

# Loire Classics

## Reviving Classicism in some Loire Poets

### Abstract

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The term 'Loire poets' has come to refer to a rather undefinable group of poets that in the second half of the eleventh century distinguishes itself through its refined poetics. They are often characterized as medieval humanists thanks to their renewed interest in the classics. Sometimes their movement is labelled a 'classicist' one. But what does this 'classicism' mean? Is it even permitted to speak of medieval 'classicisms'? This contribution approaches the question of whether we can apply this modern label to pre-modern phenomena. Moreover, it explores the changes in attitude towards the classics that sets the Loire poets off from their predecessors and contemporaries. The article focuses on poems by Hildebert of Lavardin, Baudri of Bourgueil, Marbod of Rennes and Geoffrey of Reims. They are compared with some contemporary poets, such as Reginald of Canterbury and Sigebert of Gembloux.\*

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### Introduction

In modern times, the work of Latin text editors has become an unrewarding and even risky task. Not only are they confronted with the problems their material poses (the voids and lacunas in the manuscripts, the difficulty of tracing back the original wording and writing of the text under scrutiny, the always ambivalent choices to make between different readings, between *lectiones faciliores* or *difficiliores*, the puzzling out of genealogical trees between manuscript and text families), but in recent decades they have also become the target of modern critics who have started to question the value of their work in itself. For some critics, each material witness of a text is considered to be a unique and singular testimony of an individual procedure. Every textual divergence must be seen as an irreplaceable element within a continuum of *variance* and *différance*. The technical methodology as developed in a century of tough philological inquir-

1. Of course, I refer to Cerquiglini and the school that labelled itself as the New Philology. In spite of all the criticism the movement received, it helped scholars to reconsider text editing practices that for more than a century remained perhaps a bit too positivist.

2. “When Lucretia ran through her breasts with the sword / and a torrent of blood rushed forth, she said: / ‘May the witnesses step forward and tell that I did not comply with the tyrant; / my blood gives evidence for my husband, my spirit for the gods” (translation is mine). The actual poem includes two more verses. See *infra*.

3. Riese refers to the manuscript he names Q which is Paris, BNF lat. 14194.

4. As a matter of fact, the editors of both Otto and Godfrey expressed careful doubts about the classical attribution. Pertz even checked in Ovid’s *Fasti* II, 685–852 (Pertz 78).

ies is dispatched with as though it were nothing. It is the actual and concrete individual that counts, not its century-old pedigree.<sup>1</sup>

And, moreover, the expertise of editors has become the object of doubts if not pure derision. Do the meticulously refined procedures of textual analysis really give sound results? Is the painstaking dissection of the tiniest textual details truly rewarding? Did the last century not leave us with too many philological mistakes? The die-hard philologists, mostly Germans, of the nineteenth century have been robbed of much of their ancient credibility. Few modern text editors will dare to state their opinions as strongly as their predecessors did in the optimism of their firm positivist belief in scientific infallibility. Times have changed, and with them many an edited text.

Cum foderet gladio castum Lucretia pectus,  
sanguinis et torrens egereretur, ait  
‘testes procedant me non favisse tyranno;  
ante virum sanguis, spiritus ante deos.’<sup>2</sup>

This small poem found its way to the Teubner edition of the *Anthologia Latina* by Alexander Riese (n. 787, p. 267). Riese mentions the different manuscripts known to him that contain the poem. He also refers to Otto of Freising († 1158) who incorporated it in his *Chronica* (Pertz *Chron.* II.9, p. 78). Otto does not name the poet. He simply introduces the poem as *Unde pulcre quidam* (‘As someone nicely puts it’). Riese himself, however, mentions how one of the manuscripts ascribes the poem to Hildebertus, but immediately he specifies: ‘At Hildebertus ipse (Migne 171, 1447): Scribit et Ovidius super ipso crimine versus...’ (217: ‘But Hildebert himself...: Ovid too writes verses on this crime...’).<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, this remark can be found nowhere in Migne’s re-edition of Hildebert’s works. Actually, it belongs to Godfrey of Viterbo († 1196) who indeed in his *Speculum regum* quotes these same verses and ascribes them to Ovid (Waitz vss 67–74). It seems as if Riese found his information in the 1867 edition of Otto of Freising’s *Chronica* but did not check it when writing his note and thus substituted in his memory Godfrey’s name with Hildebert’s. As a result, he made Hildebert attribute his own poem to Ovid, which must have been to Riese sufficient reason to take it as an authentic classical epigram.<sup>4</sup>

This little anecdote of editorial confusion is not meant to join the choir of those who want to ridicule the distinguished editor of the *Anthologia Latina*. Riese was an excellent philologist and text editor

in the thorough nineteenth-century German way. He was also careful and did not automatically rely on the work of his predecessors. More remarkable is that he did not even hesitate in attributing this poem to the classical era, even when he clearly is not certain enough to put it under Ovid's name. But he saw no reasons to deny it its classical origins.

Nowadays, the manuscript evidence is followed and the poem is published under the name of Hildebert of Lavardin, bishop of Le Mans and archbishop of Tours († 1133) (Scott 9.n19).<sup>5</sup> But this poem is not the only one among Hildebert's with a comparable history. The same happened to a poem on Ganymede, incorporated without further comment in the *Anthologia Latina* as number 795,<sup>6</sup> and to six verses from a longer poem, the attribution of which to Petronius, however, Riese hesitates to accept.<sup>7</sup> In other anthologies of the nineteenth century, still more of Hildebert's poems occur under the classical label. This confusion and uncertainty tells us perhaps less about the expertise of the philologists than it does about the actual classicality of Hildebert's poetics. Clearly, Hildebert writes poems in such a classical way that even the most trained experts are not always capable of distinguishing them from authentically classical ones. This has been one of the arguments that, for many scholars, made him into a medieval humanist. Even that most nuanced scholar but admirer, Peter von Moos, is not able to abandon entirely the tempting epithet (von Moos).<sup>8</sup> Without ever addressing him explicitly as such, he seems all too willing to present Hildebert as the best example of medieval humanism and classicism.

