting, for a moment, the connection between body and environment, the ultimate corruptibility of the human body in *Simplicissimus*, interestingly, directly mirrors the struggle against the forces of social entropy evident throughout the text. This dystopian vision of human society subjects both noble and commoner alike to the threat of disease, disorder and extinction, and leaves little room for the existence of a perfect vessel.

As one final point, we ought not to dismiss the chronological positioning of *Simplicissimus* as unimportant. Falling approximately at the halfway point between the High Middle Ages and Post-Modernity, it provides an invaluable and illuminating bellwether, for the transition from group identity to individual identity was by no means a *fait d'accompli* at this time, and examples of the turbulent wake of the transition are abundantly evident in *Simplicissimus*. In keeping with this position, the

body language of the text clearly has not yet completely divested itself of its medieval antecedents, but it has begun to transform the meaning of these reflexes by adapting them for use in a new social context. As a result, the simplizian body looks more like a hybrid imbued with an individual identity, which, though not yet as fully diversified as our modern definition, nonetheless, has plainly taken significant strides in the direction of greater individualisation. Were we, for example, to coin a description of this new body it might best be described as non-linear, and, above all, *a posteriori*, literally coming into being only after the fact. Unlike the linear, *a priori* parzivalian body, which remained intact and unchanged under almost every social condition, this body lacks the ability to dominate situations and control its own internal and external circumstances. Instead, it has developed a pliancy and responsiveness to the stimuli of its surrounding environment, which makes it a particularly suitable vessel for the reproduction of one of those stimuli, individual identity.

## 4.3 Deciphering the new body code

### 4.3.1 The transitional body of the Hermit

Despite his early and rather brief appearance in the narrative, the character identified throughout the text simply as the *Einsiedler* bears the responsibility of two pivotal roles. In the first, his wisdom and moral teachings provide the yardstick against which Simplicius judges the remaining experiences of his life.[213] In another very much different role, however, "dieser sorgfältige fromme Mann" (I; XII; 35,25) presents the reader with the first functional example of the metamorphic dynamism with which the

[213] It is the *Einsiedler*, for example, who first instructs Simplicius in reading and writing, and his three life rules, "sich selbst erkennen / böse Gesellschafft meiden / und beständig verbleiben" (I; XII; 35,35-36), appear in various permutations throughout the text.

contemporary cultural body has undertaken its departure from its medieval counterpart, with the former now expressing itself in a far more compact and psychologically lucid language.

His initial, and subsequently only, encounter with the *Einsiedler*, for instance, produces the following impression on Simplicius: "da wurde ich eines grossen Manns gewahr / in langen schwartzgrauen Haaren / die ihm gantz verworren auff den Achseln herumb lagen / er hatte einen wilden Bart / fast formirt wie ein Schweitzer-Käß" (I; VI; 22,1-4). With the gray hair and beard preserving the obligatory accoutrements of the pious recluse, the material components of this body certainly do not substantially deviate from the precedent set in *Parzival*. The arrangement of these features, however, and, therefore, also the impression they create, belies a fundamental difference.

Trevrizent, despite his supposed solitude, lived a life of quiet dignity and surprisingly fastidious orderliness because the Grail community met his every material need. The *Einsiedler*'s tattered beard and generally unkempt appearance, on the other hand, are quite distinctive and are the first and most visible signs of a man who has chosen to lead a similarly solitary life in the wild, and who, by consciously foregoing human company, is emotionally unwilling or physically unable to maintain its customs and manners. From the outset, then, this dimension of realism is a strong indication that the congruence between characters, or, at the very least, this character, and their environment is subject to a logic process far different from that in *Parzival*.[214]

[214] The incongruence of a figure such as Cundrie represents the polar opposite of this logic. By most just estimations, her abhorrent appearance alone should have condemned her to a life of

The addition of a notably innovative dimension to the *Einsiedler*, whose "Angesicht war zwar bleich-gelb und mager / aber doch zimlich lieblich" (I; VI; 22,4-5), only enhances this logical continuity, similarly extending it to the congruence between the internal and the external of the character. The term *Angesicht*[215] provides the focal point for Simplicius' and the readers'attention, and as the present context clearly shows, it serves as a key cipher in the definition of the *Einsiedler* character. As the term *cipher* would suggest, however, *Angesicht* has a baseline value but no extended meaning. Rather, it derives its deeper significance as a conduit for the expression of body language laden with psychological ramifications, such as *bleich-gelb*, *mager*, and *lieblich*. Such signals are responsible for producing a body, which does not rebuff scrutiny as those in *Parzival* did, but rather invites it, and also invites the assignation of a value judgment based on its own unique merits.

The signals, too, have various levels of meaning, depending on their associative properties. Perceived strictly as material phenomena, for example, *bleich-gelb* and *mager* are clear indications of the poor diet and failing health, which, shortly thereafter, lead to the *Einsiedler*'s demise.[216] On an almost metaphysical level, though, they sustain a much deeper revelation, betraying a sense of emotional fatigue and worldweariness of soul, which implants, well in advance of its actual elucidation in the text, a suggestion in the mind of the reader as to the reason for his withdrawal. The fact that he has remained *lieblich*, despite his, yet untold, hardships, is a

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psychologically damaging criticism and scrutiny in the xenophobic atmosphere of the Middle Ages, and yet, she has grown up to be educated, well adjusted, and extremely cultured.

[215] Although it appears, morphologically, to be a cognate of *antlütze*, semantically, the two have little in common. However, it could represent the transitional form between *antlütze* and *Gesicht*.

[216] Simplicius reveals the true extent of the *Einsiedler*'s privations when he notes of his threadbare abode: "darin war die Armut selbst Hofmeisterin / der Hunger Koch / und der Mangel Küchenmeister" (I; VII; 23,11-12)

testament to his goodness and provides the reader with the beginnings of an invaluable psychological insight into the nature of his character.

*Lieblich*, however, is by no means a throw-in term, and is, in fact, the most important of the three in its meaning and the most significantly different in its transmission. The connection, which I have drawn between the *Einsiedler*'s haggard appearance and his inner fatigue, for instance, is suggested but, by no means, causal. It may merely be a coincidence. Furthermore, *bleich-gelb* and *mager* are traits, which are physically manifest on the body, and are, therefore, visible to the unaided eye.[217] Even stripped of all emotional referents, we should still register their presence.

The same does not hold true for *lieblich*, however. Its presence, of course, becomes visible by physical means, but it is forcefully directed to the eye of the reader through particular visual cues, which have as their referent not physical, but rather psychological processes, and should the reader fail to understand the psychological meaning behind it, then such a term would simply cease to exist in the text.

That the reader does understand its context seems clear by its employment, yet strangely, up to the point of their encounter, nothing in the *Einsiedler*'s behaviour or in the specific concretization of his specific features, the tilt of his nose or the set of his eyes, for example, should warrant the appellation of such a term. Instead, the transmission of this term now revolves around the limits of language, and how Grimmelshausen overcomes these limitations. Simplicius subconsciously forms an impression based upon the interpretation of specific visual cues provided by the face,

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[217] One can speak, for example, of hands and feet as *bleich-gelb* or *mager*, but never *lieblich*. That is a quality, which only the face can convey.

and the reader, likewise, forms a positive impression of this character based on Simplicius' observations.[218] The particular details of exactly what constitutes *lieblich*, however, are left to the imagination of the reader, and it is ultimately the reader, who synthesizes its meaning, guided, of course, by their own process of enculteration.

