Michael Beheim's Versifications of Popular Piety

Samuel Pakucs Willcocks

We are very sorry that Samuel Pakucs Willcocks passed away far too early.
We dedicate the publication of his contribution to his memory.

1 The Singer and His Sources

Michael Beheim, a prolific versifier of late medieval German vernacular material, served at several important Central European courts in the middle of the fifteenth century. In many cases individual songs or entire cycles can be shown to have been based on source material in the possession of his noble patrons, or of other factions represented at these courts who saw the commissioning of such songs as a means to prestige and influence. This contribution examines two song cycles in particular, the songs against the Jews which Beheim composed during the years he spent in Vienna at the court of the Habsburg Emperor Frederick III and the versification of a pious work, the *Büchlein von der Liebhabung Gottes*, composed in Heidelberg at the behest of the Wittelsbach Elector Frederick the Victorious. A comparison of the songs with their source texts, and careful examination of the additions and alterations, reveals how Beheim shaped his materials. This in turn suggests something about the composition of the audience, who were variously nobility, courtiers and members of the higher citizenry, and about how they received the works, whether by private reading of manuscripts or by listening to sung performances.

Beheim's works run to over four hundred and fifty songs in the standard edition.¹ Most of his manuscripts are also available online in digitised form at the website of the University of Heidelberg.² We possess a recent study of his poetic career in the form of a monograph by Friederike Niemeyer on Beheim's

¹ Gille and Spriewald (1968–1971); song numbers refer to this edition throughout.

² The songs against the Jews form part of Codex Palatinus Germanicus 334 as *the Büchlein von*

adoption of different roles, as singer, preacher, artist and entertainer, in his interplay with an audience or with readers.³ Scholars of late medieval literary culture began to pay particular attention to Beheim once Burghart Wachinger had shown just how extensively he borrowed from prose sources, with at least half the songs based on an extant source and probably half as many again awaiting identification.⁴ The act of adapting prose material into verse is not in itself remarkable in the medieval context, but Beheim stands out for the sheer quantity of attributable models, and because these were so largely drawn from the literature of vernacular piety rather than from romance or epic. This preponderance of religious songs in his output seems to indicate that patrons were keen to hear pious works performed for their household, or to make it known that they owned these works in their library. This can be seen as part of the wider reception of vernacular piety in the German later middle ages, significant among which were the works of the *Wiener Schule*, a group active at the Vienna court of the Archduke Albrecht in the early fifteenth century who wrote to encourage piety among the laity.⁵ Since the laity here included the Archduke and his court, the burghers and nobility of Vienna, and since the authors were high churchmen and members of the Vienna university, their texts came to possess considerable prestige. Some were written versions of sermons delivered at the archducal chapel; others were vernacular translations of works of scholastic theology from the university. By Beheim's time, a generation later, the works of the *Wiener Schule* had achieved wide distribution in the Central European cities and courts where he sang, forming something approaching a canon of popular piety in Austria, Bavaria, the Rhineland and even German-speaking Bohemia, where Catholic orthodoxy sought to recover the influence it had lost in the recent Hussite wars.

Beheim's method in working from his sources is characterised by close attention to the prose text, but his changes were not restricted to the dictates of rhyme and metre. Although he made certain claims in some songs about the accuracy and fidelity of his adaptations, we shall see that he frequently elided his material, amplified upon it or introduced new emphases. These changes can in part be explained by the local circumstances in which he worked, the particular constellation of text, court and patron which lay behind each of the song

den Juden (<http://diglit.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg334/>) while the *Von der Liebhabung Gottes* is found at <http://diglit.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg375/> as a manuscript complete in itself, cpg 375.

3 Niemeyer (2001).

4 Wachinger (1979).

5 Williams-Krapp (2002).

cycles examined here. Although Beheim took proprietary pride in his stanzaic forms, insisting that it was part of the singer's task to invent his own *Töne*, the verse form itself may not have been the main force behind the process of adaptation.

