Translation of Rudolf von Ems’s *Der guote Gêrhart*

Whatever one does with a good intention,  
for a good goal and with good ideals,¹  
that should be praised as a good thing,  
since it has happened with goodness in mind.²

Whoever is driven by his nature  
to turn to God  
his heart, senses, and mind  
and to enjoy doing the best possible  
should guard himself against the material world.

Then all is good and praiseworthy,  
whatever good one does out of goodness,  
with a good heart and a good intention.

But when he then hopes to gain fame,  
in this desire for approbation,  
will bring about the end of worthiness  
in such a bad turn of events  
that through the wrong praise  
the good praise will be lost on him.

Whoever does something [really] good,  
does not care about the praise by the world.

Because the world-experienced mind  
knows how to recognize and to differentiate  
between bad and good  
once he has understood both.

A wise person knows how to avoid [the bad],  
and knows how to recognize what is good.

The good and wise people  
rightly praise his fame.  
Thus he will become widely known  
and his deeds will earn him much renown.

If you identify those as good ones,  
who look for the good by way of real goodness,  
then you should stop giving praise,  
since the good person will easily recognize  
if he has performed, driven by the goodness in his heart,  
something good.

The wise ones say that the person who praises himself  
without being supported in that by others, must be crazy.

With this teaching [in mind] I present  
my small lesson  
for the wise ones and the foolish folks.
This teaching dawned upon me through a story that is guided by truth and evolves in the proper fashion, how a person would be on the wrong track, whose fame is destroyed by his accolades so that no one will give him praise except for what he is giving himself. His praise is of little value. I have learned this lesson from a mighty and wise emperor. The account of an amazing story involving him has given me insights which I derived from his actions, that is, the lesson that I am presenting here. Insofar as he disregarded that lesson himself, his fame declined, diminished and became muted. He considered himself so clever, so righteous and so good that he carried in his mind such an illusion that he alone believed to enjoy praise which carried here in this world the crown of joyfulness, combined with fame and rich praise. With such a foolish mind-set he praised himself so much that the fame was the measure of praise which he had given himself. Praiseworthiness had been the cause [beginning] for his fame, which was so good and so laudable, coming with so much acclaim, that he gained such recognition that in turn destroyed his own worth. How this all happened, under what circumstances, I will not hide from those who want to hear about it.

There once was, as I have heard told, a great, powerful emperor. He was friends with the greatest lords, and he was outstanding in honor and manliness. His generosity was so extensive that it made him known everywhere.
He was called Otto, and people called him the Red Emperor. All of his mind, heart, and senses were directed, as it should be with an emperor, toward peace, a good legal system, good manners, but not toward deception. He was bent on truth, charity, and chastity, these were his imperial virtues, with which he had grown up in a praiseworthy manner from his youth to adulthood, and he was never disregarded, when people placed those with the highest praise next to each other. He carried God in his mind. He endeavored to love dearly all of His commands according to the wise teachings which Charlemagne’s profound wisdom had set up as rules. He followed them so closely that he hardly ever transgressed what the old laws ordered him to do, and he did it all with great care and turned his mind [so closely] to it, that his legal courts were good. This way his name was an ornament for the Holy Roman Empire. He was married to a woman who was a perfect match for him and the imperial crown. She had preserved her beautiful womanhood with chastity and good manners for God. She was called Ottegebe. The noble, pure, and good lady loved in her heart God so steadily that the highly virtuous woman never forgot her creator. Because of the steadiness of her good manners she never lost God’s or her husband’s love. She was filled with such strong virtues in her mind, her heart, and her soul, and so much supported by God’s grace that she wore already here in all worthiness the heavenly crown.
Saint Ottegebe the pure soul
was so much loved by her Creator
with all His heartfelt feelings
and with such strong love
that His praise of her never faded.
She advised her husband, the emperor
to think ahead of his afterlife,
what wealth a person has here on earth,
and that his property does not stay with him
when he leaves this miserable world.
Once it will be taken away from him,
he should think of the rewards
for the deeds that he has done.
When he has served [God] well, his reward will be good.
He will not be rewarded in any other way,
but for the deeds performed.
This the lord took into his mind
and thought about whether he should share his goods
in the name of God,
so that he would heal thereby
the wounds caused by his sins.
He took it as a message
reading the truth of Scripture
which talks about alms:
Whoever freely gives them,
will get absolved all the time
from sins, just as water quenches
fire. This was for the good lord
a dear example and a solace,
which freed him from doubt.
The emperor and the empress
discussed this among themselves
that they would honor with the love
of the highest empress [Virgin Mary]
would honor God their creator
and would increase service in His name
on behalf of their [own] honor.
They received the pure advice most praiseworthily
through divine inspiration
in their hearts, without any evil thoughts,4
as I am going to tell you now.
They decided together
to establish, in honor of God,
a mighty seat for an archbishop
on their own land, through which they would be able on behalf of the honor of the Virgin to increase forever service for God. This happened. They donated [much] of their own property, and ministeriales, cities, castles, and also land. This is called Magdeburg until today; it is located in the territory of Saxony. The emperor donated at that time so much property that because of its wealth it shines forth through its riches in its highly famous name. When the bishopric was richly endowed just as he wanted it, he selected as canons only the sons of princes. A highly born prince was chosen as archbishop [Albrecht II]. On to him bestowed the noble and powerful emperor the privilege that from hence forth the archbishop would be included at the council when a king would be chosen, being a guardian, who was supposed to fight hostile wrath and unfair judicial courts. The mighty power [of the bishopric] well reflected the impact of the imperial alms-giving. The emperor was never tired to make every effort, that he wanted to be associated with this bishopric. From the bishop’s hand he received great feudal lands [for the cathedral]. He convinced the princes that they gave of their own lands and received those again as feudal fiefdoms. The bishopric became mighty through so much wealth. This was the truth, as the chronicle reports to us, and as it was written down there. The noble and pure empress was very pleased with it [as well] and gave from herself whatever she could
which was to increase God’s honor.
After the bishopric had been established,
she never neglected to donate more.
When this all had happened
and the emperor fully recognized
the adornment and the great wealth,
as it was granted to the house of God,
he was thoroughly happy about it.
He often turned to God
and prayed intensively,
which he did happily
in the name of God and at all times.
Without any wrong thought in her heart
the empress was filled with constant love
for God.
Now the wise emperor
was much filled with the desire
for praise by the world.
There was nothing comparable
to give him any joy.
That he did so much good
in honor of God,
made him very happy,
since that gave him all the time
without anyone doubting him
the praise of the world.
Everyone said in full agreement,
using the same words,
that an act had been done by him
in a truly imperial fashion.
That was the common account
everywhere in the country.
Thus his praise grew everywhere.

When the emperor well perceived
that he had earned the recognition by the world,
he was thinking to himself:
“Since I have gained the praise of the world
by means of my goods,
then, as I believe, I should rightly
receive a great reward from God,
since there was very little that held me back
in doing what I did for Him.
With my wealth I have bought [for myself]
a steady place in heaven.
Since now my good deed brings to light,
in a praiseworthy fashion all over the world,
the crown of accolades,
my reward also ought to be higher,
since a good deed has been made known
which shines before God’s eyes
so richly that there is no one living,
who has given as much in worldly goods
for the eternal life.”
That thought never got out of his mind.
The extraordinary praise was so deeply
implanted in his heart
that it was never free of the illusion of praise.  

Now I have heard the wise saying
that no one can keep his mind hidden
for a long time,
neither when filled with joy nor when filled with sorrow.
His tongue finally formulated a word
somewhere according to his wish
which planted his heart’s desire
firmly in his mind.

This I will prove to you as I am supposed to do.
The story [to be told] will prove this proverb
in the case of the emperor,
who finally turned
with his words to God,
voicing what he had kept hidden for a long time.
This occurred as I am going to tell you.
It happened one day
in the cathedral, of all places.
The mighty and worthy man
knelt on the ground on his exposed knees
when he was in front of the lord’s altar
and sighed deeply from the bottom of his heart.
He said, as I will reveal to you,
in his mind to God in the following way:
“Oh Lord, Alpha and Omega,
true creator, sweet Christ,
I believe in You,
in the triune unity,
in God who carries three names,
three names in one power,
who ordered everything that has ever been seen
and also what has never been seen,
with three powers.
Those three powers have protected
with Your triune strength
everything in creation.
The first power is the one
within the Father.
The other power is the wisdom
which carries the Son’s name.
The goodness of the Holy Spirit is,
as I fathom,
the third power in You
according to Your wise mastery.
These three powers have forcefully
merged together in one bundle,
and that bundle has so much power
that it will never go away.
That is You, Father Sabaoth,8
Your fatherly power ordained
the eternal stability of the heaven,
how and in what manner
the course of the stars run and how the sun shines.
You have divided with Your power
day and night.
Your art has given each
their own time according to the right scale.
The virtues of grace, praise, peace, and blessing
wish for You at all times
to grant to You the heavenly triumph,
which You have divided
into nine choirs.
Those who are angels and archangels,
praise You, Father and Son,
in three names being one,
always being pure,
without beginning and without end,
in divine victory.
The honor of the bishop’s chair, of the bishop’s office,
the office of the princes, the power of the heaven,
the constant power of all forces
give You praise by day and night
and Your fatherly mind.
Cherubim and Seraphim
are constantly ready for Your divine Highness
to give You praise at all times.
You are also praised steadily
by what has, with the help of Your power,
be hidden so secretly
away from human eyes
that it will always remain
unseen by people.
You are also praised by other creatures
that I cannot, out of fear of You,
identify by name;
I recognize thereby
that Your divine council
has created all beings.
Your fatherly will created that.
You are sitting high on Cherubim
and you command knowledge
of the depth of the abyss.
The other spirit in You I call the council
which has joined You:
that is the wisdom of the Son.
That has created with Your strength
in perfect manner
air, water, fire, and earth.9
They are the core of all things,
created by Your pure word
that came out of Your worthy mouth,
and made everything that exists here in this world.
I know, as far as I have learned,
there is the third power in You:
that is Your humility,
the kindness of the Holy Spirit,
with which the life of being
is given existence.
Whatever is living here on earth,
in the air or what is swimming in the water,
that lives in its full blossom
through the goodness of the Holy Spirit.
That life is triune;
Your Spirit is the power over all.
One life has living life,10
which yet does not know about life,
such as wood, grass, the roots:
all that is living, but those things are not aware of it,
except that they grow, as you can see. The other form of life has the sense that it lives and understands that, and yet cannot explain it with the help of reason. Those are the creatures with a reason, that swim, fly, and walk. The third form of life possesses intelligence, senses, reason, and rationality. Your living spirit has granted to it law, art, speech, and life, such as myself and all Your children who are called human beings. That is the triune power which has turned to you with all might to Your sweet Godhead. Praise and honor to You.

When Adam committed a wrong deed, it happened because of a woman’s false council that he broke Your rule and thus all mankind was lost. At that point Your sweet word was ready for ignorant mankind, as a consolation for us poor people. Thus Your word redeemed us, your child’s humanity, which constantly stays with You in loyalty.¹¹ The word departed from Your chair, and a pure maiden received it, who gave birth, in a human fashion, as a mother and as a maid at the same time.¹² That is You, sweet pure Christ, since You are Your father’s son. The Holy Spirit is both of You. Through Your complete worthiness I believe that Your being suffered death in human sorrow because of our foolishness in harsh human pain. And according to the words of the faith on the third day rose [from death] the true human being and God so that the Spirit through the law of divinity entered hell.
and took freed them
from eternal lamenting,
and on the fortieth day
He sat at Your right side,
and did not forget his comfort
that he had left behind here on earth
as a promise.

Since I believe in that
in a Christian fashion, just as I am supposed to,
pure God, I am begging You
that You grant me Your hearing
because of my sweet faith
so that I may find out,
perceived through human eyes,
in Your divine secrecy
what high praise is prepared for me
as a reward for my labor
that I have done on Your behalf.
I know in full truth, without any doubt,
that now in these times
in all the lands far and wide,
there is no one as good a person,
who has served You so well, Holy Christ,
as I have done for You.
All over the world people praise
my great accomplishments.
With the intention of serving You
I have carried out my duties for Your divinity
and have always been ready
to work hard for you,
acquiring constant praise with great strength
together with many illustrious knights,
who have sworn an oath to serve
You ever more.
In order to enhance Your mother’s honor,
I have given the most wealth
in Your name.

Now I request, without being lost in an illusion,
since I have donated to You
so many fiefdoms,
that You, very sweet, pure God,
on behalf of Your mother’s honor,
show me what I will receive from You
as a reward for all my efforts,
that I have performed on Your behalf.”

As the emperor had formulated that prayer with endearing words, he did not desire anything less but what the story is telling us, since God granted him just that what he desired, that is, that he was going to see how God was going to reward him for what good he had done for Him. Now listen properly to his prayer to Him, before whom no one can hide, whose eyes look into all hearts and who knows in advance what people are going to think. That is God of the wise council who has thought ahead in His mind what will happen in the future until the Day of Judgment. He heard and saw what the emperor said, who had handed over so much of his property to Him.

The emperor begged God intensively in so many ways to let him know, what kind of reward he was going to receive, for which he had done good deeds.

Then there came, as I have heard, a very trustworthy messenger, whom God had sent to him. He was eager, shining, and fast. He had a loud and clear voice. The emperor perceived how it came close to him. It was the answer to his request, filled with some wrath: “Highly worthy and mighty emperor, God has granted you much honor in this world. He gave you life, honor, and wealth, now your heartfelt mind has given you a good advice to share it all in the name of God as well.
You are being praised fully
all over the world.
In heaven there was a chair prepared for you,
placed next to the Highest
and at the highest rank.
Your [lust for] fame has lowered it.
The praise for your good deed has been silenced
because of your great arrogance,
which you did not repress toward God,
because of the advice by your misled heart
so that you have destroyed your good deed in the face of God.
      Now you will receive as a reward,
since you have done it all in order to gain fame,
the praise of the world,
which you have manipulated
in so many ways
in order to gain God’s reward.
He is not honored who desires goods;
he should seek to have a heart’s pure mind
to achieve human salvation;
therefore he will be able to acquire
with eternal reward
the heavenly crown.
You could have achieved your goal well
in a grand manner with many things,
and your praise would have been great before God
if you had done, according to His command
without any evil intention
such praiseworthy good deed
as a good merchant has done,
who never earned the name of a prince.
That merchant’s alms have gained him the reward
that his name is written
into the book of life
with God’s approval.
You will have to amend this with God
with repentance through good deeds,
if you want that your effort will be worth anything
and come to good fruition.
Otherwise you will be denied
the reward that formerly had been prepared for you.”
      The emperor got so frightened
that the terror took away all of his joy.
He said to himself:
“Lord God, how can it be that that merchant could have served so much better than me? With your permission, I would like to say that I have made so many worthy knights into your servants, who could help You much better being ready to serve You in their worthiness, with their goods, that is, serve You, Good God, and Your dear mother, than such a kind of man, who never earned such a rank. But I would like to know, if it can be without incurring wrath, what his name might be, so that I could get to know him. Dear Lord, sweet God, let this happen through Your command.” The voice said to the emperor, when he had spoken those words: “I want to respond to your heart’s desire and properly name the merchant who has earned the great goodness with so much justification that his praise becomes praiseworthy in all times without any end. It is the Good Gerhart of Cologne who has protected himself from all sinfulness. He is free from all false loyalty; his generous heart makes everyone say that he is called a good person: for that reason he is called the Good One. His blissfulness is a decoration for the entire country where he has his abode. He is greatly praised everywhere.” “Oh, Lord, what has he done that he has earned so much gratitude?” asked the emperor immediately. “If you want to learn about it, then travel there one of these days and ask him to tell you the truth.” “A messenger might learn well
what I want to find out through him.”

Then the voice answered him:

“You should be happy
if he tells you the full truth
when you go to see him.
When he tells you the full truth
without any lying,
how he has served God,
then I know well that your heart will let go
the strife and will acknowledge him without any jealousy
that he has served better
God’s gracefulness than you have done,
however much you might boast about it.”

The emperor then immediately got ready
when the voice had disappeared.
He left the cathedral
and wondered mightily,
what the meaning of those words might have been
by which the merchant
had received so much praise
and such high acknowledgment.
At the beginning of the next morning
the emperor heard mass
in his imperial glamour.
When he came down,\textsuperscript{13} they had readied
his horse and he rode off.
He left all his knights behind,
except that he took some people with him secretly
who seemed most fitting for this.
He asked them to keep the journey a secret.
Early in the morning the mighty emperor rode
out of the city of Magdeburg
in such a secret manner
and with such a private group of helpers
that no one noticed it.
The worthy man sent ahead
messengers to Cologne
and told them to inform the bishop\textsuperscript{14}
that he wanted to speak with him
within the next few days
and that he only wanted to arrive
only under the cloak of secrecy
together with his private group.
The messengers told him those things.
The bishop was very pleased
and prepared himself well
because he wanted to welcome properly
the great man in his palace.
Then the emperor arrived.
The bishop rode toward him honorably
together with noble knights all well dressed,
and also with a group of the burghers,
who were excited about this visitor.
According to imperial rituals,
with bells ringing and with relics brought along
the mighty emperor was welcomed
in a worthy fashion
in the major city of Cologne.
The bishop asked him politely
to tell him the news
why he had come there
in such a secret manner
with such a small band of men.
The noble and rich emperor then said
displaying his best eloquence:
“A secret revelation
has urged me to come here privately,
to find good council.
I will need the help of all burghers
who are sitting here.
Now, do not forget,
dear lord bishop,
to ask all the burghers
to come to the court the next morning.
I want them to give council
about one thing.
Let on my behalf come forward to the square
everyone without exception,
both the poor and the rich,
when the bells will ring
and I will tell them the time to come.”
“Lord, that will be done.”
The bishop ordered his messengers
to go out into the city.
They carried out what he requested from them
and ordered, as I have heard,
all the burghers to come and see the emperor.
This took everyone by surprise  
and all burghers were wondering  
why the famous emperor had come  
all by himself.\textsuperscript{16}  
But they would not have wanted to go to see him,\textsuperscript{17}  
unless they would have put on, everyone among them,  
their best clothes  
so that they could appear in a worthy fashion  
before their lord,  
either standing, speaking, or sitting.  
Then the emperor went to have dinner.\textsuperscript{18}  
They did not forget to offer  
an imperial meal to the emperor.  
It was presented to him out of love  
which the friendly and well-meaning bishop had for him,  
just as one would have expected to serve it to an emperor.  
Once they had eaten  
and had sat there for a while,  
the ruler of Rome went to sleep.  
He said good-night  
to the bishop after that,  
speaking from his imperial mouth.\textsuperscript{19}  
\textsuperscript{16}After the night had passed, the day arrived.  
The burghers all agreed  
to go to the palace,  
in order to welcome their lord properly.  
Once they had sung the early morning mass,  
they heard the sound of one bell ringing,  
calling them all to come to the council,  
telling them that the time had arrived  
to go to the court.  
At the time when they had heard that message,  
the emperor had already arrived at the court  
together with the bishop.  
They sat next to each other.  
Then the burghers arrived  
in a good procession, not in disorder,  
the old ones before the young ones.  
They were so nobly dressed  
that they were well entitled to greet  
in a good courtly fashion  
the emperor.  
He welcomed the burghers  
equally graciously
according to courtly standards.  
He asked them all to sit down  
in a wide ring in a group.  
They extended very kind greetings,  
which he returned similarly.  
He thought about it,  
where he should sit next to the entire group  
for whom he had gotten there.  

He looked around  
and examined quietly  
whether they might not honor one among themselves  
to whom they paid tribute  
above all and no one else.  
Immediately he noticed one  
who was the foremost among them  
who appeared to him to be the worthiest.  
He noticed in him  
that people made room for him in the crowd;  
wherever he wanted to turn,  
they stood up for him.  
He was a splendidly looking man,  
he had turned old in good measure.  
He was a very mature person;  
his hair was as white as ice  
both on his head and in his beard.  
He looked attractive and was impressive,  
just as one would like to see in a man.  
He was endowed with such manners,  
that he never lost manly praise in virtuous style.  
He completely stayed away from instability.  
He was a good person and well educated,  
not failing in sweet manners,  
and was loyal and fully trustworthy.  
As a wise and constant person  
he had grown up as a man.  
He was richly dressed.  
His dress and coat were of dark red color  
like blood, and of good quality,  
adorned with the fur of a sable.  
The coat was a blend of cloth and fur  
out of ermine, more white than a swan.  
He wore a ring on the finger and a brooch  
made out of good gems,  
those were the attributes of the worthy man,
and also a valuable belt.
His hair was done in the courtly fashion, 790
in a simple curly way.
His beard was trimmed
elegantly and adroitly.
That was the Good Gerhart, 795
whom the emperor was seeking out.
He was the one of whom God
had received the good deeds
that he had performed in His name
whatever he had undertaken in good terms
because his heart was filled
with pure intentions.
He was as loyal as a diamond
and shone through his manly steadiness,
as the story’s source is telling us.

When the emperor noticed him, 800
he secretly spoke to the bishop:
“Tell me, who is that man
who knows how to demonstrate
such noble manner and behavior?
Indeed, he shines forth so splendidly
that he appears to me
as being free of any vice.”
The bishop answered immediately:
“He is a virtuous hero,20
who can not tolerate falsitude.
That is that worthy old man,
whose heart has always pined for the true goodness.
From childhood until today
he has always protected himself from vicissitude.
This is the Good Gerhart. 815
His name is known far and wide.
He has received this epithet for good reasons,
since his entire attitude
is determined by pure goodness.”
When the emperor heard this,
he liked him more and more
and felt great about him.
“I have heard that of him”
said Emperor Otto thereupon.
He was pleased seeing him,
since he had been told
of so many of his virtues.
The emperor then kindly spoke, when he looked at the good man, who was standing there in such a praiseworthy manner:
“Lords, I have come riding here to look for advice in my misery which forced me to undertake this travel.”
Then everyone spoke up in likewise fashion, both the poor and the rich, that they would be ready to give their advice, if they could give him truly proper council, honoring his imperial rank.
The emperor thanked them without any deception, as he knew well how to do.
He said: “Whoever is looking for advice, ought to look for it where he can find advice without being deceived.
For that reason I am looking for council here, since your smartness has always provided me with aid and advice in full truth.
Now I would like to select one from among you (allow me to do so, without incurring your wrath) whom I will tell the reason why I have been driven to come here. I am looking for council from him, and afterwards from all of you, if you agree with that plan.”
“Yes, oh Lord, whatever you prefer,” we have no concerns about it,”
they were all saying, and:
“whatever you want, we will be happy with it as well.”
[The Emperor:] “Gerhart, then I would like to talk with you.
My heart is drawn to you.”
[Gerhart:] “Lord, I do not command such wisdom to go alone to you to give council for the empire,” said the very well mannered Gerhart, the highly virtuous man.
But then he went with the emperor into a private room.
When they stepped into it, the emperor locked the door
with a large bolt.
He went to sit down on a chair.
He did not allow the merchant to keep standing,
he also had to sit down next to him.
[Gerhart:] “Oh no, lord,” said the good man,
“I can sit well on the stool,
since that ought to be enough for me,”
he said in his excellent wisdom.
[Emperor:] “No, you must sit here
right next to me.”
He struggled against it, but then it had to be.
Then the mighty prince said:
“Gerhart, I am going to tell you what is on my mind:
I have come here to see you.”
[Gerhart:] “Lord, that was not appropriate:
I do not possess enough of wealth,
do not enjoy the birth right, do not have the noble body, or mind;
you ought to recognize that yourself.
You never would have, please accept that,
any need of me  
and if I may,
I will not give you any advice
(unfortunately my abilities are not enough for that).
I would have come to you, if fetched by a messenger,
as soon as I would have received word.”
[Emperor:] “Now be assured, I tell you honestly,
I have come riding here
only because of you.
Now let me witness your loyalty
and answer me what I am going to ask you.”
[Gerhart:] “Gladly, lord, I will do so,
if I know anything.” [Emperor:] “Yes, you do.”
[Gerhart:] “So I will do it because I am supposed to be
obedient to you.”
[Emperor:] “Then tell me openly,
how did it happen, through what method,
have you been called the Good Gerhart
from very early on,
and why people gave you that epithet?
I want to ask you for the favor
to inform me about
what you have done for God
so that you carry such a name.”
[Gerhart:] “My lord, the reason for that was
that people have the habit
to those whom they observe as being reliable,
and thus treat them as honest men.
That is a bad custom among them.
That is also happened to me.
Unfortunately I cannot tell you
why I might be called ‘the good one,’
unless I would deceive myself.
I have not done any special thing
on behalf of God that I might carry
with good reasons that great name,
which is so high and praiseworthy.24
I have often had a good intention,
but then I failed, as it often happens with people,
since I was weak and did not have the necessary wealth.
Even though I was prepared,
I still could not do anything
to chase after praise, honor, or fame
and acquire any of it,
so that it would have been to my advantage.
When I wanted to do something good,
the weakness of my intention
took away from me the good will
so that I helped the poor in their suffering
with very poor means.
I gave sour beer and rye bread
as alms outside of my gate,
when I saw the poor standing outside
in all of their miserable suffering.
Unfortunately, I rarely demonstrated
that I had ever received from my creator
any valuable goods.
But whenever I thought of God
and gave away something to fulfill his commands,
then I handed out
some old clothing,
and sadly enough I seldom gave
anything else.
I have also always uttered only short prayers.
Once I had done so at a time,
It seemed to me to be enough for a year.
My lord, I truly should be exempted
from carrying that honorable name,
since I have not earned it.”  
The emperor said: “It has to be after all  
that you give me, which is my wish,  
a better answer to my question.  
I know very well that you have done  
something great on behalf of God,  
and you should let me know what it was,  
and for what reason you earned that name.”  
Then Gerhart answered:  
“You should spare me that, lord.”  
[The Emperor:] “No, that cannot be, indeed,  
say it, I will not permit anything else,  
you will not make me forgo my request,  
you will have to reveal it,  
irrespective of how much you might dislike it.”  
Then the good man called upon God in his heart.  
He said: “Oh dear, Lord God,  
do I now have to, following your order  
reveal to you whether I  
have done anything good on your behalf?  
Have mercy on me, Lord.  
Consider that I, Your poor creature,  
will have to do it by force,  
and not in order to gain fame.  
This is such a harsh man  
against whom I cannot defend myself.  
I must tell him everything  
what he wants to hear from me.  
Out of fear I must tell him  
what good things have happened through me.  
You know that, sweet Lord.”  
With those thoughts in mind  
he knelt before the emperor  
with the intention  
of begging him  
through that method  
to let go of his request.  
He formulated his desire as follows:  
He begged the emperor to allow him  
not to answer the question. And in his mind  
he requested from God to let him know,  
whether he would lose, through his revelation  
as a result of his bragging  
God’s sweet grace.
He formulated out of his heart’s piety two types of questions, one for God and one for the emperor. The heart separated body and mind because of the loyalty toward both, as I will tell you. He bent his heart’s knee before God, and the body’s knee before the emperor; the heart’s mind was lying before God, the body before the emperor did nothing but that he begged him to let go of that question. The heart before God was such that it requested advice and help from Him so that He would, in His grace grant him to be freed from this obligation if He was so inclined, since in those matters he really disliked, as he felt in his heart, to speak about his fame in response to the emperor’s request. Since he now had turned in prayer his mind, heart, and reason to both, I believe that his heartfelt mind made this possible for him that the good was granted in a good fashion, as it is always the case when someone requests the right thing from Him. The goodness of the sweet, true Christ, who is the origin of all good, was present there in much purer form than it had been before in the shape of human goodness. In the blossom of the flower of goodness merciful goodness blossomed there for the emperor’s soul. God granted him in His graciousness what he had requested from Him. The emperor did not spare [Gerhart] to answer him what he had asked him to do. God who had forgiven his guilt because of his prayer, and this without wrath. The emperor did not let go his continuous jealousy and he forced the merchant to tell him what he wanted to learn from him.
When the Good Gerhart recognized this in the emperor, that his request was denied, he had to tell how it had happened. He said: “My honorable lord, grant me out of your mercy, and accept on behalf of God, to take from me willingly thousand marks that I will give you so that you no longer request that from me.” This began to irritate the emperor. He said: “Gerhart, now tell me, how come that goodness rests with you so easily and that you so easily offer me thousand marks in order for me to spare you to respond to the request. I will be wondering about that forever.” [Gerhart:] “I will tell you, my lord, why I have offered you that money. If I had done any good deeds on behalf of my creator, that would become meaningless if I were bragging about it, whereby I would make it useless. He certainly knows whether I have done any good for Him. He will know how to reward me for that; for that I should not give praise to myself.”

