

## THE FIGURE OF THE NIGHT WATCHMAN IN THE DAWN SONGS FROM WOLFRAM VON ESCHENBACH TO OSWALD VON WOLKENSTEIN<sup>1</sup>

Classical Middle High German courtly love poetry (*minnesang*) describes (or is set in the framework of) a fictional love relationship between a knight and a lady. One of the main characteristics of this aristocratic liaison is to be found in the unreal or deceptive nature of the physical reward, since although in theory the knight is motivated by his hope of the lady's surrender, that hope is necessarily an illusion. The German *minnesang* is very much preoccupied with this inherent problem of the convention and many of the poets of the classical and post-classical periods debate it at some length in their works.

However, there are poetic situations within the classical convention where there is no such illusion, indeed, quite the contrary, where the physical fulfilment of the fictional *minne* relationship provides the very backdrop for the setting of the poem. This is the case with the dawn song or, in MHG, *tageliet*, which, more so than the traditional *Minnelied*, uses a mixture of epic and lyric perspectives to describe a specific poetic moment: that of the parting of the knight and the lady at dawn after their sexual encounter at night. As Arthur Hatto demonstrated in a comparative study of the subject, the theme of lovers' partings at dawn is omnipresent at different periods in nearly all literary traditions.<sup>2</sup> In Middle High German *minnesang* there are a relatively large number of dawn songs: the manuscripts of the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century transmit some 50 examples of these poems, and the genre lives on with a certain vitality until the later Middle Ages. The wide popularity of this poetic form in

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<sup>2</sup> Hatto, Arthur (ed.), 'Eos. An Enquiry into the Theme of Lovers' Meetings and Partings at Dawn in Poetry', The Hague, 1965.

German does not, however, seem to be reflected in other European literary traditions where it represents one of the less important lyric genres; in the troubador poetry of Old Provençal, for example, there are fewer than ten secular dawn songs, in Old French five and in Old Portuguese only one or two.

As, among others, Dietmar Rieger has pointed out, a set number of figures belong to the basic structure of the dawn song (*alba*) in Old Provençal: the two lovers (the knight and the lady), the jealous husband and the night watchman.<sup>3</sup> The Middle High German *tageliet* convention does not feature the jealous husband (indeed, it is not often clear if the lady of these poems is married) and in the earliest examples of the genre there is no night watchman. However, from Wolfram von Eschenbach onwards the watch (in MHG *wahter*), becomes an important – to a certain extent central – element of the dawn song.

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Other works consulted: Borck, Karl Heinz - *Wolframs Tagelied 'Den morgenblich bi wahtaers sange erkos'*. *Zur Lyrik eines Epikers*, in: 'Festschrift für Adolf Beck', Heidelberg, 1971, 9 – 17; Corneau, Christoph - *Zur Stellung des Tagelieds im Minnesang*, in: 'Festschrift Walter Haug und Burghart Wachinger', Tübingen, 1992, pp. 695 – 708; Gibbs, Marion E.; Johnson, Sidney M. – *Wolfram von Eschenbach 'Titurel' and the 'Songs'*, New York; London, 1988; Hoffmann, Werner - *Tageliedkritik und Tageliedparodie in mittelhochdeutscher Zeit*, in: 'GRM' 35 (1985), pp. 157 – 178; Mertens, Volker - *Dienstminne, Tageliederotik und Eheliebe in den Liedern Wolframs von Eschenbach*, in: 'Euphorion' 77 (1983), pp. 233 – 246; Niklas, Friedrich - *Untersuchung über Stil und Geschichte des Deutschen Tageliedes*, Berlin, 1929; Rieger, Dietmar - *Tagelied ('Alba')*, in: Köhler, Erich (ed.), 'Les genres lyriques', Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979 ('Grundriß der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters', Vol. II, Tome I, Fasc. 5 BIII), pp. 44 – 54; Rohrbach, Gerdt - *Studien zur Erforschung des mittelhochdeutschen Tageliedes. Ein sozialgeschichtlicher Beitrag*, Göttingen, 1986 (GAG 462); *Tagelieder des deutschen Mittelalters. Mittelhochdeutsch / Neuhochdeutsch*. Ausgewählt, übersetzt und kommentiert von Martina Backes. Einleitung von Alois Wolf, Stuttgart, 1992; Müller, Ulrich - *Die Tagelieder des Oswald von Wolkenstein oder Variationen über ein vorgegebenes Thema*, in: Mück, Hans-Dieter; U.M. (eds.), 'Gesammelte Vorträge der 600-Jahrfeier Oswalds von Wolkenstein, Seis am Schlern', Göttingen, 1978 (GAG 206), pp. 205 – 225; Wapnewski, Peter - *Die Lyrik Wolframs von Eschenbach. Edition, Kommentar, Interpretation*, München, 1972 (cf. *Der Wächter und das Tagelied: Zur Reihenfolge der Lieder Wolframs*, pp. 245 – 258); Wynn, Marianne - *Wolfram's Dawnsongs*, in: 'Studien zu Wolfram von Eschenbach. Festschrift für Werner Schröder zum 75. Geburtstag', Tübingen, 1989, 549 – 558.