2 Vienna

Beheim was active in Vienna from the mid-1450s until 1463, though there is some doubt as to when he formally entered service at the Emperor Frederick's court and where he should be placed in the Imperial household during these years.⁶ The uncertainty is underlined by his authorship of songs 203 to 234, a cycle of songs on the errors of the Jews, setting out to show that Jesus was the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy and that the Jewish failure to acknowledge him has led to their current exile from the Holy Land. The last song, 'ain straff auff die fursten dy die juden halten,' is directed at princes who favour the Jews in their lands; it advises them to impose various punishments on the Jews and severely restrict the way they live among Christians, how they may trade, whom they may employ and how they practice their religion. This is immediately followed in the manuscripts by two songs, 235 'disen geticht sagt von mancherlai keczere und zaber' and 236 'von geilern und sterczern,' which similarly urge the prince against heretics, magicians, mountebanks and beggars. An association of such undesirables with the Jews described in the previous songs is clearly intended, though the latter two songs are much less exhaustive in their arguments. The songs against the Jews add up to very nearly eight times the length of the material directed against the other miscreants. All of the songs are in Beheim's *Verkehrte Weise*, a heavily rhymed stanza of thirteen lines, and the songs against the Jews total 170 of these stanzas, 2210 lines in total, in songs that run from a sharp and pugnacious three stanzas (songs 210, 218 and 219, on the Second Coming, the New Covenant and the Apostles respectively) up to an exhaustive seventeen stanzas (song 229 'von falschen artikeln, dy der talmut lert'). Frederick Habsburg was often accused of leniency toward the Jews, and it seems unlikely that he would himself have commissioned a poet to adapt such a mass of anti-Jewish material.

The songs against the Jews use two sources.⁷ Songs 203 to 226 are based on a set of letters supposedly written by one rabbi to another, pointing out how wor-

6 Niemeyer (2001) 53–57.

7 Wachinger (1979) 63.

ryingly closely Christ's life and teaching fulfil the various Scriptural prophecies, whereas songs 227 to 234 adapt a much coarser text, which fulminates against the Jewish faith and pokes fun at various inconsistent or exaggerated stories in the Talmud. Thus even before widening the attack to include magicians and mountebanks, the songs bring together two rather disparate texts. The former may be placed in the conversion tradition that seeks to persuade the Jews of the truth of Christianity, whereas the latter is situated very squarely in the invective tradition that rather sets out to make Christian listeners laugh at the perceived absurdities of Judaism. The first text, the so-called Letter of the Rabbi Samuel, required more adaptation to be usable in song form, and thus forms the basis for this enquiry.

The Letter of the Rabbi Samuel is a vernacular version of a Latin tract dated to the mid-fourteenth century—roughly half a century before the *Wiener Schule* and a full century before Beheim's time. The Latin text is attributed to Alphonsus Bonohominis while the German version was composed by a priest in Graz, Irmhart Öser.⁸ The letter purports to be from a rabbi in Fez to his colleague in Tunis, expressing doubts about the truth of the Jewish faith and setting out reasons why the Christian religion may be more justified. The fictitious Rabbi Samuel works steadily through various major doctrines of the Christian faith, including the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Eucharist and the Real Presence, the Great Commission and the events of the Passion, showing how each is grounded in Old Testament prophecy or tropological precedent. The text is thus at least as much a primer of doctrine for faithful Christians as it is an engagement with the possibility of Jewish conversion, and the former aspect comes through much more strongly in Beheim's songs. As with all of Beheim's adaptations of prose works, the word-for-word correspondence over long stretches is sufficiently exact that there can be no doubt that he was working from a copy of the text, but he made more radical changes than this suggests, both adding and cutting material. For instance, he cut out all text passages relating to the fictional letter form. Rabbi Samuel disappears entirely, and invective against the Jews as a group is introduced instead. This level of adaptation was necessary if Beheim was to perform the songs publicly as a Christian singer, rather than assuming the mask of a doubting Jew. The sermons of St Vincent Ferrer in the late fourteenth century, and the decrees of the Council of Basel in the 1430s, were intended to convert the Jews, but the songs which Beheim composed, although based on material squarely in the conversion tradition, became merely vituperative.

8 Marsmann (1971).

It seems very likely that the songs against the Jews were performed aloud, and that Beheim took apart his source in order to create songs that could be performed either singly, or a few at a time, or as a full repertoire of dozens of songs. Manuela Niesner has suggested that the university of Vienna commissioned Beheim to produce the songs and supplied the texts, and that the poet was expected to perform the songs at Frederick III's court in an attempt to persuade the Emperor to revoke privileges which he had granted to the Jews of Vienna.⁹

Beheim begins the whole sequence of two dozen songs based on Öser's text with a stanza of prayer for aid in the task of defending the Christian faith against the Jews.

