

The Old English Epic of *Waldere*



The Old English Epic of *Waldere*

Edited and Translated with an Introduction by

Jonathan B. Himes

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P U B L I S H I N G

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*Se ðe him to ðam halgan helpe gelifeð,
to Gode gioce, he þær gearo findeð.*

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Wasigenstein, a ruined castle in the Vosges associated with Walter legends

PREFACE

This book attempts to elucidate how Anglo-Saxons handled legends from the Heroic Age in their own poetic mode as seen in the *Waldere* fragments. The extensive introductory sections are meant to equip both scholar and ordinary reader with a sufficient background for approaching the fragmentary epic in the critical edition presented here, though some sections will be of greater use or interest than others to various audiences: specialists will want to consult the manuscript description and orthographic analysis of unusual forms (Section 2.1) as well as the metrical analysis of the verses (Appendix B), while literary readers of medieval epic will find Section 3 on the heroic themes and Appendix A on the weapons to be enlightening (though fresh insights and new arguments ought to interest experts here, too). Although I have not normalized the text toward the West Saxon dialect in this book, deviations from that OE standard are noted, especially throughout the first section, to acquaint readers with the differences (such an approach is instructive to students in how heterogeneous the language could often be in this era). The whole of Section 4 on the heroic voices should prove useful to all readers for accurate interpretation of *Waldere*.

Many scholars have accepted certain interpretations based on emendations by early editors who did not have the benefit of ultra-violet light (Holthausen) or did not examine the manuscript at all but relied on the facsimiles of others (Norman). Arne Zettersten's 1979 edition was the first to offer ultraviolet facsimiles and transcription, but too many textual *crucis* remained doubtful or supposedly illegible. Thus I have analyzed the fragments first-hand to see more of what the first audience saw on the parchment, as well as landmark editions such as the first by George Stephens, containing artfully contrived "photographic" renderings, and Holthausen's, containing actual photographic facsimiles from 1899. The trail of emendations produced by these editions for the fragments' troublesome script is reflected in the copious notes to my own edited *Waldere* text.

This edition provides both an accurate description of the manuscript and tools for tracing its interpretations historically. Several of the prior edited texts of *Waldere* contain emendations that need reassessment, especially since "an editorial incursion, repeated enough over the decades,

has become canonical and authoritative thereby; that is, there is a craft respect among editors that trumps their regard of scribes' doings" (Doane 75). *Waldere* has thus been mediated to us by multiple modern editions—sources that may be sifted for the “best” reading while turning once more to the original manuscript as the final word on orthography and versification. In this study I attempt to recover the original words and letters, restoring the forms committed to parchment long before editors perpetuated variant readings, and emend only where the scribe has self-corrected or where the manuscript remains illegible. Throughout this Introduction, I attempt to discern the cultural perspectives that Anglo-Saxons (and near neighbors familiar with their vernacular) read into this early heroic epic. Because of this policy, the present edition answers the call of Michael Lapidge for Old English editors to “conserve the transmitted text when it is sound” but “to emend when it is not” (67).

The whole introduction is written to be intelligible to ordinary readers that they might deepen their appreciation for Old English poetry. This I believe also fulfills Helmut Gneuss's plea (1998) for a “pragmatic approach to the editing of Old English texts” that “gives us scholarly and yet readable editions . . . and emends (in a clearly marked form) where this seems appropriate,” providing for the “needs and interests of the literary reader as well as those of the historical linguist” (135). Starting with my attempts to present the state of the text with precision, this introduction grows progressively more invested with my own conclusions in the sections on poetry and contending heroic voices, culminating in my translation at the end of the edition proper.

Before proceeding, a word on the fine interior illustrations is in order: Brent D. Himes has adapted a few bellicose figures from the following Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in ways that resonate more closely with the themes explored in this critical edition: the OE *Hexateuch* (MS Cotton Claudius B. iv), pp. 2, 71, 77, 118; Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, pp. 54, 95; the *Utrecht Psalter*, p. 96. Similarly, the image on p. 36 is drawn from a seventh-century Lombardic crown detail, “The Triumph of Agilulf,” the first depiction of a Germanic king enthroned. (I thank Steven Lowe for locating some of these images.) Alterations made to these illustrations, and any resulting infelicities, are entirely the author's doing. The frontispiece is taken from a German guidebook to historical costume by Braun and Schneider. Photographs are by the author unless labeled otherwise.