<sup>3</sup> Rieger - *op.cit.* pp. 44ff..

The importance of the night watchman in the *tageliet* can be seen in his relation to the other characters in the poem. Many critics have indicated the fundamental difference that exists between the classical courtly love poems (*Minnekanzone* and *Frauenlied*) and the dawn song in relation to the constellation of voices in these lyric genres. In the *Minnekanzone* and the *Frauenlied*, in which respectively the male and the female voices have their say, the sentiments of the lovers in regard to their partners form the very centre of the lyric reflections. In the *tageliet*, however, these reflections – when they are expressed – are often framed by the epic commentary of an objective narrator. Significant, however, is the presence of a further voice in this constellation, that of the night watchman. It is the interplay of this multiplicity of voices expressing often quite different opinions (the narrator, the lovers and the *wahter*), which is a determining characteristic of the dawn song. Of decisive importance in this polyphonic interplay is the voice of the watchman: it represents a constituent factor in the poem in that it determines the setting and the situation – a song, at the break of day, on the ramparts of a feudal castle: as a number of critics have demonstrated, the introduction of the figure of the watchman into the tradition of the dawn song clearly indicates the feudalisation of this genre.

As Christoph Cormeau has pointed out, the structural importance of the watch in the *tageliet* goes well beyond his merely functional role as a figure announcing the proximity of dawn from the battlements, since he normally gives an external perspective in regard to the lovers' relationship and the situation in which they find themselves.<sup>4</sup> More importantly, however, he usually offers a commentary on the lyric reflections of the knight and lady. The classical *wahter* figure thereby bridges the gap between the fictional lovers and the audience of the poem, a gap which does not exist in the traditional *Minnelied*, where the lyric reflections of the knight and the lady are transmitted directly to the audience without the mediation of a further fictional entity.

It is perhaps ironic that this gap should be bridged less by the narrator in the poem, whose role in the dawn song tends to be more objective, but rather by the night watchman, who, in the reality of feudal society, is traditionally a relatively mundane figure who belonging to a socially inferior group, and whose duty it is to guard the castle, and warn of the approach of intruders. However, in the courtly poetic convention the function of the watch is not the one it would have been in feudal reality. In the *tageliet* the watch has been 're-functionalised' for poetic ends and his song from the castle ramparts at dawn warns not of the proximity of some

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<sup>4</sup> Cormeau - *op.cit.* pp. 700f..

possible external military threat, but of the dangers of the approaching light of day; his warning song is destined not for the inhabitants of the castle, but exclusively for the knight and lady engaged in an illicit love affair. The role of the watch is therefore to help the couple, but since he effectively puts an end to their love-making, his role is controversial as its legitimacy is often called into question and he is therefore sometimes open to rebuke from the lovers.

However, this figure is problematic for other reasons: although the *tageliet* represents one of the few moments in the courtly convention where the *vreude* / joy of the physical fulfilment of the love affair is in fact realised, the general mood of the genre remains one of sorrow. The *tageliet*, like the other courtly lyric forms, is dominated by the courtly dichotomy of love and sorrow (*lieb* and *leit*). In the dawn song convention this sorrow is almost exclusively due to the realisation by the lovers that the light of day is approaching and therefore that the *vreude* / joy of their sexual encounter will soon be coming to an end. The news that dawn is at hand is often provided by the night watchman and it is he then who introduces the element of sorrow, one of the constituent components of the courtly convention, into this lyric situation; this explains I believe, another of the reasons why the *wahter* becomes such a controversial, but also such an important figure in the genre.