When the emperor heard that, his joy was in part diminished. He thought by himself: “Oh you good Lord God, how is it that this man can understand all that better than me, while I am rightly called emperor of the Holy Roman Empire? That a merchant has a better insight than my own imperial understanding will grieve me forever. Lord God, I am begging You to forgive me what I have done wrong to You. Whatever I have misspoken, I will repent for,
trusting Your great mercy.”
He said: “Gerhart, now let it be,
tell me what I want to hear from you.
I have been convinced
that you may do so truly
without any false self-praise.”
The good man responded:
“My lord, if it is the case
that this is God’s will
(which I cannot know truly),
I would not have denied your request so far,
know this for sure.”
[Emperor:] “It is not against God’s command,
since I am asking you in the name of God
that you do not keep it hidden from me
and tell me the full truth.”
[Gerhart:] “Lord, since it has to be,
God must know my mind,
that I am doing it because you force me to do it
and not out of [the desire] for worldly fame.”
These were the Good Gerhart’s words,
when he was asked once again.

[Narrator:] Since things have developed this way,
that he will tell the story himself,
let me become quiet.
Let us have him talk himself
about the origin of the full truth,
how he got that name,
that is, how he was called ‘the good.’
Gerhart then sat down on the chair,26
as the emperor had personally ordered him to do,
who had not let go of his request.
Thus [Gerhart] began to speak:

“Lord, it started that way:
When my father died,
passing away in so much honor
that he had acquired such a reputation
which made him known far and wide
all over the land
and recognized by the people,
his inheritance came to me,
since it was rightly mine.
according to the inheritance laws.  
It was such a great amount of wealth,  
and I was happy to accept it as such;  
it was certainly more than enough.  
Dear lord, then I acted  
as everyone else likes to do:  
I endeavored to put my goods  
to the best possible use  
and increased my gains  
on behalf of my son whom God had granted me.  
In him I found His command  
realized just as it pleased me;  
God had shown me His love for me  
in my son’s goodness.  
This gave me solace  
since he grew up, as I noticed  
just as my heart desired.  
When he began in his youth  
to display love for manly virtues,  
I felt great joy in my heart.  
I thought to myself,  
that I would invest my good  
on his behalf,  
so that I might gain thereby  
the chance according to old customs  
that they would call him the Rich Gerhart  
and would not grudge him  
to carry the name of my father,  
who was called the Rich Gerhart  
because of his wealth which he had acquired  
in a worthy fashion throughout his life.  
I was prepared to trust my good fortune  
and left to my son  
a part of the goods, which he was supposed to have  
and with which he might be able to live  
like a wise man.  
I took then silver from him  
which weighed 50,000 marks.  
Whatever profitable goods there were available,  
I took it with me as much as I deemed wise  
to the markets in heathen lands.  
Once I had made up my mind,  
I ordered to place provisions  
in my ship enough for three years.
I had under my command
experienced and good sailors,
who were familiar with the sea.
A scribe also came along
who kept an account of all goods
and who performed without delay
the seven daily prayers.
Once I was ready as I had intended
for my voyage,
just as my heart desired,
I traveled with all my goods
over the sea to Russia,\(^2^7\)
to Livonia and Prussia,
where I found many saber furs.
From there I traveled to Samarkand,\(^2^8\)
to Damascus and Niniveh.\(^2^9\)
There I found plenty of merchandise,
such as many rich furs,
more than anywhere else in the world.
I purchased so much of it
because I fully realized
that, once having come home,
I would double the amount
of [the original] in silver and even more.
From there I returned to my voyage across the sea
and wanted to return home.
My business had turned out in every respect
so well beyond all of my own expectations
that I could not have had any further wish
which I might think of
or any other desire.
My intentions had been so fully accomplished,
that, whatever I might have dreamed of,
I could not have wished it better.
On my loyalty, I am telling you that.
Now I realized that my plan
should be completed,
as I had originally intended.
At that very moment
strong thunderstorms arose.
They chased us toward a destination
with all their force and great strength
for twelve days and twelve nights.
during which we never enjoyed
a calm of the storm or the reappearance of the sun.
We experienced much suffering.
The storm constantly caused us much pain.
Then we reached, I am telling you,
on the thirteenth day
a mountain range which rose up to a high elevation.
It was so entirely unknown
that there was no one among the men
who recognized it,
or could have told me
that he had ever seen it
in all of his life.
It was the unknown wild world where we had arrived.³⁰
At that moment the weather improved.
After the long time of raging storms
the day turned nice and clear.
We forgot, I honestly tell you,
all the previous suffering.
Nevertheless, we were greatly concerned
because we were afraid of the strange land.
The waves had brought us
to the harbor near the mountains.
Then I sent one sailor ahead
to climb the mountain, and I told him to take a look,
whether he might espy somehow
any farmed land.
He should then inform us about that.
This happened, the sailor
climbed on top of the mountain
and wanted to see whether he could recognize
any inhabited land.
He observed, lying below the mountain,
a wide and pleasant plain,
beautifully settled, as he told us.
He said that he had never seen
a land that had pleased him more.
As much as he had measured it with his eyes
as to its length, width, and extension,
the land did not appear known to him,
and he could not recognize
where that region and the land
in their width and length came to their end.
When he had reached the top of the mountain,
as I had asked him to do before,
he discovered a city located below
at the foot of the mountain next to the sea.
It seemed well fortified to him,
with many splendid towers.
The size of the city I would compare
to the city of Cologne.\textsuperscript{31}
The sea partly surrounded it;
on one and a half sides there was water,
a good harbor deep enough for ships.
The castle’s moats were filled with water.
The city was, indeed, well fortified,
against threats from enemies.
Three streets allowed to transport
merchandise from the countryside.
On the fourth corner there was a gate
allowing merchandise to come in from heathendom [per ship].
The sailor observed exactly
how people came from the countryside
toward the city in large numbers,
pulling many carts,
which aimed for the castle,
filled with much valuable merchandise.
He did not know where the many elephants
originated from.
On the three other roads traveled
many mules, horses, and carts,
carrying such great merchandise,
coming from and going to the castle,
and this for great profit
and he swore to me
that wherever he had traveled before,
he had never seen
such a huge market as he had observed there,
and never so many objects for sale.
There was such a throng of people,
that he swore by God,
that he had never seen such a crowd.

Once the sailor had learned everything\textsuperscript{32}
about the city, the area, and the land,
he returned and told us
how it had turned out,
and what he had seen there.
Then we directed our ship toward that goal,
that is, toward the strong fortress.
What the sailor had told me
about that city,
I found to be true,
and just as one could only wish for.
When I sailed into the fortified harbor,
[I noticed that] the burghers were heathens
and yet so well mannered
that they gave me kind greetings;
with that they eased for me
many of my heartfelt worries,
which had naturally occupied me deeply.
All that gave me some comfort.
Then I looked around everywhere
if I might find someone
to whom I might dare to entrust
all my goods
and whose promise of peace might protect me.
Right then I saw a man,
who instilled confidence in me.\textsuperscript{33}
He approached me in a princely manner.
He was so manly in his appearance
that his impression made me believe
that I should ask for his protection.
Many worthy knights followed him
and also many squires. I hurried
through the throng toward him
and wanted to present my request to him.

The noble and worthy knight
began to greet me right away
in heathen [Arabic] language, when he espied me.
Once he had given me his greeting
I bowed before him, as one ought to respond to greetings,
but he realized and noticed clearly,
as the wise people mostly do,
that I could not understand his language.
Then the prince spoke in a courtly fashion:
“Tell me, do you understand French!”
[Gerhart:] “Yes, lord, I know well
both the language and also the country [of France].”
[Prince:] “Then may you be greeted.”
I said: “\textit{Merci beaucoup}, Sir,”
feeling great joy in my heart.
Then the mighty prince said:
“Dear sir and guest, now tell me,
what has brought you to this country?
Are you a Frenchman, or what?
What country are you coming from?”
Then I told him everything
that I was a merchant
from German lands far away.
Then the lord asked me
what I was looking for in this country.
I answered him thereupon:
I have been told in truth
that in this heathen land,
there would be an annual market
at this time. I traveled then
with my merchandise to this land.
The most precious goods that I could have found
I have eagerly
brought with me to this kingdom.”
When the lord heard that,
he immediately asked me
whether people called me a Christian
and whether I acknowledged
baptism according to the Christian law.
I said that I was called according to God’s command
a Christian in the name of Christ.
Then the prince responded right away:
“Since you have arrived here at this time
from such a great distance
in order to honor my overlord,
you will not be amiss in anything,
neither regards your personal needs nor your goods.
In the name of my overlord
I will receive all your goods [for safekeeping].
Whoever might do any wrong to you,
will have done that wrong to me.
Whatever you want to sell
or what you might purchase, that will
remain free of any tariff
in the name of my overlord’s honor.
Then I want to honor you even more
because of your [long] journey.
Since you have expressed such great love for my overlord
and wanted to visit the market,
you will experience good fortune here
without anyone begrudging you that.
I want to make on your behalf
a harbor for all Christians, free of tariff.
That is situated near by,
it was given to me by my overlord as a fiefdom,
whatever merchandise will be brought there,
free of any toll, that shall from now on
be free according to my law.
The worthy and noble king
of Morocco has, with his own hand,
given it to me as my own.
In addition he granted me all this land.
I have sworn on my oath:
whenever I will have a child,
then that should also belong to time,
and this by the same right as it belongs to me.

When the market begins,
then all goods will be free of a toll,
a privilege for all Christians, and this because of you.
Now turn around and consider
what lodging you would like to have.
Once you will have tested one and found it to be good,
it will be granted to you
without charge and any deposit
as long as this market will last.
Be assured, whenever you desire anything,
turn to me without any hesitation,
by my truth, I will help you.

I was happy about this arrangement.
I then gave to the lord
my grace and great thanks.
His support happily dispersed
whatever suffering I had ever experienced
through terrifying conditions,
and this happened in that foreign land.
His squires took me
to where I chose an inn.
It was one that seemed appropriate to me,
which was praised above all the others
by the guests in town.
His squires recommended it to me
and thus fulfilled my heart’s desire.
I inquired with them
what the name might be
of the man who had treated me so kindly
to welcome me so well.  
One of the squires informed me  
that he was called Stranmûr.  
He was the territorial duke  
and was the castellan of the castle.  
[Gerhart continues:] He was so well mannered,  
although he was a heathen,  
that I am wishing him, to be sure,  
always the best in the name of God.  
Now I praised God for the kindness  
that he had turned my sorrow  
so fully into happiness  
and increased my joy  
in such a blissful manner for one man,  
which I have never heard of before,  
except for that moment,  
when he informed me  
about his own rulership over the harbor  
and that I was so fortunate to be freed  
from paying a toll, indeed.  
I gave great thanks to God  
who had bestowed that grace upon me.  
When I went to my private chamber,  
the lord offered me many honors  
and upon his own friendship  
ordered that I should receive  
whatever I should ask for.  
As a sign of his good breeding he granted me even more,  
more than what I would have requested from him,  
and this all through the loyalty of companionship.  
His dedication was new to me,  
yet I begged him  
to approach me with the personal ‘you’.  
Thus he shared with me in lovely fellowship  
loyal company.  
One day he asked me,  
when we were together, to let him  
see the treasure of my merchandise.  
I was pleased about it. I allowed him to examine it  
what I had brought with me for sale.  
He looked at it carefully.  
It all seemed valuable and wealthy to him,  
[and said] that he had never seen  
anything in such splendor
anywhere in all heathen lands.

Then he turned to me
and said “Gerhart, I am telling you,
you have brought with you the greatest riches
that have ever been in this country
owned by one single man.
No one in this country could pay for it
except for myself.
If you want, I will let you see
the treasure of merchandise that I own.
If you like it, then we shall arrange
an exchange between us both.
I will honestly tell you
what kind of merchandise it is.
If you were to take it to your land
you will nicely profit from it.
Here it is not worth anything, therefore I want to
exchange with you, if you are prepared to do so.
If you are not opposed to making a profit
you might gain a lot from it.”

I said: “Wherever I can gain a profit
I will do entirely the same what anyone else would do
to gain properly acquired goods.”

[Strannmür:] “This is a rightly acquired good.
If it were as valuable for me as it will be for you
in your country, I would never receive
the appropriate amount of money for it from you.”

Now, I assumed that I would find
merchandise goods
out of silver and gold.37
Then the host took me
to a private room.
I assumed to find there
great riches.
But there were no wares in the room,
and yet it contained great wealth,
as I will inform you.
It was filled with goods and yet empty of goods,
stuffed with wealth and yet also with poverty,
all well protected there.
I found there in a miserable shape
twelve manly and good knights
who were firmly tied with strong ropes,
and were lying there caught in iron shackles
and suffered badly.  
Always two were tied to a bar,  
which was heavy, certainly not light,  
and they were locked to them.  
About thirty years old was each in his youth.  
From the early childhood years of virtues they had grown up in a manly fashion.  
They displayed the first hair of a beard, that had never been shaven.  
Although they suffered deeply in their hearts they were so lovely to look at that the thought occurred to me, that the universal desire for beauty must have been realized through them, if only they could live in joyfulness.  
They were miserably robbed of that; their hearts had lost all joy through lamentable suffering and long sorrowing, which heavily filled their minds. Indeed, the room was devoid of goods, no doubt about that.  
No goods had been placed in there except for the pure worthiness, shining forth from the noble knights who were caught in that prison.  
My heart began to lament their suffering and to share through the lament their burden, which they suffered in such misery and with such great heartfelt pain. My heart’s joy deflates [even] now when I am thinking of them. Their lamenting and suffering will hurt me forever. Then the host took me by his hand and asked me to go forward, since he wanted to let me see an [even] greater merchandise somewhere else. I went with him in apprehension. So I followed in order to see it. He led me on to another chamber. When we stepped into it, I looked around [to find out] how and when I was supposed to see the greatest merchant’s treasure that he would offer me.
There I found, in the same misery,
the same kind of sorrow,
which reminded me of the others’ suffering.
The discovery was so painful for me
and so lamentable
that my heart could barely cope with it.
If I had ever enjoyed anything,
the memory of it was at that moment completely removed from me.
I saw twelve old lords
sitting there, also caught in shackles,
who had grown in their wisdom
to full maturity
and were about sixty years of age.
They had grey hair and looked pale.
The hair on their heads and in the beards
had turned grey.
They appeared to me as praiseworthy,
as I could perceive it in their appearance.
Then my heart began to tell me,
that all their wishes would have been fulfilled
if they did not suffer from heart-felt pain.
Their demeanor demonstrated that to me.
Each two were bound
in one shackle.
Their miserable suffering
I lamented even more than that by the young men,
since they should be honored
because of their age, and this over the youth.
The bold virtues of young hearts
is often wounded,
but this easily changes.
Youth overcomes
what makes old age grow weak.
Youth suffers many a pain
from which old age receives death.
For that reason their suffering
caused my heart pain because of their age.
When I saw their lamentable suffering
and heard their heavy laments,
it hurt me deeply in my heart.
Then the host no longer tarried
and I left together with him. We departed.
Then the noble man took me
away from the miserable crowd.
After I had observed their suffering, the host did not spare me from more. 1625
Holding his hand I went further into another room. There I found sweet reward, which delights a man’s mind in terms of love, joy, and goodness, which, regards to worthiness and bliss, brings many delights of happiness, which in turn provides the world at all times with great joy in one’s mind.
This treasure of all merchandise was in that land a brilliant mirror of good manners and good fortune, a diamond of loyalty and goodness, except that the gleaming of its light was dimmed through great sorrow, since it was often made wet through a rain which came from lament in the heart, burdened with lament.
Then I looked around. I saw sitting there noble ladies, in total fifteen of them. 1645
That was the treasure of a merchandise of which I had spoken. They looked so pretty that I will wonder forever how God had granted them so much delight to them, when he increased through His art their bodily beauty. They displayed wonderful manners and womanly praise in their goodness, highly minded disposition in ever-lasting constancy. All that characterized those women through their feminine delights, not leaving anything to be desired for; 1655
They were a sweet living fruit in their beauty and their feminine breeding, marked by their goodness without a drop of gall. Of all those women I want to mention one who was so noble and so pure and in beauty superseded the others so much
that I can give her excellence the triumph above all other beautiful women with the crown of delight. The brilliance of her loving appearance carried in terms of beauty such a wreath so that she was the triumph of female beauty. Her delightfulness was more impressive than that of all other women. Because of her beauty I am giving the crown to her body, her sweet worthiness. To her beauty God had turned all his loving effort. Her lips were red, her neck was white, her cheeks glowed in the rosy color of lilies and shone forth in her bright skin. It was not marred by anything. Her eyes were shining and bright, and her hair was blond and curly, hanging down in a simple fashion. Her lovely body was slender and graceful. This well born noble lady was perfect as one could just imagine and was free of any false behavior. When she had been born, nothing had been missed in terms of beauty, goodness, and virtues. She deserves to be praised as a worthy woman, and in her body she was just perfect. I became sad and happy to have ever seen this good lady. I felt sorry for her suffering and also felt happy in my heart to have seen her in her lovely appearance. Once this had happened and I had looked properly at those women and also at the poor knights suffering in such great sorrow, then Stranmûr, the worthy man, took me away again. He said: “Have you seen all that well?” I said: “Yes.” [He:] “Now tell me whether you want to purchase them.” I said: “What?”
[He:] “Have you not seen it?”
[I:] “I have not observed anything else but a sorrowful crowd of people, who lead a terrible life.”

[Stranmûr:] “These I want to offer them to you in exchange [for your goods].”
[I:] “What good would they do for me?” [Stranmûr:] “I am going to tell you that. If I could profit from them, as you might be able to do, I would not so easily offer them to you. Whoever demands the right amount of ransom will certainly be given hundred thousand marks. He could not have in his ship a better merchandise, if he lets them go after a contract has been signed. If their home countries were closer by to me, I would have secured through them a huge ransom in the amount of hundred thousand marks; that’s what I estimate them being worth.”

Then I asked him right away how they had gotten into this situation. He said: “I am going to tell you how they came into my power in the first place. Tell me, do you know England?”
[Gerhart:] “Yes, I know it well.”
[Stranmûr:] “The noble and outstanding knights were born in that country.”
[Gerhart:] “What had caused them to come here into imprisonment in this country?”
They traveled from their country together with a hero, called Willehalm, a young prince from England, and went to the mighty Norway. Its king handed over his daughter to him as his fiancée. This was the high-spirited princess whom you were allowed to see, together with fourteen ladies, and she was the fifteenth, in whom God did not spare anything. She is [King] Reinmund’s daughter. The storm drove her and her knights into a harbor that belongs to me.
Therefore they have rightly
to stay here until the time has come
as I will determine.
(I have that privilege from my overlord,
as I have told you before.)
If you want to purchase them from me,
I will give them to you and assure you
that they will pay double the amount of money as ransom
which you will give me for them.
The purchase, however, cannot be in any other way:
whatever I have seen in your ship
as your merchandise
you will have to give me as the price.
If the king is still alive,
he will ransom you dearly his daughter;
If he is not dead or ill,
then King Reinmunt
will not allow his dear child to perish.
Amongst those who are imprisoned with her
there are a good number
of noble and mighty princes.
Instead of lying here a long time
in such hardship,
you will rather give you their property;
I know that this would be their desire.
The wild and stormy waves and
their complete ignorance of where they were pushed by the waves
brought them into my shackles,
and they are hidden here from their families.45
Now, their wealth and their country
is more closely situated to you, and known to you.
Therefore I offer them to you for purchase.
If you do not want to buy them from me,
I will still take your goods
as you wish to sell them
and will happily keep the promise
that I had given you.”46

That proposition appeared very strange to me,
that he had perceived in me
a person with such an attitude,
believing that I would be so minded
to hand over such great goods
for nothing but an illusion.
I said: “Lord, I will have to think about it well
until tomorrow morning.”
He answered: “That pleases me. Now do so.”
With his permission I then left him.
My heart often advised me
to go take this or that approach.
At last it occurred to me
to ask God for advice,
what I should do in this case,
so that He would send into my heart
according to His grace,
an understanding in my heart$t^4$ whether it would be pleasing to Him
that I would release those poor people
from such misery.
My heart was burdened with these doubts
in the middle of the night,
whether it would be alms [coming from me]
or whether I should not do it.
While I was lying there, tortured by doubts, and yet was enjoying my sweet sleep,
an angel came and awoke me
(as it seemed to me). Then I woke up.
I would not want to say
that my eyes saw him:
rather, my heart saw him in sleep.
When I learned that in my dream,
it seemed to me that he called me
and twice addressed me by name.
“Gerhart, wake up, are you still asleep?
God is very angry with you
that you are such a wise person
and yet understand so little
of God’s true wisdom.
You carry a doubt in your heart
which is contrary to your creator.
The sweet God, the pure Christ
has said with His own mouth,
when he was still seen with human eyes
in the shape of a human being:
‘What is being done to a poor person
is an act of kindness when it is being done for me, you are going to do that for me, not for the poor man. I am the poor one. Wherever you see a poor person, and when you do something good for him, then you do something for me. Because of this comforting solace you ought to live without doubt and be strong in your heart.

You had a foolish thought when you thought that you had lost some of your goodness. Now be resolved in your heart: A good deed will never be lost which is being done in the name of God. In whatever country you will relieve the poor and give them comfort, that will be the reward for your heart. If you do it in return for money, they will reward you, but if you do it for honor, you will be praised forever; but if you do it to meet God’s command, then be assured that God will give you as a reward the eternal crown.”

When the angel had spoken those words I woke up from my sleep because of him and wanted to see him. But he was gone. When I had woken up because of him I gave praise to God for the goodness, which He had sent into my mind out of His graciousness, so that I would properly recognize His great mercy in face of the sorrowful group. I said: “Very sweet Godhead, You have told me enough. I will always give you, sweet Godhead, praise and honor.” Then I got up from my bed. I asked my scribe on behalf of God and for myself to read a mass. I listened to it and requested that God’s sweet blessing take care of the body and the soul.
with His dear protection,
so that I could do the best possible thing
with my merchandise,
and that I would never
misuse and waste it.
Once I had listened to the very end
of the good mass,
I left my lodging
and entrusted myself entirely to God.
At that moment I encountered
Stranmûr of Castelgunt. 49
He immediately greeted me
and said ‘good morning,’ ‘have a good day.’
He laughed [happily] when he uttered the greeting.
I thanked him for that.
Then he asked me this:
“Tell me, what is your decision?
What advice has your mind given to you?
Do not hide that from me;
since I want to know through your words,
your final decision
which your mind has given to you.”
I said: “My dear lord,
what decision should I make?
The purchase is too expensive;
and I do not know whether they [the prisoners]
would agree or not.
If it happens without their gratitude,
it will not be of any use to me, that’s true,
and this purchase would not be worth a hair.
If you grant it to me
that you let me find out
what their intention might be,
then I will be able to let you know
my mind and my decision,
and what my heart might desire.”
[Stranmûr:] “That pleases me, talk to them then,
I happily grant that to you.”
[Gerhart:] “Then they should profit from me
and get unlocked
because I want to see them freed from the shackles
and properly find out their wishes.”
[Stranmûr:] “This will be granted to you on my behalf,
and know for sure, you can trust me in that,
that I do not know anyone
anywhere in heathen lands
whom I would entrust them without shackles,
except alone to my overlord,
from whom I had received goods and honor.
Now, I will let you see them,
freed and unfettered,
since I have found out
that you have a completely
loyal heart and command loyalty.”
[Gerhart:] “My dear lord,
you give me too much praise.
I am not worthy of such praise,
except that your good breeding makes you
give me this honor,
although I have not earned it.”
So I said to the lord.
Then he ordered his squires
to go with me to the lords;
he ordered to release them from their shackles.
The worthy men were unlocked
from their shackles.
One here, the other there;
together they were let go
and allowed to walk freed from their locks.
Then the squires left me
and went out of the room.
They kept a strong guard
outside of the door
to the room with the noble and highly minded men.
Those had been, that is true,
imprisoned for more than a year,
and yet they had not been allowed
to look at each other.
That had been their greatest heart-felt lament
in the prison all the time.
When they all had gotten together,
they shouted out such screams [of relief]
which will always remind me
of the great commiseration that I felt.
They began to cry
both for love and also their suffering,
happy that they experienced the blessing
to see each other again,
which seemed a great gracefulness to them, 1975
so in all their suffering they were very happy.

When they lovingly
greeted each other altogether
demonstrating their love for each other,
I immediately greeted them in French.
But they did not know that language as well
as I knew English. I could speak that language.
When they understood the words and me,
then the entire miserable group
bowed before me.
They said: “Lord Father God,
now be praised that on Your command
someone has been sent to us very downtrodden people
someone from the Christian lands
who knows our language.
May you be honored and your mouth,
the wisdom of which knows
the language and our tongue.
Dear lord, tell us on behalf of God,
share with us miserable people, without mocking,
are you a Christian?” I said: “Yes.”
They then welcomed me
so lovingly as I have
never been welcomed before.
I joined their laments
and helped them all
to sustain the pain of their wounded hearts,
when I noticed their misery
and their heart-felt pain,
which the suffering had caused them.

After I had sat there for a while,
I did not forget my words
and said: “Lords, your suffering
is worse for me than death.
If I could end it,
it would surely be over.
I am grieved over your laments.
Now listen to what else I am going to tell you:
I want to let you know truly
what my intentions are.
When I departed from my country
I had made up my mind
that I wanted to take with me great wealth
into the heathen world
in order to make a good profit.
At that time I was determined
to take fifty thousand marks
from my treasure box
and then traveled into heathendom.
I have applied that silver
for such great purchases
that I dare say
swearing by my baptism (faith)
that no one before me has ever bought more.
I brought that with me into this country
where I knew about the markets.
Now, the mighty castellan
has, in a worthy fashion,
welcomed and honored me.
He has thus increased toward me, his honor,
in many different manners,
his manly reputation.
When I came into this country,
he took me into his protection
and offered me many honors.
Afterwards he begged me
to let him take a look at
my merchandise. He then noticed
that it was very large.
Thereupon he began to ask me
whether I would agree to an exchange
with him and that I would take
his merchandise. That’s what he offered me.
The merchandise is you
and my dear lady
whom he allowed me to visit
yesterday, when I also saw you.
Now, I have a lower social status,
and am lacking in rank
as to purchase you by force.
If, for instance, I were to help you
by freeing you from here,
but you would then insult me
and confront me with hostility,
such as telling me then
that I had never suffered from you
any ill, and that hence I should let you go,
in that case I would rather keep my property 
before I would proceed 
and attract your hatred through my loss. 
If you want to, however, I would risk 
for your sake everything that I have 
and will happily accept in your name 
both gain and loss 
on the condition that you 
reimburse me for my loss. 
If I can be certain about that 
knowing that you will never 
turn against me, 
then I would be happily prepared 
to ransom you here 
and lift the suffering from you.” 
The lords immediately jumped up, 
both the old and the young 
and fell down before my feet. 
Everyone grabbed me 
and gave me much honor. 
With a sad voice each lamented badly to me 
uttering only: ‘oh dear, oh dear, 
help us, dear lord! 
mercy is far away from us. 
Bring to us mercy and solace, 
so that we could get released 
from this great suffering. 
We also beg you further 
in the name of God who handed Himself 
over to death in his human form, 
let us recognize in you 
that you call yourself a Christian 
in the name of pure baptism. 
Help us to get away from heathendom 
and to return again to Christianity! 
Think of our heart-felt pain 
and lift from us our great suffering. 
Through God and your grace, 
in the name of all knights’ worthiness, 
have pity for our affliction 
and let us be forever 
in the name of God in your servitude. 
Whatever pleases you,
we will all swear an oath to you
that we will double all your goods,
except for what our lady will do
and her father who [separately] will ransom here from you
just as you will demand,
and if our lord is still alive,
he will give doubly pay you for his wife."

It disturbed me and gave me grief
that they were laying before me in such a woeful sorrow
for such a long time in lamenting manner
and displayed such great unhappiness.
I said: “My dear good lords,
stand up, in the name of God, you act
differently than it behooves you
or as it seems appropriate to me.
You have behaved rather shamefully
laying on the ground for such a long time
before me and lamenting so badly;
I gladly can do without it.”

[The English nobles:] “Mercy, sir, suffering makes us do that.
Help us, we are dead without any joys.
Your very sweet consolation gives us solace!
We will be lost forever.”

[Gerhart:] “Let us go to my lady.
If it will be her will
that she wants to travel with me into my country
and will demonstrate through her loyalty
that it will be her true desire, her intention,
to reimburse me for my goods,
if she can do so and if I request it,
then I have rightly come here
to risk everything
that I own for your sake.”