I also wish to preface this book with my profound thanks to all of the following people who made this research possible. I would like to thank first of all Dr. Robert Boenig, a fine medievalist and mentor who guided much of my initial research, for his encouragement and constant support.

My sincerest thanks go to the Royal Library at Copenhagen, especially Senior Researcher Dr. Erik Petersen (Manuscript Department) and Head of the Photographic Studio Karsten Bundgaard for allowing me to view and obtain photographs of the *Waldere* fragments.

I am deeply indebted to the English Department at Texas A&M University and the Melburn G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research for providing the funding for my research in Scandinavia.

I also greatly appreciate the feedback of Clive Tolley, Tom Shippey, Thomas Bredehoft, and Geoffrey Russom, all of whom offered their advice when I consulted them, a generosity which strengthened my arguments, led me to consider further issues, and emboldened my interpretive stance. For any inaccuracies that may have crept in, I alone am responsible.

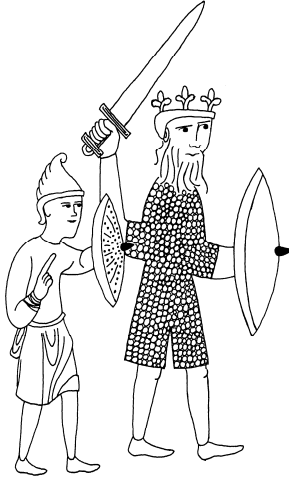
A word of heartfelt gratitude goes to my colleagues, administrators, and friends at John Brown University not only for providing Shipp's Scholars Grants and other funds for the rewriting and expansion of my former work on *Waldere*, but for cultivating a great climate of intellectual and spiritual growth. To my undergraduate students in Medieval Literature and also the Anglo-Saxon language lab who heard a lot about *Waldere*, I am grateful for opportunities to read and recite Old English passages as well as my translations. Thanks also go to my research assistant Mark Royes for once again helping with the front matter, the bibliography, and the formatting; to Simone Schroder for ordering numerous interlibrary materials; to Neal Holland and Jeremiah Proctor for improving the resolution of various images; and to Lee Schrader especially for helping me scan transparencies of all four *Waldere* fragments.

Finally, I thank my parents Glenn and Jean Himes for their encouragement and example; my brother Brent for lending his artistry to this venture and for sharing a common vision; my friends Justin Tedesco and Geoff Malone for fresh ideas and inspiration; and of course, my wife and best friend Amanda for long walks, for tall mugs of evening tea, for exploring the Vosges with me in search of Wasigenstein and other castle ruins (as did on a separate trip her brother Ross, whom I should likewise thank), and for her invaluable feedback and constant compassion. I had also better thank in advance our wee ones Logan and Audrey for all the tales of heroes they will hear as they grow beyond their cradles.

Most of all, thanks to *God Ælmihtig*.

PART I

INTRODUCTION



*Guðhere . . . ðas beaduwe ongan
mid unryhte ærest secan*

1. OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT AND LEGEND

The *Waldere* text has been somewhat neglected by later twentieth-century scholars because, eclipsed by *Beowulf*, its sixty lines offer only a glimpse of ancient Germanic legend. The fragments present a challenge to scholars not only for their brevity, but also because the heroic allusions in the text are obscured by the scuffed vellum and its vexing orthography. Despite the problematic textual features, *Waldere* offers a great deal of insight into the Anglo-Saxon conception of heroism. These epic fragments yield some of the earliest lore concerning migration-period heroes such as Attila the Hun, Theodoric the Ostrogoth, Walter son of Ælfhere, and Gunther and Hagen of the Nibelungs,¹ while at the same time expressing political concerns that the viking-age poet shared with his audience. Imagery and themes such as armaments and the worthiness of warriors to bear them point to the climax of Walter's victory over Guðhere in single combat, a duel presenting an ethical dilemma for Hagen as indicated in both of the extant leaves. Other emphases point toward plot elements of the full epic: at least four references to Walter's hand or grasp in the fragments recall the title of Ekkehard's school exercise, *Waltharii Manufortis*, "Walter of the Strong Hand," suggesting an injury of great irony in the early vernacular poem analogous to the duel's outcome in *Waltharius*.² We can tell from the leisurely, expansive epic style of *Waldere*—as well as its numerous allusions to the sort of episodes and scenes in *Waltharius* and other continental analogues—that the full poem had epic proportions of both style and breadth of content.

