

**THE RIME TECHNIQUE IN THE POEMS OF
REINMAR VON ZWETER: A THESIS,
PRESENTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF CORNELL UNIVERSITY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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The Rime Technique in the Poems of Reinmar Von Zweter: a Thesis, presented to the faculty of the graduate school of Cornell University for the degree of doctor of philosophy by Louis E. Wolferz

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Konrad Zwierzina has made exhaustive investigations of the material of the Middle High German epic writers, the very valuable and fruitful results of which are to be found in Haupt's *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* vols. 44 and 45, entitled "Mittelhochdeutsche Studien," and also in *Abhandlungen zur germanischen Philologie Festschrift für Richard Heinzel*, Halle 1898, entitled "Beobachtungen zum Reimgebrauch Hartmanns und Wolframs." These are studies of the rimes based upon a great mass of material in the form of rime dictionaries of nearly all the Middle High German epics.

It is well known that the scribes and copyists of the ancient manuscripts had no misgivings about making changes in the text to suit their own vocabulary or dialectic usage, and these changes could easily be made without affecting the text provided the word was in the verse, but in rime such changes were much more difficult, if not impossible, because then both members of the rime pair required changing and frequently one or both of the verses needed recasting. For this reason the rimes have come down to us quite intact and furnish a more reliable criterion of the author's original diction than any of the rest of the text. A rime investigation leads us into the workshop of the author, as it were, and we observe him at his work. We note his peculiarities, his special preferences, the influence of his dialect, the development of his rime technique.

That Zwierzina's studies are based upon the rimes lends so much more weight to his conclusions. His method is to compare the rimes of two writers e.g. in the "Beobachtungen", or of two groups of writers as the Austrian-Bavarian and the Middle German in the "Studien", or of individuals in their different works, tracing throughout the use of a given word or grammatical form, e.g. the adverb *sân* which Wolfram uses 86 times in the first half of *Parzival*, an average of 1:150, is used only five times in the second half, an average of 1:2370. Zwierzina's conclusion is that Wolfram deliberately avoided it from book VIII on, because it came to his notice that his readers considered it dialectic. If several hundred opportunities to rime *gân*, *stân* with other *-ân*

forms are left unused, the conclusion is that Wolfram's forms were *gên, stên, gêt, stêt*, for both words are among the most frequently used wherever they are not purposely avoided. Other most common words are *kam, kâmen, kaeme, kaemen*. They are frequent in Hartmann but seem to have been strange to Wolfram's dialect.

Various details of rime technique such as the avoidance of doubtful or dialectic or double forms, when traced through Hartmann's epics are found to attain their highest development in Iwein and are at their lowest in Erstes Büchlein and Erec. The correctness of Lachmann's chronology of the epics of Hartmann: Erstes Büchlein, Erec, Gregorious, Armer Heinrich, Iwein seems thereby conclusively confirmed. The evident desire of an author—especially Hartmann in Iwein—to avoid riming doubtful or double forms, and, where such a form cannot be altogether avoided, to restrict it to use within the verse, lends considerable support to the theory that there was in Middle High German times an ideal literary language, free from all dialectic peculiarities, toward which authors strove, though they never succeeded in freeing their diction from all dialectic peculiarities. Rimes that might offend the ears of anyone using another dialect were avoided out of a desire to make the work popular with the widest possible circle of readers. Using a word in the verse avoided offense because everyone could change to suit his own tastes, but in rime it was quite inflexible. Zwierzina is enabled by the quantity of material at his disposal to distinguish between dialects in their use of certain rimes, e.g. the riming together of the different quantities and qualities of the *e*. He examines the so-called irregular and exceptional cases and establishes beyond question that they can all be explained by certain rules which he sets forth. So, too, he finds that the dialects distinguish very carefully between the old *ei* contracted from *-ege-* and the *ei* contracted from *-age-*. In other cases he is able to show that usage depends not on dialectic influence but merely on the author's personal preference.

The following rime studies are the result of an attempt to apply to the lyric writers the method which Zwierzina applies to the epic writers with such success, and were suggested by Prof. Strauch of Halle University. The great wealth of material from which Zwierzina draws his conclusions is not at hand in the lyric field and it would be most venturesome to draw equally far reaching conclusions. In material of limited extent the absence of examples may indicate nothing at all and the presence of one or two may depend wholly on chance. But even a limited number of examples can bear indications of importance, above all when they can be interpreted in the light of such well-established principles as those of Zwierzina.

In most cases, therefore, Zwierzina's results have been accepted and the examples have been interpreted by them. This course is justified by the fact that Paul and Michels have incorporated these same results in the latest editions of their Middle High German grammars. Although an investigation of this kind ought to include the whole field of lyric poetry, it has been necessary to confine these studies to a few authors only. Reinmar von Hagenau, Walther von der Vogelweide, and Reinmar von Zweter have been chosen because of the amount of material they offer and especially because their works are available in admirable critical editions. It is the purpose of these studies to investigate especially Reinmar von Zweter (RvZ) of whose poems Roethe's splendid critical edition (Leipzig 1887) furnishes a most reliable working basis. For Walther examples are cited according to Lachmann (seventh edition) prepared by C. v. Kraus, Berlin 1907, and for Reinmar von Hagenau (RvH) according to Vogt's revision of *Minnesangs Frühling* (second edition) 1914. Rime dictionaries of RvH and RvZ have been prepared and furnish the basis for the investigations. For Walther, Hornig's *Glossar, Quedlinburg 1844*, has been used.*

There are many interesting problems connected with the life and writings of RvZ. Roethe's exhaustive studies have cleared up many of them, but some still remain and perhaps always will remain unsolved. It is hoped that these studies will throw additional light from a new direction on some of these problems.