What was Hildebert's secret? What made him into such a 'classical' poet as to be able to deceive the specialists? Was he an exception or may we see him as just a representative of that poetical movement that has been called the School of the Loire? This label designates an as yet undefined group of poets, whose poetry is transmitted mostly anonymously in larger collections, but which shows clear common characteristics and poetical principles. My contribution aims to re-evaluate the 'classicist' label of this movement and thus question in a certain sense the possibility of using our modern referential qualifications for premodern periods. But it hopes also to demonstrate what contributes to the misleading classicality of a poet like Hildebert.

5. Here, the poem is complete and edited with the two verses that Riese knew but did not include. Actually, Riese based his edition of the poem on its appearance in a manuscript, containing Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, where it appears in the margin as a comment on the paragraph treating Lucretia (1.19). That Riese took this marginal appearance of a truncated poem as authoritative may be considered at least remarkable.

6. Riese 273. It is the poem opening with *Lumina, colla, genae*. Now in Scott n. 48 p. 38.

7. Riese n. 927 p. 349. They are the verses 15–20 from the poem that is now in Scott n. 17 pp. 6–7. Poem 23 in Scott's edition (p. 15) was refuted by Riese on the authority of Traube (n. 786 p. 265). Scott and Riese both hesitate about Scott's Suppl. 3 (57–59): Riese n. 794 pp. 271–73.

8. *Hildebert von Lavardin, 1056–1133*. The subtitle is telling: *Humanitas an der Schwelle des höfischen Zeitalters*. In spite of its age, this book will remain for some time the classic on Hildebert.

## Medieval Classicisms: An Attempt at Sorting Distinctions

9. For “klassisch” von Moos *passim*. For “klassizistisch,” 59.

10. It occurs for the first time in the letters of Ugo Foscolo († 1827): 1817, Jan 18, in a letter from Serafino Buonanti; 1818, Sept 30, in a letter to Silvio Pellico. In both cases, it seems to be used in a rather neutral way, though with a slightly negative undertone. In those years, Foscolo is in England. In the same year 1818, it is used in its opposition to romanticism by Ermes Visconti in his *Discussioni e polemiche sul romanticismo* in *Il Conciliatore* 24, 1818, Nov 22. In 1819, Goethe has read Visconti’s article and mentions classicists in his “Notes to the *West-Östliche Divan*” under the lemma, *Lehrer* (Schulz and Doering 43). For a similar account with some smaller discrepancies, Tatti 43–49.

11. “Racine a été romantique ... L’absurde, ce sont les gens qui, écrivant en 1823, s’efforcent d’attraper et de reproduire les caractères et les formes qui plaisaient vers 1670; gens doublement ridicules, et envers leur siècle, qu’ils ne connaissent pas, et envers le dix-septième siècle, dont jamais ils ne sauraient saisir le goût” (Stendhal 76–77).

12. “Imiter aujourd’hui Sophocle et Euripide, et prétendre que ces imitations ne feront pas bâiller le Français du dix-neuvième siècle, c’est du classicisme” (Stendhal 23).

13. “Classicism at its best only appears when the old poetic matter or form has been fully assimilated, fully integrated in the language and vision of the imitator, who then becomes a creator in his own right, the supreme example of this rare process being Jean Racine” (Secretan 26). Published as number 27 in the collection with the telling title *The Critical Idiom!* Secretan’s article takes into account only the classicism based upon the incorporation of Aristotle’s and Horace’s poetic rules, thus exemplifying its regulated character.

A first question poses itself almost naturally. Is it permitted to think of medieval classicism? Strictly spoken, of course, it is not. Peter von Moos, as a prudent scholar, makes use of the term nowhere in his impressive book on Hildebert. Whenever he applies the epithet ‘klassisch,’ it serves to identify classical authors. Once the predicate ‘klassizistisch’ occurs, but then denoting a modern reader.<sup>9</sup> This circumspection characterizes his deeply rooted sensibility for conceptual differentiation in a way that has become rare in contemporary academic discourse.

For it must not be forgotten that the term ‘classicism’ can be traced back to the opposition to romanticism.<sup>10</sup> Its appearance in Stendhal’s *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823), where it is used to denounce all that opposes the *romantique*, the view on writing and art that Stendhal considers to be modern, is famous. Stendhal’s interpretation of the term classicism is extremely negative. Surprisingly, Stendhal does not apply it to the classical authors nor to the French classics. He does not recoil from even calling Racine a *romantique*. *Classicisme* serves for Stendhal as a way to indicate slavish epigones of those models that are considered to be ‘classics’:<sup>11</sup> “To imitate nowadays Sophocles and Euripides and to pretend that the French of the nineteenth century do not yawn at those imitations: that is classicism.”<sup>12</sup>

Nowadays, classicism has not lost all of its negative associations. It is still associated with servile imitation according to rather rigid mostly self-imposed rules that are considered to be derived from Antiquity. But besides this, it has also become part of the critical idiom used to distinguish certain currents in art and literature that seek inspiration from classical models. As such, it is obvious that one can speak of French classicism (ironically enough with Racine as its outstanding representative),<sup>13</sup> of humanist classicism and even of the classicism of Late Antiquity. So, why not speak also of medieval classicism?

Doubts, however, are justifiable. For ‘classicism’ is not only formalistic imitation. In its modern form, it is grounded upon theory and as such reason plays an important part.<sup>14</sup> This causes ‘classicism’ to be taken in a predominantly normative sense. That is to say, ‘classicist’ judgment departs from Antiquity and the Classics and then analyses the merits of later work according to its obedience to the

14. “In the movement under scrutiny, the classicism of the moderns, theory will appear to play an inordinately big part. [...] what underlies classicism is partly a theory of imitation, partly an immoderate faith in Reason” (Secretan 7).

