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Cambridge Medieval Classics 1

Nine medieval Latin plays

Cambridge Medieval Classics

General editor

PETER DRONKE, FBA

Professor of Medieval Latin Literature, University of Cambridge

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Nine medieval Latin plays

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

PETER DRONKE

University of Cambridge

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Preface

My aim in this book is to present a richly varied and inviting group of the Latin lyrical plays of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, editing them afresh from the manuscripts and providing line-by-line translations that do not evade the detailed questions of meaning. The edition is addressed to lovers of drama and poetry as much as it is to scholars.

The introductory, textual and explanatory notes that accompany each play are exceptionally full for a volume in the Cambridge Medieval Classics. This was necessary because of the sheer number of problems of text and interpretation that are still outstanding. At the same time, in order to keep the material surrounding the plays within manageable scope, I have formulated certain judgements perhaps too apodictically: for, to have commented in adequate detail on scholarly controversies, or to have added extensive allusions to secondary literature, would have placed an intolerable strain on the format of the volume. For a similar reason, while I was aware of the existence of previous English translations of four of the nine plays here edited, I chose not to consult these: such consultation would inevitably have led to further discussion of minutiae, and hence to a more cluttered book.

In two respects the present volume is more limited than I originally planned. It was intended from the outset to provide, along with the texts and translations, a new edition of the music of the plays, insofar as this was extant and transcribable. Sadly, the musicologist who agreed to undertake this had to withdraw from the project unexpectedly, at a point when all other aspects of the volume were already complete. For the present, then, I would refer readers to the following existing musical editions, to complement the play-texts below:[1] for I (*Sponsus*), the music of which survives nearly complete, the transcription by Raffaello Monterosso in Avalle 1965,[2] pp. 123–30; for V–VI (*Verses pascales de tres Maries* and *Versus de pelegrino*), of which only part of the music is

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[1] I am leaving out of consideration adaptations of medieval Latin plays for modern performance: in these, the music as presented tends to go beyond what can be deduced from the manuscripts.

[2] References are given in full in the list of abbreviations below.

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preserved, that of Anglès, pp. 276–8 and 281; for VII (*Danielis ludus*), both that of W. L. Smoldon[3] and that of Mathias Bielitz;[4] for VIII (*Ordo Virtutum*), finally, that of P. Barth, M. I. Ritscher and J. Schmidt-Görg.[5] It should be noted that, especially in the case of the plays V and VIII, there are important differences between the texts as printed in this volume and those given under the melodies in the musical editions. It is from the manuscripts of these two plays, moreover, that I have chosen the four facsimile pages for this book (plates I–IV) : these will give readers an impression of the shape of certain melodies as well as of the original texts.

The music of the plays III–IV (the Hildesheim *Tres filie* and *Tres clerici*) is missing; it is unlikely that the music of II (the Freising *Officium stelle*) will ever be fully transcribable. On the problems involved in reconstructing the music of IX (the *Ludus de passione* among the *Carmina Burana*), there is a challenging essay by Thomas Binkley.[6]

While much fundamental work on the extant music of the plays still needs to be done, the present, textually oriented volume will fulfil its purpose if it reveals something of their dramatic artistry and imaginative range. The situation is a little as with Hofmannsthal's libretti in our century: while these were naturally destined for their operatic settings, and many aspects can come fully alive only in a first-rate performance, there are other, equally fascinating aspects, many subtleties of characterisation and scenic invention, which will show themselves first and foremost through close attention to the poet–dramatist's language.

The second part of the original plan that could not be realised in this volume was a new edition of the mid-twelfth-century *Play of Antichrist* (*Ludus de Antichristo*). I had worked intensively on the text in the principal manuscript in Munich (Clm 19411), but was quite unable to obtain photographs of the second, fragmentary manuscript, in the Austrian Benedictine abbey of Fiecht,[7] which I felt it was necessary to collate. Both my own requests and those most kindly made on my behalf, by colleagues at the Monumenta Germaniae Historica, proved fruitless. I hope, however, that this obstacle will not remain insuperable,

[3] *The Play of Daniel: A Medieval Liturgical Drama* (London 1960; 2nd edn, rev. D. Wulstan, London 1976).
[4] Bulst 1989 (the 'Notentext' presents a revision of Coussemaker's edition of 1860).
[5] Hildegard von Bingen, *Lieder* (Salzburg 1969), pp. 165-205.
[6] 'The Greater Passion Play from Carmina Burana: An Introduction', in *Alte Musik. Praxis und Reflexion*, ed. P. Reidemeister, V. Gutmann (Winterthur 1982), pp. 144–57.
[7] Cf. J. Riedmann, 'Ein neuaufgefundenes Bruchstück des "Ludus de Antichristo"', *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte* 36 (1973) 16–38.

and that a later volume of the Cambridge Medieval Classics will have a new critical bilingual edition of the *Play of Antichrist* – the most ambitious political-religious drama of the period – as its centrepiece, accompanied by further examples of high achievement in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Latin drama, together with the music of the plays when this survives.

I should like to express my warm thanks to the British Academy for the generous research grants that enabled me to work with the manuscripts in Wiesbaden, Munich and Vic, and to have help with the preparation of electronic copy for this volume. In preparing this for me, Sarah James showed great patience and skill in getting the more complex Latin verse-forms onto the page, and in matching these line by line with the translations – to her, too, a heartfelt thanks.

It is a pleasure, finally, to record my gratitude to Monsignor Miguel Gros and the Museu Episcopal at Vic, for supplying a microfilm and allowing the reproduction of Plates I and II, and to Dr Wolfgang Podehl and the Hessische Landesbibliothek, for permission to reproduce Plates III and IV.

Cambridge, 25 March 1993   P.D

Abbreviations

AH	*Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, ed. Guido Maria Dreves, Clemens Blume (55 vols., Leipzig 1886–1922)
Anglès 1935	Higini Anglès, *La Música a Catalunya fins al segle XIII* (Barcelona, repr. 1988)
Arlt 1970	Wulf Arlt, *Ein Festoffizium des Mittelalters aus Beauvais in seiner liturgischen und musikalischen Bedeutung* (2 vols., Cologne)
Avalle 1965	*Sponsus. Dramma delle vergini prudenti e delle vergini stolte*, ed. D'Arco Silvio Avalle. Testo musicale ed. Raffaello Monterosso (Milan–Naples)
1984	*It teatro medievale e il Ludus Danielis* (Turin)
1987	'Secundum speculationem rationemve (Il "Ludus Danielis" di Beauvais)', *Helikon* XXII–XXVII (1982–1987) 3–59
Blaise	Albert Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens* (2nd edn, Turnhout 1962)
Bulst 1989	*Hilarii Aurelianensis Versus et Ludi, Epistolae, Ludus Danielis Belouacensis*, ed. Walther Bulst †, M. L. Bulst-Thiele. Anhang, Notentext: Mathias Bielitz (Leiden)
CB	*Carmina Burana*
Bischoff 1967	Bernhard Bischoff, *Carmina Burana. Einführung zur Faksimile-Ausgabe der Benediktbeurer Liederhandschrift* (Munich)
Bischoff 1970	*Carmina Burana*, I 3, ed. Otto Schumann†, Bernhard Bischoff (Heidelberg)
Dronke 1962	Peter Dronke, 'A Critical Note on Schumann's Dating of the Codex

