Friderun's Mirror and the Critics' Discontent: A Neidhart Problem Revisited

BY

Carla Bullinger

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of German and Slavic Studies
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

(c) February, 1996

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-13002-9

Canada

Name_____

Dissertation Abstracts International and *Masters Abstracts International* are arranged by broad, general subject categories. Please select the one subject which most nearly describes the content of your dissertation or thesis. Enter the corresponding four-digit code in the spaces provided.

Medieval German

SUBJECT TERM

0297

SUBJECT CODE

UMI

Subject Categories

THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS
Architecture 0729
Art History 0377
Cinema 0900
Dance 0378
Fine Arts 0357
Information Science 0723
Journalism 0391
Library Science 0399
Mass Communications 0708
Music 0413
Speech Communication 0459
Theater 0465

EDUCATION
General 0515
Administration 0514
Adult and Continuing 0516
Agricultural 0517
Art 0273
Bilingual and Multicultural 0282
Business 0688
Community College 0275
Curriculum and Instruction 0727
Early Childhood 0518
Elementary 0524
Finance 0277
Guidance and Counseling 0519
Health 0680
Higher 0745
History of 0520
Home Economics 0278
Industrial 0521
Language and Literature 0279
Mathematics 0280
Music 0522
Philosophy of 0998
Physical 0523
Psychology 0525
Reading 0535
Religious 0527
Sciences 0714
Secondary 0533
Social Sciences 0534
Sociology of 0340
Special 0529
Teacher Training 0530
Technology 0710
Tests and Measurements 0288
Vocational 0747

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND LINGUISTICS
Language
- General 0679
- Ancient 0289
- Linguistics 0290
- Modern 0291

Literature
- General 0401
- Classical 0294
- Comparative 0295
- Medieval 0297
- Modern 0298
- African 0316
- American 0591
- Asian 0305
- Canadian (English) 0352
- Canadian (French) 0355
- English 0593
- Germanic 0311
- Latin American 0312
- Middle Eastern 0315
- Romance 0313
- Slavic and East European 0314

PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND THEOLOGY
Philosophy 0422
Religion
- General 0318
- Biblical Studies 0321
- Clergy 0319
- History of 0320
- Philosophy of 0322

Theology 0469

SOCIAL SCIENCES
American Studies 0323
Anthropology
- Archaeology 0324
- Cultural 0326
- Physical 0327

Business Administration
- General 0310
- Accounting 0272
- Banking 0770
- Management 0454
- Marketing 0338

Canadian Studies 0385
Economics
- General 0501
- Agricultural 0503
- Commerce-Business 0505
- Finance 0508
- History 0509
- Labor 0510
- Theory 0511

Folklore 0358
Geography 0366
Gerontology 0351
History
- General 0578
- Ancient 0579
- Medieval 0581
- Modern 0582
- Black 0328
- African 0331
- Asia, Australia and Oceania 0332
- Canadian 0334
- European 0335
- Latin American 0336
- Middle Eastern 0333
- United States 0337

History of Science 0585
Law 0398
Political Science
- General 0615
- International Law and Relations 0616
- Public Administration 0617

Recreation 0814
Social Work 0452
Sociology
- General 0626
- Criminology and Penology ... 0627
- Demography 0938
- Ethnic and Racial Studies 0631
- Individual and Family Studies 0628
- Industrial and Labor Relations 0629
- Public and Social Welfare 0630
- Social Structure and Development 0700
- Theory and Methods 0344

Transportation 0709
Urban and Regional Planning 0999
Women's Studies 0453

THE SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
Agriculture
- General 0473
- Agronomy 0285
- Animal Culture and Nutrition 0475
- Animal Pathology 0476
- Food Science and Technology 0359
- Forestry and Wildlife 0478
- Plant Culture 0479
- Plant Pathology 0480
- Plant Physiology 0817
- Range Management 0777
- Wood Technology 0746

Biology
- General 0306
- Anatomy 0287
- Biostatistics 0308
- Botany 0309
- Cell 0379
- Ecology 0329
- Entomology 0353
- Genetics 0369
- Limnology 0793
- Microbiology 0410
- Molecular 0307
- Neuroscience 0317
- Oceanography 0416
- Physiology 0433
- Radiation 0821
- Veterinary Science 0778
- Zoology 0472