15. We have only to think of Winckelmann's precepts for 'great' as: "Der einzige Weg für uns, groß, ja, wenn es möglich ist, unnachahmlich zu werden, ist die Nachahmung der Alten" (Winckelmann, cap. 2).

16. Fortunately, the period of the rediscoveries of an uncountable number of medieval renaissances seems to have come to an end. I refer to the Carolingian, Alfredian, Ottonian, twelfth-century renaissances, as if the term renaissance remains the best possible guarantee against the insults of barbarianism and dark ages. Literature on this point has become abundant. The floodgates were opened by Haskins. For the other Renaissances, see Treadgold.

17. Traube (+ 1907) makes the distinction: "Es ist das Zeitalter, das ich die *aetas Ovidiana* nennen möchte, die Zeit, die der *aetas Vergiliana*, dem 8. und 9. Jahrhundert, und der *aetas Horatiana*, dem 10. und 11. Jahrhundert, folgt" (Vol 2. 113). Traube uses this distinction only to explain the development he remarks in poetical forms: from hexametrical (heroic verse) to Ovidian inspired distichs with a period of satire in-between, concentrated in the Investiture literature. Traube explains this poetic evolution by the changing models for poetical inspiration. As to a link with the historical context, he only mentions the Investiture Controversy as inspiring to satirical attacks (*ibidem*). Traube makes no link to the schools, although he explicitly states that he is talking only of erudite poetry (*gelehrte Dichtung*).

18. Although schools in the Middle Ages have received plenty of scholarly attention, it is hard to find anything concrete on possible changes in school programs. I refer to more general works as Jaeger and to the more focused studies of Münster-Swendson (see bibliography).

classical norm. In this, it is still the mental fruit of the Renaissance and of the humanists, or perhaps even more so the fruit of Winckelmann in his blind adoration for Greek Antiquity as the culmination of human civilisation.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, it is simply impossible to apply a similar approach to the medieval attitude. Even though Antiquity remained normative throughout the Middle Ages, it never constituted a comparable strict norm as in modern times. Medieval 'classicisms,' if we take them for granted, display a remarkable freedom as to the models they follow, imitate or invert. This is exactly what makes it so difficult to speak of medieval 'renaissances' or 'humanisms' as they never fulfil what one might expect them to fulfil.<sup>16</sup> They always seem to escape our modern categories. Again and again, they confront the modern mind with its incapacities to think in a medieval way. Trying to assess the medieval mind-set demonstrates, time and again, the limits of modern judgment, and teaches us to think differently.

The same applies as regards medieval 'classicism.' It is most often approached as a constant phenomenon in which only the models change. The best example thereof is Ludwig Traube's characterization of medieval literature as evolving successively from a Virgilian by way of a Horatian to an Ovidian era.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the difference between these literary classicisms is considered simply a change of the principal models without having any implications for the fundamental attitude toward the Classics, as though the mentality remained the same and only the attention shifted to other primary models.

It seems more likely, though, that something more fundamental changed in the attitude toward the classical tradition, and that this fundamental change brought along a need for or interest in other writers. Is the shift in primary model not more than simply a symptom for something happening underneath? As scholars, we have to look more profoundly to find the deeper reasons for the changes that show themselves at the surfaces. In this contribution, I depart from the assumption that the changing attitudes toward the Classics might be linked to changing practices at the schools, introducing other writers or focusing upon other ones.<sup>18</sup>

As such it might be illuminative to make a distinction between a more 'monastic' classicism, based upon a dominance of monastic schooling (notably from the eighth to the tenth centuries) and taking a more heroically classicizing stand (Traube's Vergilian era), a more 'scholastic' classicism, based upon education at the higher schools and universities of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries with a nota-

19. I try to demonstrate the consequences of these two different traditions of schooling in a book I am preparing on the Loire poets.

bly Ovid-based poetical inspiration, and the immensely interesting period of transition from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, during which schooling broke out of the monastery and became increasingly a point of attention for bishops and cathedral chapters. This transition period is characterized by a schooling that did not yet constitute a strictly organized institution but varied strongly according to the masters and programs involved.<sup>19</sup> The so-called Loire poets form a fascinating example of the changes that start to occur during this intermediate period.

## Rewriting and Reviving: An Attempt at Distinctive Definitions

A change of school systems can be accompanied by a change in school practices. In the Middle Ages, such evolutions seem rare. The transition normally takes place alongside the survival of the former or traditional practices. Consequently, the rewriting techniques as they were known from Antiquity largely survived in the basic courses of grammar: notably paraphrase and transposition (normally of a prose text to poetry), or more simple imitations. Rewriting classical texts thus formed an integral part of literary education and became an integral part of the literature written by these scholars (Cizek).

Rewriting must be considered not only as slavish imitation, but must also be understood in its more developed forms as an important starting point for properly original creations. To give some examples, one might think of Peter Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* as a rewriting in the hagiographic tradition but also of Bernard of Clairvaux's *De consideratione* as an attempt to rewrite Boethius' *De consolatioe*. Both of these, however, stem from after the change that took place in the latter half of the eleventh century, as mentioned above. They rather illustrate the developed art of rewriting that has almost entirely emancipated from its normative classical models and that has become what will be called here 'a reviving' of the classics.<sup>20</sup>

What is the difference? I hope to shed some light upon it by giving a few examples, but in short it may be based upon the following distinctions:

Rewriting, in the way it was practiced before the line of fracture as it seems to appear during the second half of the eleventh century, takes its departure from the normative authority of the model, which in this case is the classical text.

20. For Abelard, see Verbaal, "Trapping the Future" and "Epistolary Voices and the Fiction of History."

Reviving, *i.e.* the way of treating the classics after this same line of fracture, takes the classical text less as an authoritative norm and model but rather as a source of inspiration that can be manipulated freely and thus give birth to something completely new and original.