As the sole conduit for these new body signals, the face forms the bridge between inner and outer, between soul and body, and is the only body part capable of taking its place as the undisputed avatar of *das Ich*. It is precisely in this capacity that the term *Angesicht* appears for the last time in conjunction with the *Einsiedler*. During his interment, Simplicius, who must perform the burial, relates the experience to the reader as follows: "und wann ich kaum sein Angesicht bedeckt hatte / stiege ich wieder hinunder / entblöste es wieder / damit ichs noch einmal sehen und küssen möchte" (I; XII; 37,7-9).

Of course, to the eye, that beholds the face as just another mute object, this might seem a bewildering activity, but, as Simplicius' behaviour clearly demonstrates, he perceives the identity of the *Einsiedler* to be resident in his face. For this reason, he is unwilling, or, indeed, unable, to cover the face, for it is an act, which would symbolically confirm, in his own mind, what has already taken place in the *Einsiedler*'s body, that is the dissipation of his life force.

Based on the above observations of the face's functions in direct application, we can draw the following two conclusions. Metaphorically speaking, the field of the body functions much like the ideogrammatic representation of a word, and the advent of the face, with its powers of psychological articulation, represents the addition of

[218] It is a credit to Simplicius' näivete and general unfamiliarity with character judgment that he can perceive the *Einsiedler* as *lieblich*, then, in the next breath, state that he "sahe sonst in meinen Augen so scheußlich und förchterlich auß / daß ich anfienge zu zittern / wie ein nasser Hund" (I; VI; 22,9-10).

new syllables to that word, which, in effect, completely change its meaning. The mere application of such a dash or stroke suddenly grants the reader privileged access to the secretive world, which turns behind the body's fleshy façade. It is this psychological shorthand, for instance, which allows Grimmelshausen to create, within the span of seven brief, but succinct statements, the fundamental blueprint of the *Einsiedler* character.

Finally, there is another less obvious byproduct associated with this intimate acquaintance between character and reader. Feeling that they now know, or understand, a character, they subsequently form expectations based upon it. This profiling must ultimately influence the behavioural parameters of the characters themselves, since their coherency rests, to some degree, on the consistent agreement between behaviour and perceived nature.

### 4.3.2 The Warrior's body through his own, and others', eyes

In an illuminating and, for our purposes, very suggestive statement, Simplicius attributes the success of his early tutelage to one man, the *Einsiedler*, "weil er die geschlichte Tafel meiner Seelen gantz läer / und ohn einige zuvor hinein gedruckte Bildnussen gefunden / so etwas anders hinein zu bringen hätt hindern mögen" (I; IX; 29,32-35). This motif of a *tabula rasa* is an equally appropriate designation for Simplicius' body, which, undescribable because it is yet unwritten, has a lot of living to do, and, at times, to endure.

Usually, the reader would expect the full descriptive marrow of a character to now ensue from such humble beginnings, but such a description never graces the text,

not because Simplicius lacks a body per se, but rather because the reader experiences the events of the narrative through his eyes, and he rarely trains his gaze upon himself.[219] As if to compensate for this, Grimmelshausen leaves small clues and scraps of information strewn throughout the text, from self-statements to fleeting glimpses of Simplicius' reflection in the eyes of other characters, from which the reader can piece together a rough approximation of his appearance.

This lack of vivid description notwithstanding, the first-person narrative style provides access to external speech, actions etc., and insight into non-vocalized musings and opinions, which ensure that Simplicius remains the most chameleonic and indelible character in the text. As if in deference to its medieval antecedents, however, his body also provides, at times, deceptively familiar allocations, which range from such descriptions as "Mannsbild" (II; XXVII; 176,8), and "Beau Alman" (IV; III; 300,2), to the "frischer auffgeschossener Jüngling" (II; XXIX; 185,14) with "schönen Haaren" (III; XI; 237,32), whose "weisse Arm" (II; XXV; 171,25) and "weisse Haut" that "hervor schiene / wie der Schnee" (IV; III; 298,33) are important constituents of "seiner übertrefflichen Schönheit" (IV; IV; 301,32-33). Despite the fact that his "Bart ist noch viel zu klein" (II; XXX; 186,7), many noble women "hielten alle mein Sitten / Wesen / Thun und Lassen vor Adelich" (II; XXIX; 184,34-35) simply on account of his "zimliche Leibs-*Proportion* und schönes Angesicht" (II; XXIX; 184,33).

What immediately separates each of these instances from their parzivalian predecessors, however, is the context from which these signs derive their meaning.

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[219] The use of a first person narrative style is already a strong indication of the personalization and psychologization of writing and represents a significant departure from the authorially mediated narrative of *Parzival*.

The non-neutral gender designation of Simplicius as a *Mannsbild*, for instance, follows directly on the heels of his discovery disguised, ironically, as a woman, and his snowy white arms and skin, the very weapons of this female alter ego, instead of signifying vestal purity, inflame the lust of an unwanted admirer. Similarly, the accusation that Simplicius' beard is too small, conceivably one reason why he could convincingly pass as a woman, would never have been levelled at Parzival, for the medieval paradigm of youth and beauty strictly prescribed no beard at all. Finally, we also ought not to forget that the women, who, quite naturally, marveled at his attractive proportions, were none other than cloistered nuns!

The complexity of Simplicius' body extends well beyond a contextual recycling of 'old' parts, however, as it also reacts to significant changes in its environment in hitherto unfamilar ways. An abbreviated period of high living, for instance, oversees the transformation of his once "mageren außgehungerten Leib" (I; XXI; 59,15-16) into one, whose "Leibs-Kräfften namen Handgreifflich zu" (II; XIV; 135,12). Poor hygiene, on the other hand, just as quickly puts him at the mercy of his tiny, biting guests, who, under the protection of his cuirass, "hatten ihren freyen Paß / Spaß und Tummelplatz" (II; XXVIII; 179,15-16). Evidently, unlike the idealized physical laws in *Parzival*, every action in this universe, however insignificant, draws a reaction and one not always pleasant at that.

Yet, clearly, neither the body, nor its minor fluctuations in context and mass, can account for the distance between Simplicius and Parzival. Instead, this task falls to the implications of Simplicius' *schönes Angesicht*, the very reason, for instance, that the *Rittmeisterin* "vernarrete sich dermassen in meinen glatten Spiegel und

geraden Leib" (II; XXV; 168,35-36) and that the Kommandant of Hanau was originally so disposed towards him.[220]

Aside from its creative power, however, the particulars of Simplicius' case reveal another aspect of the face, namely its power to deform, and it is a dimension, which only crystallizes once the dark spectre of disease enters the narrative equation and initiates sweeping changes. Simplicius, of course, recuperates from the illness contracted after an extramarital Parisian tryst, but the residual effects of this malady are not so easy to overcome. Indeed, symptoms such as hair loss, "Gruben im Gesicht" (IV; VII; 310,35), and eyes, which "man hiebevor niemal ohne Liebes-Feur finden können / eine jede zu entzünden" (IV; VII; 311,8-9), but which now "sahen so roth und trieffend auß / wie eines 80. jährigen Weibs / das den *Cornelium* hat" (IV; VII; 311,10-11), indelibly transform the landscape of his face, which once "wie ein Engel vor kam" (IV; VII; 312,3), into a "grindiger Guckuck" (IV; VII; 312,9), who "hinfüro vor den Weibsbildern gute ruhe hatte" (IV; VII; 310,34-35).