Biophysics
- General 0786
- Medical 0760

EARTH SCIENCES
Biogeochemistry 0425
Geochemistry 0996
Geodesy 0370
Geology 0372
Geophysics 0373
Hydrology 0388
Mineralogy 0411
Paleobotany 0345
Paleoecology 0426
Paleontology 0418
Paleozoology 0985
Palynology 0427
Physical Geography 0368
Physical Oceanography 0415

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
Environmental Sciences 0768
Health Sciences
- General 0566
- Audiology 0300
- Chemotherapy 0992
- Dentistry 0567
- Education 0350
- Hospital Management 0769
- Human Development 0758
- Immunology 0982
- Medicine and Surgery 0564
- Mental Health 0347
- Nursing 0569
- Nutrition 0570
- Obstetrics and Gynecology .. 0380
- Occupational Health and Therapy 0354
- Ophthalmology 0381
- Pathology 0571
- Pharmacology 0419
- Pharmacy 0572
- Physical Therapy 0382
- Public Health 0573
- Radiology 0574
- Recreation 0575
- Speech Pathology 0460
- Toxicology 0383

Home Economics 0386

PHYSICAL SCIENCES
Pure Sciences
Chemistry
- General 0485
- Agricultural 0749
- Analytical 0486
- Biochemistry 0487
- Inorganic 0488
- Nuclear 0738
- Organic 0490
- Pharmaceutical 0491
- Physical 0494
- Polymer 0495
- Radiation 0754

Mathematics 0405
Physics
- General 0605
- Acoustics 0986
- Astronomy and Astrophysics 0606
- Atmospheric Science 0608
- Atomic 0748
- Electronics and Electricity 0607
- Elementary Particles and High Energy 0798
- Fluid and Plasma 0759
- Molecular 0609
- Nuclear 0610
- Optics 0752
- Radiation 0756
- Solid State 0611

Statistics 0463

Applied Sciences
Applied Mechanics 0346
Computer Science 0984
Engineering
- General 0537
- Aerospace 0538
- Agricultural 0539
- Automotive 0540
- Biomedical 0541
- Chemical 0542
- Civil 0543
- Electronics and Electrical 0544
- Heat and Thermodynamics ... 0348
- Hydraulic 0545
- Industrial 0546
- Marine 0547
- Materials Science 0794
- Mechanical 0548
- Metallurgy 0743
- Mining 0551
- Nuclear 0552
- Packaging 0549
- Petroleum 0765
- Sanitary and Municipal 0554
- System Science 0790

Geotechnology 0428
Operations Research 0796
Plastics Technology 0795
Textile Technology 0994

PSYCHOLOGY
General 0621
Behavioral 0384
Clinical 0622
Developmental 0620
Experimental 0623
Industrial 0624
Personality 0625
Physiological 0989
Psychobiology 0349
Psychometrics 0632
Social 0451

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
*****
COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

FRIDERUN'S MIRROR AND THE CRITICS' DISCONTENT: A NEIDHART PROBLEM REVISITED

BY

CARLA BULLINGER

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

(c) 1996

Permission has been granted to the Library of The University of Manitoba to lend or sell copies of this thesis/practicum, to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and to University Microfilms Inc. to publish an abstract of this thesis/practicum.

This reproduction or copy of this thesis has been made available by authority of the copyright owner solely for the purpose of private study and research, and may only be reproduced and copied as permitted by copyright laws or with express written authorization from the copyright owner.

ABSTRACT

Neidhart was a popular medieval poet who created songs parodying *Minnesang*, medieval courtly lyric. He had a host of imitators whose creations are an integral part of the Neidhart manuscripts.

The mirror, an important symbol in traditional *Minnesang*, is one of the main elements of continuity in this Neidhart tradition, and it has fascinated critics for over a century. In one song, a mirror is stolen from Friderun, a village girl, by a peasant boy. The singer develops this scene and the mirror into a leitmotif in his other songs.

This study investigates Friderun's mirror, and the theft of the mirror (ie. the *Spiegelraub*), in the work of Neidhart and his imitators, the "Neidhartianer". Why did Neidhart choose the mirror for a leitmotif? How did he want the mirror imagery to work? This thesis attempts to provide an overview of this complex symbol within the Neidhart tradition and to make sense of the vast body of literature surrounding the *Spiegelraub*.