Fundamental to this distinction is a difference in approach to the text and to its creation. Based upon earlier research, I dare to state that in the Loire poets, for the first time since Antiquity, we encounter the idea that the text offers the writer the opportunity to create a world that is independent from his own. This means that, consciously, the writer becomes the supreme master over the textual world he creates. It is he who gives life to the text and to what it conveys. This however must not be taken in a simple figurative sense but in the concrete sense of what is said: the writer is master over life and death in his text (Verbaal, “How the West was Won” and “Getting Lost in Worlds”). This consciousness determines much of what made the Loire poetics a breaking moment in medieval literary history. In what follows, I hope to illustrate what is meant by this.

### Sources of Information and of Inspiration: Sigebert’s Vegetius and Marbod’s Maximianus

After having set out the presuppositions of the approach this contribution offers, a few examples might clarify this rupture caused by the Loire poets.<sup>21</sup> Starting with the simplest distinction that sets off the classical text as a source of inspiration to a more authoritative approach, I bring to the fore Sigebert of Gembloux († 1112), who incorporated elements from Vegetius into his epic poem on the Martyrdom of the Theban Legion, and compare this to the way Marbod of Rennes († 1123) gave life to another writer of Late Antiquity.

Sigebert will be best known for his *Chronicles* and as a very prolific writer, deeply involved in the Investiture Controversy. Here his poetry is in the centre, notably the hagiographic epic on the Theban Legion (Sigebert, “*Passio*”). It is Sigebert’s most prestigious poem, both because of its length (2896 verses in three books, each with a separate prologue) and because of its scope: it does not limit itself to the story of the martyrdom but incorporates historical, geographical and ecclesiastical digressions.

21. These examples are not meant to be decisive arguments but rather to be illustrative ones. The topic will be more exhaustively treated in my book on the Loire poets. Here, I ordered them in a line that goes from more or less direct imitation to an entirely free rewriting that I have labelled reviving.

22. Sigebert as a poet remains largely understudied. See for example the recent collection Straus (ed.), in which Sigebert the poet is almost entirely absent.

23. A profound study on Sigebert's use of Vegetius in the *Passio* seems still to be lacking.

24. As Traube defined the 'Vergilian era' in which "herrscht das heroische Versmaß und man besingt die Heiligen" (113).

In terms of poetics, Sigebert demonstrates himself to be all but an old-fashioned poet sticking to a bookish tradition.<sup>22</sup> He has fine poetical qualities and knows how to create tension in his verses. He does not yield to the more 'baroque' tension of some of his contemporaries and shows himself a master in prosody and Latinity. Moreover, he proves open to the more modern poetical currents without following them merely because they are modern. In his *De viris illustribus* he makes a complimentary mention of Marbod because of his rewriting of the Theban legend and he praises him for the elegance of his verses (Sigebert, *De viris* 99).

More important here is the attitude of both poets towards the classical models and sources they use. In the case of Sigebert, his reworking of Vegetius into his poem is particularly interesting. Whether Sigebert worked directly with the classical text, or whether he used one of the many abbreviations or summaries available, is not entirely clear. We are here concerned with his way of treating the text. The sixth 'chapter' of his first book is dedicated to the organization of the Roman legion and is almost entirely based upon Vegetius (Sigebert, *Passio* vss. 221–308; Dümmler 16).<sup>23</sup> But Sigebert is not copying his model slavishly. Vegetius is used as a source of information that is artfully reworked and incorporated into the narrative and didactic frame of Sigebert's own poem. Nonetheless, it is taken as an authoritative source, not as an inspiration. The same is also true for Virgil or for other classical poets. They do not offer the actual inspiration. That is taken entirely from the hagiographical tradition. In that sense, Sigebert remains bound to tradition.<sup>24</sup>

Nor does Sigebert want to give a summary of the entirety of Vegetius. He makes a deliberate choice of elements he wants to incorporate. He orders them according to his own poetical structure, which is not determined by the subdivisions used by Vegetius. Even when quoting Vegetius almost literally, Sigebert manages to make the words of his model his own. Sigebert indeed opens his chapter by asserting that the Theban legion learned all that had to be known from ancient warfare: first of all, how to proceed on foot or by horse, and next how to recognize the different signals. Sigebert then copies almost literally sentences and parts of chapter III.5 from Vegetius (see Appendix 1). But he adapts it by amplifying and eliminating according to his own interests or by using other parts of his source. In short, he remains a very independent rewriter in his choice and use of all quotations and references.



25. The poem was reedited by Bulst (287–301, not. 297–98). The lost manuscript is the *Florilegium Sti Gatiani*, of which we have an accurate description by Wilmart (3–40, 147–81, 235–58). In my book, I will focus more on Marbods' reworking of Cicero to illustrate the differences.

26. This will be one of the central topics of my book.

As to Marbod, we will focus here upon one of his *carmina amatoria* that were censured by the later editors and that can be found only in the *Editio princeps* of 1554 and in one (now lost) manuscript (see Appendix 2).<sup>25</sup> The poem is remarkable for several reasons. In it, Marbod displays his technical virtuosity as an adherent of the new poetical trends. The use of disyllabic leonine rhyme all over the poem, the complete avoidance of elision, the poetic enumerations, the wordplays: they all form part of that high-spirited poetical game in which this new literary elite so strongly revels.<sup>26</sup>

The poem is inspired by a late antique poem, known as the *Versus Maximiani*. Here the persona of the poet laments his having come to old age, which takes away from him all the pleasures and all the insignia of youth. Most of the poem's attention, of course, goes to the loss of the pleasures of love, which in the poem are always depicted as never having reached their final satisfaction.