¹ The names of these legendary figures will be anglicized, though in comparing analogues I give the forms found in their respective texts in order to keep their roles in each text distinct. The form *Walter* will be used in general, especially to differentiate the name of the OE protagonist from the title *Waldere*.

² Ekkehart IV of St. Gall claimed to have revised the school exercise of his predecessor Ekkehart I, a poem called *Waltharii Manufortis*. Whatever text he may have been referring to, it cannot conclusively be proven to have connections with *Waltharius*, which has a prologue signed by a monk named Geraldus. (See also n.10, p. 47)

1.1 Provenance and Date of the Manuscript

The Old English *Waldere* epic is based on ancient legends that circulated as oral poetry for centuries before passing into the Anglo-Saxon community where it was recorded. The two surviving leaves comprising *Waldere* were discovered among loose bundles of medieval sermons in the Royal Library of Copenhagen in 1860, bearing weather marks, creases, and signs of their use as a book cover. Though its date and point of origin cannot be identified with precision, the manuscript appears to be a late tenth- to early eleventh-century document, containing a script derivative of Anglo-Saxon miniscule and scrollwork of Danish style. The unusually high proportion of revisions, variants, and spelling irregularities suggests that this text was not smoothed over into the West Saxon *koiné* or even copied by an accomplished Anglo-Saxon scribe. The matter and style of the whole manuscript has suggested to past scholars that it is the product of Anglo-Danish culture, but the evidence throughout this introduction, especially in Section 2, extends the provenance to an Anglo-Frankish milieu.

1.2 The Walter Legend

The *Waldere* fragments are important as the earliest surviving epic material treating of Walter, Theodoric, Attila, and other heroes of migration-period Europe who were celebrated in song from the fifth to eleventh centuries. *Waldere* does for Gothic tribes what *Beowulf* did for Scandinavians in the Anglo-Saxon literary mold—preserve popular tales associated with legendary heroes of the dim and remote historical past. The Old English epic accurately presents Guðhere as a lord of Burgundy in the wide-ranging adventures set in post-Roman Europe. The poet is not thinking in precise terms, however, about the historical periods of barbarian kings like Ermanaric, Theodoric, and Attila: though their actual deaths occurred at intervals of roughly seventy-five years, for a long while they had been presented as contemporaries in oral tradition.

Various legends relate that as fellow hostages at the court of Attila, Walter and Hagen received martial training in their youth so that they could be of service in his regiments. In *Waldere* FI.18, the line *Ac ðu symle furðor feohtan sohtest* serves as a transition to the Hunnish battles which Walter led on behalf of Attila after his training.³ *Waltharius*

³ The speaker's segue to military encounters experienced together in the past is reinforced by one of the only capitalized words in the MS, the conjunction *Ac*.

corroborates this information in lines 100-106, relating how Attila personally trained both boys until they surpassed the Huns in skill and he made them his captains. The speaker of *Waldere's* first fragment recalls how fiercely (*fýrenlice*) Walter fought during their time over the border (*mæl ofer mearce*) as the pointman (*ordwyga*) of Attila's forces in foreign lands (*ætstealle oðres monnes*), according to his battle plans (*wigrædenne*).

Although Attila showed preferential treatment to them, Walter and Hagen's prior loyalties to their respective Germanic tribes could still be roused. Hagen and Walter both leave Hunland to rejoin their former peoples, and in the Walter analogues, both warriors depart with treasure for them. The unreasoning hostility Walter later endures while passing through the Burgundians' neighboring territory leads to Hagen's conflicted loyalty to his former chieftain. In *Waldere*, Hagen switches sides because of Guðhere's ignoble ambush of a lone traveler that forces Walter to defend the tribute of his people against a competing Germanic lord and his henchmen. The animus against the young Burgundian king is certainly greater than any hinted at for the Hunnish overlord Attila.

Early Germanic peoples retained a folk memory of the devastating defeats of early Gothic chieftains such as Ermanaric and Gundaharius at the hands of the Huns, and in a later generation of poets, Attila was credited with the victories over these Goths, having gained so much notoriety over the centuries. In an age where the primary medium of reportage was encomium for the victorious and eulogy for the dead, the embellishment of court poets was expected by audiences moved by the pathos of concentrated lays. The exploits of these chieftains thus accrued archetypal elements of heroism suitable for inspiring the military elite. As centuries passed, the legend took on more coloring of the later Germanic warrior aristocracy of the periods in which it was recited.