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	Buranus', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 84 (Tübingen) 173–83
Steer 1983	'"Carmina Burana" in Südtirol', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 112, 1–37
Vollmann 1987	*Carmina Burana. Texte und Übersetzungen*, ed. Benedikt Konrad Vollmann (Frankfurt am Main)
CC CM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
Coussemaker 1860	Edmond de Coussemaker, *Drames liturgiques du moyen âge* (Paris)
Dronke 1977	Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric* (2nd edn, London–New York)
1984	*The Medieval Poet and his World* (Rome)
1986	*Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages. New Departures in Poetry 1000–1150* (2nd edn, London)
1991	*Latin and Vernacular Poets of the Middle Ages* (Aldershot)
1992	*Intellectuals and Poets in Medieval Europe* (Rome)
1993	'Amour sacré et amour profane au moyen âge latin: Témoignages lyriques et dramatiques', in *Du récit à la scène (XIIe–XVe siècle)*, ed. Jacqueline Cerquiglini (in press, Geneva)
Drumbl	Johann Drumbl, *Quem quaeritis? Teatro sacro dell'alto medioevo* (Rome 1981)
Fassler 1992	Margot Fassler, 'The Feast of Fools and *Danielis Ludus*: Popular Tradition in a Medieval Cathedral Play', in *Plainsong in the Age of Polyphony*, ed. Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge)
Hardison	O. B. Hardison, Jr, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore 1965)
Hesbert	R. J. Hesbert, *Corpus antiphonalium officii: III Invitatoria et antiphonae* (Rome 1968);

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	IV Responsoria, versus, hymni et varia (Rome 1970)
Hofmann-Szantyr	J. B. Hofmann, Anton Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stylistik* (Munich 1965)
Jones, *Liturgy*	Charles W. Jones, *The Saint Nicholas Liturgy and its Literary Relationships (Ninth to Twelfth Centuries)*, with an Essay on the Music by Gilbert Reaney (Berkeley–Los Angeles 1963)
Lexicon	*Lexicon Latinitatis Medii Aevi* (Turnhout 1975)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Mlat. Jb.	*Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch*
Norberg	Dag Norberg, *Introduction à l'étude de la versification latine médiévale* (Stockholm 1958)
Novum Glossarium/NG	*Novum Glossarium Mediae Latinitatis*, ed. Franz Blatt *et al.* (Copenhagen 1957–)
PL	Patrologia Latina
Rankin 1990	Susan Rankin, 'Liturgical Drama', in *The Early Middle Ages to 1300* (New Oxford History of Music II), ed. Richard Crocker, David Hiley (Oxford–New York)
Simon 1991	*The Theatre of Medieval Europe. New Research in Early Drama*, ed. Eckehard Simon (Cambridge)
von den Steinen, *Notker*	Wolfram von den Steinen, *Notker der Dichter und seine geistige Welt* (2 vols., Berne 1948)
Tobler–Lommatzsch	A. Tobler, E. Lommatzsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch* (10 vols., Berlin–Wiesbaden 1925–76)
Women Writers	Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua († 203) to Marguerite Porete († 1310)* (Cambridge 1984)
Y	Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (2 vols., Oxford 1933)
ZfrP	*Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*

Introduction

The purpose of this volume is to make accessible nine of the most imaginative medieval Latin religious plays composed in the eleventh century and the twelfth. Surprising as it may seem, the editing and interpreting of these plays is still something of a pioneering venture. Most of those who read medieval literature, for love or scholarship or both, must have a general impression that, as regards the Latin drama, all the editorial groundwork has been done. Notably the two imposing volumes of Karl Young's *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (1933)[1] would seem to offer a definitive corpus of texts.

Nonetheless, since O. B. Hardison's critique of Young's methods, in his *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages* (1965), we know that this corpus is problematic in at least one important aspect. It was arranged so as to inculcate a certain view of how the plays evolved, and this arrangement entailed the flouting of all chronological order. In ordering the plays, Young always proceeded from the simplest forms to the most complex – even when, as was often the case, the complex plays were preserved in early manuscripts and the simple in much later ones. Thus the assumptions – implicit in the ordering, and often made explicit in Young's discussion – about how the diverse dramatic genres developed tended to be highly misleading.

Yet this was by no means the only weakness in Young's monumental project. On closer inspection, it turns out to be much less comprehensive than might appear at first sight, and in the presentation of certain genres there are quite serious lacunae. Thus for instance, while Young knew and edited the 'great Passion-play'[2] that is preserved among the *Carmina Burana*, he was unaware of the equally wide-ranging and original Passion-play from Monte Cassino, wholly different in concep-

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[1] Full references for works alluded to in the Introduction can be found in the list of abbreviations (pp. xii–xiv).

[2] This term, which has no manuscript authority, has been used by scholars to distinguish the play that is freshly edited below (IX) from the *Ludus breviter de passione (CB 13*)* – as it is called in the Codex Buranus rubric – which was added to the codex in the late thirteenth century. The *Ludus breviter* is a play that uses almost exclusively biblical phrasing.

tion and detail – a play that still awaits a reliable edition.[3] Some genres, too, are missing from Young's corpus: he seems not to have known Hildegard of Bingen's allegorical drama, *Ordo Virtutum* (VIII below), and by overlooking this, as well as the other ranges of allegorical dialogues in his chosen period, he tended also to ignore the presence and functions of allegory in plays that he did edit.

Young transcribed his texts with considerable accuracy. A fresh look at his manuscripts, however, still leads to quite a few new readings and new perceptions. Particularly in cases where Young's text remained fragmentary – as in the Freising *Play of the Star* (II) and the pair of plays from Vic (V–VI) edited below – the use of an ultraviolet lamp can add numerous readings, so that these plays can now be presented in full.

Young's transcriptions, it should be added, even when they were very accurate, were transcriptions rather than editions. That is, they remained close to being diplomatic texts; they included scarcely any discussion of corrupt passages or of difficulties, and few attempts at emendation. The plays in his volumes lack not only translation but textual commentary; at times they still bristle with desperate, but unremarked, cruces; it would seem that detailed interpretation simply lay outside Young's concern.