Marbod's idea is completely based upon Maximianus, though it would be very hard to find concrete quotations or even allusions. The entire atmosphere recalls the first part of Maximianus' poem. Marbod, however, did not keep the words. He did not even keep the verse form. Maximianus' poem is in elegiac distiches, whereas Marbod wrote in hexameters.

Similar changes also occur in the content of the poem. While Maximianus is boasting about his good-looking youth and about his success with the girls, he stresses as well his pure and chaste disposition that made him refuse most of their advances. Marbod's speaker was less prudish. As a boy, he loved many boys and girls, he boasts, and as a man, he loved many men and women. And he still revels in the memories of these carnal pleasures, which make him regret his old age even more. Marbod is thus inverting Maximianus' image in order to make the opposition between youth and old age even more tangible and painful.

Yet, in spite of these differences, the spirit in both poems is the same and many of the same themes concur, making the one undeniably the source of inspiration for the other. But Marbod did not truly take Maximianus as a model or as a norm. He tried to enter the mind of Maximianus' character and to rewrite his lament in a condensed form. He 'revived' its content and created a related but nonetheless different persona in his own poem.

## Models to follow and models to fill: Reginald's Statius and Baudri's Fulgentius

Reginald of Canterbury's *Vita Sancti Malchi* provides an example of taking a model that is considered truly authoritative (Lind). In the second book of this hagiographical rewriting in six books (not surprisingly half the number of the *Aeneid*) we get an extensive treatment of the games among the Saracens who took Malchus prisoner. The choice and reworking is based upon Statius, primarily, but of course, also on Virgil with successively the boxing (*Aeneid* v.361–484; *Thebaid* vi.731–825), the horse race (*Thebaid* vi.296–549), the discus throwing (*Thebaid* vi.646–730) and the sprint (*Aeneid* v.286–361; *Thebaid* vi.550–645). The choice of the games betrays the model, Statius, but their appearance in a different order shows that Reginald tried not to simply copy his model.

He indeed gives his own solutions. Thanks to Virgil, who was inspired by Homer, the sprint became an element within the games to offer particular attention to some personalities and their characteristics. In Virgil, it is the first manifestation of Nisus' friendship for Euryalus. Nisus, who has taken the lead, lets himself fall to hinder his pursuer and to give Euryalus the chance to win the contest.

Statius gave it another twist. In his account, Idas seizes the long hairs of Parthenopaeus who is ahead of him, thus causing him to slow down. In Reginald's poem, the sprint simply has no winner as both competitors disappear at the horizon and do not reappear.<sup>27</sup> Reginald, whose poetical skills demonstrate less refinement than those of Marbod, Sigebert or Hildebert, shows himself, however, to be relatively free in the reworking of his model. But in this reworking, he also demonstrates the impact the model still has on him. One could characterize his rewriting as a variation upon the same theme.

When looking at Baudri of Bourgueil and his *Carmen* 154, it seems at first sight almost impossible to be more obedient to a model (Tilliette vol. 2, 61–97). The poem is one great paraphrase of Fulgentius Mythographus' first two books. The editor characterizes it as a paraphrase "aussi servile que l'autorisent les contraintes de la métrique" [as servile as the constraints of meter allow it to be] (Tilliette vol. 2, 234). Nonetheless, the poetics of its rewriting appear to be much more original than the ones Reginald used in rewriting Statius.

The elements he introduces show that to Baudri the model is much less authoritative than it was to Reginald. If we have a look at the small fragment in which he retells the birth of Erichthonius, sev-

27. "Ergo cucurrerunt neque tunc neque post redierunt. / Patria quae peperit tunc quaesiit et modo quaerit; / Esse putat nusquam sua plebs quos non videt usquam" (Lind 70).

eral aspects leap to the eyes (see Appendix 3). Baudri first gives a plot synopsis of the story. Then, he introduces direct speech. These two elements seem to fit in perfectly into the schoolwork system of paraphrase, the one to make the text comprehensible from the outset, the other to make it livelier. Yet, this last element is not without consequences, for the vivacity of the small scene focuses concretely upon the sexual part. The eroticizing fight of the god and the virgin goddess is depicted in very suggestive words and it receives the greatest amplification. Even the ‘parody’ of a gnomic *sententia* is inserted, stressing the stimulating effects of delaying coitus.

In spite of his afterward giving an allegorical interpretation of the scene, Baudri’s emphasis on the carnal and erotic aspects goes beyond mere rewriting techniques. It shows his wish to bring the scene to life, to make it more tangible and visible than is the narrative in Fulgentius. His depiction is more founded upon insight into human psychology, and physiology for that part. He enters the scene from within, not contenting himself with a simple description of what happens. In short, this shows the method behind these adaptations: Baudri’s first aim is not to write another parallel story (as one could say of Reginald) but rather to fill the model with new and sparkling life.

## Taking over the Classics: Baudri’s Letter to Helena and Godfrey’s Orpheus and Hector

28. Baudri c. 7 besides Ovid *Her.* 16 (Tilliette vol. 1, 14–23).

29. In itself, this Ovidian exchange is already something new in the antique collection as it is the first real exchange and because the initiative is with the man.

30. For the scholarly discussion on the last exchange, between Baudri and Constance, see the notes on both *carmina* by the editor: Tilliette vol. 2, 288, 294. The point of discussion is the authenticity of the second poem: was it truly written by Constance or is it a composition by Baudri? All textual evidence, however, points to this last answer: the identical length of both poems, the identical style and poetics.