Anglo-Saxons would certainly have had an interest in tales of rivalry among Germanic tribes in which refugees were sent to the court of a neighboring king. Such were the political realities known from the Migration Period of the fifth to sixth centuries (when the poem was to have taken place) up into the viking era of the ninth to eleventh centuries (when *Waldere* was penned): Egbert of Wessex found shelter in Francia under Charlemagne; Edward the ætheling, son of Edmund Ironside, grew up in Hungary; Anglian King Rædwald protected Edwin of Northumbria instead of killing him; King Æthelstan received young Hákon the Good from Norway; and in poetic tradition, Hrothgar sheltered Ecgtheow, and Heardred sheltered Eadgils and Eanmund, in *Beowulf*.

Equally relevant in the Viking Period would be the tribute sent to Attila and Walter's offer of gold rings and heirlooms to keep his enemy at

bay. Throughout the fragments, lofty speeches concentrate on arms and treasure of the kind archaeologists have excavated from lavish graves of northern princes. Few other Old English poetic texts put as much emphasis on military accoutrements as *Waldere* proportionally does: Walter boasts not only the unspoilt mail-coat of his father Ælfhere, but also Weland's work Mimming. It is in fact remarkable how closely Walter's flight from Hunland to Aquitaine with such treasured heirlooms reflects the actual conveyance of material goods from Attila's realm toward the West during the fifth and sixth centuries. Eighth-century Franks and Anglo-Saxons alike appreciated Hunnish-style treasures around the time epics like *Waldere* and *Beowulf* were being composed in England. In one famous royal exchange involving all three ethnic groups (Franks, Anglo-Saxons, and Huns), Charlemagne sent an Avar gift-sword to Offa after having plundered the vaults of the Huns during his campaigns. Of course, this audience would sympathize, too, with Walter's unbridled aggression once provoked by an unethical band of marauders who outnumbered him.

The *Walter legend* referred to in this introduction concerns the central characters involved in the plot of the hero's escape from Hunland as well as the Frankish attacks on Walter in the mountains, as extrapolated from the following texts: the Latin-hexameter *Waltharius* and its extracts in the Italian *Chronicon Novaliciense*, the Old Norse *Þiðreks saga*, and the Middle High German *Walther* fragments. A few significant details of Walter's exploits are mentioned also in *The Nibelungenlied*. The Polish version *Wdaly Walcerz* (*Walterus Robustus*), however, borrows only the names of the hero and his consort for a tale of elopement gone wrong—Walterus kills his betrothed after she marries a rival—although like *Waltharius* and *Þiðreks saga*, it may preserve a detail from an early Germanic lay, the troublesome river crossing. The closest surviving analogue to the Old English poem in terms of basic plot elements is the Latin *Waltharius*, whose manuscript appears one hundred years later and is closer to classical conventions of Latin epic in its tone and treatment than to the Germanic tradition of heroic poetry.

The plot of *Waltharius* provides the only full treatment of the Walter legend now extant, and as it overlaps with *Waldere* on several points, a summary of the Latin version may help to contextualize the OE fragments.

Attila has subjugated various Germanic peoples, demanding tribute and hostages. Guntharius (henceforth, Gunther), the Frankish prince, is too young to be sent and so his liegeman Hagano (Hagen) goes instead. The Burgundians surrender Hildegund as hostage, while the Aquitanians send her betrothed, Waltharius. In Hunland these refugees receive a royal

welcome, the boys learning martial arts under Attila and the girl how to oversee the estate under his queen, Ospin. Walthari (hereafter, Walter) and Hagen lead Attila's forces in skirmishes with rebellious tribes until the Franks stop sending tribute, inciting Hagen to return to his homeland. Walter and Hildegund also conspire to escape during the Huns' drunken revelry following one of Walter's successful battles. Absconding with two treasure-laden horses and provisions for the journey, the couple set out for Aquitaine. When they cross the Rhine, the clink of gems against gold in their chests arouses the suspicions of the ferryman, who alerts Gunther to their presence. At once the young king marshalls twelve retainers, including the reluctant Hagen, in his greed to intercept so much Hunnish gold passing through his territory.