Of the author's life we know extremely little. 150,1 f. he says of himself:

von Rine sô bin ich geboren
in Ôsterreich erwahsen, Bêheim hân ich mir erkorn

When he was born, when he went to Austria, and when he chose Bohemia as his residence, we have no precise means of telling, but the political stanzas which he has written, and which can be dated have been used as a basis of reckoning. Thus we obtain the probable time of his birth, between 1195 and 1205, by counting back from the earliest datable stanza, 125, which refers to the election of Pope Gregory IX. The style and tone of the stanza indicate that Reinmar was no mere youth in November 1227. The question as to just where along the Rhine Reinmar was born has been finally settled by Roethe who locates a family von Zeutern in a village between Heidelberg and Bruchsal (nearer Bruchsal), which exists to-day as Zeuthern. The records of the nearby monastery of Lorsch prove the existence of the family from 1313 on, but the village is much older and without doubt the

* By permission the rime dictionary of RvZ has been omitted but will appear later.

family also. Von der Hagen in his *Minnesinger*, Leipzig 1838, (HMS IV 138a) gave support to an earlier theory which made RvH and RvZ father and son, and being unable to locate a von Zweter family along the Rhine, he connected Reinmar with the Kuenring family at Zwetel in Austria. Reinmar von Hagenau, he claimed, was not from Hagenau in Alsacia, but from a place by that name along the Danube in Austria.

"in Österriche erwachsen" has been interpreted by all critics to mean that Reinmar was still a boy when he left his home by the Rhine to go to Austria, and it is difficult to read any other meaning into these words if we accept them at all. The context in which they stand, which the studies of critics have always found accurate, establishes their reliability. He accompanied his father, RvH, according to v.d.Hagen. Meyer ("Untersuchungen über das Leben Reinmars von Zweter und Bruder Wernhers," Basel 1866, page 7) thinks he was a boy or at most a youth and may have been attracted thither by the presence of the many renowned singers at Vienna. The influence of Walther is evident but Meyer does not think personal contact with the great master necessarily certain. Roethe claims he was so young that no peculiarities of his home dialect appear in his earliest poems, but that they are written in the language of the MGG classicists as it was used by Walther himself. Wilmanns (*Chronologie der Sprüche Reinmars von Zweter*, Z.f.d.A. 13,434 ff.) considers Austria the place of RvZ's first productions. We shall have occasion to examine these early poems and also to compare their language with Walther's. They ought to present especially few dialectic peculiarities and, if any, then such as point to Austria. Certainly a problem would be raised by the presence of Middle German characteristics in these early stanzas, not only in view of the above assumptions, but also because RvZ's poetry was poetry of occasion, composed for Austrian hearers whose ears would be offended by MG rimes.

From the context of his poems we gather that RvZ was a very serious-minded earnest man, inclining in certain respects almost to pedantry; that he had sincere convictions of right and wrong and gave them very plain expression, on occasion even before the Emperor or the Pope. Quite the reverse was the nature of Friederich der Streitbare, who succeeded his father Leopold VII as Duke of Austria in 1230. He had no use for RvZ's serious style and neglected and ignored him for such a writer as Neidhart. Under such conditions RvZ's position at the court of Vienna soon grew intolerable. But the opportunity for a change came in 1234 when on May 1 the wedding of Friederich's sister was celebrated with great pomp, and brought to Vienna a great company of noble guests, among them King Wenzel of Bohemia. During his stay at Vienna, Wenzel can have been approached by Reinmar with the request for a place at the court of Prague. Roethe

suggests that RvZ actually accompanied Wenzel to Bohemia when he returned home from the wedding. Wilmanns sets the date of this departure from Austria at 1236, but aside from the fact that Wenzel and Friederich were then at war, the context and order of the stanzas datable as of that period make the earlier date more probable.

Whatever hopes RvZ entertained of a happier existence at Prague than his last years at Vienna had afforded him were doomed to disappointment. The Bohemian Czechs were jealous of the favor shown the German poet and made their resentment most evident to him. He had no friend at court but the king, who was very frequently absent. The last of the political stanzas referring to Bohemia dates from the close of 1240, and RvZ must have left Prague soon after that. Nowhere does the approach of the Mongols in 1241 receive any mention and it is more than improbable that this event which caused Bohemia to tremble to its foundations would have been ignored had RvZ been in Bohemia at the time.

From his departure from Prague on, it becomes difficult to follow the author's movements. He appears at many different courts, perhaps first at Meissen and later in his own land along the Rhine principally at the court of the Archbishop of Mayence. The latest datable stanza is of 1248, but he must have lived a number of years beyond that. The date of his death is about 1260. Luppold Hornburg of Rothenburg, in a poem in praise of Reinmar says he lies buried in Essfeld in Franconia. What took him to that obscure place cannot be determined. Roethe suggests that he died there while on a journey. Although no trace of the grave is to be found, Hornburg's information is probably correct because it is coupled with the indication of Walther's burial place as at Würzburg, and this is generally accepted.

Of the many mss. in which RvZ's poems have been preserved, D, the Heidelberger ms. no. 350, and C, the Paris ms., are the most important. The bulk of the stanzas in D are 1-157 of Roethe's text, carefully arranged in groups according to subject matter, to which are added 158-193 (excepting 187) not so arranged. Ms. C is made up of an excerpt from stanzas 1-157 (but independent of D) which was later amplified from other sources. Because of this careful arrangement the order of ms. D has been followed by v.d.Hagen as well as Roethe in their editions of RvZ.

Critics from the beginning have turned their attention especially to the group of political stanzas in an endeavor to connect them with definite historical events. What v.d.Hagen undertook in his *Minnesinger* in 1838, Meyer carried forward in his "Untersuchungen" in 1866. Wilmanns, who had been working independently of Meyer on the same problem, and had found many