The process begins with a discussion of the song in which the *Spiegelraub* occurs. In addition, other Neidhart songs in which objects are stolen from peasant girls are investigated, as are songs which refer to either a mirror or the *Spiegelraub*. The process also includes a chapter

devoted to the critics' response to the *Spiegelraub*. Their understanding of the mirror and the Spiegelraub is as varied as the mirror's multivalency in medieval literature.

The thesis concludes with the idea that Neidhart stole the mirror and its reflection of traditional *Minnesang*, and thus he is able to create a new reflection for his songs. This new reflection still includes all the associations of *Minnesang* and courtly society. In stealing the mirror, Neidhart and the "Neidhartianer" were able to change and mould this complex symbol, and make it their own.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor R.J. Glendinning, and my thesis support group, Frank Wijma, Barbara Cameron, and Ian Cameron

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

There are many puzzles surrounding the work and figure of Neidhart von Reuental. This is witnessed in the research over the past century and in the many articles which continue to appear every year. Who was Neidhart von Reuental? Very little is actually known about the historical Neidhart. What little information there is has been gleaned through his work and that of his contemporaries.

Wolfram von Eschenbach was a poet in Thuringia around the year 1220. In one of his poems, he makes reference to a *her Nithart* and alludes to images which are found in Neidhart's winter songs. (A description of the winter and summer songs will be provided in Chapter 1.) These songs are believed to have been composed in Bavaria, since the place names which in occur in them are located in the Bavarian region. From this one can infer that a poet, referred to as Neidhart, did exist and that he had achieved some success and popularity with at least his winter songs. Since Thuringia lies north of Bavaria, and time would have been required for the songs to move north and become familiar to the Thuringian audience, it becomes evident that the winter songs must have been composed well before 1220.

One can only guess the year Neidhart was born, but it was likely in the late 12th century.[1] It is also fairly safe to conclude that he may have spent some time in Austria because some of his songs contain place names of localities in Austria. In addition to the localities he names, he also makes reference to the Austrian Duke Frederick II, who appears to have been a patron of Neidhart.

It is difficult to determine whether the poet who started the Neidhart tradition--he had many imitators--was indeed named Neidhart. Nevertheless, this name has been accepted by general concensus for a poet who did really exist. The authenticity of his surname, von Reuental, is also questionable. The name von Reuental (Vale of Grief) was first introduced by Moritz Haupt. Not only is this place name used in the songs over 20 times, but it is also the name of geographical localities in southern Germany. However, there is no evidence to support the conclusion that the poet was born in a place called Reuental. Upon closer examination of these songs, it appears that the poet plays with the word Reuental much the way he plays with symbols and metaphors.

It appears, then, that Neidhart employed von Riuwental as the name of the poor village knight, the literary persona who speaks in the songs, whose home has become

---

[1] Eckehard Simon, *Neidhart von Reuental*, Twayne's World Author Series, no. 364 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975) 15-16.

> a "Vale of Grief" because of the hostil actvities of Engelmar and his fellow peasants. By introducing "his" name, Neidhart also seems to make fun of a rule of traditional minnesong to the effect that the poet should refrain from naming himself in his songs. At the same time, the name assumes the significance of a "commercial" appeal: since the poet lives in the pauper's lot in Riuwental, he seems to be appealing to the generosity of his public.(Simon, 20)

Although attempts had been made in the 19th century to reconstruct the life of Neidhart using the information found in his summer and winter songs, critics are now in agreement that the songs cannot be considered autobiographical. Also, one cannot assume that the poet was born into courtly society just because he refers to himself as a knight, or squire, in his songs. Simon believes that Neidhart "was a professional poet of indifferent social status who made his living by entertaining audiences with his songs"(17).

All other aspects of this enigmatic life are equally sketchy. One can only guess that the death of this popular poet occurred some time in the 1230s since references in his songs to historical events come to an end at this time (Simon, 33).

Biographically, little may be known about the poet Neidhart and his imitators; however, this has not hindered the transmission of their songs. A total of 24 complete,

partial, or fragmentary manuscripts have been transmitted to us and they range in date from the late 13th century to the middle of the 15th century.[2] The production of the manuscripts appears to have occurred in two groupings. The first took place from 1280-1350, and the second production from 1410-1480. The early manuscripts are all vellum whereas the manuscripts from 1410-1480 are paper. One thing most of the manuscripts have in common is that the winter songs always outnumber the summer songs. It appears that Neidhart, as well as his imitators, preferred to write about the rowdy peasants found in the winter songs. The manuscripts provide us with other interesting observations regarding the popularity, reception, and the scribes' perceptions of Neidhart. An overview of the manuscripts will follow. For more detailed information about the manuscripts, see Appendix A, which contains a list of all the manuscripts, where they originated, and where they now are located.