By this time, Walter and Hildegund have taken refuge in a sheltered gorge of the wild Vosges mountains; this narrow defile proves to be a tactical advantage for Walter when the Franks arrive, permitting only one assailant at a time to approach on horseback. After Walter tries to appease Gunther with two offers of gold rings, the setpiece of the poem commences with a series of single combats in which the henchmen attack with a weapon or strategy of their own expertise. Walter dispatches every opponent to a man with his spear, beheading them with swords and taunting the others between bouts. When his nephew Patavrid joins the slain, the conflicted Hagen eventually is roused to aid Gunther against his old comrade, but not before three others work in concert with a tethered trident, failing in the attempt to pull Walter's shield away and leave him unprotected. Gunther and Hagen, the only two Franks left standing, now feign a retreat to Worms. While Walter sleeps, Hildegund stands guard, singing to stay awake, until morning when the couple emerge from their wilderness lair.

Before they get very far, the princess spies the two Franks in another ambush that results in the epic's climax. After the battle has raged for hours, Walter hurls his spear at Hagen, ripping part of his byrnie, and unsheathes his sword. In the combat, he slices off Gunther's leg up to the thigh, but before he delivers the *coup de grace*, Hagen interposes his helmet, shattering Walter's sword. As Walter curses the hilt and slings it away, Hagen lops off his outstretched hand. Undaunted, the Aquitanian slips the stump into his shield and draws his Hunnish dagger with his left hand, slashing out Hagen's right eye and six teeth. This, the poet says, was their share of Attila's gold. The three combatants call it even and rest while Hildegund binds their wounds and serves them wine. After trading some jibes about each other's mutilations, Hagen and Walter part

amicably, leading their respective companions home. In Aquitaine, Walter marries Hildegund and reigns for thirty years.

The Norse episode of Walter within *Þiðreks saga* resembles the plot of *Waltharius*, including eleven slain combatants, culminating in a night ambush which costs him an eye. The differences, however, are many: Hogni (Hagen), sent by Attila, leads the ambush instead of Gunther; the fights are not single combats, nor are they set in the Vosges defile (Walter's epithet "Waskenstein" here refers to his homeland). The Middle High German Graz and Vienna fragments of *Walther* ballads ostensibly draw upon early Germanic legends to create romance, but the characters and mythic allusions known from the Old English *Waldere* are not treated as epic again until the *Nibelungenlied*, AD 1200. In that poem and associated Middle High German romances, Walther of Spain is renowned for his fights set in Waskenstein.

Old English *Waldere* is thus one of several variants of the Walter legend that proliferated as it was retold from the Migration Period up into the Viking Period. In relation to *Waltharius* these fragments would fall roughly between the scene where three foes beset Walter with the three-pronged *ango* (a trident or spear) and the final confrontation with Guðhere (Gunther) and Hagen.

Allusions to other legendary cycles and details of various scenes of battle in *Waldere* point to plot elements that survived in later analogues, heroic lays such as the Eddic *Völundarkviða* and *Atlakviða*, Middle High German romances like *Alphart's Tod* or *Virginal*, and other Dietrich traditions concerning Walter's exploits as an ally of Attila. If the *Waldere* poet was at all familiar with classical epics like Virgil's *Aeneid*, Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, and Statius's *Thebaid*, he must have relied more upon the Germanic traditions than the Latin, based on internal evidence of the fragments and the sort of narrative they tend toward. Specifically, the Mimming and ðeodric cycles were well known to the *Waldere* poet, for these elements not only provide a legendary backdrop for the main action, they are interwoven with the foregrounded events and speeches, continuing to affect the heroic world and influence its major actors.

Surely it is more than mere coincidence that the poet describes Widia's release of ðeodric from captivity in the giants' domain, and in the same breath mentions Widia's illustrious progenitor, as found in *Völundarkviða*. In the Old English text, both Weland and Widia are mentioned twice by name, as is Ælfhere (but Attila, ðeodric, Guðhere, Hagen, and Walter once each). Since the poet identifies Weland as the famous forger of