The most serious lacuna in Young's collection is the complete absence of the music of the plays, which often survives together with the play-text in the manuscripts. The music is likewise missing in a later major corpus: Walter Lipphardt's ambitiously conceived edition of Easter ceremonies and Easter plays (*Lateinische Osterfeiern und Oster-spiele*, 9 vols., 1975–91). In fact, in order to find a scholarly edition of a group of medieval Latin plays together with their music, one has to look back many generations behind Lipphardt and even behind Young, to a work published in 1860: Edmond de Coussemaker's *Drames liturgiques du Moyen Age*. Even here, however, the texts are not translated, and when they are incomprehensible they are neither emended nor discussed.

This means that, in the longer term, a wholly new corpus of medieval Latin drama is needed, with all the plays freshly edited from the manuscripts, ordered as accurately as possible by time and place, with philologically sound texts and translations that genuinely confront the

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[3] The text of D. M. Inguanez, *Un dramma della Passione del secolo XII* (2nd edn, Monte-cassino 1939), is still the best available. I have briefly noted some of the defects in 'Laments of the Maries', in Dronke 1992, pp. 474 f. Cristina Dondi (Milan), who has worked on the text of this play with me, has collated the MS afresh and is preparing a critical edition.

problems of meaning, along with textual and explanatory notes setting out the difficulties that remain. Wherever the music survives in legible form, this should be edited with the text, in an edition as scholarly as that devoted to the words.

With the present volume I make no claim to initiating such a corpus: only to offering a small sample of bilingual texts, in a way that I hope will be both adequate to the needs of specialists and attractive to non-specialists.

The nine texts included here have been chosen to show something of the range of dramatic achievement in the Latin plays that survive from *c*. 1050 to *c*. 1180 – the period of their finest flowering. All the plays in this volume were sung, not spoken, though the music has not always been preserved. While the sung Latin plays nearly always treat religious themes, there was also a tradition of spoken plays that existed alongside them, plays that were more often secular than religious in content. Some of these spoken plays – from the 'Altercation between Terence and his Critic' in the ninth century to *Pamphilus c*. 1100 or *Babio c*. 1140[4] – likewise show a high degree of dramatic and verbal artistry. They have been excluded here, because to do any kind of justice to spoken as well as sung drama would require an extremely bulky volume.

By concentrating on fully-fledged plays, I have also had to exclude examples from the range of 'borderline' compositions that relate as much to liturgical ceremony as to drama. These have received an almost inordinate amount of scholarly attention – and controversy – in the last half-century.[5] If one accepts that the boundaries between ceremony and play were not immutable, and that some pieces could be oriented in the one direction or the other, depending on the mode and context of their performance, it should also be recognised that the artistic peaks among the eleventh and twelfth-century play-texts are clearly sited in the region of drama. This does not mean that such plays exclude all that belongs to liturgical ceremony. On the contrary, some of the most skilled dramatic composers also integrated ceremonial elements. The authors especially of the four plays edited here that concern events in the life of Christ – Epiphany (II), Passion (IX), and

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[4] The 'Altercation' is conveniently available in E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage* (2 vols., Oxford 1903), II 326–8; the best texts of *Babio* and *Pamphilus* are those of A. Dessì Fulgheri and S. Pittaluga, in *Commedie Latine del XII e XIII Secolo* (Genoa 1976 ff.), II 129–301, III 11–137. On the modes of performance of these pieces, see esp. Dronke 1991, chs. II ('A Note on *Pamphilus*') and IV ('Narrative and Dialogue in Medieval Secular Drama').

[5] See most recently *The Theatre of Medieval Europe*, ed. E. Simon (Cambridge 1991), esp. chs. 2–3.

Resurrection (v–vi) – chose to work with two complementary styles. With all their bold inventiveness in the greater part of their plays, they deliberately retained certain sacred moments set amid their free dramatic inventions, moments that keep the words *in illo tempore*, unchanged or scarcely changed from their origins in gospel or liturgy. The melody too, in such cases, is often unchanged from that used in a long-hallowed ceremony.

The retention of such moments within plays does not, however, warrant any simple conclusions about the relations between liturgy and drama. This much-debated topic is not directly relevant to the compositions edited here. Suffice to say that, even if in the case of certain other works that survive it may be possible to trace the actual growth of a play from a liturgical ceremony, such a growth is out of the question for any of the plays in this volume. For these at least, the most illuminating perspective is that of Johann Drumbl, who in his book *Quem quaeritis* (1981), as rich in new insights and challenges as it is in learning, begins with the concept of 'the alien theatre' (*das fremde Theater, il teatro estraneo*). Where the received opinion was that early medieval drama is a kind of 'natural' extension of worship, and is totally impregnated by its sacred function, Drumbl sees all that is dramatic in it as entering from without. What the surviving texts show us, he argues, is not liturgical question and answer gradually approaching the condition of drama, but if anything the contrary: a range of attempts by the Church to 'normalise' dramatic impulses, to diminish their distinctive qualities in order to bring them back closer to liturgical practice. The great number of ceremonies at the borders of the drama – of which the *Quem quaeritis* dialogues sung at Easter and Christmas are the best known – do not, Drumbl suggests, 'help us to study the development of medieval dramatic writing, but are, on the contrary, documents of its lack of success. The real medieval dramatic tradition ... can often be traced not in these documents, which show us "adapted" [i.e. liturgically oriented] versions, but in the space that the reformers, who transmitted these "liturgical" versions of medieval drama to us, consciously left aside'.[6]

When we look at the four eleventh-century plays chosen for this volume, it is at once evident that they were conceived in that space which was 'left aside'. To consider the four together is to become aware of what a fullness of theatrical creation, what a multiplicity of poetic-dramatic techniques and effects, was already possible by the eleventh

[6] Drumbl p. 366.

century – a period, that is, when not one among the numerous *Quem quaeritis* compositions contained even as many as ten lines of dialogue.

The diptych of St Nicolas plays from Hildesheim introduces us to a genre for which earlier testimonies are lacking – the genre that from the thirteenth century onwards is known as the 'miracle play' (*miraculum*), portraying not episodes from the Old or New Testament but the life and wonders of a saint. Were the Hildesheim plays the very first *miracula*, or must we reckon with earlier experiments in this genre that have not survived? By chance we know through an English testimony that *miracula* were familiar in England already around 1100. In 1119, the *Gesta Abbatum S. Albani* tell us, a monk named Geoffrey was elected Abbot of St Albans. The chronicler relates that, when Abbot Geoffrey had been a young schoolmaster in the nearby town of Dunstable, he had tried to stage a 'play of St Catherine' (*ludus de sancta Katerina*). In order to provide fine costumes for the players, he had borrowed some splendid copes from the monastery. When a fire broke out and the vestments in his care were burnt, Geoffrey offered to make reparation by becoming a monk himself.[7]

It is only through this – precious and quite fortuitous – testimony that we know of the existence of a play of St Catherine in the time of Abbot Geoffrey's youth. Quite possibly plays about saints were not a rarity before 1100, even if their texts were not copied in durable form, on parchment, and hence earlier examples have not survived. At all events the Hildesheim dramatist does not have the air of a 'beginner'. His strophes may appear innocent, yet they are *faux-naïf* rather than simple: there are touches of subtle, humorous complicity with the audience which suggest that this early dramatist has something of the cultivated mock-innocence of the author of *Aucassin et Nicolette*.