In the older manuscripts, Neidhart's songs can be found with the songs of other courtly poets. In other manuscripts he is not considered of such a high station. In MSS.B and C, which originated around 1300-1330, the scribes assessed the social standing of the poets and ordered their songs accordingly. Thus poets of a higher social class appear at

---

[2] Edmund Wiessner, ed., *Die Lieder Neidharts*, 4th ed., revised by Hanns Fischer and Paul Sappler (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1984), IX-XV.

the beginning of the manuscript, and poets of a lower social station appear towards the end. In both of these manuscripts, the compilers chose to place Neidhart near the end (Simon,117).

Four of the earlier manuscripts originated in different regions, and therefore are written in various dialects: Middle Franconian, Middle German, and Rhinish Franconian. This demonstrates how popular the songs had become.

The Riedigg Codex R, MS.R, is a manuscript which contains only Neidhart songs. It was compiled in Lower Austria around 1300. MS.R will be used in this investigation because of its history as being the most authoritative collection, and also because most critics have used this manuscript in their investigations. However authoritative this collection may be, there continues to be dissent among critics regarding which songs are authentic and which spurious. Simon states that MS.R contains 383 stanzas with only one Pseudo-Neidhart (Simon, 118), whereas Wiessner notes that the manuscript contains 365 stanzas, two of which are duplicates, and 18 spurious stanzas (Wiessner, XIV).

MS.R also contains stanzas which were written in the margins of the manuscript by at least a couple of different scribes. This seems to indicate, Simon believes, "that these songs were circulating at that time with varying numbers of stanzas or, more likely, that other scribes had

access to sources containing fuller version"(118). This could add to the confusion of determining which stanzas are authentic and which stanzas are spurious.

It was mentioned above that Neidhart had a host of imitators. Most of the spurious songs and verses appear in the manuscripts of the 15th century. This appears to be a natural evolution because the songs were not only transmitted on vellum or paper, but were also transmitted orally through recitation. In oral tranmissions variations will always occur. Of course, some of the changes introduced were intentional as imitators added verses to, or created new versions of songs. In addition, some composed their own songs based on the original themes, and these songs found their way into the manuscripts. Simon observes: "All this led by the fifteenth century to such differences between *Neidharte* in the various manuscripts that the reconstruction of a single 'original' version is often no longer possible"(21).

The largest Neidhart collection known to us is MS.c which was written between 1461 and 1466 in Nurenberg by a single scribe. This collection has 1,068 stanzas (127 songs) with 395 authentic stanzas and 703 spurious ones. It appears that the scribe attempted to compile all of the songs of the Neidhart and the "Neidhartianer".

The last manuscript which will be mentioned here is MS.z, which was compiled around 1566 and contains the

stories of Neidhart Fuchs. This collection contains only 12 authentic stanzas; the other 341 are spurious. Three stanzas belong to Oswald von Wolkenstein, a Tyrolean poet who lived from 1377 to 1445. The songs in the Neidhart Fuchs collection are much coarser than those composed by Neidhart and the "Neidhartianer". "The editor has a pronounced tendency to make individual verses sound coarser, to increase the satirical effects, and wherever possible, to come up with more exaggerated statements"(Simon,131).

With the widespread transmission of the 24 Neidhart manuscripts and the many songs which comprise them, is it possible to distinguish between the songs which are authentic and those that are spurious? Moritz Haupt was one of the earliest scholars to undertake this task, one which was continued in the landmark revision of Haupt's text by Edmund Wiessner in 1923. The result was a major publication of Neidhart's songs and the methods and criteria used to judge which songs were authentic and which spurious.[3] This work, more notably in its more recent revised editions, has been the basis for research and instruction up to the present day. Of the 24 Neidhart manuscripts, Haupt believed that manuscript R was the most authentic.

Several years later, Wiessner produced a new edition of the Neidhart material, based once again on the text of Haupt

---

[3] Moritz Haupt, *Neidharts Lieder*, 2nd ed. rev. by Edmund Wiessner (Leipzig: 1923).

and on his own earlier revisions of that text (see note 2). He maintained that this new edition was not to replace the Haupt-Wiessner edition but rather enhance it.