They all spoke in one voice:
“Good graciousness, sir, she will be very happy about it.”

Then the knights went with me.
We turned to the ladies
toward the private chamber.
They were very surprised
about how this miracle had happened
that they were to see the knights.
There I had to witness
with the knights and the ladies,
after they had completed their greetings, much crying.
I clearly recognized
that their pitiful suffering
came from heart-felt pain.
Then an old lord took me
by my hand, and I asked him
in what language my lady, blessed by good fortune,
had been raised.
[Gerhart:] “Does she speak French!” He said: “Yes.”
Then I greeted my lady in that way,
as it seemed fitting to me,
trying to avoid misbehavior.
She was very thankful to me
in her womanly courtliness.
Her eyes were filled with tears.
I then said to the knight:
“Lord, speak on my behalf.”
He responded: “No, the treasure of fortune
adorns your soul.
After a wise flowering
you have brought forth the fruit of fortune.
God was in a most kind mood,
when He granted to you human life
filled with such virtues.
You are so filled with pure wisdom,
your mouth can speak for itself.”
Then I began to speak.
I said: “Lady, I am a man
who must pursue the life of a merchant,
I have always been bent on purchasing
wherever I found affordable goods.
I have gained to some extent
many goods through purchase:
I have brought it here into this land.
The castellan desires to acquire it
through offering you to me.
He wants me to have you in exchange,
if I give him everything what I own,
and he wants to give me the knights,
who endure a miserable life here.
But now this purchase
is somewhat too costly for me,
if you were to be my payment.
A piece of cloth or silk
I might trade more easily,
where I might find it at a good price, instead of such great lordship. If I now had so much wealth in goods that I might be able to take you away from here, and you would then, dear lady, reimburse me my goods, I would ransom you immediately. The kingdom of England is located so near to my home country, if you do not mind, I will keep you surely in such good manner that it will never seem to you a misbehavior until they will learn and think about it how to find out whether the young prince of England is still alive or not, who is engaged with you.”

The lady got up from her chair and wanted to kneel before me, but I objected to that. I approached her and begged her in the name of her virtues to let that go and not do that. Thereupon her eyes filled with tears. She knew how to beg in such an innocent [child-like] and pure way that I recognized well at her manners how much she had placed very serious thoughts on her request. This I clearly noticed in her. Although being very young, she had the wisdom of an older person:\[Erene:]\[57\] “Mercy, sweet pure man, allow me to profit from the fact that a woman gave birth to you. Be so kind and show grace to me on behalf of all worthy women. On your graciousness, you most fortunate man, allow me to lament my worries to you on behalf of the most holy maid who is the mirror for all women.\[58\] She delivered the most holy Christ, the emperor of all emperors,
and to whom the angel announced [the miracle].
The virginal mother without original sin,
was still virgin after the birth,
just as she had been before.
The sun’s gleam shines forth in strong force
because of her virginity.
The flower of virginity
remained with her in complete splendor.
As much as the highest beams of the sun
elevated her to a mother-virgin,
as little did she ever lose the name of a virgin,
this glorious queen of heaven.
To her I extend my heart very much,
dear man, for you,
so that you keep in mind that I carry
her name,
since I am known as a virgin,
as it is the case with the other ladies here.
Now allow us to become your children!
Dear father, dear solace,
redeem us from suffering.
Mercy, sir, since you represent
the Christian fulfillment,
honor Christ’s name with us
in a divine, praiseworthy manner
and through the strength of the pure baptism.
Free us from heathendom,
since God has sent you here.
I will travel with you to your country,
and whatever you want I also want.
My father will happily ransom me,
for which I will vouch.
And I know in truth,
if the prince of England is still alive\(^{59}\)
and knows of me also as living,
that he will not let me wait for long,
if he is still in good health\(^{60}\).
But if they are all dead,
who were supposed to protect me from danger,
then there is still God, who will give you a reward
for all the grace that you will grant to me.
Help me to return to Christianity
in the name of God, and let it be a grief to you
that I am suffering such great pain.
without any fault; 
and have also pity for the noble ladies here. 2285
Oh dear, if I will never see again 
my father, friends, or the Christian lands, 
them God would have put His shackles 
in wrath on me 
in sorrowful suffering!"

The women all cried heavily, 
their delightful eyes wetted 
the God-given pure meadow of May, 
which was blooming in the colors of roses and lilies 
on their cheeks. 2290 
The sparkling delight, the bliss of happiness 
poured its heart-felt dew, 
which came from their hearts’ sorrow. 
Their lamenting hearts were deprived of all joy. 
Their laments, a darkness of clouds, 
covered their delightful sunshine, 
the beauty of which was yet so intense 
that in the summertime 
it came through after all. 2295
Rain came falling from the clouds, 
which dropped onto the wonderful eyes 
in such an intensity that a part of the beauty 
that had shone forth before was gone. 
Their crying was so sweet 
that both the mouth and the eyes 
invited me to take a bath in them without being invited. 
Their childlike shedding of tears forced me 
to join their crying. 2300
My will merged so much with theirs 
that I was happily ready to do, 
whatever the good woman asked me for. 
Her crying penetrated into my heart; 
her female request conquered me 
so that I could not reject anything 
which her red lips uttered 
since I observed through the good women 
that her lamentable sorrow 
seriously came from deep in her soul. 
When she addressed her request to me, 
she was serious, there was no doubt about it. 
Her sweet request was an order for me 
to take her deep grief
with laments into my heart.
I then clearly noticed the struggling;
fear, sorrow, lamentations, and misery
often teach wise words,
where deep wisdom finds a small treasure
in the right thoughts.
Childish words disappear, 61
where sorrow and heartfelt grief
are constantly present.
I learned that through my lady
in cumbersome fashion
so that I have to say, as I noticed:
my lady formulated already in her blossoming youth
an old wisdom.
In her young childhood she would have been denied
such meaningful wisdom,
but because she experienced such frightful sorrow,
she had learned through her suffering.
Know this from these wise words,
that she understood how to beg me intensively
through her such wise breeding.
I said: “Dear good lady,
have joyful confidence,
let your lamentable sorrow go.
Since I can change your great pain
with my goods,
it will not be kept away
from you or spared any longer.
Lucky I am that all those goods ever have come to me,
so that I can chase away your sorrow
and so also your suffering.
Now, I want to purchase with my goods
all your grief,
and will beg God to grant me
what I will ask Him to do for me
so that I can actually achieve that goal.
May God bring it about
that I will not be without success.
Now, let me request from you truly
that you will reimburse me then,
for that what I will spend for you,
in likewise fashion
on your behalf.”
This brightened up her soul.
The knights and the good ladies 
cried out for joy  
so much that I felt  
great pity in my heart.  
The noble but poor people 
received so much comfort through my consolation 
that I freed their hearts 
from great lamentable sorrow, 
because I gave them my solace.  
Then I left them behind 
and went where I found the castellan.  
The well-bred man 
greeted me friendly and politely. 
He said: “Now, what do you think? Tell me 
whether this purchase pleases you well.”  
I said: “Yes, my lord, truly. 
I will be happy to carry out that purchase 
[on the conditions] as I am going to specify to you.” [Stranmûr:] “Then tell me, how?” [Gerhart:] “Aren’t here not any of their goods?” [of the prisoners]  
[Stranmûr:] “Yes, they are so well kept 
that not one penny was hidden in the ground.” 
[Gerhart:] “So I would like to achieve for the good people 
if you grant it so, 
that they receive all their goods again 
and can prepare for their voyage 
their ship as it had been before, 
and that none of their property stays behind, 
neither small nor large, 
and that everything will be handed over 
into their possession, 
and that you give me all the food 
necessary as provisions. 
If you agree to that 
and are willing to do so, as I have detailed it, 
then I will leave behind 
what I have brought here with me, 
and then the contract can be agreed on.” 
Then the worthy castellan 
proved his honor to me out of his desire [to acquire my goods].  
He said, demonstrating his courtly manners: 
“That will all be made ready. 
You have negotiated well. 
I will do whatever you request from me; 
then the purchase will be completed.”
I received from his hands
the miserable hostages\textsuperscript{63}
and he took over my goods,
which I turned over to the castellan.
A reliable guarantee bound us together,
confirming this purchase.
The contract specified
that he had to be trustworthy.
Then he took over all my property
and I received the prisoners.
He called together many of the people
in the city to his court.
The [former prisoners] came with me, as he had ordered it,
filled with joy, to the palace
where the seat of the government was.
He turned them over to me\textsuperscript{64}
Whatever property had been taken from them,
he ordered it to be returned to them.
There was reconciliation amongst all sides,
which naturally instilled strong feelings
in me and many other people.
Mixed into the joy there was much lamenting.
The joy pushed away a part of the sorrow,
which had been the origin of the heart-felt pain
and the strong suffering.
They received without delay
what property they had brought
to that country when they had arrived from across the sea.
This gain resulting from the purchase
pleased the castellan mightily.
He ordered to unload my ship
and to load [the former prisoners’] ship.
He compensated them for their losses
in terms of physical goods, but not in terms of their suffering.
He commanded that all my property
be carried off.
He arranged that sand and stones
would be brought to me as a load
so that my ship would sail uprightly
without leaning when being on the sea.
The wise knight Stranmür
ordered provisions to be provided for me and the entire group,
that is fresh new provisions,
which was all brought to the ship.
He also arranged that we received enough food for the voyage, so that we would not, if we were driven, as is often the custom of wild waves, into a foreign country, then run out of food, and hence might perish. We ought to have good food in great plenty. All this the highly worthy lord arranged. Truly, to me it seemed that I was a blessed man. Then I led my lady, her maids, and the knights [to the ship]. There was much happiness to be observed and much joyfulness, because the miserable imprisonment had been overcome in a good way. The heathens also cried out of love for the wonderful ladies, pitying them for their long suffering; whoever saw their tearful eyes had to lament their sorrows; and their friendly laughter made all people feel very joyful. Whoever saw what demeanor the lady displayed being happy and enjoying a happy life, had to acknowledge that himself. Even if he did not experience joy because of that, he felt joy because of her beauty. Whenever she was to smile out of happiness, as she was supposed to do, then her rose-colored lips sent joy to those who were unhappy, and those who looked at her happily gave her high praise. For the night we stayed there. For the guests a bath was prepared and they washed themselves. My goodness, how lovely did the guests look afterwards! When I saw that, I forgot all my losses which I had suffered because of them.
Once they had received new clothes, then my lady, a flower of pure virtues carried the crown of all desires in bright beautiful colors. Both the old and the young knights displayed accordingly great beauty. What one expects from youth, that is to display fully their beauty, one could perceive now in the physical appearance of those who demonstrated fresh chivalry through their youth and strength. This was visible through their bodily presence. Beautiful, impressive, white, and gray were the old knights, displaying their good demeanor. The women’s beauty was so amazing, except that my lady was the most charming in praiseworthy honor, yet the other women did not lack in charming beauty, all wearing the crown of praise and admiration.65

Early the next morning I prepared myself since I wanted to depart from there. I prayed that the ladies and the knights66 be protected by God’s blessing,67 since they had never heard the true word of God during their imprisonment. After mass we went back and sat down happily. At that moment the honorable Stranmûr, who was the castellan there, arrived, who demonstrated much kindness to me at the table, where many knights and squires were sitting. He displayed his good breeding. To the knights and the ladies the loyal and trustworthy man raised his cup to greet them all and saluted everyone, for which I had to wish him all the best as it befitted me in accordance to my breeding.
When the meal had been completed, we said good-bye and prepared for the voyage. [Stranmür:] “I want to entrust you, dear Gerhart, to the care of your God, may He protect your life. But if there might be anyone more powerful, then His help may be there for your assistance.

    My dear God Jupiter shall provide you with a blissful journey. May Pallas and Juno make you joyfully happy; to Mohammed and Mercurius, and to Thetis and Neptune, who command the waters, may your journey homewards, along with the group of guests, be entrusted.”

Through just a little good fortune on the sea may he help you, through his powers, Aeolus, the god of winds that you and your people will succeed in everything by means of favorable winds and that the journey will turn out well.” Those were the words of the castellan. Immediately I bowed before him. He then gave me his blessing. Then he said again: “Let me assure you once again that I want to honor the entire Christianity on your behalf, since God has placed so much blessing on you in this world, that your body and your life must always be honored. My heart is wishing you that.” Then he began to cry out of sorrow [to see me leave], and we both cried, he and I, because we had to part from each other. Because of this sorrow we experienced painful loyalty. Thereafter we departed.

    He was pleased about the purchase, and I was also happy about the exchange. He believed to have made a profit,
and I also thought the same
believing that my profit would not be lost,
but the reward depends on God’s grace
according to His great mercy
and according to my needs.
We both were sure that we had not been cheated.
Soon the sails were hoisted
in the harbor.
Thus we left from there
very happy along the way.
We took good care of ourselves
and defended ourselves against the devil.
Soon, a strong wind from our back
rose on the sea.
Let me tell you honestly,
we could not be happier about it,
just as I had desired it,
driving us forward most swiftly.
The son of the pure maid, [Christ],
gave us good company and a delightful journey,
and He protected us from danger.
The person who has trust in Him
will never experience bad fortune.
Now, His sweet support guaranteed for us
a fortunate journey.

The force of the wind pushed us forward,
for twelve days and nights
taking us on the right path toward the location
where we had been lost before.
We followed that direction.
Soon the time had come
when we made so much progress
that we could clearly perceive
high mountains and lands
that were well known to me.
When I perceived that mountain range,
I said to the captain:
“Tell me, do you not know
these heights and the country?”
[Captain:] “Oh yes, I know where we are.”
[Gerhart:] “Then note, where the ways part
either toward Austria or England,⁶⁹
aim the ship immediately to that site.”
[Captain:] “Near the present location
where the high mountains are situated, that is the point where the two routes are specifically marked, as you can clearly recognize.”

From there we sailed directly toward the goal.

I ordered the ships to anchor there in a harbor, which was situated near the high mountain range, that separated the two roads in clearly two directions.

When our anchor had taken hold firmly in the ground, I ordered all our provisions to be divvied up equally for both ships.

I handed over equal parts to each ship, one part for the other ship, the other for my ship.

I said: “My lords, I and you now have to part from each other. Tell me, who amongst you all originates from England? To you I want to entrust that ship that had been taken away from you. And who has come with my lady from her father’s country? Tell me that, I need to know it.”

One of them told me: “My lady and two of the maids had been sent from Norway. The twelve [knights] are from England, and all the others as well. From her father’s country a large group of people had come along. They are all lost in the sea. When my lord’s ship sank, he himself must have drowned.”

Then I separated from the lords the lady and the other group that had come along with [the speaker]. I took my lady and her two maids to my own ship.

After I had sent the good lords,
as it seemed right to me, 2680
   to their own ship,
and after I had the lady under my protection 2685
together with her two maids,
I decided for myself,
to give the lords leave to depart,  
   to travel back to their country.
I said: “My dear lords, 2690
   we will part here, it has to be.
Return to your country
   and be reminded by me,
if I have served you well, 2695
then do not forget that
and observe that loyally.
I want that my lady travels
   together with me to [my] country.
If her fiancé is still alive, 2700
I want to keep her for him,
and serve her so honorably
that she will never feel insulted.
For her father, if he is mindful of her, 2705
that is, King Reinmunt [of Norway],
I will keep her sound and safe
in an honorable fashion without any fail,
if God happily grants her
to stay healthy and without any burden.”
The upright heroes 2710
   lamented our departure very much.
They all spoke with one voice:
   “No, our very dear lord,
   let us always stay with you
until we will have redeemed your property.
Your best pawns we are ourselves.
Take us under your guardianship 2715
   until we will have, to your satisfaction,
completely re-paid you all your goods,
with which you, in your pure virtue,
freed us from our manacles
and gave us joy in our sorrow.”
   I thought by myself:
“I want to leave their castles and income 2720
to Him, the Good One,
on whose behalf I had done that.”
I said: “Go on in the name of God.
Your lands and your goods
are too far away.  2725
I know you characters so well
that your word is my guarantee.
You have suffered for so long in the shackles
that my hand should not be a new repression.
It would not be appropriate
if someone were to have control over you.
After such great misery
go home and rest, may you have a better life,
and your friends should find out
that you are as healthy as before.
Their long waiting [for you] has hurt them.
Let me admonish you, however,
when I will send you my messengers,
asking for my repayment, if that is ever going to happen,
that you then will give it to me, and not in any other way.
I know for sure anyway
that I have enough pawns and bailsmen,
who do not aim for disloyalty
and will reimburse me thousand-fold
what I have given on your behalf.
If your lord is still alive
and will ask for his lady,
then tell him of the princess
whom I will keep in my protection
so that she will never lose
whatever had been granted to her
in terms of women’s virtues.”
The lords fell to the ground before my feet,
they cried and [yet] were happy.
Out of joy they shed many tears
because it was my intention
to let them go for free.
They forgot their suffering
and became very delighted.
They all spoke with one voice:
“God who allowed us to become free,
whose power came from heaven
and created a great spirit,
may give you a good reward
for what you have done for us out of love.
Even if we had inherited
ten kingdoms,
we would never be able
to repay you the good spirit of your heart,
or your merchandise.
We entrust it all to your power,
may the mighty God reward you,
who is richer than we are;
He may remunerate you your goodness
with everlasting recognition.
May he bestow upon you forever
the heavenly crown.
Our promise will stay for you,
dear father, as you wish.
our promise will never fail,
because you have returned to us
honor, goods, our bodies, and our lives.
May the good God take care of you
and protect you in His sweet embrace. 70
May the strength of the holy cross
provide you with triumphant joy
in human blissfulness;
may you reach the end of your life
without any sorrow,
so that God may bring you
in happy joyfulness
high up to heaven.”
Then they kissed me and I kissed them.
Full of sorrow we said good-bye to each other
and yet with joy and without any hatred.
They did not tarry any longer
and turned away from me
in order to travel to England,
while I went my way to my homeland,
which I know so well.

The road led me straight on
from the mountains to the ocean and then to the Rhine,
toward the city of Cologne.
To my friends I sent word
in a most happy mood,
that I had never returned home
with so much wealth and so much happiness,
and that I was richer
than ever before in my life.
I let my wife know
that my merchandise was so large
that never any of my fellow merchants
would have ever thought of acquiring
such a great treasure.
   My friends were happy about that.
Their joy became exuberant
when they heard that I was going to arrive.
My wife called her friends together
and also my son. They came to her house
and anxiously awaited my appearance
happy about my great good fortune.
A large group of burghers
came riding to meet me at the Rhine.
I and my dear lady
were well received then.
Subsequently my friends came
and went on board of my ship.
The merchandise did not please them:
they found nothing but stones.
That seemed too little for them
since those goods were worth nothing.
Thereupon I took my merchandise
leading her at my hand.
The others did not find anything
but my dear lady.
“Dear Gerhart,” said my wife,
“tell me by God, where are your goods?
Your messenger had given me great hope,
he told me of superior riches,
of which I have found here little.”71
[Gerhart:] “Well, see, I took my lady
as a pawn for all of my goods.”
“Are you mocking me?”
“No, it is true, so help me God.
even though I do not know whether it pleases you.”
“Gerhart, dear friend, now tell me
in the name of God the full truth,
how did she get into your power?”
“I am going to tell you that:
see, no one should act wrongly,
who wants to enjoy my friendship.
Let your anger go,”
said Gerhart. “My dear child [his wife],
and all who are present here.
This is the way how friendship goes. 2855
It is just right and proper
to accept in friendship
what pleases your heart.
That also ought to be in all your minds.
God knows well, my dear father,
for that what you have done for Him,
you will receive my acknowledgment.
If I see this correctly,
we still have enough goods,
and we will certainly receive
divine grace.
Now, praise to the sweet Christ
that you have returned to me in good health.” 2860
Then my beloved son spoke:
“My lady and those who are with her
are welcome here
to God and to my heart.” 2865
The good lady thanked him
in a friendly manner
because the greeting of a woman and of the son
can make a bad mood disappear.

Whether the worth of the purchase
pleased anyone or not,
I did not care, I was delighted about it.
My lady I then took
together with her two maids
happily into my house
and arranged a good space for them,
pleasant and well equipped
in a room.
I ordered that it would be filled
with valuable vessels.
As far as noble dresses were concerned,
which she could wear honorably,
I gave her more than enough
as it pleased her.
I observed carefully what she needed,
since my lady’s sweet child-like purity,
determined by innocent virtues
was manifested by her delightful youthfulness.
It did not seem too much to me
to invite from my friends
beautiful young virgins,
innocent as one could only desire, and very pretty,
to be her companions
(since they were in their sweet childishness
characterized by a childish mind).
I provided them with dresses fitting for noble children,
in the fashion appropriate for my dear lady
in order to honor her innocent worthiness.
They were honorable friends for her.
This pleased my lady in her sweet mind,
to have such pure company,
which made her very happy.
She asked me to get for her
gold and much soft silk.
I told myself: “Whatever the good lady wants,
she will receive fully.”
Then I collected everything for my lady
what she needed,
silk and gold.
She knew how to make out of them
imperial fabric,
whatever you could sew out of silk.
She knew well how to sew
rich and noble clothes
and accomplished this task in a masterly fashion.
This art she taught the other maids.
Her products made such an impression,
and never before had any better clothes been worn,
adorned with valuable pearls and dotted
with noble gems.
Her needle work was so precious
that I had to appreciate it a lot.
Silken cloth and phellet-silk,
the best that have ever been worn
the good lady gave to me more than enough.
I gained great profit from that.
When the lady then decided
to rest after the work,
oh my goodness, what womanly brilliance
shone forth from her body!
She was so extremely beautiful
that all my desire to feel happiness came true, and this through her.
Because of much good fortune
I received so much delight
that nothing in my business ever went wrong.
Whatever I undertook, it worked out well. All my wishes were translated into my works and everything was just as I wanted it, and as I was supposed to wish for. When I experienced something sorrowful, which caused me pain, I went to her and looked at her. Immediately afterwards I was able to return filled with joy, since I had recovered thereby from sorrow, however great my sorrow had been. Whoever could take a look at her beauty, whatever pain he might have experienced, he then could not help but be filled with joy and be healed from sorrow. He could take away from her an inner delight because of her. If I had brought back home with me my goods, I know in truth and without any delusion, I would have delighted in it only half as much compared to the delight which she created in me. This great fortune God granted me through the blessedness, which he had granted her.

Then my lady stayed with me, that is true for more than a year during which I never received a message from the prince, her fiancé, any certain news, how he had fared. I never heard anything from her mother or from her father. At the same time I never got news from England. I was very surprised about that and thought to myself: “Indeed, I know in truth that I should not worry that the prince of England might have perished, except that I have never heard any trustworthy news. Before he would abandon his lady here without having seen her, he would rather accept woes, unless he had died. The king of Norway
has also passed away, that must be true, 2990
since it is now one and a half years ago
that he sent from his country
my lady.
If he knew that she lives with me and is healthy,
I would have seen repeatedly
his messengers here.
They are all dead; I am afraid to say.”

   Now my heart was torn all the time 2995
and filled with conflicting thoughts,
wondering whether they were alive or not.
I pondered much about the options
and was finally convinced of their demise.
Now, I observed that my lady handled
her suffering in a well mannered female fashion.
However happy she was, when her friends
mentioned the name of a man [her fiancé],
of whom she never received a word,
then that name made her cry,
as soon as she heard it,
his name who was deep in her heart
in a loving company.
She often cried,
lamenting her secret sorrow,
because stern Minne [Love]
had implanted the young hero
in her youthful soul.
One heart contained both their lives,
he carried their lives, his heart carried her body,
although she had not yet married him.
Love is often placing her rope
between two hearts,
who know very little about Love’s strategems.
Love operates with a trick,
that two people declare their love for each other
as soon as they have gazed at
each other in a loving fashion.
Love is often gaining riches,
because she works with the constancy of feelings
so that love does not disappear
from either one among the two.
Love is inseparable
which is granted to two lovers
who are bonded by love.
Love revealed its truth to me,
as I perceived it in my lady,
because she held such strong feelings
for the young noble man
and yet never received in his arms
love through a kiss.
Love’s work would normally disappear as a result of separation,
except that love bloomed through them,
of whom I have spoken here.
Each one of them granted love
to each other,
once each had been hit
by the gaze of love,
when they looked at each other
for the first time, and when they experienced love in their hearts.
I recognized that entirely in the lady,
and understood it completely.
I thought about it
and often reflected upon it:
“My God, what will happen next?
Since I have released my noble lady
from great sorrow,
how shall I then worthily
arrange her situation,
so that she will not always be unhappy?
She will always experience sorrow,
great pain and misery,
as is fitting for her kind,
unless I will remove it from her
as far as I might be able to do it.
Whatever riches I have acquired
until today,
that would not be enough
to find a husband for my lady
who would be worthy of receiving a fiefdom from her father.
Since I do not possess so much wealth,
which would be appropriate for her nobility,
I will probe with her
whether she might consider
to become the wife of a rich merchant
instead of suffering
in servile misery.”

Then the thought occurred to me:
“I would be unhappy forever, if I were to break love’s constancy, which she holds for her beloved friend. Oh dear, that is, however, nothing else but an illusion, even though it is engraved in her heart. Now, I doubt it that he is still alive, no, that lord is dead. For that reason she is suffering even more pain, since it is only a dream, of which she believes to draw her joy.” Thus I lamented for her in manifold ways. One day I went to see her. The good lady greeted me very lovingly. I said: “My dear lady, would you grant me your favor and care to listen to me?” [She:] “Yes, my lord father, now speak. Whatever might please you, I will happily listen to it, my dear, tell me then.” [Gerhart:] “Lady, may God reward you for that. This is a blissful response from your worthy sweetness. Allow me then, if I might say something hurting your graces, that you do not take it badly against me and let it stand, by your kindness, if I voice a request to you.” [She:] “I will do so, father, in the name of God. Your request is a command for me, that I will happily comply with. Whatever you desire in your heart, I will gladly accept it, I will be content with it.” I responded to my lady: “I am speaking up then, since I have your permission. Lady, please into consideration what miracles have happened with you. I have unfortunately recognized truly that no one is still alive who could be called your friend. They are, sad to say, all dead. Now, because of your hardship I have often great worries.
and sharp pain in my heart,
worning how things will develop for you.
My greatest worry,
as God knows, my lady, concerns
you and troubles me all the time.
Those worries have weighed heavily on me.
Now, often I thought that,
before you suffer from poverty,
you should accept wealth and property
to a great extent
in the social community
in which I am called a merchant.
You know well of my son
that he commands great virtues
and dignity, according to his name,
that is, a dignity corresponding
to the status of a merchant.
That’s what I wanted to suggest, if you permit
and if you agree to it, my lady,
that you accept him as your husband.
I cannot imagine
how else you would regain
the status that you have lost
with the disappearance of the highly acknowledged prince,
Willehalm of England.
He has, unfortunately,
passed away."
My lady politely answered then:
“Lord father, I am glad
that you have tried so hard for me.
What you want I also desire,
since that is proper and correct.
If you were asking me to marry
your servant upon your recommendation,
I would do that for your sake
very willingly, undoubtedly;
since you and our Lord God
have returned to me completely
my body and my life.
I do not talk about your son.
The lowest person in your service
would be fully adequate for me,
just as you were requesting from me.
It is true, the young man is worth to receive
the highest fortune one could aspire for,
as he demonstrates through his demeanor.
I would be happy, if he agrees [to marry me].
Dear father, now do as well,\(^8^5\)
what I will request from you.”
[Gerhart:] “Gladly, my lady, that will be done.”
Then let me wait one more year,
if you agree readily,
to find out whether our Lord will let me know
whether my fiancé is still alive,\(^8^6\)
and whether He will return him to me.
I know for sure and do not doubt,
that, if he is still alive, he will find me
before this year will have come to an end.
If that does not happen, I will have to console myself
about his demise.
Allow me to wait in that hope,
and then I will fulfill your wish.”
[Gerhart:] “Gladly, lady, that will be,
I will happily allow you to wait,
since God, throughout time,
has never created an individual so virtuous as you are
in such an innocent youth,
with such a blessed body.
I am most pleased,
that you have accepted my request
just as my heart had desired,
and therefore I have to be even more jubilant
in my heart
as long as I will live.\(^8^7\)
May God always happily grant you
forever a blessed life!
The fact that I had given away my goods for your sake,
pleases me more and more,\(^8^8\)
since it was truly done out of love for you.”\(^8^9\)
Then I left my lady
She was sad and I was happy,
that she had kept her love in mind.\(^9^0\)
I was joyful that I had received from her
an answer just as I had hoped for.
Her loving eyes
had filled with tears because of her longing
for the one whom she never forgot,
I mean her worthy fiancé.
It was a wonderful time for me,
seeing this good lady in my presence,
who never transgressed womanly virtues
through unwomanly thinking.