Mimming,⁴ Widia's heroic and divine pedigree has a special resonance in conjunction with ðeodric's dire straits: the poet wants to emphasize how this sword-of-swords has helped more than one hero out of a tight spot. As an indestructible weapon of prestige for Walter's protection when other functional fighting blades (such as a sword of other manufacture) let him down, the inimitable sword Mimming is central to the *Waldere* fragments, if not also the entire Old English epic. As in the Latin analogue, the numerous fighting scenes between Walter and the henchmen would contrast the functionality of various weapons, highlighting the sword as a symbol of the social prestige of leaders who duel with it.⁵

Other areas of focus in *Waldere* are the rules and rites of martial conduct. The poet of *Waldere* places particular emphasis on the ethics of the sword duel, as opposed to other prevalent modes of fighting such as melee with spears. The climax of *Waldere* is indeed a duel on foot, *fedewigges* (FII.16), with the most legendary of Germanic blades, and not a spear fight or a mounted charge with a two-handed lance. Walter attempts to observe the etiquette of combat discernible in heroic literature, but Guðhere's treacherous tactics compel him to overstep the customary boundaries. An epic whose hero conforms to the heroic code while trusting implicitly in God, *Waldere* celebrates the old warrior aristocracy and at the same time approaches Christian ethics.

A powerful antithesis is created in the text with Walter as the victorious warrior-king—despite being outnumbered and unfairly ambushed—and Guðhere as the greedy princeling who will gain neither praise nor riches from this encounter. The poet employs Hagen, caught in the middle, as the retainer whose loyalties are divided between his lord to whom he owes nominal allegiance and his friend with whom he has grown up as a refugee. The ethical contrast is sharpened between Walter and Guðhere—and the dramatic intensity of their duel heightened—by Hagen's dilemma; the rightness of Walter's cause as the hero is confirmed when Hagen finally puts his sword at his old comrade's disposal, as inferred from the fragments.

The ancient Walter story contains a potent message about the struggle

⁴ Ute Schwab (235) and Claudia Bornholdt (56) argue that “the work of Weland” could refer to Walter's armor instead of his sword.

⁵ The battles are only half the story in the Latin epic: the bridal quest is the other half that, as Bornholdt rightly points out, too many scholars overlook. Unfortunately, the OE *Waldere* in its fragmentary state focuses almost exclusively on battles and weapons, and Walter's consort is not even mentioned. Therefore my study is confined to matters of combat and the exploits of the heroes featured.

among Germanic peoples to forge ahead of the rest of the tribes in a time of major political upheaval. The warmonger Attila, despite his role of instigating the hostage scenario and exacting tribute from Germanic chieftains, is regarded as one barbarian among many, with the difference of posing a serious threat to a crumbling Roman hegemony. Thus he is viewed in a favorable light in many medieval texts. The real villain of course is Guðhere, whose greed, unlike Attila's, manifests itself not in open warfare against other armies but in the cowardly act of robbing a fellow Germanic prince returning home from exile. Guðhere knows nothing of the rigors of the Hunnish proving grounds in the service of the "scourge of God," having been too young to go as a hostage; thus his father had sent Hagen in his stead. The pathos of divided loyalties for Hagen, the seasoned veteran and comrade of Walter, is a familiar element in Germanic tradition, one that the Walter legend throws into greater relief. Guðhere, the miserly young Burgundian who enlists others to steal the treasured emblems of nobility for him, must have been quite a reviled character. In contrast, Walter stands his ground and predicts his own victory and generosity in the concluding lines. The epic plight of this hostage-turned-hero had resonances with Anglo-Saxon political realities.

2. THE EPIC FRAGMENTS

For a poetic fragment of only sixty complete lines, *Waldere* proportionally contains quite an array of textual oddities and unexplained idiosyncrasies. The editorial history of *Waldere* is indeed staggering when it comes to the number of variant readings put forth for individual words, letters, and possible speakers in only three separate speeches discernible in the two parchment leaves. There seem to be as many interpretations as there are editors and commentators willing to take up the challenge of making the weathered vellum legible, for much of the confusion is due to the dilapidated state of the manuscript which has holes, scuffs, and ambiguously corrected letters. Many problematic instances involve dubious spellings that seem to be the result of careless or inexperienced penmanship; they may possibly be due to haste on the part of the scribe. The anomalies and damage within the *Waldere* manuscript are so widespread that a number of its interpretive *crucis*, such as the first mention of *Nibelungs* in written sources (see p. 25), have remained obscure to generations of scholars until now.