Indeed, it would appear that the night watchman is so central to the German dawn song, that the names *tageliet* and *tagewise* which originally – in Wolfram von Eschenbach and in Walther von der Vogelweide – signify specifically this figure's song within the poem, are, later used by poets like Ulrich von Lichtenstein and Hugo von Montfort, to designate the love poem itself. Thus, the semantic range of the term *tageliet* is expanded from indicating merely a structural element within the poem (the night watchman's song) to the denomination of the structure itself, to the designation of the genre. Although the night watchman is certainly not present in *all* German dawn songs, this semantic expansion of the term shows, I believe, the central importance which, during the development of the *tageliet*, is attached to this controversial figure (and to his song) within the Middle High German poetic convention.

It is generally accepted that Wolfram von Eschenbach is the first poet to make use of the figure of the night watchman in the Middle High German dawn song. It is hardly surprising that it is the poet Wolfram who introduces this conventional figure of the Old Provençal *alba* to the German audiences, since he is very well versed in romance literary traditions – he is the translator / adaptor of Old French narratives, the Arthurian and Grail romance *Perceval* by Chrétien and the *chanson de geste Aliscans*. Of the lyric poems ascribed to Wolfram, five (well over half) are classified as dawn songs: in four of these, reference is made to the figure of the

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watch and in three the watch speaks – indeed, in one of these poems the voice of the *wahter* is dominant – alternating, only in the third and final stanza, with the voices of the narrator and the knight.

“Von der zinnen  
wil ich gēn, in tagewisc  
sanc verbern.  
die sich minnen  
tougēnlīche, und obe si prise  
ir minne wern,  
Sô gedenken sêre  
an sīne lêre,  
dem līp und êre  
ergeben sīn.  
der mich des bacte,  
deswâr ich taetc  
ime guote raete  
und helfe schīn.  
ritter, wache, hūete dīn!

Niht verkrenken  
wil ich aller wahter triuwe  
an werden man.  
niht gedenken  
solt du, vrowe, an scheidens riuwe  
ûf kunfte wân.  
Ez waere unwage,  
swer minne pflaege,  
daz ûf im laege  
meldes last.  
ein sumer bringet,  
daz mīn munt singet:  
durch wolken dringet  
tagender glast.  
hūete dīn, wache, sūezer gast!”

Er muos eht dannen,  
der si klagen ungerne hōrte.  
dô sprach sīn munt:  
“allen mannen  
trūren nie sô gar zerstōrte  
ir vrōiden vunt.”  
Swie balde ez tagete,  
der unverzaget  
an ir bejagete,

“From the battlements  
I shall go down without  
singing my song of day.  
Those who love  
secretly, if their mutual  
love is to bring them honour,  
let them ponder earnestly  
the teachings of him  
to whom their life and honour  
are entrusted.  
If someone were to ask me to,  
then truly I would give  
him good advice  
and demonstrate my help to him.  
Knight, wake up and watch out!

I do not wish to betray  
the integrity of all watchmen  
by the way I treat this noble man.  
My lady, you should think not  
of the sorrow of parting,  
midst hopes for the future.  
It would not be right  
for someone engaged in love  
to have the burden  
of announcing daybreak.  
It is a summer day  
that causes me to sing.  
A brilliant shaft of light  
is pressing through the clouds.  
Watch out, wake up, sweet stranger!”

He simply had to leave,  
the man who was so sad to hear her lamentation.  
His lips spoke thus:  
“Sorrow has never wrecked  
so totally the store of joys  
for any man.”  
Though day was breaking,  
the bold man  
gained from her

daz sorge in vlôch.  
 unvrömedez rucken,  
 gar heinlich smucken,  
 ir brüstel drucken  
 und mê dannoch  
 urloup gap, des pris was hôch.<sup>5</sup>

something that made care flee from him.  
 Snuggling close,  
 secret hugging,  
 pressing breast to breast  
 and more besides  
 made a leave-taking of great glory.