Baudri also rewrote one of Ovid’s *Heroides*, Paris’ letter to Helena.<sup>28</sup> It offers a nice example of the new power that writers exercise over their texts. Baudri is actually one of the first to revitalize the genre of the Ovidian *Heroides*. It is tempting to see him develop the form in three epistolary exchanges. The first one in the corpus is the exchange between Paris and Helena (c. 7 and 8) that is entirely founded upon Ovid’s own *Heroides* 16 and 17.<sup>29</sup> Much later there is the exchange between Florus and Ovid himself (c. 97 and 98) and finally the elegiac letter of Baudri to the nun Constance and her answer (c. 200 and 201). There seems to be an evolution from mythology by way of history to the poet’s personal reality.<sup>30</sup>

In Paris’ letter, Baudri is voicing the seducer in an all too convincing way. One of the main arguments is a long description of Troy and of all its beauties compared to which Helena’s Greece simply seems a country of peasants. And then suddenly, just past the halfway mark

of the three hundred-verse poem, the marvels of Troy and its wines are equalled to the region of Orléans, to the wines of the country around Bourgueil and to those that have the preference of Henri I Beauclerc of England (c. 7, 194–209; Tilliette vol.1, 20).

The entire literary construction is consciously broken down. For a short moment, Baudri drops the mask. Whether he does so in a serious attempt to Christianize the letter and the myth, as is suggested by some scholars, or whether it is rather to be understood as a dialogue of the abbot with his muse, as the editor supposes, can be left undecided for the moment (Tilliette vol. 1, 155–56). More importantly, Baudri is very well aware of what he is doing, *i.e.* breaking down the illusion of the poem. His personal voice interrupts the persona that had lent him his other voice. It is as if he is laughing at the reader: ‘Did you follow me up to here? Did you believe my imitation? Yes, it is an imitation, you can see. I am just joking and playing my game.’<sup>31</sup> And after having confronted the reader with the truth of textuality, he simply continues in the role of Paris.

This small passage of some twenty verses illustrates in a marvelous way the new attitude of these poets as they face the text. They know what they are doing. They are aware of what we would call the textual illusion: that the evocation in the text is nothing but a dream, a game, a deception of the reader’s imagination.

But as important is what it tells us about Baudri’s attitude toward the classics. It is not only that Baudri tries to revive the stories which inspire him. He also takes the right to treat them for what they are: textual fancies, or better, texts that have to obey to his own creativity. Ovid is not a model to follow. He must receive new life. He must be reborn in Baudri. And thus, Baudri will give Ovid a voice in his second *Heroides* exchange.

Yet, one can even go further. Godfrey of Reims does. We only have four poems and three epitaphs in his hand (Broecker).<sup>32</sup> In the longest of them, a poetical letter in disyllabic leonine hexameters to Hugh Raynard de Bar, bishop of Die, Godfrey expresses himself in almost extravagant lyrical terms on his own poetical gifts (Broecker 206–25; Boutemy 351–64). At his birth, the three Fates entered the small cottage where he was lying on the bare ground and Clotho prophesized that he would be the equal of Homer and a singer of cosmological truths (c. 4.101–15). The scene is a bit shocking for modern readers, who are not used to a similar self-appreciation in medieval poets. But it is revealing of the high estimation these poets had of their poetical vocations.

31. Baudri classifies his own poetics as a *musa iocosa*, a playful muse: c. 1, 29–30. It returns several times during his collection, including in the invitation to poet colleagues ‘to play the game’ with him in exchanging their poems. Remarkably enough, Reginald of Canterbury also talks about his ‘playful art’ (Lind 47). Other members of this so-called Loire-circle do not use this term to qualify their poetics. For them it is a serious task, as I try to demonstrate in my book.

32. This edition contains too many mistakes and lapses to be entirely reliable. For that reason, the text of the four greater poems must be supplied by the edition in Boutemy 335–66.

In this same poem, Godfrey retells the story of Orpheus (c. 4.184–205). And, a remarkable fact, he does not hesitate to bring Eurydice completely back to the light: “and returned to life she fled the doors and anger of Hell” (et rediviva fores Herebi fugit atque furores, 4.205). The passage is inserted between Godfrey’s account of Hercules’ fight with Cacus and his description of the rape of Ganymede.

His retelling of Orpheus’ story consists mostly of a large catalogue of the trees that followed Orpheus and of the halting of nature at his song. Yet, some hundred verses earlier it was Godfrey himself who boasted that he was capable of making the rivers flow upstream and making the trees flower in the middle of winter (c. 4.60–71). Godfrey thus is another Orpheus – or rather, when taking the chronology of the poem under consideration, Orpheus appears as another Godfrey. As Godfrey’s poetical forces enable him to change the seasons and the normal current of the rivers, it is no wonder that his is also the power to tell stories anew. If Orpheus truly had such powers of song, then, of course, he got his Eurydice and he knew to bring her back into the light and into life.

Similarly, the last story in this same poem retells the fall of Troy (c. 4.395–481). We see part of the Greeks leaving the horse, part of them entering the gates and, astonishingly, we see Achilles while urging his troops and we see Hector standing on the Trojan walls to defend them against the assaults. The poem ends at this point and is normally considered to have remained unfinished, but the effect of surprise comes very close to the Orpheus-story. In both cases the story has a completely different ending than the expected or traditional one. In both cases, those that were dead in myth reappear alive, thanks to the power of poetry.<sup>33</sup> Godfrey thus proves himself master not only over his own poetry but also over tradition: it is up to him to give any story the end he prefers. This is no simple rewriting anymore but re-creation.

33. I have shown elsewhere how Bernard of Clairvaux uses the same vision of the writer as textual mastermind in order to recall his brother to life. See Verbaal, “Preaching the Dead.”

## Being a Classic: Hildebert

To conclude we have to return to the poet generally considered to be the greatest of this group, Hildebert of Lavardin. In his poetry alone, all that has been shown here as making part of the poems of his colleagues, could have been demonstrated too, but it is important to understand that this is not just one poet’s merit but part of a shared po-

34. Notably in his letter to Reginald of Canterbury on his *Vita Malchi* (von Moos 32–36), paying much attention to the comparison of the olive tree. See also Klopsch, 85. In my book the letter receives ample attention and a different interpretation.