The redactor of our epic may have known the poem well enough for memorial reconstruction, but scribes commonly worked from a written exemplar. In the case of Anglo-Saxon poetry, scribes frequently introduced their own variants of pronunciation, wording, and even verse.¹ In *Waldere*, the nature and high proportion of language anomalies are unusual for a native speaker and writer of Old English poetry. As I will show, the scribe of *Waldere* did not simply improvise with his received text in ways natural to a people still versed in oral composition, but he

¹ A point well made by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe in *Visible Song*. However, Douglas Moffat (1992) cautions against one-dimensional views of OE scribes as purposeful, creative editors and even improvisational poets in light of evidence that their copy habits were not monolithic and might include inattentiveness resulting in incoherence. Because it is uncertain how much of *Waldere* may have been extemporized as it was recorded, both "scribe" and "poet" will be used, the former generally referring to aspects of paleography and the latter to narrative and versification. For consistency in pronouns, "he" is adopted for convenience and not to suggest gender, which also is unknown.

transgressed so many conventions of spelling, *ductus*, and meter that we must conclude that the fragments contain mistakes.

Why would the writer commit so many apparent errors in this segment of an epic that proportionally they seem almost as much the rule as the exception? He may not have been a native speaker of Anglo-Saxon, in which case the high number of anomalous spellings and word forms would be due to unfamiliarity with the language itself. The text of *Waldere* was after all found in Denmark; could the writer have been a Dane, attempting to copy this exciting tale for later translation? The dearth of Scandinavian writings until the thirteenth century and the lack of Old Norse linguistic influence in the manuscript argue against this. However, uncommon forms like *gefeald* (corrected to *geweald* in FII.10), *mit* (FI.25), and *bæteran* (FII.1) reflect not simply late OE dialectal variation but continental influence, particularly from France.² My aim here is not to prove conclusively the poet's point of origin, but simply to broaden the field of inquiry for *Waldere*'s provenance beyond Anglo-Danish borders.

Such forms in the manuscript just mentioned, taken with the numerous mistakes either corrected or left in, indicate Frankish influence, which is conceivable when we consider the political and ecclesiastical connections across the channel historically: the Franks were already engaged in this work of epic preservation during the reign of Charlemagne, who commissioned old heroic tales to be collected and who brought the Anglo-Saxon Alcuin to his court; ecclesiasts such as the great tenth-century scholar Abbo wrote poems on sacred and secular themes and maintained close ties to monasteries like Fleury, where, according to Kratz, the earliest *Waltharius* copy could have been produced (xxxvi). In fact, during his two-year sojourn in Ramsey, Abbo introduced his English pupils to useful French loans resulting in "barbarisms" identified by Byrhtferth in his *Manual*.³ Surely this borrowing was not one-sided: monks from the

² For the unique and unattested form *gefeald*, the French influence which brought *u* or *v* in place of voiced *f* (Cecily Clark lx) as well as *uu* could have caused the scribe uncertainty with the *wynn* graph, thus hypercorrecting with *f* before his later correction to *w*. For *mit*, there was devoicing of final *d* among OE sound changes (G. L. Brook 286), but the overwhelming majority of OE spellings is *mid* by almost 1,000 to 1 (*DOEC*), whereas *mit* is common in Old High German and Old Franconian (Orrin Robinson 209). For *bæteran*, short [e] was commonly spelled *æ* in Kentish, but such spellings "may have no dialectal significance but merely be due to Latin and French influence on orthography" (Cecily Clark xxxvii-viii). Forms of *bæter-* occur only 11 times in the corpus, as opposed to *beter-* which occurs 113 times (*DOEC*).

³ With a variety of evidence for the extensive contact between learned Franks and Anglo-Saxons, René Derolez argues that the "linguistic flexibility" for speakers of

continent could certainly have picked up heroic materials of relevance to their countrymen while imparting their own lore in English monasteries (e.g., the only copy of *Chanson de Roland* is from England). Additionally, there is evidence that the “most learned man” of the same period in England, Frithegod who wrote the Latin hexameter poem commemorating St. Wilfrid, was a Frank under English patronage.⁴ Scribes in England had access to epics like *Psychomachia* (existing in at least four tenth-century Anglo-Saxon illuminated manuscripts) along with heroic poems like *Waldere*, both of which have definite affinities with the Latin epic *Waltharius* composed in Latin hexameter. However, neither Frithegod’s *Wilfrid* poem nor *Waltharius* display much affection for, or intimacy with, Anglo-Saxon, but then the Old English *Waldere* fragments are not so well versed in that tongue, either.⁵