He took inspiration from hagiography, and perhaps from a lost earlier tradition of performed *miracula*. But it is also likely that, some important differences notwithstanding, he received a stimulus to his plays from another direction. The Nicolas plays were planned for musical performance in Hildesheim cathedral, though sadly their music is not extant; the verses, composed almost wholly in lyrical strophic forms, could not aspire to the lively freedoms of spoken dialogue. Yet this playwright's themes – the three daughters, and the three students[8]

[7] Rolls Series 28, iv, 173 (a section written by Matthew Paris); cf. R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London 1952), p. 215.
[8] For the plot of the three students, no older source in hagiographic legend has been found. It is not likely, however, to be an entirely free invention of the Hildesheim dramatist (see below p. 56).

– tantalisingly recall themes in the spoken plays of Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim in the later tenth century.[9] Like the three sisters – Agape, Chionia and Hirena – in one of Hrotsvitha's plays, or Sapientia's three daughters in another, the three young people in each of the Nicolas episodes are seen as the potential, or actual, victims of a more brutal world. It is not only the ordeals of the triads of the young and guileless, in the two Hrotsvitha plots and the two Nicolas ones, but the contiguity of comedy and tragedy in the unfolding of those plots, that makes the resemblance striking. In the year 1007 the proudly independent foundation of Gandersheim had been assigned to the diocese of Hildesheim, and since then had owed obedience to its bishop, whose cathedral was only some thirty kilometres away. Hrotsvitha by then was probably no longer alive; moreover, she had never written *lyrical* dialogues, and had written for a court and not a church. Yet that the first dramatist we know of who brought non-biblical episodes into church performances was close to Hrotsvitha in themes and outlook, as well as geographically, must give pause for thought.

A brief indication of the nature of the bilingual play, *The Bridegroom* (*Sponsus*), from Limoges, will reveal a further range of the eleventh century's imaginative possibilities in drama. The manuscript containing the *Sponsus* stems from the end of the century, but one can see that the play is somewhat older: the vernacular verses in it, originally Provençal, have undergone some linguistic remodelling at the hands of the Limousin copyist. Most scholars speak of these vernacular verses as 'glosses' or '*farcitures*' of the Latin text, which they assume must have been the original. But this assumption can and should be questioned. For the Provençal verses have even greater poetic power than the Latin ones, and are never dramatically superfluous or discardable. I do not believe there was ever an original version of this play purely in Latin, which was later amplified by vernacular 'glosses'. Rather, this is the integral conception of a single dramatist, and one who could express himself more tellingly in his own native idiom than in the language of high culture he had assimilated. Besides, I think it was particularly his non-clerical, vernacular audience who had lively experience and expec-

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[9] Cf. my observations in the introduction to *Rosvita, Dialoghi drammatici*, ed. F. Bertini (Milan 1986), pp. xl–xli. The two relevant plays by Hrotsvitha are today generally known as *Dulcitius* and *Sapientia*, but the titles she herself gave them are, respectively, 'The Passion of the Holy Virgins (*Passio sanctarum virginum*) Agape, Chionia and Hirena', and 'The Passion of the Holy Virgins Fides, Spes and Karitas' (cf. *ibid.* pp. xx–xxi). A third play of Hrotsvitha's, *Gallicanus*, mentioned by C. W. Jones (*Liturgy* p. 101), does not, as he claims, 'involve three sisters-german who struggle under threats of a fate worse than death'.

tations of lyrical dialogue: in the same manuscript, for instance, we encounter a delicate Annunciation piece, *Mei amic e mei fiel*, composed wholly in Provençal, in which the strophes of Gabriel's attempts to persuade Mary and those of Mary's replies are formed as a subtle spiritual counterpart to the wooing-dialogues of profane vernacular *pastorelas*.[10] Early vernacular dramatic dialogue, that is, should not always be imagined in a humble role such as that of glossing: it could already achieve much in its own right.

The play of the *Bridegroom* shows a confluence of learned and popular streams. Symbolically the night of the drama is both the night of the Easter vigil and that of the bridal wake in the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins: it is the hour of redemption, but also the hour of the final judgement. The Bridegroom is symbolically both Christ in the Harrowing of Hell and the *Sponsus* in the Song of Songs: he can open the gates of limbo, as of the divine bridal chamber. He does not, as in the gospel parable, come accompanied by a bride: no, each of the ten maidens can become his *Sponsa*. Yet five of them lose this chance through oversleeping: *Dolentas, chaitivas, trop i avem dormit!* – 'We, wretched in our grief, have slept too long!' In this refrain, and in the moving pleas and plaints of these maidens, as in the harsh and ugly replies of their wise sisters – 'Don't bother us any more with your begging . . . you sluggards . . . you shan't get a thing (*no·n auret pont*)' – we perceive a human empathy, indeed partisanship, of the poet for the victimised ones, which surely did not come to him from the side of theology or exegesis, and which lends his interpretation of the parable an unusual dramatic force. Was it really so terrible to sleep too long? How can it be that the Bridegroom does not pardon such a fault? The *Sponsus* dramatist would have understood perfectly the reaction of Margrave Frederick of Thuringia, who in the year 1321 saw the Eisenach play about this parable:

> When he saw and heard that the five Foolish Virgins were barred from eternal life, and that Mary and all the saints interceded for them and this was of no avail . . . then he was beset by doubt and moved to great anger, and said: 'What then is Christian faith, if God will not have mercy on us at the prayers of Mary and of all the saints?' . . . And he was so shattered by his long anger, that for three years he took to his bed.[11]

The dramatist of our bilingual *Sponsus* shapes his material with effortless freedom. He is aware of several exegetic traditions and touches upon them, though without ever committing himself to a particular

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[10] Cf. Dronke 1977, pp. 50 f., 237.
[11] *Deutsche Dichtung des Mittelalters*, ed. M. Curschmann, I. Glier (Munich 1981), III 689 f.; cf. MGH *Scriptores* xxx 1, 448.

exegete; he does not teach, he *shows* the symbolic depths of his theme. He recognises what seems rebarbative in the parable – yet he refuses to gloss it over or (at least overtly) to judge. He stresses all that is humanly unbearable and tragic, and sees no theodicy in the background, that might make it less so; and precisely because of this fearlessness of vision his play is individual and moving.