Starker, allmachtiggleicher got,
durch dein vil heiligen trinitot
deins geistes weishait, hilff und rat
verleich mir, Michel Pehen!

Maria muter, raine mait,
verleich mir wicz und auch weisheit,
das dicz puchlein wert aus perait
czu preis, lob, rum und wirde

Und hoch geplumter czirde
cristenleichs glaubens, horent wie,
wann ich will tichten wider die
argen checzer und juden hie
und ir schalkait vergehen.

Song 203, lines 1–13

It cannot be by chance that this invocation refers to doctrines which Jewish listeners would find immediately offensive, the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Virgin Birth. This signals quite clearly that the pretence of one Jew addressing another has been dropped, even before Beheim names himself in the fourth line, in a prominent end-rhyme that might pose problems for a subsequent poet seeking to appropriate the songs into his own repertoire.

It is curious that although this stanza and the further alterations strongly mark the songs as Christian rather than Jewish utterances, Beheim also addresses a purported Jewish audience at the beginning of every song, in additions that vary from two or three lines to a full strophe and more, so that in

9 Niesner (2004).

the full cycle of songs 203–226 there are twenty-four variations and repetitions of this name-calling. Here are some of the terms he uses to address and characterise the Jews in the first three songs only. The cycle begins as above, calling them ‘argen checzer’ (203, ll. 11–12). The second song begins ‘Sagt, ir verstoppen juden plint / und ir verfluchten teufels chind,’ (204, l. 1–2) and the third promises ‘Ich wil pewern und offenporn / der juden tumhait und ir torn’ (205, l. 1–2). The rest of the cycle rings changes upon these themes. The Jews are malicious, misguided, blind and wilful; they are devils, dogs, fools and sinners. None of these epithets is found in Öser, since he was concerned to preserve the fiction that the ‘Letter’ was a catalogue of doubts written by one learned Jew to another on terms of mutual respect. Niesner’s opinion that Beheim was not conscious of such changes of emphasis seems rather inadequate to explain such consistent and drastic alterations to a source text that was otherwise followed fairly closely. ‘Mit seiner Bearbeitung stellt Beheim die christliche Perspektive der Epistel unter Beweis und entlarvt unabsichtlich ihre vorgebliche innerjüdische Herkunft als Fälschung.’¹⁰ Rather than assuming that these changes were unintentional, we must look for the intention behind them.

The change in tone is particularly marked in the last song of the Rabbi Samuel cycle. In the Latin version of the text, ‘Samuel’ closes his letter to his fellow rabbi ‘Isaac’ with resignation. *Et preterea evenit nobis illud, quod nobis evenit* (‘what will come, will come’); there is a very faint echo of Matthew 27:25, ‘His blood be on our heads, and on the heads of our children’ but nothing explicitly out of keeping with the character of the doubting rabbi.¹¹ Öser’s German expands considerably on this. ‘Davon, herr meiner und maister, ein ygleicher sech zu ym selber und wart, waz ym daz pest sey und wie er hye nach disem langen leyden und venkchnüzz flyeichen well daz ewig leyden.’¹² Here is a strong suggestion that perhaps the best way to escape what otherwise is bound to come is conversion to the Christian faith, exhaustively justified in all the preceding chapters.

In song 226, Beheim explicitly substitutes himself as speaker once more: ‘Davon rat ich euch, Michel Pehn, / das euer iglicher sol sehn / czu im selb, was im mag peschehn’ (226, 161–163). In its original context, where one Jew was supposed to be speaking to another, this was supposed to be read as a warning about one’s spiritual fate and the life to come: Beheim cuts his source heavily, making this into a rather menacing call to action in this life. Niesner holds that this closing appeal is the only occasion in an unrelenting tirade when Beheim

10 Niesner (2004) 406.

11 Marsmann (1971) 430.

12 Marsmann (1971) 431.

actually invites the Jews to convert.¹³ I suggest rather that even here, he knowingly speaks to a self-assured Christian audience eager to hear its superiority over the Jews confirmed.