The watch in the first stanza discusses his duties towards the lovers, duties which are characterised by *raete* (advice), *helfe* (assistance) and, most significantly, Wolfram's cardinal virtue, *triuwe* (fealty). His is the voice of a counsellor, sympathetic to the lovers, but also the voice of good sense, reminding them of their dangerous situation and explaining the obligations they have to each other: although it is his duty to wake the man, in particular, his appeal is to the lady. The watch proves, through his words, to be the lovers' loyal confidant. And this is a role the night watchman will play in all of Wolfram's classical *tageliet*, a role dominated by *wahter triuwe* (the fealty of the watch), but here the fidelity is also to his colleagues.

This quality of the faithfulness and integrity of the night watchman is also apparent in what is doubtless Wolfram's most famous and arguably his most beautiful dawn song, in which, in the first stanza, by the use of a very powerful and effective metaphor, the *wahter* describes the dawn as a demon or monstrous wild animal armed with talons, tearing through the clouds:

“Sine klâwen  
 durch die wolken sint geslagen,  
 er stîget ûf mit grôzer kraft;  
 ich sich in grâwen  
 tegelich, als er wil tagen:  
 den tac, der im geselleschaft  
 Erwenden wil, dem werden man,  
 den ich mit sorgen in [ ] verliez.  
 ich bringe in hinnen, ob ich kan.  
 sin vil manigiu tugent mich daz leisten hiez.”

“Its talons  
 have struck through the clouds,  
 he mounts aloft in all his might,  
 I see him growing silver-grey –  
 dawn-like – as if about to dawn –  
 the Day! – who from sweet fellowship  
 intends to part the noble man  
 whom I let in with such misgivings.  
 I shall fetch him away, if I can;  
 his many virtues lay that charge on me.”

‘Wahter, du singest,  
 daz mir manege vreude nimt  
 unde mêret mîn klage.  
 maer du bringest,  
 der mich leider niht gezimt,

‘Watchman, your singing  
 robs me of great joy,  
 and swells my discontent.  
 You always bring me news,  
 alas, that suits me not at all

<sup>5</sup> Moser; Tervooren (eds.) - *op.cit.*, Wolfram von Eschenbach V (= Lachmann 6,10); translation: Gibbs; Johnson - *op.cit.*

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immer morgens gegen dem tage.  
 Diu solt du mir verswîgen gar.  
 daz gebiut ich den triuwen dîn.  
 des lôn ich dir, als ich getar,  
 sô belîbet hie der geselle mîn.<sup>5</sup>

“Er muoz et hinnen  
 balde und ân sûmen sich.  
 nu gip im urloup, sūezez wîp.  
 lâze in minnen  
 her nâch sô verholn dich,  
 daz er behalte êre unde den lip.  
 Er gap sich mîner triuwen alsô,  
 daz ich in braechte ouch wider dan.  
 ez ist nu tac. naht was ez, dô  
 mit drucken an [ ] brust dîn kus mir an gewan.  
 me with a kiss.”

‘Swaz dir gevalle,  
 wahtaer, sinc und lâ den hie,  
 der minne brâht und minne enpfîenc.  
 von dînem schalle  
 ist er und ich erschrocken ie,  
 sô nînder der morgenstern ûf gieng  
 Ûf in, der her nâch minne ist komen,  
 noch nînder lûhte tages licht.  
 du hâst in dicke mir benomen  
 von blanken armen, und ûz herzen niht.’

Von den blicken,  
 die der tac tet durch diu glas,  
 und dô wahtaere warnen sanc,  
 sô muose erschriken  
 durch den, der dâ bî ir was.  
 ir brüstlîn an brust si dwanc.  
 Der rîter ellens niht vergaz;  
 des wold in wenden wahtaers dôn:  
 with his singing!  
 urloup nâh und nâher baz  
 mit kusse und anders gap in minne lôn.<sup>6</sup>  
 reward.

so early towards daybreak.  
 You must not speak of this to me,  
 I charge you by your fealty.  
 I will reward you as I dare.  
 Thus my friend shall stay with me.’