The fourth of the eleventh-century plays, the Freising *Play of the Star*, shows still another astonishing range of new techniques. These are discussed in some detail in the introductory note to the play (pp. 24–31 below). Among the salient innovations are: the use of a sung prelude, composed so as to be accompanied by mime; the attempt to characterise the protagonists by the way they speak – the disdainful messenger, the impatient, overweening and furious Herod, the sardonic, sinister shield-bearer; the use of classical allusions and citations to bring certain parallels to mind: the Magi arriving as serene and dignified strangers, like Aeneas and his retinue, at a foreign court, or Herod working himself into a rage like Catiline in the Roman Senate; the symbolic superimposition of the present – the revelry of the 'Feast of Fools' of the youngest clergy, the day of the Innocents, December 28 – on the past, Herod's grim massacre of the young boys, the Innocents, in his kingdom; and throughout the play, the alternation of two kinds of language – the one hieratic, the other, freely formed, here often in the guise of rhyming ('leonine') hexameters. It is these last that, along with the classical reminiscences, indicate that such a play must have arisen in, and been first performed for, a highly cultivated milieu. If the Freising play is the culmination of the eleventh-century experiments, a fragment from Metz, copied soon after the year 1000, already shows the dramatist of a Magi play freely creating rhymed hexameters: there, in complete contrast to Freising, these reveal Herod as well as his messengers speaking with perfect courtliness.[12] To cite Drumbl once more, about the oldest versions of the *Play of the Star*:

> The composition with which the history of the theatre in the early Middle Ages takes its beginning shows itself as the product of the *schola*, and we do not know whether it was originally destined for liturgical use. Unexpectedly the study of the diffusion of the *Play of the Star* has taught us that what we can study of medieval theatre is not its origin, but only the moment at which it enters and becomes a part of 'culture'.[13]

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[12] On the dating, see Drumbl p. 293, who also prints the text (from Y II 448).
[13] Drumbl p. 326.

Perhaps we can pursue this suggestion a little further. The towns where the *Play of the Star* is attested naturally had cathedral schools, and one could suppose these plays to be in the first instance the products of such schools. Yet it may also be significant that some among these towns – notably Metz, Regensburg, Freising – had close relations with the *Imperium*, and in particular with the Ottonian dynasty.[14] And it is precisely at the Ottonian court, as we learn for instance from the *Vita* of Bruno of Cologne, brother of Otto the Great, that the plays of Terence were avidly read; it is there, too, that Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim found 'favourers' (*fautores*) for her own – Christian-Terentian – plays. At that same court, Claudia Villa recently showed, three young princesses – Adelheit, Hedwich and Matthilt – set their names at the close of a handsome Terence manuscript (today Oxford Bodley Auct. F. 6. 27), and described themselves as 'well-bred girls' (*curiales adolescentule*).[15] Does not all this prompt the surmise that the Ottonian Renaissance, which fostered Hrotsvitha's dialogues, also lay behind another impulse to unite classical and Christian language – as we see it in the *Stella* plays from the Metz fragment onwards? They may well be viewable in their beginnings as 'co-productions' of some of the major cathedral schools and an exceptionally cultivated imperial court; their first audiences may well have included not only scholars but the Ottonian princes and their entourage.

How, then, did all these dramatic possibilities, that we can richly document in the course of the eleventh century, develop? Rather than risk any new contribution to a general theory of origins, I should like to signal at least a small number of specific testimonies from earlier centuries that to my mind give interesting pointers.

It is among the many great merits of Drumbl's book that he empha-

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[14] Thus for instance, at the very time in which the Metz Magi fragment was copied, the inhabitants of Metz address verses to Henry II, who succeeded Otto III in 1002, and who received his early education from Abraham, Bishop of Freising: Metz implores Henry's help against his brother-in-law, Bishop Thierry I, who had driven out the city's beloved Bishop Adalbero II (*Ursus nobilis*) in 1005. The verses are printed in MGH *Poetae Latini* v 494; cf. R. R. Bezzola, *Les origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en Occident* I (Paris 1958) 269.

The existence of no fewer than eleven Magi plays in eleventh-century MSS indicates that the genre had developed in the previous century. When Otto the Great, in 961, 'celebrated the birth of the Lord in the city of Regensburg', as the contemporary chronicler, Adalbert of Magdeburg, relates (*Quellen zur Geschichte der Sächsischen Kaiserzeit*, ed. A. Bauer, R. Rau, Darmstadt 1977, p. 214), it seems to me altogether possible that he witnessed there a Magi play such as that preserved in fragmentary form in a Regensburg MS of c. 1050 (Y II 445; for the date and the St Emmeram provenance, cf. Drumbl p. 306).

[15] C. Villa, *La 'Lectura Terentii'* I (Padua 1984), Pl. I and pp. 99–120. On Hrotsvitha and the Ottonian court, see esp. *Women Writers*, ch. 3.

sised the importance for the history of medieval drama of an unusual passage in an early commentary on Horace's *Ars poetica*.[16] The manuscript, Vienna 223, is of the eleventh century, but scholars generally assign the commentary itself to the ninth.

In the *Ars poetica* (179–87) we read:

> On the stage, an event is either acted or related. What is taken in by hearing is less vivid to the spectator's mind than what is brought before his trusty eyes, what he can see for himself. Yet you will not put on the stage things that should be done behind the scenes, and you will keep from the spectator's eyes much that an eloquent tongue can readily narrate: don't let Medea slaughter her children before the audience, or let impious Atreus cook human flesh on the open stage, or let Procne be turned into a bird there, or Cadmus into a snake.[17]

The commentator writes:

> Every event is either acted on the stage, by the characters who have been brought on, and also related – as in the case of Herod's banquet (for there we have both: it includes acting as well as relating) – or again, the actors only relate certain events.[18]

This would suggest that the ninth-century commentator was familiar with a dramatic representation of Herod's banquet (*cena Herodis*) that featured both mimetic and narrative moments. (Theoretically we cannot rule out that this passage in the commentary is a later interpolation, nearer the time of the manuscript, but there is no positive reason

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[16] Drumbl pp. 327 f.; cf. also I. Pagani, 'Il teatro in un commento altomedievale ad Orazio', in *Il contributo dei giullari alla drammaturgia italiana delle origini* (Centro di studi sul teatro medievale e rinascimentale, Atti del II Convegno di Studio, Rome 1979), pp. 51–61.