George Stephens’s account of *Waldere*’s discovery is most thorough and exact. Around 1852 he “carefully ransackt [sic]” the Royal Library in Copenhagen in order to track down Old English manuscripts, where he found but a few lines of a homiletic fragment. The *Waldere* leaves were apparently not there on the occasion of Stephens’s inspection. Since he later learned of its probable history from the librarians in Copenhagen

old Germanic dialects “should not be underrated.” Although Old Frankish and Old English could be mutually intelligible, even into the Carolingian era, “In the relations between Norman (or *Frencisc*, which first appears in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in the annal for 1003) and English it will be a combination of the two that is responsible for the frequent breaches of communication” (289). The same must hold true for Franks or speakers of Old Low Franconian dialects among the English in the decades surrounding the first millenium. “If, moreover,” Derolez continues, “the copyist was none too well-trained . . . [a] garbled text was due to be produced” (290).

⁴ Michael Lapidge argues on paleographical, stylistic, and contextual grounds that a Frankish Frithegod must have worked on *Breuiiloquium uitae Wilfridi* in Canterbury until his patron Bishop Oda died in 958, and then continued it back in France under Duke William of Aquitaine (65). Frithegod would thus have worked on manuscripts containing Prudentius’s poems, some drinking songs, and other poems of his own that are now lost. Poetic coinages typical of Frithegod are also found in poems composed in Winchester, England (57), where marginal floral designs were developed, especially the kind found in *Waldere*.

⁵ In *Waltharius*, Walthari taunts Ekiurid for his Celtic accent, which according to David Dumville marks him as belonging to people on Saxon shores such as the Bretons, a race known for verbal exaggeration or lying (92-93). Frithegod similarly denigrates the language of the Anglo-Saxons; according to Lapidge, he contemptuously refers to it as *barbaries inculta* and uses continental forms of names instead of English (61). As demonstrated in this chapter, the *Waldere* scribe lacks fluency in Old English.

himself and was the first to examine it for publication, I offer his exact words on the matter:

On the 12th of January 1860, Prof. E. C. Werlauff, Chief Librarian of the Great National Library, Cheapinghaven [Copenhagen], was engaged in sorting some bundles of papers, parchment leaves and fragments, mostly taken from books or book-backs, which had not hitherto been arranged. While thus occupied, he lighted upon two vellum leaves of great antiquity and bearing an Old-English text. (12-14)

These leaves were the fragments of *Waldere*. Stephens writes that he was granted permission to “examine them thoroly [sic] in various lights in my own house” (14). He continues:

The probability is, that they were brought from England towards the close of the last century by Thorkelin. When that learned gentleman was in London, copying the unique MS. of Beowulf, he pickt [sic] up a good many curious and rare things Some of these Thorkelin bundles have come to the Great National Library, and one of them has doubtless contained the leaves in question. This is the best guess which can be made here, by men conversant with the subject. (15)

Zettersten looked for further information on Thorkelin’s possible role in the discovery of *Waldere*, but his thorough search among the letters and papers of Thorkelin, Werlauff, and Stephens yielded no other clues (7).

Stephens, who is perhaps better known for his exhaustive and useful compilation of runic inscriptions,⁶ was the first to publish an edition of the *Waldere* text. In a rush to share the contents of this great find, he nevertheless provided both a parallel and a poetic translation, ample notes, a glossary, and in certain printings, a set of what he claimed were “photographic facsimiles” of the four manuscript pages. Despite Stephens’s boast that “Photography is Nature,” his facsimile is actually an artistic reproduction consisting of letters either traced or rendered free-hand and then super-imposed over an image of the parchment to make the faint script stand out better; in some cases, the result is only more obscure. Stephens’s edition, fraught with his trademark philological inaccuracies,⁷

⁶ *A Handbook to the Old Northern Runic Monuments*, 1884. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, it reflects “conscientious labour . . . accurate copies of the inscriptions is deserving of the highest praise . . . a storehouse of materials . . . invaluable” (“Stephens, George” 1060).

⁷ “On the other hand, his own contributions to the interpretation of the inscriptions are almost worthless, owing to his want of accurate philological knowledge . . . His