The year followed the other,
during which I never received, indeed
any certain news what the situation
of the prince of England might be,
or how her father [the king of Norway] fared.
The lady waited the whole time
in such good manners
that it added to her blessed praise
in a glorious fashion.
My good fortune grew
and my misfortune dwindled.
Because of her blissfulness it seemed to me
that my joy increased much,
since my efforts and my thinking
were turned toward the good lady,
especially because I believed
that she might always stay with me.91

When the year drew to an end
and we began to reach the deadline,
I went back again to the room
where I found my lady.
I said: “Lady, you know well
what I must ask you once again.
The time has come,
upon which we had agreed before:
the year has been completed.”
She said: “Father, you are right.”
[Gerhart:] “Now tell me, my dear good lady,
what is in your mind now!”
[Lady:] “Well, I must abide by it
what I had promised to you.
Whatever you want me to do, my dear father,
I will comply with.”
In my soul I was very happy about it.
I was pleased about what she said
and thanked her in the name of God,
who made her to demonstrate such goodness
that she did not feel shame about it
to abandon the name of ‘queen’
and was called a merchant’s wife on my behalf. For that her blessed person may be honored forever through joy-bearing teachings.

Then, as I had planned ahead, I had convinced her, my pure good lady, to say with a delightful mind that she was ready to fulfill my request in willing constancy. I was happy about this great fortune, since none of my fellow merchants had won such great worthiness, as that which I enjoyed through my lady’s dignity. I rode then to my lord [archbishop] at the court in his palace, where he stayed in his private chamber. I got off the horse and went to him. Out of his heart-felt nobility my dear lord welcomed me amicably. I thanked him for that grace. Then he asked me the following: “What is the purpose, Gerhart, that you have come today to me? Did something bad happen to you?” I answered: “No, but a secret matter forces me to turn to you, my lord, I need your advice.” He said: “Indeed, you will receive it as much as my wits allow me to do. Tell me what concerns you.” Then the lord invited me to sit down next to him and asked me to tell him what concerned me. I said: “Lord, I will tell you, why I have to request advice from you, for which reason I have come here. You have certainly heard how it happened to me, that I found in prison highly-minded noble knights and a worthy princess,
all shackled tightly 
in the wild heathendom, 3295
and how I ransomed them with my goods
from their misery
on behalf of God and for their own gratitude.
Their laments forced me to do the sale.
I wanted to help all of them.
When I had freed the poor people
from the heathens,
I let the knights return home
to their country, sailing across the sea. 3305
Together with her two maids
I brought the princess here.
It was my intention and also my wish
to guard her on behalf of her fiancé,
if he were alive and searched
for his fiancée, hoping to find her
in good honor, free from any disloyalty.
Thus she stayed with me, that is true,
more than a year,
during which, in truth, 3315
I never heard from her fiancé.
Then I had a conversation with the good lady,
whether I would be allowed to give her comfort
by granting to let herself be convinced 92
to take as her husband
my son. She pledged that with her own words,
and she agreed to my request.
She greatly praised my willingness
that I had given her an extra year as a goal to find out
whether her fiancé would come back,
so that she then could marry him.
That year has come to an end.
Still, the my dear lady is ready
to stick to her firm promise
and give her virginal body,
by becoming my son’s wife;
I am overjoyed about that.
This great, joyful blessing
urged me to turn to you, 3335
so that I can understand from your
teaching, help, and advice.
After all, my very pure lady
is of such extraordinary beauty,
and if she then becomes my son’s wife
I will always enjoy the highest
fortune, goodness, and honor.
Whatever blissfulness I had experienced before,
since the moment when I had seen the good lady the first time,
it was all a blissfulness,
which God had bestowed upon her.”

My lord responded then: “Since your mind has urged you
to turn to me for advice,
I will not cut off your bliss,
since God with gracious willingness
has crowned your happiness in such a way
that it will stand upright in full bloom
in complete and wonderful perfection.
Whoever recognizes this properly,
will be obliged to tell you
that God through His own blessed will
has bestowed upon you
eagerly so much good fortune
as He had never done for any other living person.
Since now God has permitted you to enjoy your fortune,
which has never happened before,
it would always give me grief,
if I were to diminish all that,
or to weaken, to repress, or to decline it.
I want to increase your good fortune in whatever way I can do.
Your son is a merchant
and also a very virtuous man.
He shall receive the rank of a courtier
and carry a sword
and become a worthy member of knighthood.
A man who is decorated with a coat of arms
pursues the world’s highest honor.
In that way I want to support you
and honor your blessedness.”

[Gerhart:] “Lord, may God recompense you for that
through His divine command.
This is such a great honor
which will dignify and elevate me.
My misfortune is sliding away,
since your kindness
has granted me such excellent advice
that I am overflowing with happiness.
I will never forget the great blessing,
which your great mercy grants me, 3385
as long as I will live.
Since I now am obliged to admit
that I have experienced through you
such great honor which no one
has ever received from his lord,
that is, so much graceful recognition,
as I have gotten from you,
I ask you to place the crown on my spirit
and on the blessed good,
for which I will have to be so thankful,
because you have provided so much support,
and I hope that you will not mind, my dear lord
to attend the feast
that will take place at Pentecost,
since I want to give at that event
my son the sword
and the very sweet and worthy lady
as his wife, if Christ will grant it,
who is the creator of everything.” 3395

My lord praised me for all that. 3400
I then left him and was happy about the outcome.
Filled with joy I rode back to the city
where I found
the local lords
who rule over the city and the country
and asked them to attend
the festival.93 We both were honored,
my dear son and myself
because all the nobles paid me respect,
counts, free men, and knights,94 3415
and I got the promise
from more than three hundred of them,
all of them well-off and outstanding individuals,
the best in their nobility,
to be my guests
during my son’s celebration,
each trying to be more chivalric than the others.
Then I returned to the city.
My fellow-citizens I asked
to come and attend
the festival
together with their wives.
Yes, that’s what I asked. They promised
to fulfill what I had requested of them. Everyone who was worthy for it, I asked to come on my behalf, so that everyone would be present. All without exception pledged it to come as guests without fail.

Then I ordered in preparation of the festival to set up a wide ring of stands, and for the tournament I had them built a fence in such a wide circle that, when a knight properly wanted to turn around and intended to rush down the field, he would still complete his joust well, because his charger could jump freely. I also made sure that both horses and rich clothes were readied for me and my son, and also for the squires, who happily served in my son’s company. I made sure that I ordered lavishly much food for all. I hardly could wait for the event to take place and that the holy evening would come. The candles were lit, which made me happy. Upon my request there came the lords from the entire country together with many knightly companies. My son, in great dignity rode toward them out of the city gate together with his squires, whom he had asked to accompany him, and who were dressed in a knightly and noble manner. The citizens were also ready and came with their worthy wives, for whom I had ordered to prepare generous hospitality along with wonderful music from string instruments, which was performed in the evening at the court. My lord the archbishop also arrived in princely splendor, riding with me into the courtyard accompanied by loud music, aiming for the stands. Thus they were sitting there and enjoyed food.
Once the meal had been completed, my lord addressed his courtiers, the counts, the barons, and the knights. There were also the cathedral canons and many of the burghers. I had invited them all with the intention to receive their advice. Together with their support my son received a great fiefdom, it was just right according to feudal rules. With everyone’s approval he became an equal to the nobles. This wonderful rise in status took place in public so that everyone heard about it and observed it, that is the honorable people present there: priests, knights, noble ladies. I was exceedingly happy about it, there is no denying it. On that holy day, we all heard mass, it did not take long after the blessing for me to take my lady [Erene] by her hand. I brought her, as was proper, to my lord who was sitting there and where every worthy man delighted to look at her in good manners, giving her the highest praise. What else could I say about it? She was given to my son in proper marriage, and this in presence of many noble knights. Then we rode in high spirits accompanied by a group of cheerful men, clamoring, until we reached the bleachers. The good knights all engaged in a bohort [melee] with flying banners. Their saddle blankets were splendid. In a most courtly manner my lord in his rich worthiness, wonderfully rode next to my lady. He sat down next to her on a chair, which was my request and my desire. Finally everyone had found a seat. We had not forgotten anything.
I was riding one way, my son the other way, intending thereby to honor everyone who had come to the festival on our behalf. We made every effort to achieve our goal to be the best hosts possible, and we served everyone in great joy. All guests attending the wedding looked at us [with delight].

I rode throughout the entire range of bleachers and noticed a guest who looked miserable, although he was not missing anything in terms of hospitality. My son rode many times up to my worthy lady because he wanted to enjoy repeatedly his heart-felt love for her. That had to happen many times, and he exchanged gazes with her, since he enjoyed it so much.

When the meal had come to an end, then we turned our attention to entertainment, according to the schedule of the day. The day turned into evening, and the holy night arrived. My son busily tried to think hard about it how he could give the courtly people some kind of gifts that would be a form of honor. In the evening he sent out written notices, since he had not yet been made fully to a man according to knightly customs. Since he was only a ‘servant,’ he was still denied as a husband for his wife. She was not joined with him. Just a maid as she was called in the morning. His love was still unknown to her. That was correct and proper. Once he had become a knight, her love then influenced his feelings in such great force that his desire for the lady’s love burned strongly. He began to love her so ardently that he forgot, out of pure joy, whether he had ever, in proper fashion,
turned his attention to worthy ladies. The reason for that was the princess’s pure beauty. Early the next morning we were all prepared to go to mass and listen to the religious message, including my lady and all the knights. My lady wore in courtly fashion a most delightful dress, which in its preciousness could certainly be worn by an empress. It was made out of silk and moiré cloth. The dress and the coat were long, mixed in was white ermine’s fur, and below she wore a white blouse out of silk. The highly honorable lady had put on a headgear, wore clasps, and a ring and a delightful belt. She displayed a pure, virtuous mind under her rich clothing. Now, according to knightly customs, my son wore rich, delightful, well-cut clothing at that wedding, made out of rich silk, which was green as grass. Mixed in was fashioned a red silken cloth. My son wore that clothing full of joy, and with him twelve worthy companions, who were supposed to receive the sword with him, so they wore the same clothing as he did in the name of his and their own courtliness. Once the mass was over the young, high-spirited men went in an orderly procession to my lord, [the archbishop]. He blessed their swords. Noble knights attached to those new young heroes their swords in proper fashion. After God’s blessing the sword-carrying heroes rushed out of the church doors with loud clamor. There they found their chargers, richly adorned
already prepared for them. 3605
All those jumped on their chargers, who had the rank of a knight. Before the entire group many banners were flying in brilliant colors. There was also loud clamor, music from drums and trumpets could be heard, and there were many musicians playing string instruments who demonstrated their skills, playing knightly melodies in the sweet courtly style. Many worthy ladies displayed their wonderfully courtly manners. My lady [the princess,] was led most politely by the archbishop to the court. She was followed by noble ladies, in an orderly fashion, without rushing. The worthy noble ladies also found their palfreys ready. They got on and rode off. No one waited then any longer, they took their shields under their arms and followed. The strong young men rushed ahead of the ladies according to a well arranged custom. The procession was thus carried out in a wonderful manner. The music was just splendid. It could be heard all over the city. The sound was very pleasant, when they entered the ring. “Come on closer! Get here, push! Hurry, move on, let the others through! Rush forward! Let us fight from the bleachers down to the sand, we recognize these knights!” Those were the common shouts, uttered by the knights anxious to gain love. “Wow, what a chevalier! Look at this woman! May God protect you, pure ladies!” Those were their cries uttered in a loud voice. Then there arrived a group, then a second and a third;
after that followed a splendid one,
a great group of knights, rushing forward,
which was not ready to spare
the horses, wherever they were.
They began to joust
on the large field.
The colorful banners
strongly rustling in the wind.
One could hear in the court
the ringing of many horse bells.
In a knightly fashion
they pursued many joys,
so they led the high-minded lady
to the stands
so that she also could enjoy the happy events.

When the worthy crowd of ladies
had arrived at the seats,
the knights stopped fighting in groups.
The squires did not ignore
the horses there; they led them away.
They took good care of them.
Then I divvied up the seats according to the knightly ranks
in each group,
as was fitting for them.
One side of the stands was occupied
by the knights, proud and in a great mood,
the other side was taken by the good ladies;
the stands on the other side I assigned
to the barons and to the counts.
Thus everyone had a place to sit
according to his social rank.
My lord sat next to the lady.
Squires, who were attentive and fast,
brought water immediately to them.
Everyone carried out
his duties properly, whatever task was assigned to him
in honor of the guests and also of the honorable day.
Stewards and cupbearers
had to watch carefully
that the guests were well served.
The field was filled with worthy squires,
who in their courtly manners
would have disliked to neglect their training.
They paid close attention
to whatever wishes were voiced [by anyone].

Now, God could not give us a more brighter day than it was at that time as delightful as it was.

Bright flowers and grass [grew everywhere] which the good month of May had brought to us in delightful colors. I expressed my thanks to God and His sweet commands in heartfelt manner and with many joys.

When I rode through the bleachers to look at the dear guests, I stopped before my worthy lady, got off the horse and looked at her, offering her a cup to drink.

When I wanted to leave again, I saw standing over there at a column a man near my lady, who wore very poor clothing, which was a sign of great poverty. He had on a rough coat and a dirty shirt. From his entire face all color had disappeared. His red lips were nothing but pale and weak. His youthful age was revealed to me by his thin beard, which was not long, since it just had begun to grow and which never had been shaven. This was the result of his youth.

The miserable man stood there void of all joys. His arms and legs were exposed and not covered. His sorrow was great. The joyless stranger had dirty hands, a sunburned neck and legs. Yet the beautiful appearance of his body came shining forth thanks to God’s effort. His beautiful body was more white than snow wherever the clothing did not cover the body.
That was obvious, just as one would have imagined it.
His hair was blond
and fell down to his shoulder in curls.
He had grown to the right measure,
neither too big nor too small,
looking attractive, being slender,
with a strong body,
altogether well built.
He had a delightful face
since God had planted his grace
into his appearance,
although he stood there void of happiness.

When I saw that good man,
I went over to him and looked at him,
wondering what might be going on with him.
He stood there like a pilgrim
as if he were filled with pain.
He constantly looked toward my lady
who was sitting on her chair.
When he gazed upon her, his eyes filled with tears
out of his grievous lament
caused by a deep and secret pain.
When they flowed over
and the tears dripped down
he put his fingers toward his eyes
and whisked them quickly
out of his bright eyes.
Then he looked at her again
with great sorrow, over and over.
Every new moment
his eyes filled with new tears;
because he lamented and suffered pain
he had to cry all the time.
He covered his head under his cloths,
and wiped his eyes, and then he looked at her again.
Yet, when he looked at the lady,
he had to cry once again.
He suffered great pain.

I thought then: “Oh, dear God
in the name of your divine command,
what does all this mean
that this particular man
cries so much in heartfelt pain?
Yes, my lord God, what is the meaning
that he suffers such great grief
because of my lady?
He receives so much pain from her.
Sweet God, who might he be,
that he is standing there and is unhappy?"
I then approached the brother and said:
“May God protect you, sir pilgrim.”
“Good grace to you, my dear lord.”
“Good man, why are you standing here in this way?”
“What do you mean?” “You are unhappy.”
“No, I am not, my dear good lord,
I am quite content.”
“No, my brother.” “But I am, in truth.”
“By God, what is in your mind?”
“Have you been hurt?” He said: “Yes.”
“Dear man, now tell me where.”
“Nowhere, and yet too much,
of which I do not want to speak.”
“Good man, what does that mean?”
“My lord, I know well what it is.”
“Dear man, you should tell me,
if some wrong has happened to you here.”
No, that’s not it; if I were suffering,
then that would have been caused to me
before I arrived here.
Whoever might experience pain,
would regain his happiness here.”
Then I asked the foreigner
to walk with me away from the stand
“Dear lord, let me stay here,”
said the miserable man.
[Gerhart:] “Dear brother, now come with me.”
He did not want to comply,
but then the pilgrim followed me.
I led him down from the balcony
to a private room.
I said: “Dear good brother,
please do what I will ask you for.”
“Gladly, sir, I will do that.”
“Brother, then reveal to me
who you are, tell me that by God
in full truth and without lying.”
“Lord, I am a miserable man,
who has gained much heart-felt pain
in his lifetime. My heart is filled with pain, sorrow, laments, and suffering, making my body truly miserable. You notice, lord, that I do not possess any wealth or a strong body that would demand respect. You may as well repress your own question. I am the most miserable person who has ever been called a man.”

Then I asked the brother again: “Good man, how did this happen that my lady’s beauty caused you so much pain in your heart? I saw you standing there lamentably, suffering from painful sorrow. What happened to you there? What did you lament about? By God, tell me that. I pledge by my Christian faith, whatever you are going to tell me, that it will not hurt you in any way and yet might easily help you to regain your joy.”

The pilgrim responded then: ‘Since I have lived in such heavy sorrow until today, I will take the risk and tell you at the danger of losing my life, since I am suffering heart-felt pain anyway and also great sorrow. If I have to die, so be it, since I have been born, unfortunately without love and without any consolation. If I am not going to be liberated from my pain, then death will be my preference; because of the endless suffering my life is in danger. Let me tell you then my name in response to your question and reveal what strange adventures have happened to me. Then anything may happen to me just as God wills it. I am going to tell you fully, as far as I know the truth, what suffering I have gone through. I am called Willehalm, the kingdom of England was supposed to be my rightful inheritance. My dear father wore there
in great esteem
the kingdom’s crown,
through which he gained much praise.
When he died an honorable death,
I inherited the rich kingdom
according to the laws, but I was
a young man, just a child.
When the lords of the land
elected me according to princely virtues,
and treated me well,
as it behooved their honor,
I took their advice well to heart.
They were pleased about that, observing that in me.
Both I and they were happy to learn
the good news
that King Reinmunt [of Norway]
had raised a dear child,
very beautiful, not lacking in any blissfulness,
who was very fitting for me,
and the princes recommended
that I should marry her.
I sent my messengers there
to find out what this beauty and her father might think about it.
Once they had seen her,
they returned and informed me
that the wishfulness of all good fortune
was fulfilled in her,
and that Reinmunt of Norway
would be happy to have me as his son-in-law.
This my messengers told me then.
I was happy about it and traveled there
together with a delightful company;
they had joined me
in their chivalric worthiness.
I selected the best whom I found
all over the kingdom of England:
twelve of them were the most outstanding,
nearly sixty years of age,
and twelve of them were honorable
and had reached the age of about thirty.
Some of them were
mighty princes,
the others were barons and knights.
I had also taken with me twelve maids,
who were supposed to be the companions for my dear lady.
I traveled with this wonderful band of people over the sea to Norway.
I was well received there.
Once all that had taken place then King Reinmunt right away gave me the virgin, the Princess Erene.
Before he entrusted his daughter, whom I was supposed to marry,
I had to promise to him and swear many oaths, to grant him my pledge that, while I was still a squire, I would not to lie with her nor treat her as my wife.  
I did so, since it had to be.
Only then he consented to my wooing and granted me the pure good woman, the noble, high-spirited, and highly-born lady, indeed.
Then I had our ship be made ready with everything necessary for the sea voyage.
The king sent with me a large army of worthy knights to accompany me home.
Then I made up my mind to place the young princess in one of the ships together with the company of English lords, whom I had brought with me from home, and I wanted to travel with the other group across the sea to my country.
I did this in order to comply with my oath.
I was afraid that the guarantee that I had promised for my lady might torture my heart so much, that I would have to undergo great suffering and would feel much pain as a result of my longing for her; since she was not supposed to become my wife before I would be recognized as a knight. 
I was worried that the bonds of love
might make me break the oath
and would teach me to experience sorrow,
as suffering always comes from love.
Because of that fear it had to be
that both I and she, that is, both of us
had to be separated on the sea.

Then I turned, together with the good lady,
toward the stormy sea.\textsuperscript{111}
We then separated, but only physically.
With my future wife\textsuperscript{112}
I left my heart and also my soul.
I took from the good lady
her soul, heart, and mind
in heart-felt love,
which she offered me with many kisses
under tears, as I did as well.
She took a ring from me,
and I took one from her.
I am still wearing it at my finger.
It has reminded me often ever since
in painful heart-felt sorrow
of the sweet pure woman who had given it to me.

When we were about to depart from the land,
I was filled in many ways
with unhappiness and great sorrow.
Misery, suffering, and troubles
have ever been with me since then.
I have never recovered from unhappiness
since I had to experience the greatest misfortune
which anyone has ever had to undergo
in suffering, that is, when I witnessed
and truly observed
great sorrow, affecting us both,
a very rueful separation
and the great suffering of dear friends,
whom I observed losing their lives.

This happened as I am going to tell you.
One day, while we were on the sea
strong and great storms rose.
My ship was driven toward a mountain,
that seemed very scary.
The storm slammed us against a rock,
which broke up our ship into pieces.
I saw how many worthy men
next to me drown in the sea,
and the entire company died
and no one survived
who had come along with me.
When my ship completely fell apart
I held onto a boat
that carried me to the land.
However, I had no idea
where my very dear lady had gotten.
I traveled through many countries
and searched in many kingdoms
for the noble and loving lady,
yet I never heard in truth
anything about her.
Believe me, as you can realize,
it has now been four and a half years
that I have been searching for the good one
and cared very little
about my country, the crown, and my life
because of the most endearing lady
who had been born to cause me so much pain,
and who is the reason that I have now lost
life, country, and property,
heartfelt joy and my high-spirited mind.
I have now found her here.
The deeply-felt longing for her,
which I have carried secretly
was terrible, and it is now even more intense;
I feel worse than ever.
Before I drew some solace from hope.
Now I have to let that go.
Prior to this I enjoyed the illusion of love,
and now I have to abandon that as well,
for which reason I feel even more badly than before.
Oh dear, and always, oh dear!
How should I find any consolation
for the pain deep in my heart?
Oh dear, how strangely God
has demonstrated his incomprehensible power
in an astonishing way!
His workings\textsuperscript{113} have lowered
so much the spirit of my heart,
turning it this and that way.
He can certainly bring about wondrous things.
That has become visible in my case:
while I lost the good lady,
whom I had chosen as the love of my heart,
for that He has given me
and added to it all
more worries than anyone
has ever earned through heart-felt love.
I have gained and I have lost
love created through the pain in my heart.

The loss in my gain
consists in nothing else but that I have come here
so that I can observe
the Easter Day of my joy.\textsuperscript{114}
It is a rich discovery for me
that I know that she is still well.
Yet, I know that I have to give up my life
for my dear lady,
since I will now have to lose her.
Because of this terrible pain
I will have to die,
and perish in grievous laments.

Oh, you wounded body!
If I will never be able [again] to hug
this lovely lady,
then great pain will afflict me
and powerful sorrow in my heart.
Then I would have purchased knighthood
for a high price, while I was still a squire!
If I had not given my promise [to her father],
I would have been with my lady
in sweet friendship
all the time before and ever since.\textsuperscript{115}
Now, I feel great pain in my heat
because I must depart from her
and lose her sweet person,
since your son is supposed to marry her.
He enjoys greatest joy in his heart,
while I am going to lose from my heart
all the joy.

Thus our lives are separated.

He has gained my heart-felt joy.
My reward is the suffering resulting from love,
heart-felt love having turned into heart-felt pain.
That’s the reason why you saw me crying
and lamenting here. This is getting worse for me, as I will have to lament ardently and to cry as a result from the pain in my heart, which I am feeling because of the love that I carry in my heart. That is all just as I have told you. I have told you the full truth and revealed my mind to you, and my name and informed you who I am. What else can I say? Whatever you might want from me, that will happen. I will have to do as you might wish. In truth, I will never recover [from my misery]. If I have to face my demise here, then so be it, it would be God’s intention. Dear lord, as you command, so it will be. I was born to experience suffering, which has sworn to be with me. Therefore I cannot push it away, and whatever misery will happen to me, that will happen to me because of a woman, that is, because of the blessed person to whom God has given life. For that reason I do not regret the suffering that I am experiencing here. I have wasted my life for her.” I said to the brother then: “Dear man, is that the case as you have told me now?” “Yes, my lord, so help me Christ. What good would it do to me if I lied, and deceived myself so much? If I wanted to tell you something else than what my eyes have witnessed, then I would lie and deceive myself. That would go very much to my discredit. For what purpose would I deceive both of us, for good or for bad? Everything has to proceed as God wants it to be. Your son ought to enjoy love in his heart, while I will have pain in my heart. That is what has happened, what else would you want? I am poor and he is rich.”
[Gerhart:] “[No, no], be happy, my lord, do not be so sorrowful. Since God has arranged matters in His own way He wants to demonstrate to you with a miracle His great power, so you should not stay unhappy; shed all your lamentable sorrow. Whatever God wants will happen, let us witness that miracle in you; and you will profit from it undoubtedly.” In that way I consoled the lord who was burdened in his heart with greatest pain and sorrow.

I said: “Lord, wait here, until I have returned.” Then I left and ordered squires and tailors to come from the city, asking them to fashion good clothes for the lord, which would be appropriate for the rank of a king. I urged them on to do their job as fast as possible. They eagerly followed my command. They immediately prepared for him an elegant dress, skillfully cut; nothing else I would have accepted. I ordered him to be given a bath and to be shaven and to make him look like a new person. Whatever clothes a person needs, I had prepared for him. Then I rode off and left him behind in his room. Filled with joy I got off the horse where I found my dear lord. I told him secretly: “Listen a little to me, lord.” “[Archbishop:] “Gladly, tell me, what has happened?” [Gerhart:] “Listen to the greatest miracle which has ever happened in these days, and which God wants to demonstrate to me at this time in a wondrous manner.” My lord then leaned over the table and said then: “Tell me, what do you want to inform me about?
What kind of miracle will happen with you?"
I said: “My dear lord,
take more time now
for the meal and the company here,
because I am going to welcome a guest
who is also supposed to sit down with you.
He really needs favors;
he has arrived here only recently.”
[Archbishop:] “Dear Gerhart, who is he?”
[Gerhart:] “A guest whom God has sent to me.
Prince Willehalm of England
has arrived now.” [Archbishop:]: “Are you mocking me?”
[Gerhart:] “No, it is him, truly by God.”
[Archbishop:] “Where has he come from,
in the name of God, and where is he?”
[Gerhart:] There [in the room], the tailors are preparing him his clothes”
[Archbishop:] “Who arrived with him here in this country?”
[Gerhart:] “No one, he is here alone.
Dressed in rags he came by here,
in the appearance of a naked [miserably dressed] pilgrim.
He was standing there near my lady
and looked at her, crying his eyes out.
When I noticed that, I took him aside
and asked him who he was.
The pilgrim told me
his proper name
and how his conditions were.
How the lady was handed over to him,
and what I learned during my journey,
his told me himself
confirming thus the full truth.
Since God now shows us His gracefulness
and His great kindness
and makes this all known to us
by way of sending him [Willehalm] here [to Cologne]
in such a miraculous way,
I request, my lord, that you could give me
good advice in this matter,
so that I can approach him in this regard
in such a way that I can bring forth God’s kindness
with good fortune in him.”
[Archbishop:] “As you desire, I will give you my advice.”
[Gerhart:] “My lord, so help me
in convincing my son to let go
of the princess,
[I mean] his dear fiancée,
whom he has not married [officially],
and grant her in friendship to her [true] fiancé.
He might act like the other young people.
He has enjoyed such great success
that he might prefer sinfulness
instead of letting go of the princess.
Now advise him and tell him that.
It would be more appropriate
for him to marry a woman rightly gained
than a woman not rightly granted.”

Then my lord said: “I will do that.
God has blissfully honored you
through great fortune.
With your mouth you provide the right teaching,
which the Holy Spirit in Its wisdom
has taught you intelligently.
Now, bring your son here [to me]
Let me try to find out whether he
will be ready to follow both of us,
once I will have explained to him
God’s proper teachings regarding marriage.”
I did not linger any moment
and rushed to find my son
I took him respectfully
through the throng to the throne.
Before my dear lord
we sat down, my son and I.
The archbishop turned to us both.
I said: “Lord, let us hear your words.”
[Archbishop:] “No, you talk, your mouth knows better
how to speak according to your mind
than mine. And whatever I will hear,
what his [the son’s] answer will be,
thereupon I will be able to provide a response.
Let me hear soon what you have to say,
since I have clearly seen
that the young people are anxious
to receive the permission
to do jousting on the tournament field.
I notice well that this urges them on.”