“But he must go  
 at once, without delay!  
 Now give him leave sweet woman.  
 Let him make love  
 to you some other time so secretly,  
 and now save life and honour.  
 He entrusted himself to me  
 on my assurance that I would fetch him out again.  
 Now it is day: but it was night when  
 ”straining him to your breast you won him from

‘Sing what you like,  
 Watchman! But leave him here  
 who brought love, and love received.  
 By your clamour  
 how often have he and I been startled  
 while as yet no morning star had risen  
 to light him, come in quest of love,  
 or daylight was showing anywhere.  
 How often have you stolen him  
 from my arms, though never from my heart.’

At the bright glances  
 the day was darting through the panes  
 and at the watchman’s warning song,  
 she started with dread  
 for the man beside her.  
 She pressed her breast to his.  
 Nor did the knight spare his mettle,  
 though the watchman had meant to forestall him

Their parting - close and closer -  
 with kiss and otherwise brought them love’s

<sup>6</sup> Moser; Tervooren (eds.) - *op.cit.*, Wolfram von Eschenbach II (= Lachmann 4,8). Translation: Hatto - *op.cit.*.

In this poem, in which the *wahter* and the lady address each other in the first four stanzas (the final stanza being assigned to the narrator), the watch is also the lovers' accomplice; he sees the light of dawn from *their* perspective, as a violent intruder and he is sympathetic of their need to be together and yet he is worried that by achieving this he may lead them into danger: it is his duty to make sure that the knight is able to get away. In the second stanza the lady naturally rebukes him for always bringing her news which leads to her suffering; she even goes so far as to offer him some sort of financial reward if she is allowed to keep her lover with her. Wolfram's *wahter* is, however, so virtuous that he does not, apparently, even consider this possibility; other night watchman figures in the later tradition of the German dawn song will not be so honourable - indeed, quite the opposite! But in this poem, with this author, the watch is the trusty and upstanding accomplice of the lovers, his discourse is not blinded by emotion (as is the lady), his is the voice of reason. And yet, although they do not agree, there is no bitterness in their entreaties to each other: indeed, they seem to understand each other on a certain level, as they are both bound by a bond of *triuwe* to the knight - the lady's *triuwe* is of love to her friend, the watch's of feudal loyalty to the knight. It can therefore be seen that Wolfram's *wahter* is, in the context of the convention, almost a poetic role model, but as with all role models, it gives rise to controversy.

Wolfram himself perhaps recognised the controversial nature of this figure and, in a poem which scholarship has alternatively termed a marriage-*tageliet*, a *tageliet* parody, an 'anti-*tageliet*' or indeed a 'pro-*tageliet*', the poetic subject, in the first stanza, addresses the watch directly, apparently questioning both the role which the figure plays in the convention and thereby the convention itself.

Der helden minne ir klage  
 du sunge ie gën dem tage,  
 Daz sûre nâch dem süezen.  
 swer minne und wîpîch grûezen  
 alsô enpfîenc,  
 daz si sich muosen scheiden, -  
 swaz dû dô rîete in beiden,  
 dô ûf gienc  
 Der morgensterne, wahtaere, swîc,  
 dô von niht <....> sinc.  
 Swer pfliget oder ie gepflac,  
 daz er bî lieben wîben lac,  
 Den merkaeren unverborgen,  
 der darf niht durh den morgen  
 dannen streben.  
 er mac des tages erbeiten.  
 man darf in niht ûz leiten

To sing the lament of secret love  
 was ever your way as dawn drew near,  
 the bitter after the sweet.  
 When a man love and a woman's carress  
 received,  
 and they had to part company,  
 such counsels as you gave them both  
 at the rising  
 of the morning star, O Watchman, silence! -  
 do not sing of that!  
 Whoever is or was accustomed  
 to lie with his love  
 without concealment from spics  
 does not need out through the dawn  
 to struggle,  
 he can afford to wait for day,  
 there is no need to guide him out



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ûf sîn leben.

Ein offeniu sūeze wirtes wip

kan sölhe minne geben.<sup>7</sup>

in peril of his life!

One's own avowed sweet wedded wife

can give such love as this.