As it later becomes apparent, and much to Simplicius' dismay, the despoilment of his oft-praised beauty is, by no means, the most significant penalty which he must suffer, for as he explains: "die Urschlechten hatten mich dergestalt verderbt und verändert / daß mich kein Mensch mehr kante" (V; V; 389,25-26). Though not explicitly stated, it is, certainly, the communicative expressiveness of his face, which has been *verderbt* and *verändert*, and, in an ironic twist, the former focal

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[220] This friendly disposition rests on the fact that Simplicius "seiner Liebsten [*Einsiedler*'s wife] von Angesicht so ähnlich seye" (I; XXIII; 64,27-28). The text contains a number of other notable references to Simplicius' heritage, and with each passing clue, from a second mentioning of this likeness (I; XXVII; 76,3-5) to the contents of a peasant fable: "so solte ein fremder Edelmann / der weder seinen Vatter noch Mutter kenne / ins Land kommen / dieselbe Jungfrau erlösen / den eisernen Trog mit einem feurigen Schlüssel auffschliessen / und das verborgen Geld darvon bringen" (III; XII; 242,29-33), the likelihood of mere coincidence drops.

point of his unique identification has now become the source of his greatest anonymity.

Apart from these scattered references, there is, unfortunately, little else to say on the specific matter of his body/appearance, leaving him a somewhat enigmatic figure, externally vague, but, as we shall see, internally very familiar.

### 4.3.3 The female body: the bad, the good, and the ugly

In spite of their infrequent appearance in the narrative, Grimmelshausen devotes some of his most exceptionally descriptive and colourful language to his female characters, and where women in *Parzival* were presented exclusively in terms of their *minne* value, these women distinguish themselves in a variety of roles, ranging from noblewoman, wife and seductress, to hag. Ironically, and despite this greater role distribution, they still tend to share many of the same physical characteristics as their medieval forebears.

Indeed, in the most vivid example of the female form, one of the many nameless *Adelich Frauenzimmer* (II; IX; 117,11), who inhabit the court at Hanau, consists entirely of the medieval traits, the brilliant teeth, shining hair, fine hands and porcelain skin, which defined women in *Parzival*. At the hands of Grimmelshausen, however, these traits undergo an unusual transposition, becoming exaggeratedly grotesque but humorous objects of derision, caricatures, which expose the bodily dimension of identity construction:

diese Jungfrau hat ja Haar / das iß so gelb wie kleiner

Kinder-Dreck / und ihre Schäidel sind so weiß und so gerad gemacht / als wenn man Säubürsten auff die Haut gekappt hätte (II; IX; 118,14-17).

Ach sehet nur / wie hat sie so ein schöne glatte Stirn; ist sie nicht feiner gewölbet als ein fetter Kunstbacken? und weisser als ein Todtenkopff / der viel Jahr lang im Wetter gehangen; Immer Schad ists / daß ihre zarte Haut durch das Haar-Puder so schlim bemackelt wird / dann wanns Leut sehen / die es nicht verstehen / dörfften sie wol vermeynen / die Jungfer habe den Erbgrind / der solche Schuppen von sich werffe; welches noch grösserer Schad wäre vor die funcklende Augen / die von Schwärtze klärer zwitzern / als der Ruß vor meines Knans Ofenloch (II; IX; 118,20-29).

Ihre Backen seyn so hübsch rotlecht / doch nicht gar so roth / als neulich die neue Nestel waren (II; IX; 118,32-33).

und wenn sie lacht oder redt (ich bitte/ der Herr geb nur Achtung darauf) so sihet man zwey Reyhen Zähn in ihrem Maul stehen / so schön Zeilweis und Zucker-ähnlich / als wenn sie auß einem Stück von einer weissen Rüben geschnitzelt worden wären (II; IX; 118,36-119,2).

So ist ihr Hals ja schier so weiß / als eine gestandene Saurmilch / und ihre Brüstlein / die darunter ligen / seyn von gleicher Farb (II; IX; 119,3-5).

> Ach Herr / sehet doch ihre Händ und Finger an / sie sind ja so subtil / so lang / so gelenck / so geschmeidig / und so geschicklich gemacht / natürlich wie die Zügeinerinnen neulich hatten / damit sei einem in Schubsack greiffen / wenn sie fischen wollen. Aber was soll dieses gegen ihrem gantzen Leib selbst zu rechnen seyn / den ich zwar nicht bloß sehen kan; Ist er nicht so zart / schmal und anmuthig / als wenn sie acht gantzer Wochen die schnelle Catharina gehabt hätte? (II: IX; 119,9-17).

While the source of inspiration for these attributes is clear, it is equally clear that Grimmelshausen intends no homage by them. As bizarre as her appearance is, pastiche reminiscent, in a more modern frame of reference, of the oddly pastiched faces of the women in Picasso's *Les Damoiselles d'Avignon*, Grimmelshausen, remarkably, does not affect the transformation by changing her physical parameters at all. Rather, through skillful manipulation of the context, he alters the readers' perception of them, and through this inversion, he also reinvents her identity. Her hair, therefore, remains as golden, her teeth as white, her hands as supple, and her body as lithe as the bodies of Cunneware, Orgeluse et al., but now, it is the gold of urine, the whiteness of a whittled turnip, the suppleness of a thieving gypsy, and the litheness of a consumptive.

The choice of openly negative referents not only ensures that the reader perceives this character as repugnant, but it also guarantees that this fashionable

beauty-cum-miscreation can possess no redemptive virtues, for as the context makes clear, ultimately, she has willfully despoiled her own appearance in an attempt to affect a fashion. Rather tellingly, she is mutely defenseless against this attack.

As detailed a description as this is, one obvious element is lacking, the very element, which individualised both the *Einsiedler* and Simplicius. This may have been a purposeful exclusion on the part of Grimmelshausen, in order to present this character as a categorical description of all noble women. On the other hand, he may have wanted the reader to piece together her parts as a puzzle. This is, in essence, precisely what he has accomplished, nothing less than the meticulous and imaginative dissection of her features, point for point, and their subsequent recreation, from the ground up, or the hair down, as polar opposites.

In contrast to the courtly, indoor habitat of the noblewoman, Simplicius encounters the *Baurn-Mägdlein*, whom he effusively praises, outdoors at a point of serene beauty, and as this would suggest, this young peasant girl represents, almost point for point, everything that the noblewoman is not: simple, beautiful and, above all, natural. Indeed, the opening notes of her approach sound the distinction: "da näherte sich jenseit dem Wasser eine Schönheit an das Gestad / die mich mehr bewegte / (weil sie nur den Habit einer Baurn-Dirne antrug) als eine stattliche *Damoiselle* sonst nit hätte thun mögen" (V; VII; 395, 13-17).