Thereupon I said: “Son, my dear man,
these words pertain to you.”
[Son:] “How, my father?” [Gerhart:] “I am going to tell you that.
I want to ask you that you will not
be angry with me about that
what I will have to ask you from the bottom of my heart.”
[Son:] “My father, you hold the authority
over me.
Whatever you will command, my father,
that will be done according to your graces.”
[Gerhart:] “May the highest God, dear son
grant you, according to His command,
fully a sweet reward.
Listen then, to what I want to request from you.
You know well, son, what kind of miracle
has happened here in our time,
how I liberated
my lady from misery
with the help of both of our goods
and how I then gave you,
to make you happy, a great fortune
through my dear lady.
If you could have her rightfully
—which unfortunately cannot be—
I would be most delighted forever.
But now it has happened
that her fiancé has returned
whom she had been robbed wrongly
and to whom she had been given before
in rightful marriage. It has now come about
that God has sent him here
for us as a solace, into this country,
so that we can now aspire
for His grace, and this with all our good intentions.
Dear son, allow this to happen,
since our Creator has granted us to observe
His manifold miracles,
since He has given us some authority,
with which we ought to be content.
This means that we can do badly or well
with this lord [Willehalm].
We will enjoy the more honor,
the more we display our gracefulness to him,
since we have the authority to do so.
Insofar as this authority is given to us,
it would be very little effort
to do well for him.
Whoever has to exert power,
ought to be humble
and to display a humble mind.
Then the highest hand [God]
who is called the glorious one, will elevate him.
Now, our situation is most favorable,
since the prince himself
is in our presence,¹²⁰
so that we can return his legitimate fiancée¹²¹
without any constraints
and lower before him in humbleness
our high-minded spirit
in servile goodness.
Thereby God’s hand will elevate us,
since He will be the judge
at the Day of Judgment
according to the statements by the prophets.”¹²²

My lord then added the following:
“Listen to what I want to tell you,
Gerhart, this is [also] my wish.¹²³
Allow this to happen with a good will,
since it is God’s command.
When the creator of this world, God,
brought into existence everything according to its own worth,
angels, heaven, and earth,
and when through Lucifer’s pride
the tenth choir [of angels] was destroyed¹²⁴
through his imitating of God,
then God wanted to replace it
with the creation of mankind.
Adam was placed by Him
in the delights of Paradise.
God took from him with His own hand
a rib and called it his wife.
He said: ‘These two are one body,
with two souls; but only one being
may be this man and also this woman,
and all those who will be brought together
through a legitimate marriage
from the beginning until today will form a new unit
in a pure marriage. Upon them will be placed,
in marital loyalty,
this bond, without ever any change to occur.’
Some time thereafter
the Church Fathers have taught us
the meaning of the Holy Spirit,
upon which it is written as follows:\footnote{125}
The very wise messenger is telling us,
that what God has bound together,
man’s hand should not separate.
What God’s idea has shaped,
that is well according to His grace,
and no one should tear it apart.
How could, anyway, our mind
separate from each other what God has created?
Think of that
and do not act against God
which makes you disobedient against Him.
If you transgress against that
what God has granted you,
then you disregard
the advice by God and the prophets.
What will you then say on Sundays,
when God arrives
and brings everything to its end,
thereupon giving you his judgment?
He will say: ‘You have taken from me
the bond of my loyal words.
When my messenger had been sent to you,
you should have taken what I had given him,
the staff of a fruitful life,
so that he would, according to my wish,
return it
with every fruitful plentitude
the fruit of human fertility.
As my words have told you,
you cannot legitimately have
what is supposed to belong to my messenger,
or you belittle my messenger.
Otherwise you will be disinherited.’
Keep this in your mind.
Gerhart, dear young man,
think deeply about this
and let the lady go in the name of God.
If you disregard His command,
you will be lost forever
and suffer God’s great wrath.
Give up this lady.
She is the prince’s legitimate fiancée.\textsuperscript{126}
Therefore you cannot keep her,
you would not be an appropriate husband.
Since God has sent the prince into this country
at such a good moment,
He had wanted to create a miracle thereby,
since He sent you [the merchant Gerhart] as a helper
for the prince and the princess.
Now, let it become apparent
that you are fortunate enough
to possess the loyalty of a steady heart.
I am asking you both for that,
in the name of God, making no distinction.”

To my lord and to me
my son turned, asking: “What is your opinion?\textsuperscript{127}
Shall I set free my lady?”
[Archbishop:] “Yes, if you want to enjoy God’s grace.”
[Young Gerhart:] “Can I not marry her under any other condition?”
[Archbishop:] “Indeed, no. As long as one will observe you
being together with her in an illegitimate way,
God’s blessing will stay away from you,
because another man is supposed to marry her,
to whom you must rightly grant her.”

[Young Gerhart:] “Oh, woe about this situation, and again, oh, woe!
Now I will have to lament forever
about the fact that God is so strange,
demanding from me the agreement
to let go of my lady,
from whom I have gained bliss and honor.
Oh, woe about this lamentable suffering
that my heart has ever made me
to receive such great happiness
from my dear lady,
whereas now I have to let her go!
I will never receive any consolation
for this heart-felt sorrow.
When I will depart from her,
I will have to give up on my love
and will have to live for the rest of my life in sorrow.”
I said to him: “Son, be in good spirit.
No one ought to call himself
inconsolable.
If the lady were not to love you, 
how much would you then lose regarding Christ? 
The more you love something, 
the greater the reward will be, 
when you do not look for a reward. 
Therefore you should let go of this love, 
if you want to receive a reward after your life. 
The good God rewards you 
according to your heart’s attitude. 
If you are ready to give up your love on his behalf, 
He will give you a life filled with heart-felt love.”

Politely my son said:
“My father, this misfortune
I will accept because you command it from me; 
because of my lord [the archbishop] and God 
I will let the lady free. 
It will not matter how much pain I will feel because of her, 
she will have her husband, and that is what will happen. 
Oh well, now let me see him 
who will receive my lady. 
In the name of God I will be happy for him to have her.”

In my heart I felt truly delighted. 
My lord was also very pleased together with me 
that we could not help but, 
out of love and also out of sorrow 
we began to cry together with my son. 
Then we left that place 
and returned to the location 
where we found the prince. 
They had carefully put on him 
most noble clothing. They had dressed him 
most worthily. 
I found him there clothed 
in silk and gold-threaded moiré, 
decked out with sable and ermine, 
decorated with valuable pearls. 
I ordered that trimming be brought, 
which he put on. 
He had on his feet elegant soft shoes, 
what a splendid-looking man he was! 
On his chest there gleamed 
a shining ruby, 
which emitted a bright light.
Also, his hair was, according to courtly customs,
cut and trimmed fashionably,
so that it fell nicely,
in brightly yellow color and curly,
down to his shoulders.
His lovely face shone
in a modest manner,
because he had to accept sorrow
for such a long time prior to then.
Everything was ready now,
as a soft beauty, not too exuberant
shone on his face.
He had such a lovely male appearance,
and if I were ever to live up to a thousand years,
I would never see again,
just as one could imagine,
such an attractive man.
He wore valuable clothing,
my goodness, he was so lovely to look at!
His wonderful youthfulness was
like the mirror glass of good fortune!
He was perfect in sweet courtly virtues,
entirely raised to perfection.
He had implanted the desire in his soul
to gain the world’s praise for his excellent manners.
He was the highest fruit of all blissfulness
in his bodily appearance.
The proof of the highest worthiness
rested in his pure soul.
His heart pursued many high virtues.
He was not lacking
in generosity, chastity, good manners,
courage, honesty, high spirit,
trustworthiness, loyalty, and goodness,
eloquence and wisdom.
God had bestowed upon him
the highest glory of a man
as displayed in his body’s purity.
The highest goal of bliss had been realized in him.
I observed all that clearly in him,
only I got to know better
this man so rich in virtues.
When my dear son saw him,
he said politely to the lord:
“In the name of God and my heart,  
be welcome,  
my lord, here in this land.”

Immediately the lord  
politely thanked him for that,  
displaying his courtly manners.
I had then not forgotten,  
once everyone had sat down,  
to order the stewards  
not to neglect their duty  
and to serve us diligently.
I also asked the worthy crowd  
in polite terms to sit down and to wait for me.  
They praised me for that and it thus had to be,  
until everything was prepared,  
my lord [the emperor as listener], just as I have told you.
I did not ignore the prince any longer  
and ordered a charger to be prepared for him,  
on which he rode with both of us.
The noble and virtuous man  
rode between us full of joy,  
displaying happiness without any heart-felt sorrow.
They were wondering much,  
all those who were sitting there,  
who this worthy man might be.
Knights and ladies  
gazed at him attentively  
and wanted to find out  
who that knight might be.
I took him to my lord,  
and in front of him we all dismounted.
I spoke then to my lord:  
“Lord, take a higher seat,  
allow me to ask you that,  
and grant that this knight take a seat down there.”
My lord took good note.  
He moved a little higher.  
The proud guest then did repress it,  
he wanted to get to her [the lady] where she sat on the bench,  
and he jumped up to the stand.
My lady, in full bloom, said,  
when she saw him sitting next to her:  
“Now tell me, my dear father, who might be this knight.”
[Gerhart:] “Lady, is he unknown to you? It is the prince of England, your fiancé whom you love in your heart.”
The lady then began to cry:

“Oh, my dear father, in the name of God, why have I deserved this mockery? For what reason, and why? You have never done to me such a hurtful thing before. Dear man, for what reason are you ridiculing your very poor daughter? By God, stop with this mockery.”

[Gerhart:] “My lady, so help me God, I am serious, and am not trying to ridicule you.” Then she looked at the unknown man with tear-filled eyes. The latter thereupon cried as well. He said: “If you do not recognize me, then look at this ring on my finger, your heartfelt love of my heart, and study the ring that I have on my finger. Lady, let yourself be reminded, of the time when I, in my youth, departed from you. You gave me that ring with woeful lament, as you know. [In turn,] the ring that you carried, my lady, I gave to you and I requested that it would accompany you so that you would think of me and would be loyal to me with heartfelt love for me. You promised that. Thereupon we parted from each other, lamenting our heartfelt pain.”

The lady, filled with sorrow, looked at him over and over and probed carefully whether it was him or not. Then their gazes met between them. He looked at her and she at him. She drew from him and he from her, driven by their hearts’ longing, loyalty in constant love. Steady love without sorrow.
in a steady mind
was given to them by constant mine [love],
who bound them together with the strength of constancy.
When my lady recognized
her heartfelt lover, the goal of her heart’s desire,
she spoke out of exuberant joy:
“Blessed am I, fortunate woman!
Sweet man, loved from the bottom of my heart,
be welcome here, a thousand times!”
After she had greeted him she experienced
out of love such extreme pain
that she leaned down onto her fiancé’s lap
and lost her consciousness.
She was so deeply moved by this joy
that she no longer heard or saw anything,
and did not understand or speak a word,
just like the person who is dreaming
and who is lost in the illusion
of thoughts giving her wise directions,
which even lead her when she is walking around awake.131
That’s what happened to the good lady.
This was the case with her mind and her mouth,
except that she began to think:
“Oh, heartfelt love, oh, sweet man,
oh dear consolation, now give me solace!
Oh, dear friend, let me see you!”
That was her dream and her thought,
which forced her [to remember] her great love.
The overflow, the fruit of love,
which blossoms in such perfection
and with such great joy
effloresced in her high spirit,
when she saw her heartfelt lover,
for whom she felt such intense emotions
that it caused her great pain in the heart
as a result of her profound love.132
She had no way of being moderate about it,
since nature drove her to that.
She had chosen such great sorrow,133
when she had lost her beloved,
that she hardly had survived it.
But now she became happy again
because love removed that pain,
when she found the love of her heart.
In this way love can cause great sorrow,
when it exerts its power to an extreme,
when a heartfelt love is filled with too much love,
then its strength gives
so much power to the experience of joy
that the suffering gains the upper hand
when the happiness is at its highest,
that is, where love responds to love,
which before had been lost in the foreign
and then is being found again.134

The prince took the princess,
his beloved friend,
into his arms,135 hugging her
and kissing her lovingly,
his sweet lady, the pure woman.
He said: “heart-beloved friend,
you sunshine of my happiness
now give consolation to my heart,
which will happen if you are happy.
I cannot give solace to myself,
if you wanted to live in sorrow.
You ought to grant to yourself and to me
full joy without any restraints.
Your suffering gives me unhappiness,
your joy delights my soul,
your pain hurts me.
Be well and look at me.
Your dear friend is greeting you
with loving love.”
He pressed his mouth
onto her lips and her chin,
and he kissed her more than a thousand times
embracing her sweetly.
For a long time her red lips
rested on his,
in love he exchanged kisses with her.
That had to be after all the sorrow.
He kissed her over and over,
he searched for happiness and consolation with her.
Her most loving consolation
was close to his heart,
since she would not be free
from heartfelt heaviness,
if he were a stranger to her.
Thus he returned to her what she had been robbed of, she recovered her joy through her heart-beloved man. When she thought properly about it and recovered her senses, she listened to his laments, and his request came back to her mind, so she looked up and gazed at him. Her red lips spoke full of sadness: “Oh dear, why did I sleep, oh dear! Did I sleep or what happened with me when I was separated from you, you who are my heartfelt beloved? What happened then to me? My grievous sorrow made me sad. Oh dear, my beloved, where have you been, since you left me joyless woman in great lamentable loneliness and in heavy sorrow?” Then her sadness really set in, and she embraced him with both her arms, she pressed him tightly to her chest. With tears she lamented the sorrowful situation, in which she had had to suffer so badly for such a long time. Her rose-colored lips laughed because of the recovery of joy which she had been blessed with through the rediscovery of him, whom she recognized so joyfully, when she found the love of her heart. Thus her love-filled mind could express itself with tears and with joy. Both [young people] began to shed tears. Out of two bodies love made one: through lovely bonds both their bodies became one, the woman became a man and the man became a woman, with one mind, one soul, one in all oneness,136 one body with one love, one heart not separated, one love and one company. The strength of love’s loyalty rested in their love for each other, all in one and not distinguished, her body was his body, her mind was his mind,
his body was her body, and his good was her good.
Her heart contained the hero’s body,
his heart was in this pure woman.
When he laughed, she was happy;
when he lamented something, she did so with him;
when he kissed her, she kissed him back.
Thus both their minds
expressed themselves in them equally
through love free from sorrow.
By means of constant love without any evil doubt
their minds became strong again
through steady and great love.
They embraced each other
in a hearty hug.\footnote{137}
Their past sorrow had to move to pity
anyone who watched them,
noting their joy shared between them.
    They did not get tired of being together:
there were sweet hugs, soft embraces,
lovely kisses, sweet faces.
They did not say anything else to each other but:
“Kiss me, kiss me, and kiss me,
kiss me, beloved, I am going to kiss you.
I feel so delighted in my heart
that I have found you, my love.
Heartfelt beloved, you give me delight.
You are love in my heart
Honor be given to sweet Christ
in whose name you have arrived
granting me your blissful presence.
Honored be the pure woman
who gave birth to you.
Oh dear, my love, I was so destroyed
when I lost you out of sight.
Your disappearance made its effects appear on me.
I lost when you were lost.
Whatever would you had ever observed on me,
I shared with you.
You are mine, I am yours, I want to be yours.”
Each one then tenderly offered
their red lips to the other.
This was a sweet kiss,
exchange in a passionate manner.\footnote{138}
His cheek rested on hers
in a soft way. Their love
found its way from red lips to red lips,
and each kiss was repaid with a thousand kisses.

I have to say honestly,
that no lovers have ever
exchanged with each other more delightfully.
I know for sure that no one has ever seen
such loving companionship,
such force of sorrowful joy,
such full love imbued with graciousness,
or such minds determined by goodness
and by constant loyalty.
The sorrow comes back to me
if I consider in my heart
the pain that they had to endure in their hearts,
and then the greeting, the love, and the bliss
which subsequently made them happy again.
I will always be happy about their happiness.
Their exchanges then came to an end because the noble knights
arrived at the table
who wanted to observe the exchanges and the laments
by the lord and the lady.
Many a stout person began to cry.
There was neither a man nor a woman
who did not have the mind-set
not to cry on behalf of the good lady
and the lord,
to empathize with their suffering
and to feel great joy because of their joy,
to share their joy by being happy as well.

The noble lovers
caused heavy sorrow
with laments and longing pain
to many loving hearts,
who desired to experience love as well.
Their longing was so loving
that many hearts had to endure
the flight of joy because of sorrow
as a result of the loving exchanges between the two.
Those must experience longing
who pursue, out of loving loyalty,
the pain of longing sweetness.
Their longing caused longing in those
who were sympathetic to longing
for the love of his/her heart:
their longing gave them longing pain.
Their longing greeting entered deeply
into the thoughts of many people filled with longing,
while longing for love.
Their longing meant love.
The pain of longing caused longing love
which revealed the truth of loyalty.
The heartfelt love spoke up
and their shared loyalty became visible
to those who had in his/her mind
the loving embrace,
the sweet kiss, the soft hug,
the fast flight of loving love,
which, with the greeting of longing love,
was shooting in both of their hearts.
Their lament and their love
inflamed many people’s hearts,
which had to burn hotly
for love in longing fashion,
that is, those who were wounded by love.
About their love and then the joyful reunification
many people had to cry,
courtly knights and noble ladies
and many other people.
[Gerhart:] For the fact that I have ever gained
that good from which that love originated
I will always feel joy.
Truly, I want to tell you,
if I were to have twelve times as much
gold and silver [as I have now],
and if I then would have to let it go for them,
I would never have complained about it.
I need to give my creator
grace, praise, and honor
with everlasting joy,
because I received the honor [to witness]
what resulted from my goods,
that is, the strength of loving love,
such loving companionship
in those two lovers,
who had been separated before,
until God had granted me the grace
that I was able to unify them again  
with the means of my goods.  

Now, in their high spirit, 4880
the company of knights was ready  
to do the bohort,140 so without further worries
we enjoyed for the rest of the day
much entertainment.  

You could observe there 4885
many types of amusements
by knights and ladies.
There were bohorts and dancing,
carried out joyfully all day long.
Whatever one could think of 4890
any form of festive activities, that was practiced there.
I then went to my masters,
the prince and the princess,
and to my dear lord [the archbishop].
I said to the prince: 4895
“Since it has come about,
my lord, that your oath
has fulfilled the pledge
that you would not be close to my lady
while you are still a squire,
so I request, my dear lord,
that you stay with me,
until you have put on the sword;
and then will be honored
the love of a marital friend
by the sweet princess.”

[Willehalm:] “Gladly, father, I will do that.
God has given you so much blessed honor
through my person that
whatever your mind instructs you,
will happen according to your wishes,
since you, my very dear lord,
have freed me, who was ill from longing,
from suffering.”

Now, my lord demonstrated his honor to me. 4910
I am not saying that he wanted, for my sake,
to dub [the prince] a knight.
The fact that my wish was fulfilled
was brought about by the love
of the worthy
princess,
a love which forced him to pursue intense love as well. I would be rather pompous to claim that the prince of England was dubbed a knight because of me; instead it was the desire by God and the lady, which brought about my greatest fortune.

The day passed with joys. After the night had spread its darkness all over the world, then very quickly the light of the next day appeared again. The knightly company agreed to attend mass, where the prince received the name of a knight and hence joined knighthood. With the double force of joy this day was even better than the day before in terms of the knights’ various amusements, like the joy which had made the previous day so enjoyable to all. That day was filled with many joys, when the prince received the sword; the lord had arrived as a squire and here gained the name of a knight.

After my dear lord had become a knight in the knightly fashion, and once the bohort had been completed and everyone was supposed to sit down, we did no longer waited: my dear son and I rode then to where my lord was sitting. I said: “Lord, since sweet Christ has arranged it so that this day is yours (yesterday the festival was mine), everyone present is requesting that they will be allowed to stay with you. So you should ask them for that favor, and I will do so as well, until your wedding festival will be over.” My lord did not tarry, he rode together with me to the court. My lord the archbishop granted him that request.
Whomever he asked [to stay]
praised us for that immediately.  
Many proud warriors
promised to stay for the festival
and did not object to that.
We became very happy in our hearts.
On the bleachers
were sitting knights and ladies,
who demonstrated to the prince
their worthiness
through many joys, free of all sorrow.
To those with a sweet steady mind,
to all the dear guests
we offered such good hospitality
that I will be acknowledged forever
in the name of all my territorial princes.
They demonstrated to my lord [the prince]
their good breeding, their excellent courtliness,
with courtly joyfulness,
as if he were their lord.
Whatever amusement was acceptable,
that was not ignored on that day
in knightly fashion.
No one thought that it lasted too long,
except for one man who was pressured by love,
whose heart was closely bound to love,
who pursued a woman’s love,
who in great heartfelt love
locked his heart close to her own.
Lady Minne also told me
that with the same mind-set
sorrow was fighting in her heart
a lady, who longed for the next night,
but not because of womanly habits.
Why she hardly could wait,
Lady Love told me
out of her smart womanhood.
The power of love, the bond of minne,
overpowered her womanly heart,
so that she was wounded by love.
The heart of her fiancé, who was familiar with sorrow,
rested in her own heart.
The same longing tortured her,
since she longed for the night,
driven by the power of her heart.  
Who might be those two,  
who so much wanted to have, instead of the delightful sunshine,  
the arrival of the night?  
What had daylight done to them,  
which gives everyone in the world so much pleasure  
during the wonderful summer time?  
Lady Love told me the secret,  
those were the princess  
and also the prince.  
Her suffering filled with laments, her pain of longing  
were lifted when the night arrived,  
since her laments then came to an end.  
The day passed away in a joyful manner.  
When evening set in,  
they prepared an excellent bed for the prince,  
performing their task as diligently  
as this ought to happen for a king’s son.  
They brought the princess to him,  
she being his love for him, his heart was burning in desire.  
For all the suffering that he had to go through before,  
God recompensed him now well,  
to speak the truth.  
Since I had brought love together  
with love, as it appeared to me,  
I left from there and was very happy.  
I wished them good-night,  
God had granted me honor through them.  
Their night was filled with so much love  
that they had never felt better before.  
Who might contradict me in that?  
No one can say anything against that.  
Those who have previously experienced a good night,  
now had to wish them [also] a good night.  
Their night of sorrow had resulted  
into the joys of a happy day.  
The lover lay in his beloved’s arms  
pressed to her chest as he desired.  
Their passion was to pursue love  
and to chase sorrow away from their hearts.  
Once it began to dawn,  
he gave her lovingly  
a rich good-morning gift:  
his heart, body, mind, and soul,
governance, land, people, and property,
the strength of love among friends,
ever-lasting company of love,
constancy of loving love,
the good guarantee of loyalty,
the stability of the heart
without failing in trustworthiness.

Not long thereafter
one could see the sun rising above the horizon,
and its bright light shone delightfully.
Then maids arrived,
beautiful, pure, just as one might wish them to be,
entering the bedroom.
They offered both of them clothing.
Once they were dressed,
they heard the ringing of many bells.
We took them to the church where the mass was performed.144

When the service was over,
then everything imaginable was done
that could bring about joy.
The entire company of knights
had assembled in the stands,
where there were all the minstrels.
All the nobles had come together.
Everyone present received from me
very rich gifts.145
After the breakfast
the knights joyfully said good-bye
and rode off.
We rode with the worthy company
until outside the city, likewise being full of happiness
and thanked them all for coming.
My lord did not spare his words:
He promised all the knights
that if one of them would be forced by an external might
to vacate his land,
if he then were to come to him [the archbishop],
he would be restored in his position peacefully,
if God were ready to send him back to his land
with His friendly support.146
The knights were very pleased about that.
They thanked him deeply
and extended to him their grace,
promising the good lord
constant loyalty in their service, 
trust and constant steadiness, 
always doing their best for him. 

Once this all had been discussed 
and the festivities had been completed 
and all the guests had left 
in such a delightful fashion, 
I looked at these two with great joy, 
at the prince and the princess, 
and understood their feeling of love, whenever I saw them 
experiencing such heartfelt love. 
Their show of love inspired people 
to feel love in their own hearts 
and to gain high spirits. 
My lord, who was a blissful man 
became loved by the other people, 
when they observed his virtues, 
and the best among them praised him highly. 

The virtuous man [Willehelm] 
took me and my son 
one day secretly aside 
and said to me, as I am going to report to you: 
“Father, you whom I love deeply in my heart, 
since God has granted you this great grace 
by allowing you to help me, 
and since He brought the opportunity that 
your constant blissfulness carries 
the high crown in heaven, 
hence complete your goodness, which God has granted you 
by helping me further 
and provide me with your advice 
how I should live and what I should do. 

You know well how things stand with me, 
and how my life has been influenced 
through your great and rich goodness, 
by way of which I could profit toward God, 
so that I regained my joy and my life 
and also my fiancée, 
whom I had lost before. 
Now it will depend on your opinion 
whether I should return home. 
I have learned, in truth,
that some people
in my kingdom
have risen up against me.
Whatever you will advise me about that,
father and my brother,
I will carry out for sure.
My country is in a bad shape;
my absence has caused chaos there;
no one seems to keep me in mind,
even though that causes havoc to the country.
Some of my dukes
want to be king themselves
and have taken control over
a portion of the castles
and of the royal treasure.\[^{149}\]
They will have appointed themselves [to the high positions],
if I do not return there soon.
Yet I have also verily learned
that the best among the lords
still stand by me in constant loyalty.”
I answered: “My dear prince,
since your staying abroad causes you damage,
we ought not to stay here any longer.
I will order a ship to be prepared for us,
which can transport so many riches
that we can arrive in that country
in full honor and splendor,
and in complete worthiness,
so that we will never have to be embarrassed.
In case someone might have acted against you in a hostile manner,
and against whom you will need protection,
we will transport across the sea
many noble and worthy knights.”
Thereupon the lord regained his high spirit
and his great heartfelt joy.
Politely he said:
“Dear father, sweet man,
I cannot thank you enough
for your great goodness,
which so mercifully
has given me your support and also your wise council,
your help and your advice.
May God, who in His eternal mastership
remains steadfast forever,
grant you the power of a reward. 
May God, through His advice filled with virtue 
help me to gain such good fortune 
that I can give back to you 
what you have done for me out of your love. 
Even if I gave you everything what I own, 
it would not serve me as sufficient, 
if not God’s reward would be given to you.”

Thereupon we finished the secret council meeting 
(my lord was pleased about the advice) 
and told everything to the princess. 
Then I ordered many clothes and food 
to be transported to the Rhine [to the ship]. 
In a short time then, 
as I had arranged, a ship was ready, 
equipped with many riches, 
loaded with good clothes. 
They had brought food and equipment, 
blankets, carpets, and enough rich bedding 
to the ship. 
When we prepared ourselves for the voyage, 
I handed over my goods and my dear wife 
into my friends’ protection. 
I entrusted myself to God 
on the day when we were about to depart. 
I begged Him to look out for us, 
offering many prayers to Him. 
I ordered that a mass be read 
so that the Holy Spirit 
would help us to achieve our goal. 
We listened to the mass with joy. 
When we were ready to embark, 
many high-spirited women then arrived, 
full of lament, 
and blessed my lady. 
Their eyes displayed 
womanly demeanor, they were filled with tears. 
Much shimmering tear drops 
were shed because of the departure, 
which was a reflection of their womanly loyalty. 
After they had left, 
my friends showed up 
and rode with us to the harbor. 
In one voice they prayed
that we would be safe on our journey.  
Both men and women
wished the best for the prince and the princess.
When we got to the Rhine,
many people burst out crying.
My wife showed the greatest grief
she had ever expressed,
when she witnessed the departure
of the lady, who was the richest in blissfulness,
whom God had ever created.
My lady, the princess, helped her
by lamenting and crying
when they had to say good-bye.
Her maids, in their lovely appearance, also could not avoid
breaking out into laments.
They cried heavily over their friend’s departure,
just as their loyal womanhood commanded them to do.
I know for sure that when my lady had departed
from her father,
she then did not cry as much,
as she demonstrated it here through her [woeful] demeanor,
when she traveled away from our country.
The women kissed each other.
My son, my lords, and also I
said good-bye and departed.
My friends sent us off
with great laments,
but our journey had to happen.