The same must be true of the prominence given to the Emperor Titus, who destroyed the Temple and scattered the people of Jerusalem. In Öser's chapter II, Titus stands for the suffering and enslavement of Israel, which 'Rabbi Samuel' makes much of: Beheim's corresponding song 203 downplays this considerably, cutting out the Rabbi's laments to present Titus as a conqueror rather than an oppressor. 203 is the first song of the cycle, so that Titus' appearance here sets the tone for future mentions, some of which are new to Beheim's version. The Emperor is named twice towards the end of the cycle in song 224, 'das nu die christen singen und lesen an der juden stat', although this is not to be found in the source, Öser's chapter XXIII. Beheim thus gives Titus greater prominence, and uses him to boost Christian triumphalism rather than to make any strictly theological point about why God allowed the destruction of the Temple. The songs play on a familiarity with legends surrounding Titus' conquest of Jerusalem, legends which gave rise to a widespread dramatic tradition in later medieval Europe, the plays of the Vengeance of our Lord.¹⁴ The implied contrast between Titus' behaviour toward the Jews and Frederick III's leniency, between Titus' role as a Roman Emperor fulfilling God's vengeance and Frederick's actions as a Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor unwilling to prosecute the Jews, would have added considerably to the polemical force of the text.

Going by the textual evidence alone, Beheim changed the Letter of the Rabbi Samuel at least as substantially as he was later to change the *Büchlein von der Liebhabung Gottes*, and as with the later work, the known personalities and political strategies of his patrons suggest extra-textual factors that influenced how the songs were received. In 1420–1421, forty years at the most before Beheim performed the songs, the Jewish population of Vienna had been expelled, imprisoned, or burned alive in their synagogue in a pogrom overseen by Albrecht Habsburg.¹⁵ Thus the contrast between Titus and Frederick may have been reinforced by a further tacit comparison with Albrecht, the pious patron of the *Wiener Schule*. This suggestion goes beyond the textual evidence available from a source comparison and touches upon questions of performance and audience—were the songs sung in court at all, or outside, in the streets of Vienna? Might they have been sung on the Judenplatz, where the synagogue had stood and where a memorial plaque celebrated the pogrom and

13 Niesner (2004) 406–407.

14 Wright (1989).

15 Lohrmann (2000) 155–173.

expulsion? This would have added particular impact to the doctrinal content of songs arguing that the covenant with Israel had been dissolved and superseded by the new covenant with Christ, for the stones of the synagogue themselves had been taken for building by the university. Niesner's argument that the university also supplied Beheim with texts and were his primary patrons in writing against the Jews makes this a compelling scenario, and it is known that Beheim composed at least one other lengthy song for the university according to a model that they supplied, song 96 in the *Osterweise* 'van der hahen schul zu Wien'. There can be no certainty of quite where and how the songs against the Jews were performed, and in particular whether they were consistently performed as a cycle (which in its entirety would have lasted well over an hour) or individually. Single songs performed individually would be yet further removed from the doctrinal context of Öser's source text and would emphasise the self-affirmation of Christian identity. It is clear that the songs adapted from the Letter of the Rabbi Samuel, wherever and however they were performed, shifted the emphasis dramatically from the prose source by introducing prayer, invective and pointed references to Imperial history.

3 Heidelberg

The songs against the Jews may have been an outside commission from those seeking to influence an Emperor not noted for his severity. The songs on the love of God which Beheim later composed in Heidelberg for the Elector Frederick Wittelsbach may similarly appear mismatched to their primary patron, since Frederick the Victorious was much more noted for his warlike deeds than for any especial devotion. Nevertheless a close comparison of songs with their source reveals the relevance of the pious theme for a prince who might not immediately seem receptive to such material.

The source, Thomas Peuntner's *Büchlein von der Liebhabung Gottes*, which directs the Christian reader as to how to feel and show love for God, is based on a series of Latin sermons by the university theologian Nicholas von Dinkelsbühl. Both were authors of the *Wiener Schule*. In characteristically scholastic terms, the work discusses Jesus Christ's commandment to 'love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind' (Matthew 22:37, Luke 10:27) by offering ever more refined definitions of love, each of which is examined for its applicability to God. A major question in the whole work is whether God has any particular need for man to love him. A fairly representative example of the method is the very beginning of the discussion, in Peuntner's second chapter:

Am ersten hab wir etwan lieb, so wir jm wellen vnd wol günen alles gutt,
das er da hat vnd darin ain frewd vnd ein wolgeuallen haben. Jn der weis
hab wir got lieb [...]