More recently Ingrid Bennewitz-Behr has undertaken a study which criticizes the Haupt-Wiessner edition:

> Die Kritik richtet sich hier sowohl gegen die Darbietungsform des "kritischen" Textes an sich--diese Überlegungen stehen damit zweifelsohne in engem Zusammenhang mit den editionstheoretischen Diskussionen der beiden letzten Jahrzehnte--als auch gegen die Auswahlkriterien, mit deren Hilfe Haupt "echtes" von "unechtem" Überlieferungsmaterial glaubte unterscheiden zu können.[4]

In spite of these criticisms, manuscript R in the fourth edition of Wiessner's *Die Lieder Neidharts* will be used as the basis of this investigation, the purpose of which is not to investigate the artistic uniqueness of a particular poet named Neidhart, who is after all an almost unknown entity given the state of the evidence.[5] Rather,

---

[4] Ingrid Bennewitz-Behr, *Original und Rezeption. Funktions- und überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien zur Neidhart-Sammlung R*, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, ed. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher und Cornelius Sommer, no. 437 (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1987) 2.

[5] In fact, Neidhart becomes a fictitious character who conquers peasants in later literature as demonstrated in Wittenwiler's *Der Ring*, and the peasants come to be portrayed as fools in the *Fastnachtspiele* of later centuries. See Hedda Ragotzky, "Der Bauer in der Narrenrolle. Zur Funktion 'verkehrten Welt' im frühen Nürnberger Fastnachtspiel", in *Typus und Individualität im Mittelalter*, ed. Horst Wenzel

this thesis will focus on the artistic integrity of a unified tradition; a tradition started by the real poet, who is known as Neidhart, and by the continuators who built on his foundation. Generally, the name Neidhart will be used in this presentation but with the understanding that the complete Neidhart tradition is being referred to.

One of the main elements of continuity in this tradition is the mirror, and this thesis will investigate the occurrence of the mirror in the oeuvre of Neidhart and the "Neidhartianer", observing how it is woven into the songs as a leitmotif, how the imagery was meant to be understood, and what the response of critics has been.

In order to understand the context in which the mirror occurs, an overview of the songs in manuscript R will be provided. The songs have been divided into two categories: the summer songs and the winter songs. Chapter 1 will begin with a brief description and summary of these songs, and it will also investigate common elements they share with *Minnesang*, since Neidhart used *Minnesang* as his point of departure.

Chapter 2 will provide a detailed investigation of the song in which the mirror first appears. In this song, a peasant boy snatches a mirror away from a peasant girl and

---

(München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1983) vol 4, Forschungen zur Geschichte der älteren deutschen Literatur, ed. Joachim Bumke, Thomas Cramer, Klaus Grubmüller, Gert Kaiser, Horst Wenzel, 77-101.

hence the theme and content of this song are commonly referred to as the *Spiegelraub* (ie., theft of the mirror). There are scenes in other songs in which an object is stolen from a village girl, and this chapter also will include a discussion of these scenes, for it appears that the act of stealing is as significant as the object which is taken from the girl.

As mentioned earlier, the mirror is woven into the other songs as a leitmotif, and these occurrences will be investigated in Chapter 3. A mirror, or the act committed in the *Spiegelraub*, is referred to 17 times in manuscript R. These first three chapters will reveal how enigmatic the use of mirror imagery is, and why it has become one of the great Neidhart puzzles.

One of the reasons the mirror is such a complex issue is due to its multivalency. The puzzle, or mystery, of the mirror and its spiritual connotations dates back to early Christianity when Paul writes in Corinthians I: 13,12: "Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face" (NEB). In his article "Das Rätsel des Spiegels", Reinhold Seeberg begins his discussion of this biblical passage with the following statement: "Diese Stelle bereitet den Auslegern Schwierigkeit."[6] His response could have been written for a study of the mirror

---

[6] Reinhold Seeber, "Das Rätsel des Spiegels", *Die Reformation*, 10 (1911): 137

in the work of Neidhart, and it is a sentiment echoed by many critics. Again Seeberg: "Die Frage ist immer wieder: was soll das Bild vom Spiegel? Denn am Spiegel liegt das Rätselhafte"(138).