There are other reasons to praise this body, however, as Simplicius' thumbnail sketch of her captures more than just her beauty; it also accentuates the duality of a body caught in the transition from medieval to modern. As he comments: "die *Proportion* deß Leibs schiene vollkommen und ohne Tadel / Arm und Hände

Schneeweiß / das Angesicht frisch und lieblich / die schwartze Augen aber voller Feur und Liebreitzender Blick" (V; VII; 395,25-28). The delicate perfection of figure and colour of skin, for example, precisely those qualities that had previously proved so damning for the noblewoman, represent atavistic qualities. Though unusual in their application to a peasant, Grimmelshausen most certainly intends the comparison because such qualities highlight the contrast between her bucolic nobility and the artificial variety of the noblewoman.[221] The expressively *frisch* and *lieblich* countenance, on the other hand, and the vivid black eyes, whose radiating fire and charm set Simplicius' heart alight, clearly characterize more recent entries into the language of the body, and it is these features, which lift her above the common image of the peasant girl.

That brings us to the final body of note, that of the hag. Where the *Baurn-Mägdlein* was glowing, and the noblewoman merely ridiculous, however, this woman is consummately dreadful. In the company of her two cohorts, Simplicius describes her as one of the "allergarstigsten alten Weiber / so der Erdboden je getragen; ich hielte sie anfänglich / [...] / vor natürliche höllische Geister (II; VI; 108,12-15), and his further observations of her represent a tasking exercise in vocabulary as he seeks to visualize her loathsomeness for the reader:

> Diese hatte ein paar Augen wie zween Irrwisch / und
> zwischen denselben eine lange magere Habichs-Nas / deren
> Ende oder Spitz die undere Lefftzen allerdings erreichte / nur

[221] Unlike the case of Simplicius, however, in which a change of context meant a change in meaning, these parts have relatively the same significance for her as they would for any noble in *Parzival*.

zween Zähn sahe ich in ihrem Maul / sie waren aber so vollkommen / lang / rund und dick / daß sich jeder bey nahe der Gestalt nach mit dem Goldfinger / der Farb nach aber sich mit dem Gold selbst hätte vergleichen lassen; In Summa / es war Gebeins genug vorhanden zu einem gantzen Maul voll Zähn / es war aber gar übel außgetheilt / ihr Angesicht sahe wie Spanisch Leder / und ihre weisse Haar hiengen ihr seltzam zerstrobelt umb den Kopff herumb / [...] / ihre lange Brüst weiß ich nichts anders zu vergleichen / als zweyen lummerichten Küh-Blasen / denen zwey Drittel vom Blast entgangen (II; VI; 108,20-34).

Warhafftig ein erschröcklicher Anblick / der zu nichts anders / als vor eine treffliche Artzney wider die unsinnige Liebe der gailen Böck hätte dienen mögen (II; VI; 108,35-109,1).

Two points, in particular, stand out, her apparent resemblance to Cundrie, and the inclusion of *Angesicht*. Of all the characters in *Simplicissimus*, the hag represents, perhaps, the closest approximation to Cundrie, in terms of her ugliness and comparatively animalistic features. Yet, as the noblewoman initially appeared to mimic her courtly predecessors, when in fact she did not, so there is also a distinct and important difference between Cundrie and the hag. As a creature of magical background, Cundrie's features were not just animal-like, but rather truly were those of an animal, and these features made no allowance for the coherent unification of an

*Angesicht*. In contrast, there is nothing supernatural about the hag and her features, although exaggerated into the realm of the animal for effect, are clearly all too human.

Puzzlingly, the expressive richness of the term *Angesicht* appears to have reached its nadir in this particular character, no longer providing psychological descriptors such as *frisch* or *lieblich* but rather only physically restricted attributes like Spanish leather. Despite this, it is, nonetheless, a far more productive messenger than this brief comparison, at first, may divulge. In fact, *Angesicht* is the keystone of the description, for it is the means of joining the various descriptive parts into a coherent whole. Since the eyes, mouth, nose etc. are naturally parts within the face, their descriptive energy supplements the total effect of her *Angesicht*, an impression born out by the fact that one cannot combine her hawkish nose or grossly distributed teeth with talk of a beautiful face, for in the end they are logically and irrevocably connected.

### 4.3.4 Conclusion: the fourth element and individual identity

We can summarize the defining distinction between the construction of the body in *Simplicissimus* and that in *Parzival* in one point: the ability of the former to recognize and demystify internal processes such as thoughts, intentions, and mental states. Naturally, since the parzivalian body was incapable of this, the simplizian body must employ some other means of making the obscure visible, which it achieves through a fundamental shift in the focus of body language. Instead of consisting merely of limbs, extremities and the odd eye, cheek etc., the new body paradigm harnesses the

latent potential[222] of the face, its coherency and articulation, to produce a cultural object, which assumes the preeminent position above all other parts of the body. Now, the face forms a fourth developmental element, and in combination with the previous three (body, clothing, and behaviour), it creates a heightened sense of verisimilitude and lends new subtlety, colour and precision to the author's palette.

The language of the face also has another inherent advantage over the rest of the body; it can transmit complex pieces of information via brief, succinct statements, which relay impressions almost as quickly as the eye can perceive them.[223] This reductive quality of the face, for instance, allowed Grimmelshausen to establish the most fundamental quality of a character through a single word such as *lieblich* or *frisch*.

As theoretically important as the face is, its practical uses are equally so. Aside from providing a site for character relevant information, the face establishes itself as the acknowledged and indispensable seat of a character's identity, bequeathing each with his/her own unique *Visitenkarte*. Interestingly, Grimmelshausen varies his terminology for the face according to its intended contextual meaning. The oft-cited term *Gesicht*,[224] for instance, refers to the face almost singularly as a physical manifestation or location and conveys only information of a strictly material nature, as illustrated in the following example: "Am

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[222] I refer to this potential as latent because the face, at least its physical aspect, has always been present, even if the perception of it has not been.

[223] Since the reader is never physically able to witness events in the text, ocular language replaces the readers' eye, as in the following example: "Hierauff betrachtete ich die Dame von Füssen an biß oben auß / und hinwieder von oben biß unden / sahe sie auch so steiff und lieblich an / als hätte ich sie heuraten wollen" (II; IX; 117,33-36).

[224] For *Gesicht*, see the following examples: I; XX; 55,28: I; XXXIII; 88,7: III; II; 207,23: IV; VII; 312,22: IV; XIV; 335,7: IV; XV; 336,25: IV; XXII; 356,7: IV; XXII; 357,18.

Schweiß / der ihnen über die Gesichter floß / [...] / konte ich abnehmen / daß sie sich starck zerarbeitet hatten" (I; XXXIV; 89,27-29).

In contrast, the terms *Minen*[225] and, in particular, *Angesicht*[226] imply a psychological correlation with the face, which transcends its physical dimensions. Both terms tend to appear in situations which emphasize an element of disguise, recognition, or disfigurement, or in any situation, in which the communication of a specific impression is paramount, as in the following: "aber ihre fröliche Angesichter gaben zu verstehen / daß sie solche Bemühungen nicht sauer ankommen" (I; XXXIV; 89,29-30).

The final term, *Geberden*,[227] although it does not explicitly exclude the face, is a more oblique reference since it not only encompasses the entire body surface, but also conveys a strong sense of *Verhalten*. Nonetheless, Grimmelshausen often employs it to convey non-verbal information, which is not otherwise communicable by purely facial expressions, as the following demonstrates: "ihr Geschrey und Geberden versicherten / daß sie ein betrübtes Weibsbild wäre" (V; VIII; 400,34-35).

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[225] For *Minen*, see: II; VIII; 114,28: III; XXI; 273,35.