Thus we left our company
and traveled down the Rhine and across the sea,
reaching England.
There we immediately entered
the mighty body of a river.
It flows just as much today as it did then
through the country and then through London.
It is called the river Lundenne.
The waves pushed us up into that river.
It was navigable, deep, and really impressive,
and so was its embankment.
The wind drove us deep into the land toward a mountain
where we reached a harbor.
I left my lord behind
in order to go to the capitol, London.
I asked the prince to stay behind until I would have learned all the news. Together with my squire I rode then into the city in order to figure out what was going on. I could not see anything else before the city in the open field, but many rich tents, set up there in the meadow. The city was likewise so crowded with guests that I hardly could get to a place where I could rent a room. Much clamour by the guests could be heard everywhere in the accommodations, and so as well the streets were filled with great noise.

I pushed my way through the crowd. Not long afterwards I found an inn-keeper who led me to a good room [for rent]. I felt a great urgency and immediately asked the inn-keeper: “My dear lord, now tell me, what has brought all those guests to this place, whom I have seen here everywhere? Is there a tournament or something like that, a courtly meeting or a knightly festival? Here is a very large crowd of people, and their arrival here makes me wonder, for what reason they might have assembled?” “I will tell you that, my lord. They have organized a convention to address the country’s highest needs because the country suffers under its greatest worries. King Willehalm is dead\textsuperscript{154} and the country has no new leader. Whatever happens here in criminal terms no one unfortunately brings to justice. If the lords could find someone, who could arrange all of that and who would seem fitting as a king, he would be elected by them, and if he were born within the right family that he could wear the crown, they would be happily his subjects.
For that reason they have been camped here without ever having been able in their council to find someone, in whom they could identify good advice and wisdom. They have gotten into bad fights amongst each other over the election. That could be a loss for the entire country, if the council would thus end without any outcome. Now they have turned over the election process to twenty-four lords. If those might [disagree] and get into a conflict, there are on the council also three archbishops. One of them is from here in this city. To support him they have appointed two bishops, from Eberwich and Santavit. Their authority is not contested and have given their advice to the people in the council. They all have taken control of the council and have gone to the palace.”

[Gerhart:] “Is that true?” The inn-keeper said: “yes.” Thereupon I ordered my squire to get my horse ready. I went to the palace. The inn-keeper, a very trustworthy man, accompanied me on the way, demonstrating his courtly worthiness taking me to the palace where the council took place. Although I was not a rich man, I wore such splendid clothing that I was regarded as a wealthy man and praised highly which was, unfortunately, not true in my case. Then I went up into the palace. I was well received. The palace was filled with worthy knights, who greeted me in a courtly fashion. I bowed before them. Then I asked them to inform me where the lords of the country had assembled who all formed part of the council. Many proud knights directed me
on my way through the palace
to the door of a chamber.
I knocked, and they let me in.
I stepped up to the council
and the lords honored me
by standing up and greeting me.
They asked me to sit down.
In the twenty-four knights
I recognized those
whom I had freed most painfully in the heathendom.
The council had been entrusted to them.
They did not realize
that it was me who had freed them from their shackles;
I was completely unrecognizable to them.
Yet I noticed well
that they looked attentively
with their eyes toward me.
Still, I was unfamiliar to them.
I said: “My dear lords,
I would like to know, with your permission,
what your advice will be. Let me hear it,
and be so kind to tell me
what your council is debating here.
An ignorant man often gives
very wise advice in an emergency,
which easily proves to be brilliant.
What if God would grant us the fortune,
although I am an ignorant man,
that my advice might help you
and perhaps come to fruition for you!”
One among them said:
“If anyone might have such a wise mind
that he could give us advice
what might be the best for us,
we would happily accept it from him.
A dangerous stalemate in decision-making\textsuperscript{157}
has affected our minds
and has robbed us of wise council.”
[Gerhart:] “How is that, my lord?” [Lord:] “Let me tell you that.
In the past a powerful and wise lord
wore the crown
in great worthiness for a long time
and enjoyed much honor.
When that lord died,
he had a son, who had decided in his mind
already in his youth that he would acquire the praise of the world;
he was a true flower of virtues.

God had bestowed upon him
an inner drive, and this already since his childhood,
to make his youthful honor
to flower as a blossoming branch,
which you can see in all of its glory.
It was certainly to be expected
that the blooming flower
would yield a fruit of sweet goodness
by way of delightful breeding,
as flowers bring forth fruit.
But then the light of the shining flower dropped.
What was supposed to develop into the fruit
following the promise of the blossom,
turned, unfortunately,
into crying and lamenting sorrow.
The brightness of the flower, and its fruit are dead.
The sweet childish youthfulness,
the purely growing manly virtues
disappeared entirely in its blossom.
He was called Willehalm,
who was supposed to carry our crown.
Let us tell you how he perished.
He led a delightful company
across the sea to Norway
and there got engaged with the king’s daughter.
I have never heard anywhere
of such a lovely person.
When he took his future wife with him,
he drowned in the sea.
Many of us lords
had been with the princess
who survived with us at sea.
[But] we suffered, together with our lady
great pain in imprisonment,
until a very good man
ransomed us with his goods.
He brought us back from heathendom;
out of his strength of great inner humbleness
he let us journey home again.
He reached the agreement with us
to keep the virgin with him. 5445
Once we would tell him in truth
about the young man’s health,
he would turn over the virgin to him.
He still holds her: but our lord is dead.
Now we have assembled here because of the country’s suffering
in order to elect a new lord,
since God has taken him away
for whom we have waited for a long time
in great sorrow.
Even though we deliberate wisely,
our council has not achieved anything
in finding anyone,
under whom we might submit ourselves
and who could carry the crown of our land
and whom we would enjoy having as our lord.
One person does not seem good enough to us
because he is too soft in his attitude;
another one seems too miserly;
a good number of men do not appear to be strong enough
in rulership and wealth;
some are lacking
nobility and a high spirit,
so no one is good enough for us.”

Once he had finished speaking,
one could see how the lords began to cry
who were members of the council,
since they could not forget him
of whom I have spoken before.
When the speech was over,
I said: “Very dear good lords,
I can well recommend to you
a highly minded nobleman,
whose virtues deserve to be praised
with sweet words throughout the lands.
I know his good manners so well
that he would be qualified to carry the crown,
if you were to accept him as your lord.”
A virtuous prince
then responded to me politely:
“If you do not mind, we would like to request
that you tell us where from
you have come into this land
and how you are called.
Dear sir, blessed man,

you have given a great speech
and have said very good things.
If your blessed mind
could help turn your words into fact,
then the day would have to be honored,
when you were born.
If you could choose a ruler for us,
then you would have come blissfully
into this kingdom."

Then I gave my name
to all the lords there.
I said: “I came here into this country
across from the sea. I am called
Gerhart of Cologne, that is my name.
I must say it without any shamefulness
that I am called a merchant.”
The lords jumped up immediately,
they kissed me happily
and said: “Father, since God has brought you
here to us lords,
then the crown and also this land
will be subject to you:
You shall be our lord.
God has done well to us through you.”
Then I wanted to tell them
for what reason I had come to this country;
but my words were cut off.
Whatever I said no one listened to it,
they did not hear my words.
The chamber was filled with loud clamor.
One of the lords unlocked the door
before all the others.
They carried me outside
with joyful shouts.
All the worthy lords
received me happily.
In a respectful manner they carried me
to the throne, beaming with joy.
The lords, princes, and knights
placed the country’s crown
wonderfully on my head.
When I was crowned as king
everyone wanted to swear loyalty to me,
young and old, poor and rich.
I asked them all
to listen to me and to be quiet.
I said: “Let me tell you something.”
The clamor barely died down,
which was heard everywhere because of the great joy.
Out of respect for me they finally kept quiet,
and they began to listen to my words,
as if I were a high-ranking man.
Thus I established silence.
Then I said to the good princes:
“For the sweet crown of goodness
for the pure willingness and pure mind,
for the overly rich worthiness,
which you have granted me,
I cannot thank you quite as well
as it would behoove me
for the worthy goodness,
for the willingness of your minds,
which you have shown to me.
I have assumed with richness
from you this kingdom here.
That I ever won this wealth,
God will be grateful to you
through His divine command,
since He is richer than I am.
May he reward you on my behalf.
My dear sweet lords,
if I were to be the king of this country,
I would be certainly too weak for that,
but I must give forever
praise for this great blessing.
Following the teachings of my mind
I have found a man
whom I prefer would have the crown,
and swear with my oath
and in the name of true Christianity,
in which I must firmly believe,
that no one will be as appropriately
fit for this kingdom [than him].
No one is comparable to him,
in his great virtues and his worthy life,
whom I will give you as your lord.”
They all responded immediately:
“Since this kingdom has lost its dear lord, who had been selected as king for us, no one will ever please us better— you have to believe us that— than you, dear lord, since your fortune and your goods has returned to us our existence and our lives with the help of God. If we possessed so much wealth that we could give you ten countries, we still would not be able, as we would be obliged, to repay you properly.”

I responded to the lords:

“All the good that happened to you through me, I will always be happy about. And you have provided me with such reward which, prior to my time, no one among my companions [merchants] has ever received in such a rich fashion. I have now the crown and also the land, which has become my subject. I will happily turn it over to my heart-beloved dear lord, to whom it all should belong rightfully, that is, King Willehalm the Younger.”

The general mood changed and all joy was lost. The entire company began to cry. “Sadly, he no longer lives. Oh dear, or does he still live? No, tragically, he is dead!”

With greatest sorrowfulness all the lords from the land spoke thus. Then I consoled them and calmed them down immediately with delightful news. I said: “Be happy, he is well. I left him this morning free from all problems that could make him unhealthy. Queen Erene, his most blessed wife, is with him and is well.”159
They cried out of sheer joy.
“Oh my,” the noble group shouted,
“dear man, if that only were true.”
[Gerhart:] “I do not deceive you, not even by a hair’s breadth.
They are healthy, so help me Christ.
Nearby, not far away,
there is a harbor
where I took good care of them.
I left them behind free of any heartfelt pain
this morning, when I rode off
and came here into this city.
Now, come along with me and let us go there.
I will let you see my lord
and also his wife whom he loves from the bottom of his heart;
both are healthy and happy.”
A mighty commotion then arose.
One shouted here, the other shouted there
many times: “Bring me the banner and the charger!”
The squires ran off immediately,
when the lords ordered them to do so,
to the lodgings,
here six in a group, there four.
They brought to their worthy lords their chargers, covered with valuable saddle blankets hanging down to the hooves.
Every knight ordered
them to bring them their best clothes.
Quickly they were all ready
and this so orderly that it was a joy
to observe their parade-like departure.
Thus we traveled along happily
with a high spirit
out of the city with great joy.
Our company consisted
of two thousand knights or more.
Now, I had sent my messenger ahead
to my lord
to inform him of the news,
how everything had taken place
and that all the princes of the land
wanted to see him,
as expressed by their shouts of joy.
My lord was very delighted about this.
Together with the beautiful princess
he came riding toward us,
and when he noticed us,
he rushed up to us.
The lords hurried toward him
in order to meet my lord there, the worthy man,
along with the pure woman
and to welcome them.
They exchanged sweet greetings,
not wasting any time
and were so happy about the meeting
that they were with him and he with them,
cried out of joy over the good outcome
which God had granted them.
He kissed his loyal men.
Their joy was mixed with great pain.161
Many proud chests was wet from tears
as the intense joy forced them
to experience this new sweetness.
After they had finished their welcome,
we returned to the open space
in a most joyful manner.
When we again returned to London
and reached the outer gate,
we found there standing outside
the wealthy burghers,
who most lovingly welcomed
the prince and also the princess.
They dazzled everyone with their splendid clothing,
which they wore out of happiness.
His subjects greeted the prince
in a loving manner, and he greeted them.
The women and the men [of the city]
treated the knights very hospitably.
In a well-ordered manner we rode
through the city to the court.
There the archbishop joined us
with all the clerical accoutrements,
with great relics,
and he was accompanied by two fellows,
mighty archbishops,162
and they were followed by many clerics.
Bishops and many abbots
wore splendid vestments,
stunning clothing for the church service
in honor of their dear lord.
They carried the monstrance toward us.
Thereupon followed a throng,
and the clamor of the people and the singing
created so much noise
that the sound echoed far and wide.

After we had been so wonderfully
and also so splendidly
welcomed there,
my lord was crowned there,
and also the good princess.
The high-spirited princes
swore their loyalty to him.
Then the high-born king requested
the lords to return to their lodgings.
He wanted to wait with the opening of his court
until the next morning.
Near the court there was located
a delightful palace.
There the queen and her ladies
took up residence.
Then there arrived
in an impressive group
the noble citizens.
They were hosted so richly
that they did not lack in anything.
They addressed my lady
in very friendly terms.163
She had to accept
many great gifts,
and there was no end to be seen of them,
made out of gold and gems,
noble, rich, and pure,
handed over by the ladies.
A loud clamor rose at court,
when the ladies desired
to return to their lodgings.

It was lovely to hear
how sweetly the delightful queen
exchanged greetings
with many people,
when she welcomed noble guests!164
With a dazzling festival
they passed the night filled with joy.
The ladies among them were often teased and entertained with jokes. With hilarious witticisms they entertained my lady. Discussing serious matters, my lord the king deliberated in order to figure out how he could bring back order to the country. The ladies greatly enjoyed the joking, and also the king, together with his councilors, did not mind some jokes, while they seriously pondered on advice how to help the kingdom. Early the next morning, after the mass had been read and it was time to go to eat, my lord sat down. Thereupon the lords of the country were sent to him. They received from him in equal measure their counties, fiefs, and their land joyfully from the king's hand.

Afterwards they swore to uphold the rules of peace. Whether he was a knight or a squire, whoever was to break the peace was to be punished in a very harsh manner according to the rules in a proper fashion. In this way the kingdom was peacefully judged. The lords of the country were happy about it. Then the king asked for advice regarding legal procedures concerning the great injustice when so many a great lord had taken violently the king's land, his castles, and his treasure, by force and without any right. They had dared to grab his land wherever possible, with their power, yet without any permission. The councilors immediately advised him [the king] through a judgment reached in unison,
that he should give those lords
a deadline to answer him.
As I want to tell you,
they decided on a day,
that in six weeks’ time
those should either defend their innocence
or seek forgiveness
according to the king’s graces
in light of their full guilt.

Once that judgment was pronounced,
there was no further delay
and the king invited
to all parts of his country
the lords to a court festival.
His messengers went
all over the kingdom
to bring the king’s relatives and vassals
to the celebration.
Having been invited by the messengers
there arrived in cheerful companies
from Wales and Scotland
the two kings, traveling across the sea.\textsuperscript{166}
Accompanied by a knightly army
the worthy king of Cornwall arrived as well.
Without delay and in a delightful fashion
proud and good princes came,
together with noble and high-spirited knights
from Spain\textsuperscript{167} and from Ireland.
They had also invited
[Willehalm’s] father-in-law, King Reinmunt.
When the latter learned the news,
he came with a joyful company,
attending this celebration [in London].
Whoever carried the title of a knight
anywhere in the neighboring countries,
would have thought that he would have been denied
the respect due to a knight,
if he were not to attend the festival,
which was organized there.

    [Gerhart:] I had to stay in that country
because of my lord,
participating at the festival.
Very soon thereafter,
the time had arrived
as it had been scheduled, for the guests to arrive, as they had been told about. The lords did not tarry: as they had promised before, they fulfilled their pledge and came to the country, each with a large company. So many high-ranking and powerful princes made their way to the fest coming from over the sea and over land. Never beforehand had there been a similar celebration, as one can give credit to King Willehalm without feeling any envy. With his joy-filled mind the virtuous man received the guests in a loving manner in the capitol of London. He asked that the guests be lodged in the city and on the field outside. The princes’ tents were pitched everywhere on the open space. They did this with noble thoughts, because the festival was, for splendor’s sake prepared out there.

One early joyful morning the proud King Reinmunt arrived there. Immediately my lord got ready to welcome him outside of the city. He was accompanied by a thousand knights and more. The most impressive troop was dressed in elegant knightly clothes. The king together with the queen rode in a most worthy fashion toward his dear father-in-law, meeting him at the stands set up in the field. His special tournament ring and his tent were on the opposite side. My blissful lady wonderfully welcomed her dear father, filled with loving joy. All that gave them great delight.
Deeply moved in their hearts
the king and the pure woman
and many noble persons cried.
There were many who felt great pain,
those who had previously lost their relatives
in the waves of the sea,
when they had traveled with the high-ranking lord.
The lady asked the lament to stop.
Then all the guests arrived thereafter
during the whole day,
causing joyous clamor.

From Cornwall and Wales,
from Scotland and from Norway,
from Spain and from Ireland
the highest ranking lords
had been sent there
together with their high-spirited knights
invited by my dear noble lord,
since he had sent them his request.
They were all, together with their companions,
seated there hospitably
in a wide circle around the field.
One could see pitted on the field
many precious tents.
Since the time of the British Arthur
who wore the crown of the kingdom,
no other king has ever had
as many noble and worthy guests
or from as many rich countries,
as the pure and good one,
the high-spirited King Willehalm.
One has to acknowledge that rightfully.
There was fiery gleaming, bright lights
all over the field,
coming from the banners and the shields
all placed neatly
in a bright and royal arrangement
everywhere on the field
in front of the rich tents,
both here and there
and also at all other places.

When the guests had arrived,
they went to their lodgings
wonderfully set up in the field.
All the lords 5930
had come, without any objections
5935
to the great festival
together with many good knights,
richly clothed and well adorned,
dressed elegantly and pleasantly.

Next to the noble and high-ranking princes,
there were many high-spirited and proud knights
wearing exquisite phellet-silk clothes,
adorned with many gems,
in a most elegant fashion
on that joyous day, free of all sorrow.
Wherever a person walked or rode
throughout the lodgings,
one could hear nothing but loud clamor,
one type of great music and another,
5940
music168 and drumming,
corresponding to each other,
from fiddles and flutes
accompanying bohorts169 and dancing
in front of many knightly groups,

5950
who in great joy
were engaged in jousting and dancing
before the tents on the field.170
The music was matched
with those activities that are joyful
for the knights, and this all day long.

In the evening when the time had come
to enjoy eating
and when all the knights had sat down,
5955
my lord the king did not forget
to display as much as he could
chivalric hospitality.
It was fully performed.

5960
Seats were arranged
for the high-spirited ladies,
from where they could observe
joyfully the knightly actions.

5965
When the daylight
fled before the arrival of the dark night,
the noble and knightly company
went to the lodgings.
The princes well ensured
5970
that the darkness of the night
had to give way to bright light  
because of many candles that burned there,  
when the daylight had vanished.  
Because of the bright lights  
it seemed like another day  
in front of the rich accommodations.  
Musicians delightfully played  
their music before the princes,  
many others played on string instruments  
presenting sweet melodies,  
and they sang beautifully of love,  
and told intriguing adventures,  
as it was proper to listen  
to stories of love and knighthood  
presented most delightfully.\textsuperscript{171}  

The knights splendidly rode  
from the city out to the field,  
visiting the various tents,  
going back and forth,  
in delightful groups,  
performing in a most courtly fashion,  
greeting the various guests.  
They received from them  
many sweet words in response.  
Because of the wonderful jokes  
they could ignore all worries and painful anxiety.  
Their aristocratic breeding made them  
to live filled with joy and happiness  
and to dismiss forever the worries by means of joyful thoughts.  
One could hear both here and there  
many light-hearted words of greeting.  
Servants brought out in courtly fashion  
to the noble knights  
in their lodgings  
great wine to drink\textsuperscript{172}  
in many valuable decanters.  
Those who cared to notice  
would have to admit that he had never before  
seen so many knights as there  
displaying such worthy behavior.  
My lord and I rode joyfully  
to the mighty princes  
to observe in their company  
the powerful performance
of high-spirited knighthood.

After many joyful events the night came to an end.

When the morning dawned and the sun’s gleaming grew steadily,
many proud guests went to the cathedral where the mass was read.
After the singing was over, it did not take long before the knights returned with well-decked chargers to the tournament enclosure.
The horse bells rang loudly, the banners fluttered strongly in the wind, the bohort was carried out in such a knightly fashion as it had never been seen before so beautifully.
After that had come to an end and everyone went to sit down, my lord did not fail to ask me to take a seat at the table next to my lady.
My son sat next to him.
I can tell for sure that never before has anyone among my companions been seated in such great honors and in such great worthiness.
I was treated lavishly with great respect and joy by the cheerful crowd.
Everyone, both poor and rich, was happy to make sure that my good fortune increased and that God took away all suffering from me with His might.
The entire group of knights wished that for me.

When the worthy company got up and endeavored to give everyone a good cheer with a bohort and dance, those lords and their companies went then to the king whom he denied before friendship and grace, which they had lost because of their great guilt.
They fell down in the grass before him and sought his gracefulness.
They demonstrated with loud crying their sorrow.
Everyone present tried hard through the same behavior to beg the king for his grace for these worthy knights. Whatever they requested from him, he denied it to all of them.
Nevertheless, it helped the entire group that they swore to leave altogether the kingdom and that they would never be witnessed in England unless he granted them his grace.
They swore many firm oaths to the king, and gave him their pledges. Many people expressed their emotions by sharing their lamenting on that day.

When pledges had been given, the noble-born king deliberated with his friends, how he could reimburse me for the loss that I had incurred because of himself, and how he could compensate me, for the loss when I had ignored all possible profit. His councilors advised him to repay me through granting me the honor of bestowing a dukedom upon me. That is called Kent and located in England.

Once the king had completed the deliberations, he returned to the people together with many knights. The princes from the land were all present during the court council. Among them there were also the twenty-four men, whom I had freed from the shackles and for whom I had purchased joy and solace. The advice [to honor me] was given by his relatives and other people. Then he turned to me again and asked everyone to quiet down the clamor and the noise. Everyone stood there in a circle.
In a well-mannered way my lord said:
“Here the consolation that I receive from my friends is seated, through which God has given me my life, goods, bliss, and honor.
I had lost property, joy, and my life, relatives, servants, friends, and my wife, bliss and honor, and even this country.
I was guaranteed the greatest misfortune which anyone could ever have experienced in his life.
He [Gerhart] has bought everything back to me.\textsuperscript{175}
God who performs nothing but miracles, gave my [future] wife into his hand, and then also my friends, this country, the crown, and my life in such astounding fashion that I, expelled from my country finally reached him.
Out of his virtuous mind-set he loved me as his child.
The love of his own son mattered little to him compared to the great love which his heart felt for me.\textsuperscript{176}
He separated, out of love for me, my fiancée from his son out of his good spirit.
In light of the exceeding goodness Judging all the highest goods available I value most the great goodness, the sweet humbleness, since he loved me more than himself.
He left his own country and accepted me as king, when the crown and the country had been assigned to him with full authority.
Now I hope that everyone present advises me, since my very dear father has crowned himself, and increased his own bliss and his praiseworthiness, on my behalf in many ways, and has become decorated and honored since he dared to burden his own person with such great losses for himself; how I might lift some of its weight
doing it in an appropriate manner, that is, repaying him for some of his goods. I might probably not be able to repay him for his great virtues. May God, who is supposed to reward goodness, honor him for his humility by granting him His gracefulness.

My sweet, dear father, your fifty thousand marks I want to repay to you immediately; the dukedom of Kent you shall receive from me; and you also should not reject to receive this rank from me and double the amount of money. Moreover, you will be granted anything your heart might desire in this kingdom. You shall occupy forever, together with your dear son the role of my secret councilor.”

I was very pleased about this offer. I said then to my lord: “Dear lord, sweet knight, you have elevated me very highly with your exceeding praise. If I were wise enough that I could thank you for what you have expressed, for the loving promises, and the delightful words with which you have praised me so much, I would be ready to thank you. May God reward you for the offer which you have extended to me, in the name of His divine governance. If I were to assume a great territory, then that would be an amazing honor for me. That powerful dukedom ought to be owned by a prince who holds that rank from birth. The lack of my birth prevents me from that. The rank of the duke of Kent is so recognized through its honor that counts, barons, and great lords,
and others who hold a similar rank
would happily submit themselves
and receive a fiefdom from him.
And they would be rightly ashamed
to call me their lord
and master over them all.
That title would be too big for me.

My dear lord, if you are willing
to reward me as it pleases me,
then give me what I would like to receive,
in the name of your virtuous customs.”

[Willehalm:] “Gladly, my dear father,
whatever you are going to ask for will be fulfilled.”

[Gerhart:] “Can I be sure about that?”
[Willehalm:] “Yes, indeed, no doubt about it.”
[Gerhart:] “Then I desire, dear good lord,
to grant me the grace
that you accept again,
on behalf of me,
those lords as your friends,
who had lost your grace through their misdeeds.
For them I request that you let them be
with your kind gracefulness
here in this kingdom
in a peaceful fashion,
and in undiminished friendship,
so that you never think about
whatever misdeeds they might have committed.
In the name of your sweet graces,
grant me this heartfelt wish.
Accepting this request would be my reward.
Thereby you would have given me fully
subjects and a land,
a dukedom and wealth
to such a large measure
that my mind would not want anything else,
if my wish would thus be fulfilled.”

[Willehalm:] “This will happen because of you,
I will grant them my grace
due to your sweet request.
They will be freed of their oath [to go into exile],
and they will receive their lands again.
Whatever they might have committed against me,
that will be forgiven on your behalf.
I will never again renew
this heartfelt wrath.
I accept them as kindly as before.
Now I desire that you receive
this land from me.”
[Gerhart:] “In truth, my lord, no, I won’t.
The reward that I have received from you,
will be enough for me.”
[Willehalm:] “Then let your son have
this land, if you do not want it for yourself,
and refuse to accept it.”
My son said: “What my father says,
I am also saying, and nothing else.
I am taking what my father is taking,
nothing else would be appropriate for me.
[Willehalm:] “Then take, as a sign of my true love
from me a county
and the city of London.
Whatever treasures you can find here,
in terms of people and goods,
I will leave to you as your property,
as you see fit.
You will have that as your reward.”
I was glad about the comfort from the dear one [God].
I took then in my heart
the country, the crown, the lordship,
the great riches and power,
the city, the dukedom,
the county and also its reputation,
and sacrificed it on behalf of God,
who upon the demand of the divinity
had been chosen as our sacrifice
and was born as a human being
in order to console Christianity
by suffering death like an ordinary person
in the name of all the faithful ones,
that is, I sacrificed it all to Jesus, child of the pure virgin.
I handed over to the divine power
the lordship
and wanted to leave money and profit,
pawn and credit to Him.
I said: “My very dear lord,
if I were to be the ruler over a land,
then this lordship would be too big for me.
I have seen so many people in this city
with a higher social rank than me,
whose worthiness was so great
that it would not behoove me
6285
to accept this rank,
which one of them should have assumed properly,
especially if he then would have to call me his lord
and to acknowledge me as his master
because of the lordship and the fame.”
6290
When my lord recognized
that I declined the land and the city,
he asked, together with his friends,
in the name of God, for his own and all of their sake,
whether I would take a city, three times the amount of silver, or the land
6295
from his hand.
In the name of God I rejected that.
But in response to the queen’s request
I promised, listening to her words178
that I would take some
6300
of the silver and gold
when I would return home.
My worthy lady was happy about that.
The bold knights,
for whom I had secured the king’s grace
6305
and who had, because of their true guilt
been exiled by him,
approached the benches
in a great throng.
They could not give me more thanks; they
6310
kneeled down before me.
They were so happy [about the good outcome]
that one could see them shed many tears publicly.
Their pain was mixed with much joy.
They said: “Sweet good father,
your heart and your mind are so pure,
6315
and your pure mind drives your heart
with blissful blessedness,
with which God, through the blood of his blissfulness,
grants much of bliss to the world.179
6320
God, through His kind consolation,
has freed many people from suffering.
You are the shield for the loyal people suffering in hardship,
You are the life of joy, death of suffering,
6325
the opponent to unhappiness.
Your solace strengthens joy
and lifts us up from sorrow.
God was in the state of pure grace,
when he focused on the hour,
which brought the seed [of your life]
as a masterful product of nature
and which granted you praiseworthy power
in the form of a living fruit,
when your flowering life
emerged from a fragile blossom,
when your life began.
After that the blossom turned into fruit
and brought such rich breeding
so that God displayed His art
with you by demonstrating His grace.
May God, who granted you the power of His art
and also the favor of happiness,
protect your life
and may he be inclined to give you
everlasting delight, honor, and well-being
and share the heavenly grace with you
amongst the sweet troops of angels.
May He recompense you for your goodness
and keep it in His mind
that you did an act of love for us;
so may He give you that reward,
which no word or the sound of the tongue
could accomplish
and which has never reached the bottom of the heart
through the gateway of the ears,
nor through human thoughts,
nor through looking
or the gaze of the eyes. 180

But you, dear good father,
with your heartfelt sweet mouth
you have declined the rulership over people and a land
and have freed us from the shackles of our sorrow,
which, through its woeful pain
had been imposed on us in a lamentable misery.
You have freed us from suffering. 181
may God, through the human death
which He suffered in human form
and human frailty,
give to you ever-lasting joy.
May His grace keep you free from worldly dishonor and hell’s fetters by means of divine sweetness.”