[17]   *Aut agitur res in scaenis aut acta refertur.*
          Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem
          quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quae
          ipse sibi tradit spectator: non tamen intus
          digna geri promes in scaenam, multaque tolles
          ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens;
          ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet,
          aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus,
          aut in avem Procne vertatur, Cadmus in anguem.

[18] Vienna, Öst. Nationalbibl. 223, fol. 7v:

Omnis res aut agitur in scenis, propter personas introductas, et refertur – ut in cena Herodis (nam ibi utrumque: <et agitur et> refertur) – aut acta tantum referunt.

The complete commentary was edited by J. Zechmeister, *Scholia Vindobonensia ad Horatii Artem Poeticam* (Vienna 1877), whose completion for sense (<*et agitur et*> *refertur*) I have adopted above, but whose edition also makes many unwarranted minor departures from the MS.

for supposing this.) I would interpret the allusion to the 'banquet' scene rather differently from Drumbl, who argues that the words *cena Herodis* are simply an orthographic variant of *scena Herodis*: that is, he would see this passage as alluding to Herod's 'scene' – namely, in an earlier milieu, to a scene in a Magi play such as we know from the eleventh century. It seems to me preferable, however, to take the manuscript reading, *cena*, at face value: the allusion in that case must be to a play about Herod's feast, featuring Salome's dance and the beheading of John the Baptist (perhaps it was this action which, with Horatian decorum, was related by an actor and not staged). My reasons for upholding the manuscript reading are: first, in Mark's gospel (6, 21), the day of Salome's dance is explicitly the day that Herod arranges a *cena* for his birthday. Second, it seems to me likely that it was Horace's mention of the grim feast of Atreus, in this very passage, that stimulated the commentator to recalling the equally grim feast of Herod. Third, it appears in a slightly later passage that the Vienna commentator distinguished carefully between *cena* and *scena*:[19] where Horace enjoins (192) that 'a fourth character should not try to intervene by speaking' (*nec quarta loqui persona laboret*), the commentator writes:

> A fourth character should not try to intervene in a single given scene (*scena*). Horace is not, however, denying that many characters may speak in the course of a comedy. But this [i.e. more than three speaking in one scene] may be compared to a banquet of questionable taste (*dubie cene*): for, just as there you hesitate what you would soonest take to eat, so in a sense here [one is bewildered] if there are several changes of the characters. What I call a scene (*scena*) comprises only one change of characters.[20]

Ninth-century art, moreover, includes quite an abundant iconography of Herod's banquet and Salome's dance: the *scena* of this *cena* was not rare in the manuscripts.[21] So it seems to me more probable that

[19] Even if in some passages the Vienna copyist has confused the two words (see the quotation in n.20 below).
[20] Fol. 8r:

Nec laboret quarta persona loqui in <s>cena una simplici. Non tamen negat quin in comedia loquantur multe persone, que comparari potest dubie cene, quia sicut ibi dubitas quid potissimum sumas, ita quodammodo hic cum sint varietates personarum. <S>cenam unam voco unam varietatem personarum.

Here the MS has *cęna* in the first line, *Cęnam* in the last. The copyist's use of *e caudata* is irregular and inconsistent throughout.
[21] Cf. *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* VII (1974) 184. The depiction in the Liuthar Gospels (from Reichenau, *c.* 990) is particularly vivid and brilliant: cf. L. Grodecki, F. Mütherich et al., *Die Zeit der Ottonen* (Munich 1973), Pl.127. There is also a striking decree, by William, Bishop of Orléans, in 867, telling priests, if they attend a banquet, 'not

we have in the Vienna Horace commentary an early testimony to the existence of a Herod-play that was not a Magi play, one different in its plot from any that have come down to us. As with the lost *Ludus de sancta Katerina* that Geoffrey of St Albans directed before becoming a monk, it is a fascinating reminder of how much must have failed to survive, and of how much imaginative effort is needed to in some measure reconstruct the prehistory of medieval Latin drama.

An even more archaic testimony pointing in this direction can be found in a celebrated manuscript, 'The Book of Cerne' (Cambridge Univ. Libr. Ll. i. 10), from the beginning of the ninth century, itself a copy of an eighth-century Northumbrian manuscript.[22] Here, after the Passion and Resurrection chapters from the four gospels, a collection of hymns, prayers and meditations, and the psalms for the liturgical hours, comes a unique composition which appears to have something of drama about it. It is a remarkable representation of the Harrowing of Hell. It is written in fifty-five lines, on three pages; some passages, written wholly in red or beginning in red, which are italicised below, can be interpreted either as moments of explanatory narrative or as stage-directions. I should like to try, by way of an abridged citation, to give some impression of the nature of the piece as a whole. –

> *This is the prayer of the countless crowd of holy ones*
> *who were kept in hell in captivity.*
> *With tearful voice and obsecration they implore the Saviour,*
> *saying, when he descends to the underworld:*
> > You have come, redeemer of the world:
> > you have come, you whom we awaited in longing, day by day,
> > you have come, you whom Law and prophets proclaimed would be here
> > > for us!
> > . . . Release the dead who are hell's prisoners! . . .
>
> *At once, at the Lord's command, all those of old who were just,*
> *. . . their chains unshackled,*
> *clasping the Lord Saviour's knees*
> *in humble supplication, were shouting with ineffable joy:*
> > Lord, you have smashed our chains –
> > in your presence we shall offer a sacrifice of praise . . .
>
> *But Adam and Eve were still not released from their chains.*
> *Then Adam, with mournful and wretched voice, cried out to the Lord saying:*

to let dancing-girls perform disgraceful *ludi* in their presence, in the manner of the daughter of Herodias' (*Nec saltatrices in modum filiae Herodiadis coram se turpes facere ludos permittant*, PL 119, 739).

[22] Cf. most recently D. Dumville, in *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 23 (1972) 374–406. There is a diplomatic text by A. B. Kuypers, *The Book of Cerne* (Cambridge 1902).

Have mercy on me God, have mercy on me in your great mercy . . .
I erred like a sheep that had been lost.
Unshackle my chains, because your hands made me and formed me . . .

Then, as the Lord shows mercy, Adam, unshackled,
clasping the knees of Jesus Christ:
My soul, bless the Lord,
and all my inner being, bless his holy name! . . .

Still Eve persists in her weeping, saying:
You are just, Lord, and your judgement is unswerving,
for I suffer this deservedly,
since, when I was in honour, I did not understand . . .
Do not turn the face of your mercy away from me,
do not, in anger, shun your handmaid![23]

[23] Fols. 98v–99v:
    Hoc est oratio innumerabilis sanctorum populi
    qui tenebantur in inferno captivitate.
    Lacrimabili voce et obsecratione salvatorem deposcunt,
    dicentes, quando ad inferos discendit:

5   Advenisti, redemptor mundi:
       advenisti, quem desiderantes cotidie sperabamus,
       advenisti, quem nobis futurum lex nuntiaverat et prophetae!
       . . . Solve defunctos captivos inferni! . . .