[226] For *Angesicht*, see: I; XII; 34,20: I; XIX; 53,15: II; VIII; 114,27: II; XVII; 144,3-4: II; XXXI; 193,12: IV; II; 296,2: IV; III; 299,10: IV; V; 305,20: IV; X; 322,30: IV; XVII; 343,7: IV: XXII; 355,23-24 & 355,27: IV; XXII; 356,2 & 356,9: IV; XXII; 357,12: V; VI; 393,23.

[227] For *Geberden*, see: III; XVIII; 263,13: III; XX; 267,14: IV; III; 298,3 & 299,6 & 299,10: IV; X; 322,30. Of all the aforementioned terms, it is Grimmelshausen's use of *Geberde*, which comes closest to its antecedent in *Parzival*. There are, however, still noteworthy differences between the two. According to Dietmar Peil, "Gebärden sind nicht nur Ausdrucksbewegungen der Extremitäten und der Gesichtsausdruck, sondern sie schließen das ganze, äußerlich sichtbare Verhalten des Menschen ein und lassen sein Wesen erkennen" (29). The MHG terms *gebâre/gebaerde*, however, refer only to universally static positions or gestures within the medieval lexicon, regardless of whether they "umfaßt[en] Verhalten wie auch Aussehen" (Peil 23). *Geberden* in *Simplicissimus*, on the other hand, are most often character illuminating references, and, as such, are not valid for all characters. Finally, Peil commits a cardinal error in his analysis. From the following excerpt in *Parzival*, "ir seht wol an ir ougen / ob si nâch vriunde kumber hât" (710,2-3), he concludes that, "an den Augen, am Gesichtsausdruck, also an den Gebärden sollen die Knappen erkennen können, wie es Itonje ums Herz ist" (Peil 25). There is, of course, no mention of any *Gesichtsausdruck* in the passage, nor is there any intimation of one.

Set apart from these direct citations, there are also numerous secondary references made to the face. Conveying no less important information, they do so in an altogether different manner, namely through a process of deductive implication, in which the presence of the face is tacit not explicit. Most frequently, these references are simply indications of a character's emotional response to a situation and are not character specific, as in the following examples: "ich aber entfärbte mich darüber" (I; XX; 56,19-20) and, "der dolle Fähnrich / [...] / auch so roth wurde / wie ein glühende Kohl" (II; III; 102, 18-20).[228]

Although fewer in number, there is also a second cluster of indirect references available in the text. In contrast to the first, these offer an even more invasive insight into the thought processes of a character than the face would normally allow, often revealing those thoughts, which a character most desires to conceal. It is by such means, for instance, that the reader first learns of Simplicius' burgeoning hubris, because the vicar, with whom he is conversing, "habe mir an der Stirn gelesen / daß ich mich groß zu seyn bedünckte" (II; VIII; 114.24-25). Similarly, notice how the following passage, without direct mention of the face, nevertheless, implies its presence and its influence over the visual cues, which allow Simplicius to evaluate Olivier's character:

> Kurtz hernach merckte ich noch besser / daß meines
> Obristen Schreiber meinen neuen Bruder schröcklich
> neidete / [...] / [...] / dann ich sahe wol / wie er zu

[228] For other examples of this type, see: III; XIX; 265,19 & 265,35-36: IV; II; 296,26-27: IV; III; 299,14-15: V; VIII; 398,22-23.

> Zeiten grißgramete / wie ihm die Mißgunst so getrang
> thät / und daß er in schweren Gedancken allezeit
> seufftzete / wenn er entweder den Alten oder den Jungen
> Hertzbruder ansahe; Darauß urtheilte ich / und glaubte ohn
> allen Zweiffel / daß er Calender machte (II; XXI; 159,17-25).

After such a lucid observation, the reader must draw the same conclusion about Olivier that Simplicius does, namely that he is a conniving and treacherous foe. Ironically, it is Olivier's own face, his expressions and his avaricious gaze, which ultimately foreshadow his calumnious intentions towards the younger Hertzbruder.

As the frequency and variety of its application in the text demonstrates, the face has assumed a central and indispensable role in the process of character development, and, specifically, in the individualization of characters. Yet, the correlation between the physical and the psychological contained within the language of the face represents a psychologization of the body, or, in other words, a referential turn inwards, which is one key element in the construction of a previously non-existant cultural space, namely individual identity.

We could better visualize the construction of this space if we were to imagine it as an empty apartment, which literally represents form without substance, where furnishings represent the impression of an identity onto it, literally giving form to substance. In *Parzival*, the form (body) and the substance (identity) remain uniformly undifferentiated because they have the same external referent (cultural meaning), which applies equally to all characters.

In *Simplicissimus*, however, the face not only provides unique furnishings, but it also adapts the walls, floors etc., in order to highlight these to best advantage. To allow for more variety, forms also now have two referents, external and internal (psychologically unique processes). While the level of cultural determination does not differ, the cultural product does, and this is solely attributable to the transcendent duality of the face, which allows the psychological aspect of characters to penetrate the material world, and become, like the body before it, a culturally determined commodity.

**5.0 Clothing and the roles of the new wo/man**

In *Parzival*, clothing served two purposes. In its first and primary function, clothing was the visible affirmation of a fixed social position, namely nobility, and brought with it all the trappings, which were the social prerogatives of that position. In its secondary, and more restricted, function, it acted as the visual metaphor for Parzival's transition from *Bauerntölpel* to *Artusritter* and, finally, to *Gralskönig*.

The significance of medieval clothing had its clear limitations, however. No matter how superlatively opulent the appointment of a garment might be, for example, it could echo, but never alter, identity positions, which were already fixed well in advance by the body that wore it; relegated to a dependent of (body) identity, it simply could not confer nobility on a non-noble body.[229]

[229] Even in the case of Parzival, his attire could enhance his *Ansehen* but never detract from it.

The role of clothing in *Simplicissimus*, on the other hand, has expanded to serve multifarious purposes, from statements of fashion (IV; I; 292,25), or prestige[230] (IV; VII; 312,14: IV; XII; 326,31-32: V; VIII; 398,30-31), to simple protection from the elements (I; XIV; 39,20-21). Aside from these mundane uses, the language of clothing also offers a natural theatre for the expression of moral sentiments. The plain but honourable *Habit einer Baurn-Dirne*, for instance, acquits itself well against the mawkish dress of the noblewomen, and where the "Aff trägt sein Hindern bloß / diese Damen aber allbereit ihre Brüst / dann andere Mägdlein pflegten ja sonst solche zu bedecken" (II; IX; 117,24-26).

These, of course, represent only the observable purposes of clothing, which Grimmelshausen consciously and visibly brings to the readers' attention, but there is in clothing that other function which is less noticeable, not because it is unimportant but rather because it seems so mundane and obvious, that the reader hardly attends to its presence at all. In this other capacity, clothing establishes a relationship to identity, a relationship which *Simplicissimus* maintains and expands by boosting the expressive range of clothing manifold times, allowing it to produce, as well as reproduce, meaning.[231]

Commensurate with this new significance, clothing changes become more frequent and more visible events within the text. The text also evinces a cyclical pattern of correspondence between clothing changes and identity changes.

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[230] Rich clothes, however, are no longer a reliable affirmation of social status or an ironclad assurance of nobility.