Out of joy they kissed my hands and my feet.

This happened without my approval. But they did not want to end this behavior. Finally they had to stop with it and to finish their performance. Their expression of joy was so great that I gained from many people joyful grace with lovely constancy.

Wherever I went or rode on horseback, I was much gazed at.

Many worthy men wished upon me, and as their good breeding moved them, bliss and good health in the name of God.

The entire noble company then began to experience great knightly joys, as was fitting for the festivities. Everyone made his contribution as it was possible for him in a joyful mood all day long.

Some were running, others were jumping; some were playing on stringed instruments, others sang; on the one side some carried out a bohort, on the other they were dancing; knighthood wore the garland of happiness.

Thus the festival lasted, free of any laments for three whole days.

The minstrels were delighted to receive many rich gifts.

The knights, along with the worthy princes, were given fiefdoms, silver, gold and valuable gems as rewards from the king.

Once the festival had come to an end, the princes, together with their courtiers, immediately returned home, leaving the kingdom of England, traveling over water and land. Wherever they had come from in order to visit this country,
their heart urged them to return home. At that moment the lady cried, when King Reinmunt, her father, left that country. He swore to me, upon his loyalty, that he would always be happy to do whatever I might request from him. The same promises were made by many worthy men, who thus expressed their gratitude. All of my lord’s relatives did not spare to give their thanks to me, who esteemed my service higher than it really had been. Without exception all the guests left the country.

Once the festival was over, I also made up my mind to return home again. I requested permission to leave. When my lord learned about it, and also my dear lady, both began to feel sadness. Both cried heavily out of grief and sorrow. Since I wanted to be allowed to leave, I had to tolerate that from them. Nevertheless, I urged them until I received their permission. I ordered that my ship be prepared, just as it had been when I had arrived, and to get it ready for the voyage. Whatever I would need for that, in terms of food for the home journey, that was wisely brought on board. My ship was richly and sufficiently prepared. One the day of departure and of saying good-bye had arrived, I went to my lord and to the queen. I said: “My lord and my lady, please allow me in your gracefulness
that I may travel home.”
The king then immediately ordered
the worthy knights to appear,
who had traveled with me
from the heathen land.
They felt very sorry about our departure,
which we had to do [anyway].
My lord, in his good breeding, spoke:
“Heart-beloved good father,
in return for your blessed spirit,
allow me to reimburse you for your goods.
I would like to do that for you in the name of God.”
Then the queen spoke:
“On behalf of God’s sweet love,
dear good father,
take something for my dear mother
from my treasures.”
[Gerhart:] “Gladly, lady, will I do that.
But let it be as it will be appropriate for you.
Whatever I will take of your goods,
it will then have been sufficient as full reward.
I will not ask for any other payment,
since that seems to be enough for me.”
Soon they brought to me
gems, silver, and gold,
so much of it that,
if I had taken just half of it,
I would have received three times as much or more
of what I had spent of my goods [for the princess and the English lords].
Then the queen said:
“Take this, my dear father\textsuperscript{183}
to my heart-loved mother.”
[Gerhart:] “Lady, I am taking only as much with me
as will be sufficient for her and me.”
However, I regarded God’s reward
more valuable. Still, I took
from the king and the queen
a clasp and a ring
and brought those to my wife
and nothing else.
Both were unhappy about that.
Then I wanted to depart from there.
My lord accompanied me honorably,
and so did the beautiful queen,
together with a delightful company, down to my ship which was near-by in the harbor, where I had left it. They all displayed their good breeding through lamentations, both the men and the ladies.

When I wanted to leave, since it was time for it, my lord, a truly honorable man, began to cry loudly.

He said: “Oh dear, since I now must witness our separation, which is about to happen; I will be sad forever. Indeed, my dear father, you have through fatherly actions done so lovingly to me through God and through your own spirit, as a father would do for his own child born from his seed. I have chosen you as my father and had figured out that I would be happy with you until the end of our lives. Now you cause me much grief, since you want to separate yourself from me. This will cause me grief forever, it is hurting my heart. I did not desire any other good than that I could see you, dear father, and that I would have joy with you. God knows, my father, that all the heartfelt pain, which I have ever experienced, was simply gone when I saw you, and this since the time I made your acquaintance, because such a blissful man [like you] had never been given before to the world [by God]. From now on I will have to live in sorrow and to suffer in lamenting, because I will have to be without you.”

I answered: “Lord, if it will be possible, then God will know well what is in my mind, insofar as I will always feel pain in my heart, longing for you.”
with sorrow in my heart.
I will be always filled with the desire
to be united with you again.
That, however, now cannot be.
At present, may it be granted that God will give you
a life always determined by happiness,
and may this also apply to my good lady.
I will leave behind here in heartfelt love
both my heart and my soul,
although I have locked them well,
and I will always feel an even stronger liking
for this country than before. 184
If I only had done something in a loving fashion for you,
of which I have unfortunately done very little,
I would be happy and would be delighted,
and it would have been very appropriate. 185
Allow me to depart with your permission.
May God [Christ], the child of the pure maid [the Virgin Mary]
give you bliss and honor
and ever-growing joy.”
Then I kissed him and he kissed me.
We both cried, my lord and I,
and so as well my lady and all the knights,
shed many tears out of great sorrow,
as it was dictated by our misery,
when I said good-bye. 186

When we prepared ourselves for the voyage,
I entrusted the lady and her husband
to the sweet custody of God.
I left them behind and departed,
sailing down the river out into the open sea,
that is, my son and I. We left the royal court
behind us in their lamentations.
The king and also the queen
did not leave the beach,
as long as they could see me.
Thus I returned to my country.

Since then I have heard
that he lives in high spirits,
pursuing a king’s pure mercifulness,
and this so praiseworthily
that his kingdom
has ever since enjoyed
royal honors during his lifetime.
His country constantly enjoyed peace, his legal courts were so esteemed that the fame of his name spread to many countries. His and his wife’s worth gained the crown of praise, wherever both of their worthiness were talked about in stories, since both their wreaths of virtues were so complete in blissfulness that their praise was recognized, wherever their names were mentioned.

When I returned home to my country I was received with such a greeting, as friends ought to give at the arrival of a friend, in loving agreement, they all treated me joyfully. After that had been completed, the people regarded those good deeds as richer, greater, and more praiseworthy, than they had actually been. On the basis of this story I was called ‘the good one.’ Alas, however, I do not know about privilege to carry this name: I am not good, except that the people gave me this great name because they thought it appropriate regarding honor and praise. I am such a sinful man, that I cannot tell you whether I have ever done anything good, except for that what I have told you. If that was good, then yes, I did it. I cannot blame myself, neither in my heart nor in my mind, that I did not do more for the sake of goodness in the name of God. But I would like to strive toward the goal of doing something good so that I could serve God better in the hope that he would forgive my sins, with which I have been stricken.”

Even before the story had been entirely
told to the emperor,
the grievous crying had become so intense
that he had wetted the clothing on his chest
out of commiseration.
When he thought of the details,
the good deeds moved him deeply.
He also realized how much
his arrogant bragging
had destroyed the [expected] reward from God.
The story’s great emotional appeal
and the manly, sweet loyalty
demonstrated by the merchant,
made him cry and awoke repentance in him
for the sins that he had committed
when he had become guilty of arrogance.
His sins triggered regrets in him.
When he thought of them,
he lamented to God
and said: “Gerhart, very dear man,
you are rightly called ‘the good one’;
your goodness is well recognized;
you are good; your pure mind
is much better than just good;
your virtuous spirit
is goodness above all goodness;
your heart is filled with pure goodness.
It was a blessing
that you have been born.
The highest ranking virtues
have pledged to you their worthiness
which carries the crown of all virtues.

Very sweet, pure, worthy man,
you had been afraid of committing a sin,
if you were to relate to me this account.
In reality, no, I am telling you
that it is much better if the story is told
than to keep it a secret.
If I had a such a blessed mind,
it still would always be better for me
to work toward the improvement of my salvation,
and to take care of sins which I am carrying.
Your goodness and the blissful advice
has outshined with goodness
the weak goodness, which I have performed
on behalf of my creator. My heart says that I must follow you insofar as I could not copy in hundredfold efforts your example and thus achieve the same goal. My fame has been defeated. The scale weighs us differently; the measuring scale grants me barely a small amount, while the other scale gives you twenty-five pounds in goodness, in purely high spirit. While I founded a church on behalf of God and endowed it, to please the divine command, with servants and property, then that still weighed very little in comparison with your sweet and great goodness. The friendship of princes, counts, and their companions you acquired by way of your great sweet goodness and then you let them free in the name of God. You took, on behalf of your creator, a noble, rich princess treating her with full respect and then you handed her over to your son as his wife and entrusted her to him. Immediately thereupon you received from God a true message. You showed that you love, strengthened by His support, God more than yourself, being obedient like a child. You handed over your son’s wife to her fiancé in the name of mighty Christ. Shortly thereafter you gave the royal crown and the country away in the name of God, then also the shire, the dukedom, cities, princely fame and much worldly reputation. You rejected for the sake of your soul’s salvation the mighty worthiness here in this life. Since now the heavenly crown cannot be denied to you as an ever-lasting reward, please pray to God to have mercy on me as a poor sinner.
I as a miserable braggart
have ranked too highly the little good
that I have done for God.
May God now help me to repent for that
by means of your sweet efforts.”

Then the Good Gerhart said:
“May God, who became human for our sake,
grant us bliss and honor
and reveal to us\textsuperscript{191} the instruction
how to pursue in this short [human] time
[here on earth] eternity,
which lasts forever and never disappears,
and which never experiences the end of joys,
and for which thousand years are [just] a day,\textsuperscript{192}
a phenomenon which no one can figure out.
May God give us [eternal] delight.”
Then both, Gerhart and the emperor,
said: “Amen.”
They stood up and went out
of the room,\textsuperscript{193}
into the courtyard.
There the burghers had waited,
partly being rather irritated.
They had wondered
why the private council
had lasted for such a long time.
In his best manners the emperor said:
“My very dear burghers,
Gerhart knows full well
my intention and my purpose.
You as a council should accept
what he will tell you with respect to me.
Accept that as full truth.
If he does not tell you anything, then let it be.
That would be my pleasure as well.
I would like to request from you further:
Stay loyal to me as you have always been,
with a steady mind
and take care in good trustworthiness
of the empire, as you have done so far.
I have never found here anything else but loyalty,
so please continue in that forever.
You have so far demonstrated much loyalty;
may the trustworthy God reward you for that
by granting you great blissfulness. He rewards everyone who demonstrates constancy in loyalty to his lord. God instructs us people to stand by our master in loyalty. With this I let you go. You have greatly helped me much; please continue to demonstrate your constancy to me.” [Burghers:] “With pleasure, Lord, we will do that,” said all the citizens there. “We will always be happy to have served you in any way.” [Emperor:] “I will not doubt that about you,” the emperor responded. In a wise manner the burghers took their leave, as they departed. They turned away from the court. The emperor went with his company to where the meal was prepared. There he sat down, as I was told.

Once the Holy Roman emperor, who had never committed a vice, had spent time in Cologne, he left again. The archbishop and his men provided him, as a sign of their love with their company leading him out of the city up to the open field. There one could see how they exchanged farewells. Then the emperor departed. He rode to Magdeburg and repented his guilt in order to gain God’s grace with the help of the clergy. From early in the morning until late at night he did extreme penance toward God. Then he thought that this account could be an uplifting story to improve Christianity, if it were written down and would not remain hidden. This story was then, as he wished made public and recorded in writing.
He commissioned the clergy
to carry this out according to the emperor’s wishes
so that it would not be lost to us. 6810
Thus the written record preserved this treasure,
the truth and the words of this miraculous account.
This document gives us a clear understanding
of the events at that time.

Let me tell you the truth,
how I learned about this story
and how it made its way into this country.
A man told us about it,
who had read it in its written version,
through which it was well preserved
in a splendid handwriting.
That man came from Austria
and brought it here into this country,
just as he had found it written down.
He shared this story
with the worthy lord of Steinach,196
Lord Rudolf, who has the same name as I.
He asked me then
to render this account into German
and to cast it into proper rhyming verses. 6830
On his behalf I began with that task.
For his entertainment and with the goal of achieving that task
I put all my effort into it,
for noble people’s worthiness,
for worthy men and worthy women. 6835
Whoever demands such loyalty
and such humbleness that he will desire
to enjoy this story for entertainment,
should give me a reward for it,
when he will hear the story read out aloud,197
and then grant me his approval,
if I can profit from my art
and thus secure a word of thanks,
a reward which I have pursued all my life.
Or he should criticize me kindly
if I am lacking in that [poetic] art,
which brings forth in wise wisdom
the essential ideas in an artistic fashion.

It will be my pleasure and I will be happy,
if the one who will fault me for my lack of skill,
offers such friendly advice
that he improve my understanding.
I will follow his suggestions.
But whoever wants to mock at me
and blame my text
as lacking,
will destroy his own honor.
However, if he cares to listen to me,
then he should take into consideration
what I have said before:
Whatever one does with a good intention,
for good and in a good spirit,
you should credit him for this in good terms
and you should not look for his failure
in creating a text, since it is good,
what one does in the name of God for goodness.
I apply this to myself.
I would gladly express myself better, if I could.
Therefore one should acknowledge it as good.
It would be very delightful,
if I could speak so well
that you would be pleased with it.
There is also another advice following this,
which also my ignorant mind subscribes to,
that one should avoid bragging,
since one can [anyway] perceive the good person
who, through the advice of a good heart,
has produced something good.
I am not deceived in that.
I have proven it to you well
through this adventurous story
that no one should brag about oneself.
Whoever cannot avoid that,
and then turns into a braggart, will face the same experience
as the one which happened to the emperor,
when he glorified himself too much
and when the merchant's goodness
in its rich humility
overshadowed his good deeds.
Allow me to warn you thereby,
that, if you do something good,
then let it be just good
without trying to get praise for it.
You ought to do it humbly.
Then your humility will increase in value, 6895
since it is striving for the [true] reward given for praise. Also, God grants reward for the person, 6900
where the good is not done humbly. Also, God grants reward for the person, 6905
who in proper constancy serves loyally.
Now let us all hope in well-tempered joy that God will bring us 6910
happily into His realm, out of this miserable world. The poet also requests, 6915
that is, he who has created this romance, basically driven by his good spirit in order to entertain you, 6920
that you pray for him that he will receive blessedness in heaven, and allow him the privilege of entertaining good hope, that he, in case he might hear of another story, which could be very likely, then will try to amend all that what he has failed to do in the present romance. This he is requesting from you, and so this story has come to an end.
Endnotes

1. To translate the Middle High German term ‘muot’ properly into English might be a near impossibility. “Muot” means the affective powers of the human soul, but also refers to the psychological, intellectual, and voluntary forces in the human mind. There are many possible meanings in the modern context, such as ‘thought,’ ‘mind,’ ‘bravery,’ ‘courage,’ ‘attitude,’ ‘sense,’ or ‘spirit.’ See Otfrid Ehrismann, *Ehre und Mut, Äventiure und Minne* (1995), 148-51. Here and throughout I have heavily relied on the excellent *Wörterbuchnetz.de*, online at webpagehttp://woerterbuchnetz.de/, especially the standard dictionary by Matthias Lexer.

2. Armin Schulz, *Erzähltheorie in mediävistischer Perspektive* (2012), 77-78, rightly emphasizes that long before the development of the bourgeois world of privacy in the early modern age, the Middle Ages knew much about the intimate, the mind-set, the will, the consciousness, guilt, the intimacy of love. Rudolf’s work is a great illustration of this important dimension. The entire concept of internal goodness in contrast to worldly praise for good deeds determines the entire romance, and the theoretical aspects are revisited again in the epilogue.

3. The poet seems to be unclear about the differences between Otto I, the founder of the bishopric of Magdeburg, then his son, Otto II, also called ‘the Red,’ and Otto IV, rival king to the Hohenstaufen King Frederick II; for Otto II, see Tina Bode, *König und Bischof in ottonischer Zeit* (2015); cf. also the excellent article online at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_II,_Holy_Roman_Emperor (last accessed on Aug. 19, 2016). In the introduction to this volume I discuss the historical issues involving Otto IV, who Rudolf probably targeted with his romance.

4. Literally: ‘misdeeds,’ but in this context the poet really means ‘evil thoughts’ or ‘sinful thinking.’

5. These are unfree, and yet noble servants at royal courts, assuming bureaucratic functions. The *ministeriales* rose, in the course of time, to the new dominant group of aristocrats.

6. Thus the archbishop of Magedeburg, founded in 968 by Otto I, temporarily received the status of a high ranking imperial advisor, which was, however, only a political move by Otto IV. The emperor conceded many significant royal privileges to Archbishop Albrecht II on May 12, 1209; globally, see Bernd Ulrich Hucker, *Otto IV.: Der wiederentdeckte Kaiser* (2003); *Otto IV. Traum vom welfischen Kaisertum*, ed. Bernd Ulrich Hucker (2009); Wolfgang Huschner, “Zwischen Staufern, Welfen und Päpsten (2012), 163–172. For a detailed chronology of Magdeburg, see http://magdeburger-chronist.de/md-chronik/ch-1200.html (last accessed on Aug. 17, 2016).

7. The poet indicates here already how wrong Emperor Otto’s attitude was, which will grow considerably in the following section.

8. “The Lord of Sabaoth was a title of Jehovah; the hosts were the armies of Israel (1 Sam.
17:45) but also included the angelic armies of heaven (Judg. 5:20; 2 Kgs. 6:17; Rom. 9:29; James 5:4; see also D&C 87:7; 88:2; 95:7; 98:2).” Quoted from Bible Dictionary, https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bd/sabaoth?lang=eng (last accessed on July 23, 2016).

9. These are the basic four elements, a fundamental concept in ancient and medieval scientific thinking.

10. The poet simply enjoys playing with the alliteration and a figura etymologica: “ein leben lebendez leben hat.”

11. The concept of loyalty matters deeply for Rudolf, since it determines the political, military, and personal relationship between the knight and his lord and also between friends, not to forget lovers and marriage partners, and ultimately between the Godhead and the human individual. See now the contributions to Loyalty in the Middle Ages (2015).

12. This is a reference to Mary’s virgin birth.

13. The weak verb ‘erbeizen’ actually means ‘to get off a horse,’ ‘to step down,’ but since the poet wanted to create a rhyme between ‘erbeiz’ and ‘bereit,’ he probably meant the opposite, that is, ‘to get up.’ Unless, as I am suggesting here, he was actually sitting in his imperial prayer alcove high up in the cathedral and so had to come down.

14. Rudolf means here the archbishop, since Cologne was one of the three seats of an archbishop, all being part of the group of seven royal electors in Germany.

15. Literally, ‘the one firm in his mine.’

16. There is a slight contradiction here. While the emperor wanted to travel by himself to Cologne, he still took a band of confidants with him. Arriving in Cologne, he was majestically welcomed, so there was no secret about that. Yet, here, they all wonder about him having traveled by himself. We have to imagine that the emperor, under normal circumstances, would have been accompanied by his entire court, so there would have been a splendid welcome, which is now totally subdued, even though the bishop and his people still greet him in all proper fashion.

17. In the original the text says the opposite, which does not make sense here: They would not have liked to come.

18. Chronologically, the narrator only means here to announce that the burghers would come to the dinner. That is following only afterwards.

19. Even though this line does not make much sense, or would be entirely unnecessary, the need for rhyming words “zestunde / munde” apparently motivated the poet to include this verse.

20. The poet uses here an archaic term, “wigant,” meaning ‘hero,’ normally used only in older heroic epic literature, but still employed also in late medieval German epic poems dedicated to
21. The true meaning here would be that everyone, irrespective of his social status, spoke up. It is very unlikely that truly ‘poor’ or ‘destitute’ people would have joined that imperial council.

22. Literally: whoever is practicing counseling, but the emperor is actively looking for advice.

23. Emperor Otto thereby might signal, which has triggered much research, as I have outlined in the introduction, how much this romance reflects a new sense of urban pride and the imperial cities’s independence from local authorities. However, we would have to be very careful in such assessments because the poet simply draws from a host of rhetorical tropes and does not intend in the present context to comment on actual historical power structures in the Holy Roman Empire.

24. Here we immediately perceive the global contrast between those two men. The emperor was driven to carry out his actions in favor of the Church in order to gain God’s favor; Gerhart tries to hide his own accomplishments and thus displays a venerable form of humbleness and selflessness.

25. Unclear meaning of “haz” (hatred) at this point. The poet says literally: The emperor did not forget in his case his same hatred.

26. This collective noun ‘gestüele” has many different meanings, as we will observe later. It refers to any kind of wooden construction, such as bleachers, a stand, a row of chairs, a throne, or, as here, simply a chair.

27. Gerhart hence took the route down the Rhine to the North Sea, around Denmark and then across the Baltic Sea to reach the Russian harbors, then those in the Baltic countries. Perhaps a little more than other thirteenth-century romances, Rudolf explored spatial dimensions somewhat more concretely, but we can easily recognize that ultimately his geographic concept remains fuzzy and irrelevant for the narrative’s development. For the ‘spatial turn’ in medieval literature, see Albrecht Classen, “The Innovative Perception of Space (Europe) in Late Medieval German Literature” (2016).

28. This is an ancient city in the southern part of modern-day Uzbekistan, located on the fabled Silk Route connecting Europe with China already in the Middle Ages. Samarkand is east of Turkmenistan, north of Afghanistan, and northwest of Dushanbe, the capital of Turkmenistan. There is no logical explanation how Gerhart reached that land after his time spent in the Baltic countries, but Samarkand simply served as an iconic city of Oriental wealth and incredible trading opportunities.

29. Like Damascus, Niniveh was also traditionally one of the famous Middle Eastern cities where European merchants could make huge profits in trading with Asian partners, and this since antiquity. This ancient Assyrian city is today located in northern modern-day Iraq on the eastern bank of the Tigris river.
30. This is the topical reference to the unknown world, a typical feature in most travel literature throughout times. The poet might have drawn from the anonymous *Herzog Ernst* (ms. B ca. 1220) where a storm also drives the protagonist away from the main course taking him from Constantinople to the Holy Land. *Herzog Ernst*, ed. and trans. Bernhard Sowinski (1970).

31. The poet makes a sudden switch here, from the report by the sailor to the report by Gerhart himself.

32. The words “marner” and “schifman” are used interchangeably here.

33. The poet regularly emphasizes the significance of the gaze when a person recognizes in a crowd of people one outstanding individual. Emperor Otto was thus able to identify the Good Gerhart immediately, standing amidst the crowd of esteemed Cologne citizens. This phenomenon is called “kalokagathia,” implying a direct correlation between the external, physical appearance and the spiritual, moral, and ethical virtues. Félix Bourriot, *Kalos kagathos – kalokagathia* (1995). For the opposite dimension, the external ugliness, see Paul Michel, “*Formosa deformitas*” (1970).

34. This seems to be rather made up by Gerhart since he had not even the faintest idea what country he had reached after the twelve days of a raging storm.

35. The formulation here is most difficult; the poet indicates that there will be a change of his previous politics on tariff, lifting it entirely for Christian merchants.

36. The poet is mostly playing with the assonance and alliteration of the two words: “triuwe” (loyalty) and “niuwe” (new).

37. Gerhart is preparing the emperor, hence us as the audience, for the shock that is waiting for us regarding the true nature of the ‘merchandise.’

38. It is clear that the poet wants to emphasize their youth, having outgrown their puberty, as indicated by the first showing of a beard. This undermines the previous mentioning of their age of 30, but medieval literature is never fully concerned with realistic and logical consistency.

39. It is difficult to render this cascading praise of womanhood into ordinary English. The poet relies here on a long rhetorical tradition of excessive praise, which might be hard to swallow for us today.

40. The poet refers specifically to the brilliance of her skin color.

41. Insofar as Rudolf delighted in playing with excessive descriptors, he was forced to repeat himself constantly. There is no good way of rendering all this in ordinary English without being highly repetitive.

42. The poet uses both words for ‘cheeks,’ “hiufel” and “wengelin” without helping us understand what the difference might be.
43. Again the text has the archaic phrase “wîgande” for hero, a word normally used only in early medieval heroic poetry.

44. Some scholars, such as Zöller, *Kaiser, Kaufmann und die Macht des Geldes* (1993), have suggested that the scribe had mistaken ‘Navarra’ in Spain with ‘Norway,’ but there is no firm proof for that idea, except that it seems unrealistic to assume that the ship with the princess and her companions had come so far off the course and gotten into the eastern Mediterranean after they had left Norway. This would presume, however, that Rudolf truly intended to project a realistic historical-geographical world view or was actually informed enough about the situation in the western Mediterranean to understand where Morocco and Navarra were located. Further, it seems unlikely that a scribe would have confused his original source so badly to copy down ‘Norway’ instead of Navarra. If we consider how unclear Rudolf proves to be also with respect to England in the latter half of the romance, we may conclude that geography was simply not his strongest ability when he composed his romance. However, throughout medieval literature, spatial precision and correctness never mattered much, so Rudolf does not differ remarkably in that regard compared to his contemporaries.

45. There is an unintentional irony here since Gerhart reached Morocco the same way, driven by the mighty storm, arriving in a foreign country where he did not want to make a stop on his way home. Hence, Stranmûr could apply exactly the same laws and confiscate all of Gerhart’s property. However, he appears as a merchant and is not a member of the nobility. Nevertheless, if the castellan were truly looking for ways to increase his wealth, he could treat him the same way as he treats his aristocratic prisoners. Yet, he is also economically minded and wants to attract other Christian merchants to his own harbor, whom he has promised freedom from paying tax on their goods. Within the literary context, of course, such inquiries regarding consistency would be inappropriate.

46. Stranmûr hence assures him that he still could carry out his ordinary merchant activities and would not have to fear anything from him if he were not interested in the offered deal, the exchange of the merchandise for the prisoners.

47. This is a typical form of repetition which Rudolf enjoys applying. I can only try to render this passage as meaningfully as possible.

48. Both the Old Testament (*Psalms*) and the New Testament contain numerous passages Rudolf could have drawn from for this theological statement. For instance, Prov. 14:31 “Anyone who oppresses the poor is insulting God who made them. To help the poor is to honor God.” Or: Mat. 25:40 “And I, the King, will tell them, ‘When you did it to these my brothers you were doing it to me!’” Or: Mat 25:45 “And I will answer, ‘When you refused to help the least of these my brothers, you were refusing help to me.’ Mat. 25:46 “And they shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into everlasting life. Or: 1 Tim. 6:18 “Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them.”

49. We learn here for the first time Stranmûr’s full name.
50. Literally: from an arc, like Noah’s Arc, but it can only mean a ‘container,’ ‘vessel,’ or ‘chest’ in the present context.

51. The original has ‘markets’ in the singular, but from the subsequent text we know that Gerhart traveled far and wide.

52. Literally: “Now I am in part too weak for you.”

53. The text has “lêre,” meaning ‘teaching,’ ‘instruction,’ maybe also ‘command’ or ‘arrangement,’ but none of those words would fit in the current context.

54. While the editor of this text, John A. Asher, placed a comma here, a period makes more sense, followed by the beginning of a new sentence.

55. Their lord is the English prince Willehalm, who was lost on the sea and had disappeared while they were driven by the storm to the Moroccan harbor, as we will learn later. The English lords refer here to Willehalm’s ‘wife,’ though she is only his fiancée at this point.

56. Literally: her youth spoke up through old wisdom.

57. Erene is the name of the Norwegian princess, as we’ll learn only later.

58. The entire following section is very difficult to render into a logical English since the implied causality is simply not given there, since the poet has the princess make a series of statements that are not related to any request on her part.

59. Since Willhelam is only a young man at that point, not even knighted and certainly not yet crowned king of England, I refer to him consistently as ‘prince’ here.

60. This is one of the many repetitions which characterize this text. In a straight prose translation I would have simply struck this line.

61. Whereas before ‘childish’ underscored the lady’s innocence, purity, and virginity, now it implies the opposite, that is, foolishness, immaturity, etc.