       Statim, iubente domino, omnes antiqui iusti,
10   *. . . resolutis vinculis,*
       domini salvatoris genibus obvoluti
       humili supplicatione, ineffabili gaudio clamantes:
         Disrupisti, domine, vincula nostra:
         tibi sacrificamus hostiam laudis. . .

15   *Adam autem et Eva adhuc non sunt desoluti de vinculis.*
       Tunc Adam lugubri ac miserabili voce clamabat ad dominum dicens:
         Miserere mei, deus, miserere mei in magna misericordia tua . . .
         erravi sicut ovis quae perierat.
         Resolve vincula mea, quia manus tuae fecerunt me et plasmaverunt me . . .

20   *Tunc, domino miserante, Adam e vinculis resolutus,*
       domini Iesu Christi genibus provolutus:
         Benedic, anima mea, dominum,
         et omnia interiora mea, nomen sanctum eius! . . .

       Adhuc Eva persitit in fletu, dicens:
25   Iustus es, domine, et rectum iudicium tuum,
         quia merito haec patior,
         nam ego, cum in honore essem, non intellexi . . .
         Ne avertas faciem misericordiae tuae a me,
         et ne declines in ira ab ancilla tua!

I follow the MS, adding my own line-divisions, line-numbering and punctuation. Lines 9–12 are in black in the MS (these instructions begin in red, a line earlier); similarly 15 is in red but 16, the continuation, in black. At 7, the MS has *lux*; before 22 (in red), *Tunc domino Iesu Christi provolutus.*

This is the last extant line of the Latin text; a later, Anglo-Saxon homily that is cognate with it indicates that there was a 'happy ending' for Eve also.

What was the function of this piece in the eighth century? David Dumville, who last discussed it in some detail, suggested that there are two basic ways of interpreting the red ink that distinguishes the narrative passages from the rest: 'The first is that this gives a clear indication of the part of a narrator in a liturgical work intended for performance by three soloists (narrator, Adam, Eve) and full choir (the *antiqui iusti*). Alternatively, the red-written sections are rubrics or "stage directions" in our earliest surviving example of Christian dramatic literature, written specifically to be acted.'[24]

Whether this text was performed more like an oratorio or more like a religious play of the later centuries is scarcely decidable on the evidence that remains. It seems to me significant, however, that the lines in red, too, are in *rhythmic* prose, like the chorale of the just and the laments of Adam and Eve. So on balance I think it probable that the 'stage-directions' were also sung – that here, as later at the opening of the Freising *Play of the Star*, a narrator had what might be called a directorial function.

Among the extant apocryphal texts about Christ's Harrowing there is none, to my knowledge, in which Adam and Eve must wait till the last and are brought to the brink of despair: in the well-known texts and iconography they are always the first to be released. Again we must reckon with lost traditions – perhaps with oral or popular ones, that were seldom written down.

The final testimony towards the development of medieval Latin drama that I wish to consider is the lyrical dialogue of Rachel, composed probably in the 860s, by the greatest Latin poet of the earlier Middle Ages: Notker the Stammerer, or Notker the Poet († 912),[25] who spent his life at the monastery of St Gall. Unique among the forty sequences[26] in Notker's cycle is the evocative, enigmatic dialogue between Rachel and the voice that tries to console her:

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[24] Dumville (cit. n.22) p.381.

[25] See the outstanding study and edition by W. von den Steinen, *Notker der Dichter und seine geistige Welt* (2 vols., Berne 1948).

[26] The poetic-musical form of *Quid tu, virgo* is that of a classical sequence: apart from the prelude (1) and coda (7), each pair of half-strophes (2a–b, 3a–b...) has an identical syllabic and melodic structure, but one that is distinct from the other pairs. For an edition of the melody, see G. Vecchi, *Poesia latina medievale* (Parma 1958), Pl. iv.

<center>1 Why do you weep,</center>

2a	maiden mother, beautiful Rachel,	2b	whose face gives Jacob delight?
3a	As if your older sister's	3b	bleary-eyedness would attract him!
4a	Mother, dry your streaming eyes!	4b	How do you think your tear-cracked cheeks become you?
5a	'Alas alas alas, why do you accuse me of pouring out my tears in vain,	5b	Since I am bereft of my son, the only one who took care of me in my poverty,
6a	Who would not yield to enemies the paltry plot of ground Jacob acquired for me,	6b	and who would have helped his many blockish brothers whom, sad to say, I bore?'

<center>7   Is he to be mourned, then,
who has conquered heaven's kingdom,
and who with frequent prayers
helps his poor brothers
in God's sight?[27]</center>

[27] London, BL Add. 19768, fols. 18v–19r (old foliation, pp. 30–1):

<center>1   *Quid tu, virgo*</center>

2a	*mater, ploras,* *Rachel formosa,*	2b	*cuius vultus* *Iacob delectat?*
3a	*Ceu sororis anniculæ*	3b	*lippitudo eum iuvet!*
4a	*Terge, mater,* *fluentes oculos!*	4b	*Quam te decent* *genarum rimulæ?*
5a	*Heu, heu, heu,* *quid me incusatis fletus* *incassum fudisse,*	5b	*cum sim orbata* *nato, paupertatem meam* *qui solus curaret,*
6a	*qui non hostibus cederet* *angustos terminos* *quos mihi* *Iacob adquisivit,*	6b	*quique stolidis fratribus,* *quos multos, pro dolor,* *extuli,* *esset profuturus?*

<center>7   *Numquid flendus est iste,*
qui regnum possedit celeste,
quique prece frequenti
m<i>seris fratribus
apud deum auxiliatur?</center>

My text is based on an early MS, copied at the monastery of St Alban at Mainz between 936 and 962 (cf. von den Steinen, *Notker* II 157), taking account of the editions by von den Steinen (II 86) and D. Norberg, *Manuel pratique de latin médiéval* (Paris 1968), pp. 176 f., but with my own punctuation. The Mainz MS has *profuturis* at 6b 4, *mseris* at 7, 4.