[231] Of course, Grimmelshausen cattily hints at this meaning himself. As his Simplicius comments, "darbey hielt ich mich so bescheiden / daß der Obrist und seine Leut / die mich zuvor gekant / nicht anders glauben konten / als ich wäre mit andern Kleidern / auch ein gantz anderer Mensch worden" (IV; XII; 328,32-35).

Simplicius' cycle, for example, is more complex and modular than that of Parzival, producing the following key phases: *Bauerntölpel*, *Einsiedler*, *Hofgesinde / Hofnarr*, *Mädchen*, *Jäger*, *Opernsänger*, *Einsiedler*. Each station in the cycle represents the assumption of a newly negotiated identity position, and as the progression plainly shows, Simplicius must first be swept further and further into the clutches of material culture before he can find himself.[232] Despite his many transitions, though, each presents its own precarious pitfalls, and the shedding of an identity is, by no means, an easy task, often made more difficult by the disapproval, and in some cases, active opposition, of fellow characters. As a result, Simplicius often finds himself desperately seeking new clothes while unable to rid himself of his current ones.

Of course, with a new purpose also comes the need for a new mechanism. *Parzival* relied on detail driven depictions of clothing to produce blanket cultural statements. Clothing in *Simplicissimus* often receives, in comparison, only a fleeting description, almost as if it were unimportant, although this is certainly not the case. Instead, there are three types of description (material driven, context driven, and a combination thereof), and, like the face, they produce a psychological impression on the viewer, and thereby elicit behavioural expectations, as well. Of Simplicius' seven phases, all of which fit somewhere into the spectrum between these poles, I would like to discuss the three most prominent.

Omitting Simplicius' time as a *Bauernkind* and his first incarnation as a fledgling *Einsiedler*, we come directly to his time spent at the court in Hanau and, specifically, to his orientation into the duties and obligations of the *Narr*. During this

[232] Indeed, it is no exaggeration to suggest that Simplicius, in the time spent between his entry into the world and his exit, singlehandedly breaks almost every one of the Seven Deadly Sins.

particular episode of his life, the reader, thanks to Simplicius' commentary, is well aware of his numerous, and often quite humorous, *närrische Einfälle*, and understands them as signs of his lingering *Einfalt*.[233] Yet, his transformation into the *Narr* is not the fruit of this behaviour per se, although it certainly persuades the Kommandant to entertain the idea. Instead, in order to produce the desired *Narr*, Simplicius, in a rather tongue-in-cheek reference, is sent to "die jenige Schul / darinn du deine Vernunfft verlernen solt" (II; V; 105,23-24), so that he might learn the requisite art of his new position. Of course, the irony in this situation is palpable, for why should Simplicius need training in an art, which he has already mastered by nature?

There is, however, another more subtle irony, to which I shall now allude. Having apparently passed his final examination with flying colours, Simplicius receives the symbol of his new position, the *Narren-Kleid* (II; V; 106,13). Fashioned, amongst other things, out of a "Kleid von Kalb-Fellen" (II; VI; 110,8) with the "rauhe Theil auch außwendig gekehrt" (II; VI; 110,9) and "eine Kappe wie ein Mönchs-gugel" (II; VI; 110,12) topped with "Esels-Ohren" (II; VI; 110,13-14), it is the visible confirmation of his presumed 'lunacy', and, for a time, his behaviour mimics these expectations.[234] Although he eventually drops the pretence and begins to act in an aggressively contradictory manner, such behaviour only serves to further confuse his tormentors and solidify their belief that he is truly witless.

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[233] In one of only many such instances, Simplicius, acting firmly under the misapprehension that dancing guests, whom he describes as previously being "noch witzig" (I; XXXIV; 89,13), had agreed "dem Saal den Boden mit Gewalt einzutretten" (I; XXXIV; 89,37-90,1), and that only couples would survive the subsequent fall, quickly fastens himself to the leg of one of the noble women and refuses to let go.

[234] He takes it upon himself, for instance, to low like a calf and scamper about on all fours.

Yet, it is not his behaviour per se, which makes him an object of scorn, ridicule and cruel amusement, but rather the non-verbal symbolism of the *Narren-Kleid*. As a primarily material driven descriptor, it derives meaning almost solely from its own internal structure and arrangement,[235] which draw on pre-existing cultural referents, in this case the traditional motley of the Fool, in order to produce a shell identity, whose meaning operates almost independently of any affirmational or mimetic behaviour. In a sense, then, Simplicius need only step into the clothes in order to submerge himself into the role of Fool, an identity, which irrevocably embosses its cultural value judgments onto the clothes themselves. Fortunately for Simplicius, a new identity is only a change of clothes away.

Simplicius' rather hurried transformation into a *Magd* is the consequence of his rash decision, "mich nicht mehr von jederman so voppen zu lassen / [...] / und solte ich gleich Leib und Leben darüber verlieren" (II; XXV; 167,37-168,3). Fittingly, his *Weiber-Kleid* (II; XXV; 168,15) is not only a combination of material and context, but it also provides the episodic transition between the *Narr* and *Jäger* personas. Although relatively brief, the importance of the episode cannot be discounted, if only for its risqué distortion of gender as Simplicius passes himself off as a chaste young maiden.

Materially speaking, the term *Weiber-Kleid* is as close a description as Grimmelshausen ever offers the reader, although the later comparison to a *Bauren-Küttel* (II; XXV; 169,7) gives at least some hint of its unflattering plainness. Oddly,

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[235] While the structure does not change, its arrangement can be misconstrued, thereby creating contextually dependent impressions. Simplicius' nocturnal encounter with two soldiers is a prime example of this (II; XVI; 139,9-36). In the darkness, they mistake his ass-ears for horns and the static electrical discharge of his fur for fire and flee in panic, certain they have just narrowly escaped an encounter with the devil.

this simple description is, in many ways, both a hindrance and an asset. Certainly, from the point of view of the curious reader, it is difficult to fashion an accurate visualization based on the information to hand. Yet, the term *Weiber-Kleid*, which is heavily laden with cultural meaning, tells us all that we really need know in order for the events of the scene to unfold.

Of course, as befits a materially and contextually determined article of clothing, Simplicius does not affect this identity transformation merely by slipping into a dress. Instead, an equally important contextual impression is needed to reinforce the material one. In this instance, all the factors of the scene help to countenance his intended deception, from his dress and harried pursuit by horsemen, to his appeal to the Officers' wives for protection: "vor denselben fiele ich auff die Knye nider / und bate umb aller Weiber Ehr und Tugend willen / sie wolten meine [Simplicius] Jungferschafft vor diesen gäilen Buben beschützen!" (II; XXV; 168,25-28).

Finally, the most important identity, which Simplicius assumes, and the one he maintains the longest, is that of the *Jäger*. Yet, unlike the *Narren-Kleid*, which was itself the unmistakeable symbol of the Fool, this outfit is simply a suit of green cloth with no ulterior significance. Instead, it draws its meaning wholly from the association that the reader and other characters draw between it and the acts of violence and plunder, which Simplicius commits during a *Beutezug*. In this way, the suit itself takes on a totemistic value through this constant association, so much so that enemies flee in terror at the very sight of it, for the *Jäger* identity comes to stand for the ultimate warrior, the bravest fighter and the cleverest strategist.