Zu dem andern mal hab wir etwen lieb, so wir jm wellen vnd wun-
schen ain solichs gut, das er magelt vnd nicht hat, vnd jm doch das selb
wol gezem vnd gut wer ob er es het. Jn der weis swllen wir nicht got lieb
haben, wenn got mangelt kains gutz [...].¹⁶

The discussion is sustained over a prologue and twenty-two chapters, taking in such subjects as salvation and damnation, predestination, the hypothetical possibility of foreknowledge and how that might affect our love for God, how far God has earned love by the Creation and the Crucifixion, and whether our love for Him is adequately shown in virtue, chastity, good deeds and prayer. The discussion is supported by quotations from the scriptures and the church fathers, mostly from Paul and Augustine.

Beheim's, in original, *Buch von der liebhabung gates* is a cycle of twenty-three songs, numbers 125 through 147, corresponding very closely to the prologue and chapters of Peuntner's text. The versified *Buch* seems to follow its prose model by assuming that it will be read rather than heard, though the manuscript opens with a musical tablature giving the melody in which the *Ton* could be sung. This is a somewhat puzzling feature in a work which elsewhere highlights its written nature and makes conspicuous use of the manuscript format to create a book for consultation and private reading. In the first song, Beheim emphasises how closely he has followed the original; he preserves the original warning to read the book in its entirety rather than dipping into it:

Ich han etwann gseczt ire wort,
etwa alain ir mainung vort
der selben schrifft pewerer.

Aber ich Michel Pehen
peger an alle, dy dis ding
peschawen, dz sy nit gehling
nach czukend übersehen

Song 125, ll. 94–100

The manuscript of the songs is furnished with a table of contents at the back, so that the reader can look up each song (or chapter) by page number, and

16 Schnell (1984) 293.

refresh his memory of the topics with a short prose summary of the argument of that song or chapter. This further indicates that Beheim's *Buch* was designed for individual reading rather than communal listening, although it does rather go against the warning that readers should not pick and choose their material.

In the article which originally pointed out Beheim's use of material from the *Wiener Schule*, Thomas Hohmann argued that Beheim was following his source so closely that any changes were caused by the exigencies of rhyme and metre.¹⁷ Since Hohmann was the first to attribute Beheim's sources and to examine his adaptive technique, his assessment of the *Büchlein von der Liebhabung Gottes* was an important step in establishing a baseline of fidelity from which other song cycles, adapting other material, may depart. It is important to note that the exactly faithful style of the *Liebhabung* was a product of Beheim's last years, among his last datable songs, and that the looser versions of material adapted earlier may be seen as working towards, rather than departing from, this standard of very close fidelity. Yet it is also important to scrutinise Hohmann's evaluation, to look carefully for alterations that go beyond the merely metrical, and where these are found, to look for other explanations of the textual changes. Hohmann was not in a position to make a really thorough comparison with the critical edition of Peuntner's *Büchlein*, still five years away at the time, and although his judgement is largely accurate and certainly fits in with Beheim's own claims about the fidelity of his verse adaptation, there are nevertheless discrepancies in the text, especially where the two works treat the issue of indulgences.

The efficacy of indulgences is discussed in chapter sixteen, where Peuntner presents the entirely orthodox teaching that an indulgence is effective only when its purchase is motivated by love of God and the desire to enter Heaven. A sinner who pays for an indulgence without feeling true remorse, only fearing the punishment of purgatory, might well find himself in hell for eternity because he has presumed upon divine mercy. This happens not because the indulgence was false or invalid, but because of the purchaser's intent. There is a tacit implication that even a false indulgence might be effective if piously purchased. Peuntner also discusses indulgences purchased not for oneself but on behalf of others already dead, and here again argues that they are only effective if the intent is to bring the departed to heaven, rather than to free them from the pains of purgatory (which are after all entirely merited). The final argument in the chapter concerns indulgences granted to crusaders, either those who fight in person or those who pay for a soldier to be outfitted for the wars.

17 Hohmann (1978) 323–324.

Here Beheim's version of the chapter makes two changes, both of which go beyond what is needed for the sake of rhyme and metre. The first of these changes is dictated by changing historical circumstance: where Peuntner had mentioned the possibility that a crusade might be proclaimed 'wider die Hussen wider die keczer',¹⁸ Beheim instead talks of 'türken, haiden und keczer' (song 141, line 263), since the Hussite wars were finished by mid-century, and the growing Turkish threat had become the focus of crusade preaching instead, especially after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Beheim's inclusion of 'haiden' seems rather odd, given that the Baltic crusade against the pagans of Lithuania was also long finished, but this may be a simple synonym for the Turks, included to fill out the metrical line. The second change is less easily explained and is Beheim's largest interpolation into the text of Peuntner's chapter sixteen, and one of the most extensive changes to his source anywhere in the whole cycle. Peuntner concludes that crusade indulgences, like all others, are only valid if earned or purchased for the right reasons. Here are Beheim's verses on this conclusion:

und so ain mensch dan für dy sünt
 in aigner persson wile
 Sich hinrüsten und fügen
 oder aussczihen wider die
 unglabigen ader wil hie
 senden nach sein vermügen,