35. This becomes even more clear in his life of Saint Mary of Egypt (Larsen).

etics. It is the common ground for an entire group. Hildebert is never as exalted about his own poetics as is Godfrey, but in his comments on the poems of others he betrays his own high opinion on the duties and vocation of a poet.<sup>34</sup> Technically, he masters all the refinements of what, for the sake of convenience, we still call the Loire poetics. He knows to apply them just enough to make his poems differ from those of that other great technical master, Marbod. His oeuvre contains less erotic or mythological topics treated in verse, but those few show him a master as great in psychological empathy as we recognized in Baudri or Marbod.<sup>35</sup>

Hildebert, however, can show still another aspect of the Loire classicism. He has become a classic himself. His poems (like his letters) became for some time and for many contemporaries the poetical reference by excellence. And as we have seen, several of his minor poems have been considered by modern editors to be truly classical, being ascribed to Ovid or Martial and surviving into the first editions of the *Anthologia Latina*. This was a fortune that had not been given to many, neither to his predecessors nor to his contemporaries.

As a conclusion, we must therefore return to the question that opened this contribution and ask ourselves what may have been the reasons that resulted in a similar fate for Hildebert's poems. What makes them so classical that their seemingly antique character was able to fool even good and great scholars? More is going on than simply a perfect mastery of the language and style. As mentioned, basic schooling in Latin had changed during the preceding century but not in such a way that it allows us to call Hildebert a greater master over Latin language and style than his colleagues.

Of course, one of the elements remains his personal talent. But besides this, there is something new that can be discovered also in his closer Loire colleagues. To Hildebert, the Classics are no longer a simple model to follow. They had to become alive again and Hildebert managed perhaps better than all his colleagues to enter the spirit of the Classics from within – as a poet at least. Just as we saw Baudri doing with the story he wants to retell – giving it life from within, truly reviving it – Hildebert does this with classical poetics itself. He knows how to write in a 'classic' way because 'classic' has become part of himself. He has appropriated classical style and poetics in a way that makes it an undeniable part of his own poetics whenever he wants to.

For Hildebert displays even more than all his colleagues the capacity to adapt his style in order to conform to the topic treated. While many of his more traditional colleagues (like Sigebert or Reginald, but also Baudri) have only one poetics to display in their works, Hildebert shows himself a master of different poetics, opposing without any problems the most classical style to the most modern ones. Differentiation of style according to the topic treated or to the public addressed becomes a fundamental and new element from the Loire poets onward, as can be seen in Marbod and Godfrey. But it immediately reaches one of its highest peaks in Hildebert. The *ap-tum* becomes a fundamental element in his poetics and this explains his classicality in those poems that treat classical topics.

## Conclusion

By way of these examples, a fracture line can be traced between poetics before and after the Loire poets. Classicism as the Loire poets represent it is able to illustrate their importance in constituting a similar break. They were not truly revolutionary. They built upon the work their predecessors had already done and they reacted to the poetry that was being written by their contemporaries. But they knew to give poetry a twist that made it definitively different from what it had been before. The reason behind this shift has to be looked for in the changes that occur at that period in the schools. It can be considered in parallel with what happened at that same moment in the teaching of dialectics, which of course have received much more attention because of the theological implications. But fundamentally we have to consider it as two aspects of one and the same movement.

As to the use of the Classics, to understand it well one has to return to the image Augustine used in his *Doctrina Christiana*. There he taught that it was allowed for Christians ‘to spoil’ the Classics of what they did not know to use in the right way, just like the Hebrews spoiled the Egyptians of their gold, cloths and pots and pans (*Ex.* 3.21–22). Christians were allowed to apply classical science and literary techniques for their own sake (Augustine II.40). He opened the doors to the huge influence of classical Antiquity on the future of Europe. For some centuries, poets limited themselves indeed to the pots and pans, to the vases and vessels. What changed with the Loire poets was that they did not content themselves any longer just with

the pots and pans, but that they became curious about what was inside. They tasted from the contents and that taste stayed with them.

## Appendices

1. Sigebert, *Passio SS. Thebeorum* I.221–36 compared to Vegetius, *Epitome rei militaris* III.5

Quicquid natura vel te, doctrina, magistra  
 Omnis ab antiquo belli dictaverat ordo,  
 Edidicit docili studio Thebea iuventus:  
 Ordinibus rectis incedere, cornibus aequis,  
 Signa sequi, signis dinoscere singula certis,  
 Sic mutis, semimutis, vocalibus uti  
 Signis, ut pueri reddunt dictata magistris.  
 Visum muta trahunt, haec auditum duo tangunt,  
 Vocibus humanis vocalia signa notabis.  
 Muta vocare potes aquilas, vexilla, dracones.  
 Edunt confusam semivocalia vocem,  
 Dum muto sonitu reboant tuba, bucina, cornu.  
 Distincto sonitu quid agant tuba, bucina, cornu,  
 Cur tuba productim, concisae, sive minutim  
 Clangat, productim ciet accenditque minutim.

Tria itaque genera constat esse signorum, uocalia semiuocalia muta. Quorum uocalia et semiuocalia percipiuntur auribus, muta uero referuntur ad oculos. Vocalia dicuntur quae uoce humana pronuntiantur, sicut in uigilis uel in proelio pro signo dicitur, ut puta ‘uictoria’ ‘palma’ ‘uirtus’ ‘Deus nobiscum’ ‘triumphus imperatoris’ et alia, quaecumque uoluerit dare is, qui in exercitu habet maximam potestatem. Sciendum tamen est ista uocabula cotidie debere uariari, ne ex usu signum hostes agnoscant et explorantes inter nostros uersentur inpune. Semiuocalia sunt quae per tubam aut cornu aut bucinam dantur; tuba quae directa est appellatur; bucina quae in semet aereo circulo flectitur; cornu quod ex uris agrestibus, argento nexum, temperatum arte spirituque canentis flatus emittit auditum. Nam indubitatis per haec sonis agnoscit exercitus, utrum stare uel progredi an certe regredi oporteat (utrum longe persequi fugientes an receptui canere). Muta signa sunt aquilae dracones uexilla flammulae tufae pinnae; quocumque enim haec ferri iusserit ductor, eo necesse est signum suum comitantes milites pergant.