Unlike his respective stints as the *Narr* and *Magd*, however, Simplicius' psychological identification with the *Jäger* does not stop at the hemline. In this guise, he becomes obsessed with *Beute erjagen* and *Ruhm erringen*, and hatches ever more clever schemes in order to trick his prey and boost his standing in the eyes of fellow soldiers. The ultimate test of his identity loyalty comes in another form, however. When he learns, for example, that another has donned a green suit and dubbed himself the *Jäger*, he feels the need to revenge himself on the perpetrator, even though he had already since abandoned this identity. While his legendary exploits live on, one has the feeling that the *Jäger* identity takes on its own alter ego, completely independent of Simplicius.

### 5.1 Conclusion: clothing and individual identity

Returning briefly to the cyclical nature of Simplicius' journey, we see that the individual stations are commensurate to a defined identity with a relatively established and stable value assignation: *Narr*/Fool, *Magd*/object of male desire, *Jäger*/soldier, *Opernsänger*/artiste; sexual intriguist, and *Einsiedler*/religious ascetic, while the *Bauerntölpel* represents a null identity.

The modularity of these identities is conducive to the sense of role-playing and theatricality, which mark the narrative, where recognition and revelation vie with misrepresentation and deception for supremacy. It is this modularity, for instance, which is responsible for the fluctuating construction, de-construction and re-construction of Simplicius' identity.

## 6.0 Behaviour, psychology and individual identity

If we were to sum up the character behaviour in *Parzival* in one word, that word might be something like *uniformity* or *order*. In the case of *Simplicissimus*, however, the picaresque elements are, at times, so predominant that one could easily describe the novel as a steady stream of farting, belching, vomiting, gorging, boozing, torture, murder and cruelty, all mixed with a healthy dose of extramarital sex, and filled in with sundry interludes, which happen to advance the plot.

Such a statement, however, should be understood as a testament to the sheer variety of behaviours now available for expression, and all facetiousness aside, behaviour makes a salient contribution to the cause of identity construction in *Simplicissimus*. Like ever expanding concentric rings, whose detail grows ever coarser as one moves outwards, the behavioural patterns in *Simplicissimus* fall into three categories.

The third and, by far, largest ring consists of both commoners and nobles alike, and encompasses the so-called background figures of the text, who, like the extras in a film, are seen but never heard. The behaviour of its members, particularly the nobles, who are a shiftless and rapacious lot, moves Simplicius to observe that, "nächst der Hoffart und dem Geitz / sampt deren erbaren Anhängen / waren Fressen und Sauffen / Huren und Buben / bey den Vermöglichen ein tägliche Ubung" (I; XXIV; 67,6-8). Apart from this description, however, this group is not important enough to receive much more attention in the text.

Distinguished from the mute masses by their active agency in the motion of the narrative, the second such ring contains all the secondary characters of the text. In

this gallery, we find, amongst others, figures such as Simplicius' stingy Kölner *Kost-Herrn*, who "ließ sich die Mühe nicht dauren / zu solchem Ende selbst auff den Fischmarckt zu gehen / und anzupacken / was jetzt die Fischer außzuschmeissen im Sinn hatten" (III; XXIV; 284,33-36). The deceitful secretary Olivier, who conspires with the sorcerous "Schwartzkünstler / Siebdreher und Teuffelsbanner" (II; XXII; 2-3) in order to further his designs on a higher position, the rectitudinous elder Hertzbruder, and, of course, the *Einsiedler* himself, whose monastic life epitomizes religious duty, all belong in this category of character, as well.

As the above examples indicate, the distinctiveness of these characters derives from their display of behavioural patterns, which assume symbolic value because they are not reproduced in any other character. This process of differentiation has its limits, however, and does not properly constitute the construction of individual identities.[236] In fact, the very ideosyncrasies, which give these characters their particular value, also trap them within a static holding pattern, as their inability to undergo significant change makes them particularly susceptible to brief synopses. Consquently, we could substantially capture the essence of the *Kost-Herrn* as miserly, of Olivier as scheming, of the *Einsiedler* as pious etc.[237]

The sole occupant of the last ring represents the only truly dynamic character in the text, one whose behaviour, because of its variety, defies such a brief encapsulation. This character is, of course, Simplicius, and unlike the other figures in

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[236] All of the secondary characters, from the hag to Olivier, show the beginnings of an individual identity, whether in the description of their face, their clothing, or their behaviour, but none displays the simultaneous combination of all three discursive dimensions, as Simplicius does.

[237] See also v. Bloedau, who similarly states "an ihnen [Nebenpersonen] wird meist nur eine Eigenschaft stark herausgearbeitet - am Kroatenoberst die unzivilisierte Roheit und Rauheit, am Pensionshalter Geiz und Habgier" (81)

the text, this power of transformation prompts the display of two types of behaviour, character identifying and psychologically deductive.

Beginning with the first of these behavioural types, the term *character identifying*, which I have previously employed to describe the paradigmatic behaviours of the cast of secondary characters, assumes a different connotation when applied to Simplicius because his dynamism prevents his association with any single trait. The same logic, which guided the depiction of the body, also demands the integrity of the link between behaviour and identity roles. With clothing, to some extent, already having established an identity agenda, Simplicius' behaviour must follow suit in order to fulfill the expectations of his fellow characters and the audience. Failing this logical correspondence between perceived identity and behaviour, the narrative would take on a confusing, even farcical, character, if Simplicius, for example, were to run around on all fours and low like a calf while dressed as a *Magd*. The question remains, however, how do the particulars of his behaviour enhance the perception of these various identity roles?

The *Jäger* identity (literally the hunter) provides an interesting beginning because it is actually self-supporting, since the green suit conjures no expectations within the reader, unless one makes an obscure association to Robin Hood. Yet, his thoughts, ambitions and, finally, corresponding actions orient themselves chiefly according to *Beute erjagen*, *Ruhm erringen* etc., and betray the qualities of a hunter. Employing his renowned inventiveness, he uses deception and trickery to achieve his goals and to maximize his *Ansehen* amongst both allies and enemies. Over and above

these qualities, he also distinguishes himself through his effusively gallant treatment of prisoners. These qualities represent the positive side of the *Jäger*.

Like any predator, however, he has a dark side too, which only comes to light when he feels threatened. The existence of the pseudo Jäger, who usurps his identity, poses just such a threat, one, which he perceives as a personal attack, if the coarseness of his revenge is any standard for measurement. Such behaviour, however, is not out of line with the expectations of a soldier, particularly since the *Jäger* represents Simplicius' accession to the material and aesthetic forms of a culture, which he had previously ridiculed.

When he assumes the form of the *Mägdlein*, on the other hand, a much different set of behaviours is required and, consequently, the tone of the narrative softens to talk of *Frömmigkeit*, *Keuschheit* and other prescriptively feminine virtues. To further solidify this perception, Simplicius also begins to assume typically feminine tasks,[238] all the while managing a delicate diplomatic balancing act between the defense of his virginity and the, at times, uncomfortably palpable desires of his many eager suitors.

Finally, and most importantly, there is his portrayal of the *Narr*, a role, which presents a unique difficulty to my thesis because the connection between behaviour and identity, so clear in the previous cases, now appears ambiguous. Fortunately, this is not an intrinsic problem but rather merely one of variable perception, that of the reader in the first instance, and that of the other characters in the text in the second.

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[238] Simplicius mentions that he learned cooking and cleaning during his time spent under the Croats. Clearly, though, men only perform these tasks in the absence of women.