So sol er das enlichen tun
 dem almehtigen gat czu run,
 czu lab, ern und peschucze
 Oder schirmung dez hailgen glabn.
 Ye mynder er gedenk mag haben
 auff seinen aigen nucze,
 Ye mer im daz ist frute.
 Song 141, ll. 285–297

These lines are mostly identical with the prose original, allowing for the need for rhyme, except for the addition of the phrase '[s]ich hinrüsten und fügen' (line 287). This addition emphasises the possibility of personal participation and fighting in a crusade, over and against the option of paying to equip a

18 Schnell (1984) 329.

soldier in order to receive the indulgence. A straightforward, although rather reductionist, explanation is that Beheim does this because he himself had taken part in the Turkish crusade proclaimed to relieve the siege of Belgrade in 1456. Both Beheim and Peuntner argue that a man could fight for God and the faith without any particular expectation of spiritual reward, and that this might in fact be best for his soul. This leaves open the possibility of fighting in a war that had not been proclaimed a crusade by God and church, and still gaining merit after death.

These then are the two changes in the discussion of indulgences, which because of Beheim's very close adherence to his source text are as drastic as any changes to be found throughout his entire *Buch*. At this point it is useful to provide a brief sketch of the circumstances under which the poet was commissioned to versify the *Büchlein von der Liebhabung Gottes*, as it involves the recent history of the Rhineland Palatinate and the career of Beheim's patron the Elector Frederick.¹⁹ Beheim entered service at the Elector's court at Heidelberg just after the end of the *Mainzer Stiftsfehde*, a war fought to decide who should become Archbishop of Mainz but which escalated into a territorial war between local dynasties, ending much to Frederick Wittelsbach's advantage. Pope Pius II and the Emperor Frederick Habsburg both supported Adolf of Nassau, and the Pope issued a number of bulls deposing his rival Diether of Isenburg and calling on all the clergy and faithful in the diocese to recognise Adolf. These bulls were issued in Rome, printed in Mainz and distributed around the Holy Roman Empire.

These Papal bulls were not bulls of crusade, and no indulgence for the remission of sin was ever proclaimed for fighting in this regrettable local war within Christendom. However, we have already learned that a pious Christian does not necessarily need a formal indulgence or a papally sanctioned crusade to earn merit by fighting for the church. It is worth remarking then that in this Rhineland war, Beheim's patron supported Diether of Isenburg, the candidate whom the Pope had deposed, and the Elector's nominal *casus belli* was the preservation of church liberties, albeit for a bishop who had also promised significant concessions in return for this aid. It might be that when Beheim expanded on his source to praise personal valour in a war of faith, he was flattering his patron at least as much as he was reminiscing about his own participation in the Turkish crusade. The phrase 'sich hinrücken und fügen' is certainly flattering to a patron who prided himself on his military achievements.

19 For an accessible general history in English, see Cohn (1965); for a specialist study of Frederick as literary patron, see Studt (1992).

4 Tactics and Territories

Close attention to two song cycles composed from widely circulating pious texts and performed at court for known patrons has revealed that Beheim altered, cut and expanded upon his sources in ways that go beyond what he claimed and what scholarship has so far recognised. How confidently can we relate such textual alterations to the recent history of those princes and their realms? Michel de Certeau supplies a theoretical framework for such explanations in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, using the terms 'strategy' and 'tactic' to describe the power relations of society and the individual, whether the individual be a worker in a factory, a housewife in her kitchen or a story-teller in a bar. By De Certeau's definition of the terms, a 'strategy' is any large social institution that has the power to impose terms and conditions, whereupon a 'tactic' is the individual, forced to operate within these terms. 'The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organised by the laws of a foreign power.'²⁰