2. Marbod of Rennes, *Dissuasio intempestivi amoris sub assumpta persona* compared to Maximianus Etruscus, *Elegiae* 1.1–6, 55–76

Mens mea tristatur, virtus mea debilitatur,  
 Corpus tabescit, flet vena, medulla liquescit,  
 Pellis mutatur, facies mea flendo rigatur,  
 Nec satis effundo lachrimas, quibus intus abundo,  
 Cum via nulla datur, qua quo volo perveniatur,  
 Prorsus despero rem, quam contingere quero,  
 Nec desisto tamen nec habet mea cura levamen.  
 Claudus agens leporem frustra consumo laborem,  
 Improba testudo cervum sequor et mihi ludo,  
 Sed neque sic cesso, nec dat furor ocia fesso.  
 O si quid nossem, per quod desistere possem,  
 Quam felix fierem, si quod volo nolle valerem,  
 Nolle sed ex toto, nequaquam duplice voto.  
 Languo quippe volens, medicinam flagito nolens,  
 Rursum quero volens medicinam, languo nolens.  
 Sic quod nolo volo rursum quoque quod volo nolo.  
 In me divisus de me michi concito risus,  
 Risus exosos, risus tristes, lachrimosos.  
 Nunquid in hoc tabo putrescens semper amabo?  
 Aut quis erit finis tantis, bone Christe, ruinis?  
 Num semper prisco cupiam me tradere visco  
 Et semel egressus rursum laqueis dare gressus?  
 Dilexi multas parvas puer et vir adultas,  
 Dilexi multos parvos puer et vir adultos.  
 Quotquot dilexi, facili conamine flexi.  
 Etas consimilis, decor et risus puerilis,  
 Aspectus letus, vox dulcis, sermo facetus  
 Quas affectabat facile sibi conciliabat  
 Et paribus lignis ardebat mutuus ignis.  
 Nunc dispar etas cogit viciis dare metas,  
 Iam dat ad amplexus neuter mihi brachia sexus,  
 Nec bene, si cupiam, quod eram tunc denuo fiam.  
 Quis iam pene senis iuvenum parebit habenis?  
 An sectabor anus incanaque tempora canus?  
 Lascivum pectus non debet habere senectus  
 Et contemptibilis solet esse libido senilis.  
 Ergo mori restat, si me mala cura molestat,  
 Ut voto solo sim mechus, vivere nolo.

Aemula quid cessas finem properare senectus?  
 cur et in hoc fesso corpore tarda uenis?  
 solue precor miseram tali de carcere uitam:  
 mors est iam requies, uiuere poena mihi,  
 non sum qui fueram: periit pars maxima nostri  
 hoc quoque quod superest langor et horror  
 habent.

...

tu me sola tibi subdis, miseranda senectus,  
 cui cedit quicquid uincere cuncta potest.  
 in te corruimus, tua sunt quaecumque fatiscunt,  
 ultima teque tuo conficis ipsa malo.  
 ergo his ornatum meritis prouincia tota  
 optabat natis me sociare suis:  
 sed mihi dulce magis resolutio uiuere collo  
 nullaque coniugii uincula grata pati.  
 ibam per mediam uenali corpore Romam  
 spectandus cunctis undique uirginibus.  
 quaeque peti poterat, fuerat uel forte petita,  
 erubuit uultum uisa puella meum  
 et modo subridens latebras fugitiua petebat  
 non tamen effugiens tota latere uolens,  
 sed magis ex aliqua cupiebat parte uideri,  
 laetior hoc potius quod male tecta fuit.  
 sic cunctis formosus ego gratusque uidebar  
 omnibus, et sponsus hic generalis eram,  
 sed tantum sponsus; nam me natura pudicum  
 fecerat, et casto pectore durus eram.  
 nam dum praecipue cupio me iungere formae,  
 permansi uiduo frigidus usque toro.

3. Baudri of Bourgueil, *Carmen* 154, 759–77 compared to Fulgentius Mythographus, *Mythologiarum* II.11

A Iove Vulcanus quasi pro mercede Minervam  
 Iam sibi promissam coniugio petiit.  
 Vulcano siquidem, cum fulmen ei fabricasset,  
 Respondit largus taliter astripotens:  
 “Ecce roga quodvis; quicquid tua cura rogabit,  
 pro mercede tibi profluet emerita.”  
 Mox in coniugium deus expetit ille Minervam,  
 Uti coniugio vult deus ille deae.  
 Armis ut propriam tueatur virginitatem  
 Iuppiter indulget sollicitatque deam.  
 Introeunt subito thalamum certaminis ambo  
 Inque deam totus belliger erigitur.  
 Tum colluctantur; Vulcanus fervet et ardet  
 Totus et in vetitum porrigitur coitum.  
 Nam dilatus amor stimulos ardentibus addit,  
 At facibus nullis fervet amor facilis.  
 Ergo pavimentum Vulcanus semine fedat  
 Sicque calor totus protinus egeritur.  
 Fertur Ericthonius ex ipso semine natus,  
 In cista clausum quem dea virgo tenet.

Uulcanus cum Ioui fulmen efficeret, ab  
 Ioue promissum accepit ut quidquid uellet  
 praesumeret. Ille Mineruam in coniugium  
 petiuit; Iuppiter imperavit ut Minerua  
 armis uirginitatem defendisset. Dumque  
 cubiculum introirent, certando Uulcanus  
 semen in pavementum iecit; unde natus  
 est Erictonius.

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