Critics have attempted contrasting interpretations of this poem: traditionally it has been seen as Wolfram's farewell to the dawn song convention, and therefore also to the figure of the night watchman, who, in the poem, is told to remain silent. More recently, however, critics have tended to view the poem as a parody, in which Wolfram juggles and plays with the elements of the traditional dawn song, the most important of which is the watch. However, there is still no real consensus about what – if any – the message of the poem is. And yet this *tageliet*, which on an internal level addresses itself to the watch, does demonstrate the extent to which this figure is such a central component in the dawn song convention.

Poets after Wolfram who include the *wahter* in their own *tageliet* do so in different ways – but these tend, in general, to be variations on a theme. They are variations which accompany the development of the convention (and the decline of the concept of *hohiu minne*) from the High to the Late Middle Ages. It is notable, however, that a number of *minnesinger* exclude the figure of the watch from their dawn songs; clearly we do not know, in most cases, if this is done because they disapprove of the *wahter* for aesthetical reasons. However, in the case of the mid-thirteenth century poet Ulrich von Lichtenstein, we do know the reason he sometimes avoided using this figure in his *tageliet*. In his critical commentary to one of his dawn songs, Lichtenstein does not criticise the *tageliet* convention as such, but he self-assuredly attacks one of its important constituent components – the night watchman. He rejects this figure for social reasons. Lichtenstein, who is descended from an important aristocratic dynasty in Styria, cannot accept that the watchman, a man of such lowly birth, could ever fulfil one of his most important functions in the dawn song – to keep secret an aristocratic illicit love. *man hat edeler wahter niht* (509,22),<sup>8</sup> there is no such thing as a noble watch, he says in his commentary, because, *gebūren art kan niht verdagen* (509,26) those of low birth cannot keep quiet. For Lichtenstein there is simply no possibility of a trusting relationship with such a man, and he replaces him with a lady's maid. In arguing in this way Lichtenstein would seem to be confusing the fictional watchman figure of the dawn

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<sup>7</sup> Moser; Tervooren (eds.) - *op.cit.*, Wolfram von Eschenbach IV (= Lachmann 5,34); translation: Hatto - *op.cit.*.

<sup>8</sup> Bechstein (ed) - *op.cit.*.

song with the watchman he knows from his own castle battlements – this lack of critical distance in relation to the fictional character of the *wahter* in a literary text would doubtless not be accepted in commentators of the modern age! However, it does not appear that Ulrich von Lichtenstein's criticism was considered particularly valid by the poets of the later tradition; in a few cases, as in a dawn song by Ulrich von Winterstetten,<sup>9</sup> the figure of lady's maid also appears, and yet, she appears not instead of, but in addition to the night watchman (indeed, this had already been the case in a poem by Burggraf von Lienz)<sup>10</sup>.

Criticism is also to be heard of the *wahter* from another thirteenth century poet, Steinmar; however, Steinmar does not reject the night watchman for social reasons. In his poem *Swer tougenliche minne hât* the lyric subject explains that it is impossible to trust someone who would harm his own lord by letting a secret visitor into the castle: instead of the dishonest *wahter* he would much prefer to be guarded by *ein staeter friunt* – a reliable friend.<sup>11</sup>

However, later poets would often seem to prefer to modify the set characteristics of the watchman himself rather than replace him with another, more acceptable figure, such as the serving girl or a friend. This is the case with number of poets, who change the personality of the watch, taking away from him the quality of *triuwe* (loyalty) which had been so central to Wolfram. Thus, in the poem by Markgraf von Hohenburg, *ich wache umb eines ritters lip*, we can already see, in the dialogue between the watch and the lady, the extent to which the *wahter* is also concerned about his *own* life – he is no longer there only on behalf of the lovers (as he had been in Wolfram), but he seems to gain a certain independence as a character, but in so doing he becomes much less virtuous and upright.<sup>12</sup>

This moral 'devaluation' of the character of the watch becomes particularly apparent in Wenzel von Böhmen's poem *Ez taget unmâzen schône*.<sup>13</sup> After the watch's opening call for the knight to leave in the first stanza, the narrator takes over in the second, allowing us to hear the lady's voice, and soon the motivation for the watch's help becomes quite clear – he's looking for a bribe, and the lady has no choice but to offer him one. In this poem the figure of the watch has become corrupt; he is offered silver, gold and precious stones in return for allowing the knight to remain with the lady for a little longer. It is an offer the grasping watchman does

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<sup>9</sup> Kraus (ed.) - *op.cit.*, 59, XXIX

<sup>10</sup> Kraus (ed.) - *op.cit.*, 36, I

<sup>11</sup> Schiendorfer (ed.) - *op.cit.*, 26, n°. 5: 3,

<sup>12</sup> Kraus (ed.) - *op.cit.*, 25, V

<sup>13</sup> Kraus (ed.) - *op.cit.*, 63, II

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not refuse; the lovers stay together and, in the final stanza of the poem, there is no parting. Such greedy, corruptible night watchmen are also to be found in poems by Burggraf von Lienz and Heinrich von Frauenberg.