Notker's primary allusion, the one familiar to all medieval Christians, is to the close of Matthew's gospel account of the slaughter of the Innocents (2, 17-18): 'Then was fulfilled what was said by the prophet Jeremiah (31, 15): "A voice is heard in Rama, loudly lamenting and keening: it is Rachel lamenting her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."' It was to Notker's dialogic recreation of this moment that two dramatists who portrayed the massacre of the Innocents responded by incorporating his sequence as the climax of their plays. In late-eleventh-century Freising, only a decade or two after the Magi play, an independent 'play of Rachel' (*Ordo Rachelis*) was composed, in which Rachel, emblematically every Jewish mother who lost her child at Herod's command, first sings a *planctus* in rhyming hexameters. Then, the stage directions say (Y II 120), 'A woman comforter (*consolatrix*) shall approach', who sings the first three strophes of Notker's composition. 'At this point', says the next rubric, 'the *consolatrix* shall wipe Rachel's eyes' – that is, as she sings strophe 4. The words 'Then Rachel shall rejoin' introduce Rachel's lament (sts. 5–6), and the play concludes with 'the *consolatrix* approaching her and uttering' the final strophe. In the twelfth-century Fleury playbook, similarly, Notker's words are given their scenic interpretation as the climax of a series of laments in rhymed hexameters. Here Rachel has 'two *consolatrices*' (Y II 112), who 'gather her up as she faints' in her sorrow, later 'lifting the children upright' (*esupinantes infantes*) as they sing the final strophe to comfort her.

The Fleury playwright makes explicit that Rachel is not consoled by what the *consolatrices* say: she 'flings herself on the children', singing: 'My spirit is anxious within me, my spirit is troubled within.' Then, says the rubric, 'the *consolatrices* shall lead Rachel away', and this play concludes with a further scene – the return of the holy family from Egypt.

To convey the whole poetic density of Notker's brief composition would require a full-length essay. He touches lightly upon other ranges of symbolic association: thus for instance 'maiden mother' can suggest both Mary and Ecclesia; Jacob, who looks askance at the bleary-eyed older sister, Leah, preferring the lovely Rachel (cf. Genesis 29), suggests the traditional *figura* of Christ favouring Ecclesia over Synagoga. Moreover, Notker destines his sequence liturgically not for the feast of the Innocents but for general use on feasts of martyrs. What matters to him most is the sense of human waste that hedges the death of any martyr, anyone who is young and brave and not like his 'blockish brothers'. Unlike the later dramatists, Notker does not introduce a

consolatrix: the voice that tries to comfort Rachel is deliberately not identified. Nor are we given any hint as to whether Rachel is consoled by the voice's final intimation, that her child – the martyr – has reached heaven and can help mankind from there. On the contrary, each of the three segments of dialogue – the attempted consolation, Rachel's lament, the reply – is left open-ended: each ends not in an affirmation but a question. Notker has juxtaposed two conflicting ways of looking, two convictions that he does not try to reconcile. In his sequence, as in the play of the *Bridegroom*, we reach the borders of tragedy: we are left with the sense of a human, or divine, injustice that no theodicy can make palatable.

We know how Notker's lyrical dialogue was performed dramatically in eleventh-century Freising and twelfth-century Fleury; we do not know how it was first performed, at St Gall in the 860s. We may conjecture that there were two soloists, and that they sang the melancholy music unaccompanied. That they enacted two rôles, with gesture and mime, is not demonstrable and perhaps not even probable. Yet that this lyrical dialogue – alone, without the setting of an *Ordo Rachelis* – was not only a masterpiece in itself but a signpost to some of the profoundest possibilities in medieval drama, seems to me beyond doubt.

The evidence both of the eleventh-century plays and of the earlier testimonies is so many-sided that I believe it should rule out any monolithic answer to the question of the beginnings of medieval Latin drama. Even if one can still (all too often) hear the quasi-mechanical repetition of answers according to which, for instance, everything dramatic grows out of the liturgy, or every dialogue grows out of the *Quem quaeritis* tropes, does not the complexity and variety of the surviving early texts demand something less simple-minded, something pluralistic, by way of explanation? Not one of the texts mentioned till now can be seen as having developed out of a trope of the *Quem quaeritis* kind. That some of the texts were composed in a liturgical context is clear. It is evident in the case of Notker's *Rachel* sequence, and highly probable in that of the *Harrowing of Hell* in the Book of Cerne. Here, however, we perceive not only a piece destined for performance in church,[28] presumably during the Easter vigil, but also a human

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[28] Clifford Flanigan's claims (in *Literary and Historical Perspectives of the Middle Ages*, ed. P. W. Cummins et al., Morgantown 1982, p. 231) – that the texts in the Book of Cerne constitute 'a collection of private devotions', and that the Harrowing of Hell composition 'presupposes no music' – are not supported by any evidence. The notion that the Harrowing of Hell piece was read and used simply as a private prayer would be hard to make plausible.

element, an empathy with the despairing Eve, which, like that of the *Sponsus* playwright with the Foolish Virgins, can have owed little to official theology; perhaps it owed something to lost popular-apocryphal traditions, perhaps it was the product of one unusual author's creative imagination.

Alongside these impulses, we have noted those from the world of popular hagiographic legend (for the Nicolas plays) and from the classicising, scholastic world (for the *Play of the Star*). Even if this latter world helps to account only for certain subsidiary aspects of the religious drama and its language, the guiding presences of Vergil and Sallust, Terence and Horace should not be altogether forgotten.

That I have here stressed the poetic and dramatic variety discernible in eleventh-century plays does not in any way imply that the twelfth-century dramatists were less inventive than their predecessors. In the diptych of Resurrection plays from Vic (v–vi), for instance, we can see particularly clearly the distinction between the words *in illo tempore*, of biblical or liturgical provenance, and the far longer passages where the dramatist's imagination runs free. It is he who creates the figure of the Merchant, and his conversation with the three Maries who come to visit him, as well as a long lyrical dialogue, in virtuoso form, between Mary Magdalen and an Angel; it is he who likewise recreates Mary Magdalen's failure to recognise the risen Christ in terms of a moment in the Song of Songs, to which he gives new lyrical form. After 87 verses that have no earlier parallel, this dramatist inserts the archaic exchanges of the trope *Quem quaeritis*; and into his unparalleled recognition-scene he inserts words from John's gospel. There is no way that his dramatic inventions can be derived from his traditional material. It is a juxtaposition of wholly diverse kinds of language and techniques, and a perfect illustration of how the large dramatic parts are, in Drumbl's expression, 'alien' to the brief liturgical–biblical ones.

A still more far-reaching creative freedom marks Hildegard of Bingen's *Play of the Virtues* (viii, *c.* 1150). Her scenario is not tied to any biblical or hagiographic plot: it is freshly improvised, even if with some cognisance of Prudentius' poem depicting the battle of virtues and vices, his *Psychomachia* (*c.* 400). Yet where Prudentius' plot is didactically predictable, Hildegard's holds surprises till the close. At the same time she creates a wholly individual poetic and musical style, the concentrated language fusing allegory, figura and symbolism, and each melodic pattern expressing a distinct range of emotions.

The two other twelfth-century plays in the volume – the Beauvais *Play of Daniel* (vii, *c.* 1140) and the *Passion Play* from the Codex Buranus