To elucidate, the figure of Simplicius with his ass' ears and fool's garb arouses certain behavioural expectations within both the reader and other characters. Certainly, to the eyes of the readers, who are constantly aware of Simplicius' lucidity, these expectations are largely unfulfilled, for Simplicius, although he initially capitulates, soon drops all pretence of lunacy and, instead, uses his position as a platform for a directed social attack. Of course, such reasoned and calculated behaviour runs contrary to the nature of the Fool, and this would seem to call Simplicius' very assumption of this identity into question. Yet, the more rational his arguments and the more insightful his criticisms become, the more he confuses his audience.[239] As a result, I would maintain that Simplicius is the very model of a fool and that he does, albeit unwittingly, embrace its identity, for in the eyes of his fellow characters he does precisely what a fool should, the unexpected and the nonsensical.

In *Simplicissimus*, the presentation of identity represents more than just the programmatic agreement between behaviour and social expectations, however. In fact, Simplicius manages to make each particular role uniquely his own by expanding its parameters in some subtle way. His ingenuity and talent for invention, for example, distinguish him from his *Doppelgänger* and from the other soldiers in the text, while his critical logic separates him from the typical fool. One reason for Simplicius' mastery of these various skills is the development of a type of behaviour or mental faculty, which was wholly non-existent in *Parzival*, namely psychological

[239] Such unusual behaviour, of course, worries the Kommandant, but he is happy to accept the vicar's excuse for Simplicius' behaviour as the recrudescence of his former learning, which is now reasserting itself within its new foolish frame of reference.

anticipation.[240] Up to this point, I have treated the psychologization of the body chiefly as an inward looking process of penetrating revelation carried out by author and reader alike. Yet, as Simplicius' behaviour often demonstrates, this insightfulness can also be projected outwards by the narrative figures themselves, effectively allowing them to calculate or 'read' other characters as successfully as the audience does. From inventing a backwards facing shoe to confuse potential pursuers, for example, to convincing an entire enemy garrison, with only the aid of two sturdy tree trunks and a metal cauldron, that they are surrounded by heavy artillery, Simplicius reveals one fundamental principle, whose basis is simple; people trust the information of their eyes and ears but these senses can be deceived.

While the development of a psychology is clearly essential for the promotion of individual identity, because this is where identity is processed, and whence its variety must ultimately spring, it is doubly interesting to note that such seeming sophistication exists in the midst of a cultural milieu which can still speak of prophecy, witchcraft, and devilry with a straight face.

## 7.0 Conclusion: *Parzival* and *Simplicissimus*: Identity, difference and 'steering the gaze'

Both strong tales of morality, the storylines of *Parzival* and *Simplicissimus* are, in many respects, virtually one and the same, as they relate the tale of young noblemen, who, raised in ignorance of their nobility, go out into the world to seek themselves. Yet, the reader need not wait long for the first of many fundamental differences to

[240] According to LePan, the faculty of expectation is "firmly grounded in a rational assessment of probabilities" (73) and the cognitive difference between medieval and modern extends to this ability to anticipate the likelihood of future events.

appear. While Parzival's curiosity first pulls him into the world, it is cruel circumstance, which violently pushes Simplicius out of his nest, and their respective manners of entry make an ominous statement not only about the world that awaits them but also about the people they will ultimately turn out to be.

Of course, variations in artistic licence and authorial intent can account for some of this divergence, but two cultures with incompatible desires, modes of expression, and self-perceptions must inevitably produce very dissimilar sorts of bodies and very divergent identities, and therein lies the true cause of the distinction between the two texts.

The basis for this cultural incompatibility is equally clear. Lacking the most basic of modern cognitive abilities (expectation, causation, psychological perception), the medieval mind did not possess the necessary language required for the construction of individual identity, and without language there can be no perception. Instead, the uniformity of group identity became the paradigm of medieval organization but also the zenith of its cultural understanding, and in every field of endeavour, in which the medieval mind was engaged (economic, political, religious), the metaphor of the group body always looms distinctly.

In *Parzival*, the construction of identity derives from three character dimensions, the body, its clothing and its behaviour. Yet, there is no causal link between the three, rather it is inevitable. The display of an immaculate noble body, the only kind in the text, immediately assigns a character a specific cultural role, with some allowances made for gender, of course. Clothing then provides another visible vestige of this identity, although it is unable to alter it. Behaviour was the only

dimension, which could undermine the statement of the body, as the disbarment of the ignoble Urians demonstrates. The ultimate result is a parade of characters, from the important to the trivial, who essentially share the same body, clothing and behavioural patterns.

During the 400-year cultural transition to the Baroque period, a number of significant changes took place within language. Economic, political and religious paradigms began to change, and with the beginnings of scientific method, the body and its messages came under scrutiny. One result of this attention was the emergence of the face, a fourth element to the previous three, which now maintains a vigorous presence in the *Simplicissimus* text. As a medium of expression, the face allows the reduction of often complex psychological information into visually digestible cues. The construction of individual identity is not appended on the merits of the face alone, however.

Unlike *Parzival*, clothing and behaviour play as strong a dictating role as the body/face. There is a much stronger link, for instance, between clothing, behaviour and identity, and the variety of clothing and behaviour in the text suggests the variety of identity options, as well. Yet, if individual identity is an operand of these dimensions, then context is as important an operator in the text. How else to explain the demonization of the noblewoman, on the one hand, and the valorization of the peasant girl, on the other, particularly when they share the same bodies, or to account for why Simplicius cuts such a ludicrous figure in his calf's skin, yet suddenly becomes a cultural icon when he dons the Herculean lionskin and prances around half naked on the operatic stages of Paris? In each case, the material basis is the same yet

the value assignations are diametrically different, which lead us to the conlusion that the manipulation of context is every bit as important in the production of individual identity as the three physical dimensions.

Finally, this manipulation of context, or what we might term as 'steering the gaze' of the reader, has another consequence. It draws the reader into the text and makes them an integral part of the narrative event. In the production of identity, reception is equally important as inscription, and although this rule is valid for both texts, the participatory levels and expectations of the reader are far different for *Parzival* than they are for *Simplicissimus*. Aside from Wolfram's occasional commentary, the third person narrative style of *Parzival* does not allow the reader to get inside any of the characters, nor does it promote any sense of expectation or anticipation on the part of the audience.

The narrative style of *Simplicissimus*, on the other hand, demands quite a bit more from its readers. The reader, for example, determines the positive or negative reception of a character based on the qualities expressed through their face/body, and the perception of the significance of clothing and behaviour. The narrative also offers opportunity for interaction between text and reader. Based upon information in the text, the reader can form expectations as to future events and then anxiously await their resolution. The reader knows, for instance, both that Olivier is extremely jealous of the younger Herzbruder and that he has struck up a friendship with the rather shady Master-at-Arms. Naturally, the reader can conclude from this that they will make a move against the younger Herzbruder, which, in time, they do. This kind of puzzle solving not only makes for more engaging reading, but it also makes the reader

undertake the exact synthesis of identity as Simplicius does, for the reader is, in essence, Simplicius him/herself.

Of course, we cannot maintain that the development of individual identity has achieved its zenith in *Simplicissimus*, for clearly it has not. From body parts to psychology, there is any number of medieval reflexes still evident in the text. Yet, one thing is certain, where the face leads, individual identity must surely follow.

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