But the later *minnesinger* do not only describe corrupt night watchmen: with the poet Hadlaub we see a *wachter* who lacks courage – a coward, who after attempting in vain to wake the couple, is eager it seems only to escape before anything should happen to him:

“Der ich leider dise nacht gehüetet hân,  
der umbevân ist [ ] noch so manigvalt,  
Wan ir beider wille stellet sich inein.  
ir sorge ist klein: si sint so minnen balt.  
Wan sorgent sî, wie ez uns irgê?  
them?  
wirt man sîn gewar, so komen wir in nôt.  
nu welle got, daz sî sich scheiden ê!

‘Ez beginnet gegen dem tage stellen sich’:  
alsus warne ich si beidiu, der ich pflag.  
Des gewinnet doch mîn frowe leids vil,  
davon sin wil nicht wîzzen noch den tag.  
Mîn herre sehe selb darzuo:  
ez stêt beiden umb ir lîb -, ich kum wol hin,  
wan ich wil sîn ûz vor dem morgen fruo.

Ich sleich tougen ûz und sang ein warnen dô.  
dô sprach ie sô mîn frowe minnenklich:  
‘Âne loughen, der wachter hât uns verlân.  
du solt ûf stân, mîn herre tugenden rich!  
Ich weiz nu wol, daz ez ist zît,  
des sich unser lieblich triuten scheiden sol.  
ez kumt nicht wol, swer doch ze lange lît!’<sup>14</sup>

“The couple I have tonight - to my regret - protected  
are still engaged in numerous embraces,  
as both their wills are agreed on it.  
They are quite unconcerned: they are so love-stricken.  
Why are they not worried with what might happen to

If they are discovered, we will run into difficulties.  
May God make them part beforehand!

‘Time is beginning to move towards daybreak’:  
thus I warned them both, whom I have guarded.  
This brings my lady great pain  
and therefore she refuses to acknowledge the day.  
My lord should see to it himself:  
both their lives are at stake - , I shall certainly escape,  
since I will be away from here before the early morning.

I secretly slipped out and sang a warning song there.  
Then my charming lady said:  
‘Indeed, the watch has left us.  
You must get up, my virtuous master,  
I know well now that it is time  
for us to stop our loving caresses:  
It does not end well for those who do not get up!’”

However, although Hadlaub’s *wachter* would appear to be one of the least reliable of all the night watchmen, in the third stanza he does, on leaving the castle, still sing one more warning song and with this the couple awake and prepare for their parting. Thus, even though the watch may be corrupt or cowardly, he still attempts to do his duty.

<sup>14</sup> Schiendorfer (ed.) – *op.cit.*, 30, n° 14.

Other poets of the later 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries modify the figure in different ways: in Hugo von Montfort's *Weka, wekch die zarten lieben!*, the poet changes the dawn song framework – the lovers now are married and thus the watch no longer needs to guard the couple: his only function in the poem to listen in silence as the knight speaks to him.<sup>15</sup> In the *tageliet Das kchühorn* by the Mönch von Salzburg, the courtly setting of the dawn song is transferred to the farm – no knight and lady, but a farmhand and farm girl, no watchman, but a shepherd to wake the lovers.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most prolific composers of the German dawn song is, without doubt, Oswald von Wolkenstein: Oswald, with his openly erotic poetry, seems to have been particularly attracted to the genre. As, among others, Ulrich Müller has demonstrated, in his 13 dawn songs Oswald experiments with this lyric form in many different ways, thereby expanding its poetic possibilities.<sup>17</sup> Like the Mönch von Salzburg, Oswald, in his poem *Stand auff, Maredel* also moves the *tageliet* setting to the farm;<sup>18</sup> but here Oswald juggles even more with the convention, since the lady is a self-assured, disobedient farm girl Maredel; she is woken not by a watchman, but by a scolding farmer's wife, who tells her to get along with her household chores and with whom Maredel discusses her lover, the farm hand, Chünzel. Indeed, significantly for the first time in a *tageliet*, the names of the two lovers are mentioned.