In the case of Michael Beheim, the poet can be seen as operating tactically on a terrain shaped by the patrons whom he served, and by the texts which they asked him to perform for them. Unsuitable material had to be redacted and made more acceptable; anything that hinted at flattery could be seized upon and built up with more or less direct references; the role of the poet himself could be emphasised. De Certeau calls the ability to seize upon such opportunities and turn them to one's own purposes *metis*, an art of sudden reversals depending upon the skilful manipulation of memory and learned procedures. 'It concentrates the most knowledge in the least time'²¹ so that through *metis* the individual can show his mastery of social codes and traditions and at the same time reveal their unexpected implications. *Metis* can thus encompass poetic craft amongst many other skills and proficiencies. Beheim's reputation as a poet was sufficient to bring him employment at the major courts of his day; it has been suggested that after he left service in Vienna, the Elector offered him a post at the court in Heidelberg precisely because he had previously served the Emperor, in order to poach some of this prestige as part of the continuing rivalry between the two Fredericks.

²⁰ De Certeau (1984) 37.

²¹ De Certeau (1984) 83.

5 Conclusion

Wachinger and Hohmann, in the original articles which revealed the extent of Beheim's dependence on source texts, advanced the opinion that the poet's reliance on his prose originals was such that in many instances he altered only what his rhyme and metre required. This judgement on his adaptive technique certainly accords with what Beheim himself claimed, for instance in his prefatory remarks to his version of the *Büchlein von der Liebhabung Gottes*. Closer consideration of the changes in the texts reveal, however, that crucial aspects of the prose model are extensively rewritten in the process of remaking it into verse. This is most evident in instances such as the songs against the Jews, where the entire context of performance and reception is heavily re-written once the fictive framework of a Jewish author and reader is abandoned, and the Christian singer steps forward instead, singing to and for a self-assertively Christian audience in an urban context marked by recent violence against the Jews. My reading of these songs in relation to their source thus goes beyond the reading suggested by Manuela Niesner.

Even where the alterations to a text truly are minimal and almost entirely metrical, a single phrase of five or six words can offer occasion for a new consideration of the song text. In the *Liebhabung Gottes*, a small shift of emphasis in the question of who may fight for the faith, in what spirit and with what expectation of reward, opens up further questions about the nature of piety and obedience when the Church is at war with itself. In this way, a text marked by an abstract and scholastic concern with 'the love of God' can be rewritten for a prince whose conflicts with pope and emperor are presented as pious inwardness.

Bibliography

- De Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley.
- Cohn, H.J. 1965. *The Government of the Rhine Palatinate in the Fifteenth Century*. Oxford.
- Gille, H., and I. Spriewald (ed.) 1968–1971. *Die Gedichte des Michael Beheim*. 3 vol. Berlin (Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 60, 64 and 65).
- Hohmann, T. 1978. Deutsche Texte aus der 'Wiener Schule' als Quelle für Michel Beheims religiöse Gedichte. *ZfdA* 107: 319–330.
- Lohrmann, K. 2000. *Die Wiener Juden im Mittelalter*. Berlin.
- Marsmann, M. (ed.) 1971. *Irmhart Öser: Die Epistel des Rabbi Samuel an Rabbi Isaak*. Siegen.

- Niemeyer, F. 2001. *Ich, Michel Pehn. Zum Kunst- und Rollenverständnis des meisterlichen Berufsdichters Michael Beheim*. Frankfurt.
- Niesner, M. 2004. Die Contra-Judaeos-Lieder des Michael Beheim: Zur Rezeption Irmhart Ösers und des österreichischen Bibelübersetzers im 15. Jahrhundert. *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutscher Sprache und Literatur* 126: 398–424.
- Schnell, B. 1984. *Thomas Peuntner, Büchlein von der Liebhabung Gottes*. München (MTU 81).
- Studt, B. 1992. *Fürstenhof und Geschichte: Legitimation durch Überlieferung*. Köln (Norm und Struktur. Studien zum sozialen Wandel in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit 2).
- Wachinger, B. 1979. Michel Beheim: Prosabuchquellen—Liedvortrag—Buchüberlieferung. In *Poesie und Gebrauchsliteratur im deutschen Mittelalter*, ed. Volker Hone-mann e.a. Tübingen (Würzburger Colloquium 1978): 37–75.
- Williams-Krapp, W. 2002. The Erosion of a Monopoly: German Religious Literature in the Fifteenth Century. In *The Vernacular Spirit. Essays on Medieval and Religious Literature*, ed. R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, D. Robertson, and N. Bradley Warren. New York: 239–259.
- Wright, S.K. 1989. *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem*. Toronto.