62. It is not clear whether the poet simply added the word ‘gir’ (greed) to rhyme on the indirect personal pronoun ‘mir’ (to me), or whether he actually intended to criticize the castellan for his materialistic interests. I tend to reject the latter position in light of the high praise which Gerhart has given him before. The poet probably wanted to say simply: The castellan desired to demonstrate his good breeding by honoring the merchant.

63. Literally: guests from abroad.

64. The text does not quite make sense, unless I misunderstand the syntax, since he first refers to people in the city at large, and now we are supposed to assume that those are the former prisoners. It seems best to create separate sentences and to assume that each one talks about
different people.

65. Possibly the poet wanted to say that the princess was the one who wore the crown of praise, but the syntactical structure obfuscates a clear interpretation.

66. The term ‘degne’ or ‘degene’ (sword) is a synecdoche, or pars pro toto (a part representing the whole), for ‘knight.’

67. That is, he asked his clerk to read a mass for them.

68. Rudolf had obviously no clear understanding of the Islamic religion and naively mixes, very much like his predecessors and his contemporaries, names of ancient Greek gods with the name of the Prophet Mohammed.

69. It would not make sense for a merchant from Cologne to look for a direction taking him to Austria, coming from the Mediterranean. Cologne would be reached via the Channel, the North Atlantic, and then upstream of the river Rhine. However, as we will hear in the epilogue, the text source upon which Rudolf based his romance originated from Austria (either written or orally). Hence, the original scribe might have mixed up things here.

70. “huote” actually means ‘care’ or ‘protection,’ but in order to avoid duplication, I use the alternative term ‘embrace.’

71. Normally, the noun ‘zil’ means ‘goal,’ ‘end,’ ‘determination,’ ‘intention,’ ‘endpoint,’ ‘closure,’ etc., but in our context, differently what the dictionary (Lexer) tells us, the poet implies: ‘nothing.’

72. The entire passage is unclearly formulated; we do not know for sure whether Gerhart, his wife, or the princess are talking. The editor, Asher, made efforts to include quotation marks to identify the direct speech passages, but this gets confused.

73. The poet uses the unusual adjective, at least in this context, ‘rittenlich,’ which means ‘knightly,’ but we can definitely understand here the global meaning of ‘noble’ or ‘aristocratic.’

74. Rudolf here explores many different ways how to praise his lady as virtuous, youthful, innocent, pure, etc., which is hard to translate into an adequate English without sounding almost silly. He does not mean at all that she is only a child or a youth; after all, she is already engaged and performs in a most mature manner, demonstrating a high level of mature intellect. Hence, the poet tries to give us a sense of her beauty and overall charm, like a child, but already as a woman, yet entire untainted by sinfulness, moral defects, etc.

75. Here is another example of how the poet plays with one key component, ‘saelde’ (happiness, delight, good fortune, etc.) and utilizes it in many different phrases, without ever saying anything new. He operates like a musician who utilizes the same leitmotif and let’s it come through in many different contexts. It is almost impossible to translate all this into clear English.
76. The text might be confusing: The “künic” is not yet the king of England, but the prince Willehalm, and ‘ir man’ (her husband) is really only her fiancé.

77. One of many similar passages, working with the noun and adapting it as a verb, adverb, and so forth. There are no adequate English terms for that artistic construction.

78. Literally, when they looked at each other with their eyes for the first time. The poet uses a filler here that does not need to be translated since it is completely superfluous. See Dana E. Stewart, *The Arrow of Love* (2003). Of course, love poets throughout time have emphasized how much the erotic gaze has always served as the catalyst for love to bloom.

79. Gerhart is thinking that his lady would require as a husband a high ranking noble man who would be worthy enough in her father’s, the king’s, eyes to receive a large fiefdom.

80. Again, a typically redundant formulation: ‘that his life is still alive.

81. He also, and actually more specifically, refers to her family members, her closest kin.

82. Literally: ‘governance,’ ‘rule,’ ‘rank,’ that is, her position as a royal princess.

83. This is a good example to illustrate the rather convoluted style pursued by Rudolf, which constantly requires me to reformulate to help the reader understand the true meaning in modern terms. Literally, these verses say: “His life has now unfortunately given an end with death.”

84. Literally: “with joy.”

85. The text is very unclear here. The princess addresses the other person as “lîp” (body, which also means: a person, somebody, life, etc.), but from the grammatical structure she can only mean Gerhart.

86. She uses the term “gemahel” (husband), but she can only mean ‘fiancé.’ This is a pattern throughout the romance.

87. Because of the rhyming structure, the syntax in the original is entirely different. For the proper translation, I had to rearrange the verses, although I still tried to stay as close to the original as possible.

88. Literally: ‘whatever I have given for you, gives me more and more love.’

89. Despite the common usage of the term ‘love’ in the conversations between Gerhart and the princess, it does not carry an erotic meaning here; instead it expresses respect, admiration, praise, and high recognition.

90. Of course, Gerhart does not delight about her feeling of sadness; on the contrary, he deeply empathizes with her, but he reveals here his great respect for her virtues and constancy of love for her fiancé.
91. It remains unclear throughout the entire text whether Gerhart is erotically attracted to this young princess, which a superficial reading might imply, or whether he simply draws spiritual happiness from her and worships her as a god-like woman who is far beyond his social rank. He wants her to marry his son, but the text might also suggest that he is interested in her more than a father would be in his own daughter (here incest excluded). Considering the larger context and the vocabulary employed for the many descriptions of her virtues and beauty, it seems most reasonable to assume, despite the emotional intensity of the language, that Rudolf aimed for an abstract glorification of womanhood.

92. This convoluted syntactical structure is part of the original text.

93. The word does not yet exclusively mean ‘wedding’ in the modern German sense of the word, and instead it is most commonly applied for a ‘courtly celebration,’ but subsequently Rudolf merged ‘festival’ with ‘wedding’ since both events—his son being knighted and also his wedding—are supposed to take place there.

94. It would be too difficult to determine whether Rudolf meant ‘patricians,’ ‘gentlemen,’ ‘gentry,’ ‘esquire,’ etc. For a good list of aristocratic ranks and titles across Europe, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_and_noble_ranks#Minor_nobility.2C_gentry.2C_and_other._aristocracy (last accessed Aug. 31, 2016).

95. The word “gestüele” covers many different kinds of wooden constructions, including a stand, a throne, a row of chairs, bleachers, etc., here fitting for a tournament. See, for instance, Wigamur, ed. Joseph M. Sullivan (2015), v. 2515.

96. Literally: he received companionship, or fellowship, next to them.

97. As fleeting as the comment might be, here we learn of the official marriage between Gerhart’s son, Gerhart, and Erene. It is unclear why no priest is involved; however, the archbishop might have carried out the procedure, although the narrator does not say so.

98. The verb “buhurdieren” pertains to the activity of knightly jousting in groups, imitating actual war situations, hence the noun ‘bohort’ or ‘melee.” This mock combat was the most common activity during medieval tournaments. See, for instance, Joachim Bumke, Höfische Kultur: Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter (1986), vol. 1, 348-60; English translation by Thomas Dunlap: Courtly Culture (1991), section 4.3; Richard W. Barber and Juliet R. V. Barker, Tournaments (1989); see also the excellent contributions to Das ritterliche Turnier im Mittelalter, ed. Josef Fleckenstein (1985); see also the useful overview online at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tournament_(medieval)#Melee (last accessed on Aug. 31, 2016).

99. The narrative flow is uneven here. Hardly has Gerhart mentioned the strange appearance of the miserably looking man, does he turn to his own son. We will have to wait for a while until we will learn again about the new but strange guest.

100. The entire section is characterized by a narrative inconsistency not untypical of medieval literature. First we hear of a strange guest, who will later turn out to be Willehalm, but this is
immediately dropped. Then Gerhart’s son indulges in gazing at his future wife. Then he is thinking about getting gifts for the guests, which leads over to a discussion of his need to be knighted. Nothing here is carried to its full conclusion, which makes this romance at times hard to read. In fact, we could go so far as to blame the poet for definite weakness in structuring his text.

101. The narrator is concerned that we might confuse the material wealth of her external appearance with the internal richness of her mind and soul.

102. Normally, at least in French and English traditions, the lord tapped the new knight on the shoulders with the sword blade (dubbing or adoubement); but here the sword is attached to the belt. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accolade (last accessed on Aug. 31, 2016)

103. Literally, flutes, but there is supposed to be loud and festive music, so it could have been a kind of tuba, a sacbut, or, most likely, a simple pipe. By the same token, it would not have been drums, but tabors; see https://www.music.iastate.edu/antiqua/instrumt.html (last accessed on July 31, 2016).

104. Literally, the poet is really saying this, as incomprehensible as it might sound: Quietly, in soft customs. In many a sweet manner the sound was elevated!

105. “avoy” is a contraction from Old French “ah voi,” meaning: oh, look!

106. Even though Rudolf does not include any reference to King Arthur and the Round Table in his text, the mentioning of the month of May with all of its natural delights is a direct allusion to that royal world since Arthur is regularly said to have organized his court festival at that time of the year. In other words, this long description of the court festival is an important trope directly borrowed from courtly romances. Even though Gerhart is a merchant and even though the festival takes place outside of the city, this is, after all, very much a courtly romance.

107. The poet does not realize the contradiction. First he had described the man as dirty, sunburned, looking just miserable, now he emphasizes his stunning manly beauty. However, this is a common technique in medieval romances to give vent to the strategy of ‘kalokagathia,’ through which inner beauty and nobility always shine forth even when the individual person has gone through rough times, such as in the case of Tristan’s foster father Rual li Foitenant in Gottfried’s romance (vv. 3757ff.)

108. While the text says ‘where his clothing covered his body,’ but the opposite is really implied.

109. “enbizzen” is the past participle of the strong verb ‘bizzen,’ meaning ‘to bite’ or ‘to sting,’ and here: ‘to hurt’ or ‘to wound.’

110. That is, not to have pre-marital sex; the marriage would have been officially fulfilled only then.

111. As before a number of times, this is a topical expression: the flood of wild waves, meaning
simply: the sea.

112. Literally: To the dream of my wife.

113. Literally: His wonder, or: miraculous doing.

114. He refers to Christ’s Passion and applies that to his own situation.

115. Willehalm refers to the voyage on two separate ships. If he had stayed with Erene, he would not have lost her out of sight. Of course, if he had stayed with her, he might have broken the oath that he had pledged to her father not to sleep with her before their marriage.

116. This comment proves to be more interesting than it might be at first sight. After all, Willehalm is the prince of England, so very powerful and rich, whereas Gerhart’s son is only a merchant who has been knighted just shortly before. But Willehalm has lost everything, and the son has gained everything. The poet does not indicate a reversal of social roles, but he suggests that fortune is very volatile (cf. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, 525 C.E.).

117. This is one of countless other examples of how much hygiene mattered already in the Middle Ages. Courtly romances and many art works from the Middle Ages reflect on baths, personal health care, and cleanliness. Willehalm’s dirty body stands out in strong contrast to all other participants of the court festival because he is deeply unhappy and had searched for his beloved for a long time. See the contributions to *Hygiene, Medicine, and Well Being: Cultural Explorations of Everyday Living Conditions in the Premodern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen (forthcoming).

118. Again, the poet just delights, as was very common in medieval literature, to dwell for a long time on clothes, fashion, and personal accoutrements, not hesitating to repeat himself several times. See Elke Brüggen, *Kleidung und Mode in der höfischen Epik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts* (1989); for an excellent survey with critical comments, see now Emily J. Rozier, “Fashion” (2015), vol. 1, 415-30.

119. As before, the phrase “gestüele” is used commonly here; it is a plural noun for ‘chair,’ so can mean many different things, such as a ‘wooden structure,’ ‘row of chairs,’ ‘podium,’ or even ‘throne.’ Best seems to me ‘throne’ in this context because father and son appear before the archbishop.

120. Most problematically, the poet here consistently uses the term ‘gewalt,’ which carries a vast range of meanings, the least of which would be the modern ‘power’ or ‘violence.’ ‘Authority’ and ‘legal rights’ might come closer to what he means.

121. Here he talks most specifically about ‘married wife,’ but they are really only engaged.

122. Although the most comments about the Day of Judgment can be found in the New Testament, there are also many in the Old Testament, such as Exodus 32:33; Daniel 7:9-10; or Ecclesiastes 12:14.
123. The archbishop is now addressing Gerhart’s son, who hence must carry the same name as his father; so this is Gerhart junior.


125. He equates the Bible itself with the Holy Spirit.

126. Again, in reality, Willehalm is not yet king and not yet married to Erene. However, for the archbishop the engagement counts as almost tantamount to official marriage.

127. From a pragmatic perspective, this question is, of course, just nonsense because both men have already spelled out in greatest detail what they want young Gerhart to do.

128. Literally: ‘a man rich in virtues.’

129. She uses the diminutive form of father, hence ‘little father,’ or, more colloquially, ‘daddy,’ but stylistically this would be a break.

130. Even though the verb “cundewieren” is registered in Lexer and other dictionaries as an ordinary, commonly used word, the poet probably thereby also signaled his knowledge of Wolfram von Eschenbach’s famous *Parzival* (ca. 1205) in which Parzival’s wife is called “Cundwiramurs” (trans. Cyril Edwards, 2006). Wolfram projects a profound love between the married couple, which Rudolf here tries to replicate through this allusion to her name by means of this verb.

131. Both syntactically and grammatically the entire sentence is extremely difficult to comprehend, especially because the poet paid primary attention to the rhyming scheme and not to the meaning of the sentence itself.

132. As is typical of Rudolf’s style, he repeats himself several times, turning and switching the syntactical structure to a point where logic disappears and we are overpowered by the countless puns on the same basic words of heart, love, pain, and joy.

133. This is the same critical point determining the entire romance; do the protagonists choose their own suffering, or are they objects of their emotions, as these lines insinuate.

134. The difficulty here consists of the poet’s efforts to develop an entire theory of love, of love pain, joy, and sorrow, and all this without having available a more differentiated vocabulary; hence his common strategy to resort to the same words and to modify them just slightly to say almost the same, and yet not quite after all.

135. The original uses only the singular, but the following clause implies that he is holding her with both of his arms.
136. There is no way of rendering this phrase in a reasonable English: “ein einie ein.”

137. Literally: Each pressed the other close to him/herself / with the arms.

138. “vriuntlich ergân” is a litotes, meaning, an understatement expression for the kiss which they exchange; however, the poet also wants to avoid any possible allusion to excessive eroticism.

139. Literally: The greeting then did not continue any longer / before the noble knights arrived.

140. Again, this is the mass tournament, a melee, in which a group of knights fights against another group, creating mock combats.

141. Rudolf intriguingly plays with the word “minne,” drawing many different registers of meaning, but he certainly does not mean that the archbishop was filled with erotic love; the true meaning is an ethical sensation, a deep respect, and admiration, for which the word ‘love’ might be the only useful expression even in English.

142. Although the original uses the subjunctive, there is no reason to avoid the indicative here.

143. Here the poet finally formulates it correctly himself; Willehalm is only a prince, not a king yet. However, in the original, Rudolf commonly refers to him as a king for metric or rhyming reasons.

144. We have to assume that the wedding was performed by the archbishop, but the text itself never exactly mentions that holy ceremony.

145. If we needed any other proof that the poet does not have a real merchant in mind, then this scene confirms this entirely. Gerhart seems to have more wealth than even the mightiest and richest members of the aristocracy. We can thus put to rest much of earlier scholarship, such as by Zöller, *Kaiser, Kaufmann und die Macht des Geldes* (1993), that had tried to correlate this text with the rising merchant class, as if *Der guote Gerhart* truly reflected changes in the social structure of that time. Nevertheless, Zöller’s investigations, by themselves, situating Rudolf’s romance within the historical context, still deserve our great respect.

146. In other words, the archbishop promises them to protect them according to the traditional customs and to guarantee their freedom from undue external exploitations.

147. Literally: “I granted myself the feeling of love.” He means that he is deeply delighted about the two young people being so strongly in love with each other. This is subsequently explained in greater detail since other people, witnessing the love of that couple, experience the same sensation as Gerhart.

148. The following is a long, convoluted sentence, but it is possible to render it into English, despite the cumbersome syntax.
149. The word “urborn” does not appear in Lexer or elsewhere. The scribe might have meant “erbe,” ‘inheritance,’ ‘property,’ or ‘treasure.’

150. This is one of the rare occasions where Gerhart’s own wife is given a short presence. Otherwise, she almost never voices her opinion and is not actively involved in any of the events organized by Gerhart.

151. These are the maids whom Gerhart had assigned as companions to his lady and who are staying behind in Cologne. They are not to be confused with the maids who had accompanied Erene from Norway.

152. As impressive as Rudolf’s general awareness of other countries might be, including Morocco and Norway (probably Navarra; see note 44 above), he only knows that a big river runs through London. This is the Thames, a name he appears to have been entirely unfamiliar with, although the etymology points to very ancient, maybe even pre-Celtic, yet still Indo-European roots of the name; see the excellent article online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Thames#Etymology (last accessed on Aug. 8, 2016). ‘Lundenne’ is actually the Old English word for ‘London,” Robert William Ackerman, An Index of the Arthurian Names in Middle English (1952), 147.

153. Rudolf here follows the same topographic model as before: every time the sea voyage comes to a temporary end, the travelers reach a mountain and at first do not know where they are. This was the same when Gerhart reached Morocco, and subsequently when he returned from there, arriving at a point where the two ships separated for their respective home journey.

154. Here we finally get the clear message that the king of England was called the same as his son, Willehalm. This then parallels the situation in Gerhart’s family, with his son also called the same as his father, Gerhart. Consequently, as we have observed already in the Introduction, this is not a romance idealizing the world of the urban class, but an aristocratic ‘mirror for princes,’ insofar as the courtly audience is admonished to live up to its own ideals as best represented by Gerhart.

155. These could be nothing but invented names; however, it might be possible that Rudolf had heard of the Bishop of London, Henry Sandwich, appointed in 1263; yet this would be virtually too late considering the dating of Der guote Gerhart (ca. 1215-1220). For a complete list of archbishops and bishops, see http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/History/Archbishops.html (last accessed Aug. 8, 2016). Alternatively, it might have been Henry Sandford, Bishop of Rochester near London from 1226 to 1235; see Harry Rothwell, ed., English Historical Documents (1975), 1031-34. Again, this would be too late considering the date when Rudolf likely composed his work. Moreover, Sandford was a rather obscure figure and most likely entirely unknown on the Continent. An easier solution might be that the poet had in mind a corrupted form of ‘Canterbury.’ As to Eberwich, it is worth considering that it might be a reference to York: ‘Euerwik’ is mentioned in a record of 1297, according to Eilert Ekwall’s The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Place-Names (1936), 519. Still, we cannot assume that Rudolf really had any good sense of English politics, geography, or history. Further, the two individuals mentioned here are
identified as bishops, whereas York and Canterbury are the other seats of archbishops in England. I would like to thank Prof. Andrew Breeze, Pamplona, for his helpful suggestions.

156. It is unclear why even the inn-keeper is associated with the court, displaying courtly virtues, unless Rudolf intended to project all worthy figures in this romance as courtly, well-mannered, closely following the principle ethics and morality of courtly life.

157. Verbatim: doubtful instability, or: unsteadiness filled with doubts.

158. Literally: when the lord died, his son was born. However, the subordinate clause refers to a much earlier point in time.

159. It remains unclear when the couple got married, since there are no remarks prior to this about a formal wedding.

160. “gehiure” appears here only for the rhyme’s sake; it is normally used only as an adjective with the meaning of ‘soft,’ ‘pleasant,’ ‘familiar.’

161. This is, again, one of those difficult passages where the poet combines different emotions, sorrow and joy in order to capture the intensity and sweetness of the emotions experienced by everyone. The joy is mixed with pain resulting from the long separation.

162. Again, Rudolf was not clear at all about the actual ecclesiastical structure of England, where there were only two archbishops: in Canterbury and in York. Since the poet knew of the archbishop of Cologne, he obviously simply but erroneously assumed that the London bishop would hold the rank of archbishop as well. That is, however, not the case, at least not in the Middle Ages. The function of the Archbishop of Westminster was instituted only in 1850, when Pope Pius IX issued the Bull Universalis Ecclesiae on September 29, 1850. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archbishop_of_Westminster (last accessed on Aug. 25, 2016).

163. “heimlîche” actually means ‘private,’ ‘secret,’ ‘confidential,’ ‘comfortable,’ ‘personal,’ etc.

164. The poet resorts to a highly metaphorized language here, relying on the reference to lips as a substitute for the person of the queen, which then serves as a substitute for the fact that she talked with the guests.

165. The scribe seems to have confused lines here since different matters are mixed.

166. It would not have been a foolish idea to travel by ship from Scotland or Wales to London, but it seems more likely that the poet had no clear idea about the geographic conditions of England.

167. It is unclear whether Rudolf thought of Yperia (Spain) or Ypern in Belgium. But “Ibern” is actually the word for ‘Ireland,’ “Ivernia” or “Hibernia.” Gottfried von Straßburg includes this line in his Tristan (8814): “mit geselleschaft s’Ibernia sin” (to travel to Ireland in company). Tristan, ed. Friedrich Ranke, trans. Rüdiger Krohn (1980). In his register of names, however,
Krohn identifies “Iberne” in line 8814 as “Spain” (vol. 3, 285). This makes sense if we consider the etymology of modern-day Iberia: “The Iberian Peninsula has always been associated with the Ebro, Iberos in ancient Greek and Iberus or Hiberus in Latin. The association was so well known it was hardly necessary to state; for example, Iberia was the country ‘this side of the Iberus’ in Strabo. Pliny goes so far as to assert that the Greeks had called ‘the whole of Spain’ Hiberia because of the Hiberus River. The river appears in the Ebro Treaty of 226 BC between Rome and Carthage, setting the limit of Carthaginian interest at the Ebro. The fullest description of the treaty, stated in Appian, uses Iberus. With reference to this border, Polybius states that the ‘native name’ is Iber, apparently the original word, stripped of its Greek or Latin -os or -us termination.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iberian_Peninsula#Etymology (last accessed on Aug. 9, 2016).

168. “galm” means generally ‘noise,’ ‘sound,’ ‘echo,’ etc.

169. “bohorts” are methods in a tournament to fight in groups against each other.

170. It is never quite clear why the poet repeats himself so many time, using almost the same words. We can only surmise that he was enamored with the attractive mechanism of having words rhyming with each other and with the strategy of a chiastic word order.

171. In a way, Rudolf replicates exactly the same situation in which his romance would have been performed, presented by being read aloud to the courtly audience. This is hence another narrative strategy to mirror the external framework through an account about parallel events within the story.

172. The poet does not specify that they drink wine, he only says: “wonderful drinks,” but since it was common practice in the Middle Ages for members of the aristocracy to drink wine, while the peasants were limited to beer and ale. See Ernst Schubert, Essen und Trinken im Mittelalter (2006), 169-205; Melitta Weiss Adamson, Food in Medieval Times (2004), 49-51, 93-95, et passim.

173. In other words, there is a collective effort to secure from the king his forgiveness of the evil deeds which those lords had committed who had taken royal lands and properties during Willehalm’s absence without having been entitled to them.

174. This refers to the prisoners whom Gerhart had ransomed from the Moroccan castellan. It might also include a reference to all the expenditures which Gerhart had with the festival in honor of Willehalm and Erene back in Cologne.

175. Even though scholarship has reached the consensus that Rudolf did not project an ideal image of the rising burgher class or of thirteenth-century cities as gaining unforeseen power and influence, throughout the narrative, such as here, the mercantile vocabulary is clearly present.

176. Willehalm does not imply that Gerhart has no love for his own son, but underscores only how much the merchant has embraced the English prince with all of his love.
175. It is unclear where this figure might come from. The castellan Stranmûr had surmised that Gerhart could earn, as a ransom for the prisoners, hundred thousand marks (v. 1729). Perhaps Willehalm calculates that half of that money would have to be paid for the English prisoners, the other half for the Norwegian prisoners.

177. Literally: I pledged to her red mouth (i.e., lips).

178. Here we face another one of those passages in which it is hard to recreate the syntactical structure, to connect the verb with the subject, to reformulate the chiasms, and to render the endless play on a few key words in their artistic interconnectedness into a meaningful English.

180. Though Rudolf uses slightly different words, he repeats the same statement twice: “ougen sehen” (‘see through the eyes’) and “ougen brehen” (‘break through the eyes’).

181. Once again, the poet delights in repeating the same words and playing with them in new syntactical contexts, here “nôt,” meaning ‘worry,’ ‘sorrow,’ ‘emergency,’ ‘suffering,’ ‘pain,’ etc.

182. The poet uses the past participle form of the verb ‘senden,’ “gesant,” meaning ‘sent.’ This rhymes on the noun “lant,” but he really wants to imply the active voice, since there is no indication that those princes had been sent as their kings’ diplomats or emissaries.

183. For the sake of the rhyme she uses the diminutive of “vater,” “väterlin,” which normally could mean a more affectionate expression.

184. We must keep in mind that Gerhart speaks fluently English; hence he must have had many business dealing with England before, which would not be unusual for Cologne merchants. See, for instance, The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Later Middle Ages, selected and ed. E. M. Carus-Wilson. Sec. ed. (1967/1968); T. H. Lloyd, The English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages (1977); English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products, ed. John Blair and Nigel Ramsay (2001); see now Jeroen Puttevils, “Medieval Merchants” (2015), 1039-56.

185. This is Gerhart’s usual humility formula, pretending as if he had barely ever helped the English prince regaining his beloved fiancée and the throne of his kingdom. The very opposite is, of course, the case.

186. Note the significant parallels between Gerhart’s departure from the castellan in Morocco and his departure from the king of England. Emotions of friendship and love apparently bond people all over the world and across all religious divides if they pursue the same courtly virtues and values, as Rudolf indicates through his romance.

187. Again, another example of Gerhart’s typical humility.

188. This would be an extreme form of litotes, or an expression of humility, especially since the entire account so far has covered years doing good deeds and involved the merchant’s entire fortune, both abroad as a merchant and back home on the domestic market, which he has constantly risked on behalf of the English lords and the Norwegian princess.
189. Literally: the truth of the report. “maere” is a highly open term, carrying numerous meanings, including ‘story,’ ‘account,’ ‘news,’ ‘miracle,’ etc.

190. The entire section represents a remarkable narrative strategy by Rudolf who makes Emperor Otto retell in briefest form the entire account delivered by Gerhart, and this almost like a synopsis following the lengthy report by the protagonist.

191. The verb “ougen” might be unusual, but it simply means ‘to bring to the eyes,’ or ‘to expose,’ ‘to make visible to the eyes.’

192. This is a famous quote from 2 Peter 3:8: “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

193. Literally: ‘through the door of the room.’

194. This is not an error by the translator, but the usual characteristic of Rudolf, repeating himself by slightly varying the same statement several times.

195. Contrary to this statement, we know that he had become a victim of his own pride; hence his visit to Cologne to learn Gerhart’s story. But the poet needed to find a rhyming word on “vogt”: “Dô der rœmische vogt, / dem nie wart laster ûz erbrogt, . . . .”

196. We cannot say for sure whether Rudolf means that the unnamed man who had come from Austria brought a written copy with him or simply told the entire story from memory: “der seite ez ze maere / dem werden Steinachære.” Or he might have had a manuscript and read from that out aloud. It seems very hard to imagine how Rudolf would have been able to retain the entire account in his memory, especially if it had been in Latin, and then rendered it into Middle High German verses. The most likely scenario seems to be that our poet had a Latin text in front of him and translated from that, transforming a prose text into a rhymed romance.

197. The poet refers to the typical situation that a text was read aloud to an audience; silent reading was reserved for religious, private devotion. This huge topic has been thoroughly examined, above all, by Manfred G. Scholz, Hören und Lesen (1980); D. H. Green, Medieval Listening and Reading (1994).

198. Rudolf approaches his self-presentation here in the same way as he does in his later Willehalm von Orlens, employing the ‘captatio benevolentiae’ topos. See Armin Schulz, Erzähltheorie in mediävistischer Perspektive (2012), 383.

199. Literally: proverb, saying, etc.

200. Middle High German proves to be very difficult at times because individual words such as “versprechen” such as here can have many different meanings, from ‘to promise’ to ‘to vouch,’ ‘to protect,’ ‘to engage,’ ‘to contradict,’ ‘to reject,’ ‘to pledge,’ ‘to speak badly about oneself,’
or, as in our case, ‘to brag.’

201. Unless I misunderstand this line, Rudolf formulates a contradictory statement, since he just has urged his readers not to strive for fame. He might mean, though: “where she desires reward without fame.” Possibly, the poet intended the adverb “nâch” to mean ‘beyond,’ or ‘apart,’ hence: without fame?