In others of Oswald's dawn songs the *wahter* does appear, to a certain extent almost in the conventional way, as in *ich spur ain lufft*, but even here, the modifications to the convention are very apparent:

“Ich spür ain lufft aus külem tuft,  
das mich wol dunckt in meiner vernunft  
wie er genennet, kennet sei nordoste.  
Ich wachter sag: mich prüfft, der tag  
uns künfftig sei aus vinsterm hag;  
ich sich, vergich die morgenrot her glostent.  
Die voglin klingen überal,  
galander, lerchen, zeisel, droschel, nachtigal,  
auf perg, in tal hat sich ir gesangk erschellet.  
Leit iemant hie in güter acht,

“I sense a breath of wind from the cool dew  
which from my experience I know well  
that it is called - and known as - the northeasterly.  
I, the watchman, say: I notice that the day is breaking  
through the dark forest.  
I see and proclaim that the sunrise is gleaming through.  
The birds are singing everywhere,  
crested larks, larks, siskins, thrushes, nightingales,  
Their song was heard on the mountains and in the valleys.  
If someone is lying here being well looked after,

<sup>15</sup> Wackernell (ed.) - *op.cit.*, XXXVII.

<sup>16</sup> Mayer; Rietsch (eds.) - *op.cit.*, 6, n° 13.

<sup>17</sup> Müller - *op.cit.*

<sup>18</sup> Klein (ed.) - *op.cit.*, n° 48.

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der sich in freuden hat geniet die langen nacht,  
derselb betracht, das er sich mer gesellet.”  
Die junckfrau hett verstaffen,  
der knab wacht lützel bas,  
si rüfften baide waffen  
all über des tages hass.  
das freulin schalt in sere:  
‘her tag, ir künnt nicht ere  
bewaren inn der mass.’<sup>19</sup>

...

who has enjoyed pleasures during the long night,  
he should take care not to stay with his beloved any longer.”  
The young woman had overslept,  
the young man had not woken up earlier.  
They both complained about  
the hatefulness of day.  
The young woman insulted it furiously:  
‘Sir Day, you cannot maintain respect  
as it should be.’

No knight and lady for the watch to guard, but a young woman and a young man; and the watch himself is different as he describes in detail the natural surroundings and the different birds which are singing. Yet another poem *Es seusst dort her von orient* features the unreliable figure of the watch and, finally, in his poem *Los, frau*, the watch is apparently reduced to little more than blowing his horn.<sup>20</sup>

It is clear that in many respects Oswald’s 15<sup>th</sup> century watch is very different from Wolfram’s courtly 13<sup>th</sup> century watchman. In the 200 year period which separates Wolfram from Oswald (a period in which the genre of the dawn-song flourished) the Middle High German lyric convention changed. The poetic form of the watch in the *tageliet* was born within the framework of classical *minnesang* and *hohiu minne* and within that context the figure of the night watchman in the dawn-song made perfect sense. However, as the convention developed and classical *minnesang* declined, the *tageliet* was modified and with that modification constituent components of the genre either disappeared or were ‘refunctionalised’. This, I believe, is what happens to the figure of the watch. Wolfram’s loyal and trusting *wahter* is very different from Hadlaub’s, Hugo von Montfort’s or Oswald’s watchman. As the figure develops it seems (during the course of time) to become less and less tied to the traditional role, to the function it occupied in Wolfram’s poems. Indeed, I believe we could almost speak of a progressive ‘defunctionalisation’ of the watch within the context of the development of the genre. It is, however, in any case, an indication of the importance which was attached to this figure that it would (from Wolfram to Oswald) be used in so many and such different ways.

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<sup>19</sup> Klein (ed.) - *op.cit.*, n° 16.

<sup>20</sup> Klein (ed.) - *op.cit.*, n° 49.