Critics agree that the mirror is the central metaphor of this particular literary period, but there are not many systematic investigations which deal solely with this metaphor.[7] However, there are several studies which provide a general description of, and introduction to, the use of the mirror in courtly and later literature. One such work is by August Langen:

> Die Verwendung des Spiegelsymbols im deutschen Schrifttum bis zum 18. Jahrhundert ist im wesentlichen durch die Mystik bestimmt. Die Seele als "stiller" und ungetrübter Spiegel, der bei rein leidendem Verhalten das Bild Gottes in der unio mystica in sich aufnimmt und zurückstrahlt--das ist die in orientalischer und spätantiker Mystik vorgeformte, im Grundsätzlichen fast überall gleiche Symbolsetzung. Gott und Menschenseele, Schöpfer und Geschöpf stehen wie zwei aufgestellte Spiegel einander gegenüber, deren Kraftströme hin und wieder fließen.
>
> Diese Sinngebung--die bei weitem wichtigste--erbt sich vom späten Mittelalter bis zu den mystischen

---

[7] Margot Schmidt, "Identität und Distanz. Der Spiegel als Chiffre in der höfischen Dichtung des Mittelalters," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, n.s. 19 (1978): 233-255.

> Strömungen der Barockzeit und des 18. Jahrhunderts ... fort.[8]

This appears to be a relatively straightforward explanation that could provide a good starting point for an investigation that will focus on the use of the mirror metaphor within a literary tradtion. What this description of the mirror as symbol neglects to address is the multivalency and the layers of meaning of the metaphor which can occur within the parameters of this seemingly straight forward explanation.

Fortunately, there are some systematic studies conducted into the use of the mirror as metaphor. Herbert Grabes devotes a book to mirror imagery in medieval English literature, and he notes:

> The employment of the mirror in metaphorical contexts is so frequent and deliberate a strategy in the English literature of the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries that the mirror can be said to constitute the central image for a particular world view;..."[9]

---

[8] August Langen, "Zur Geschichte des Spiegelsymbols in der deutschen Dichtung," In *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 28 (1940): 269-280.

[9] Herbert Grabes, *The Mutable Glass. Mirror Imagery in the Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*, trans. Gordon Collier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 4.
This book also includes an extensive bibliography of articles and books that concern themselves with the mirror as symbol, structure, and metaphor.

Although his investigation is limited to medieval English literature, his mirror findings can be transferred, to a certain extent, to *Minnesang*: "It is well known, too, that mirror metaphors also occur within texts of which the most important categories are theological writings and love-poetry (particularly mediaeval courtly lyric)"(Grabes, 3). The world view of which Grabes speaks is related to the one expressed by Langen, but Grabes provides dozens of practical examples of how mirror imagery is presented in the texts of the Middle Ages and English renaissance, and it is through this presentation that the multivalency of the metaphor becomes painfully evident.

In spite of this valuable resource--it does, after all, focus solely on English literature--it is still necessary to study the mirror imagery of an author within the context of his own work and within the tradition in which he is writing in order to understand the depth of its meaning. Symbols and metaphors are not static but rather are changed, shaped, and molded by the individuals who use them. For this reason it is impossible to create an exhaustive study of this, or any metaphor:

> Dennoch liegt noch keine systematische Betrachtung dieser literarisch bevorzugten Metapher vor, begreiflicherweise, da sich erst nach der Sichtung des schier uferlosen und mannigfaltig verflochtenen Materials nur aus sorgfältigen Einzelbetrachtungen die

> Geschichtes eines Bildes verfolgen läßt; insbesondere lassen sich erst von ihnen her begründete Urteile darüber gewinnen, in welchem Maße literarische Konvention oder Originalität bei der Gestaltung eines Bildwortes beteiligt sind. Dabei ist ferner zu beachten, daß neben der Macht der Tradition die Tatsache des Urmotivs steht, das heißt, daß Bilder existieren, die stets neu erfindbar und erfüllbar sind, da sie allen Menschen gehören. Hierzu gehört auch der Spiegel.(Schmidt, 233-234)

Chapter 4, The Critics' Response, will include a short description and evaluation of the research into the mirror imagery within the Neidhart tradition by a variety of critics, and the dissent among them as to how the mirror is meant to be understood will become evident. The chapter also will include this researcher's conclusion as to how Neidhart and the "Neidhartianer" wanted the mirror symbolism to work.

The mirror is not only a significant element in terms of content, but also structure. Chapter 5 explores the mirror as a structural feature of the songs and how structure and content enhance each other and give deeper meaning to the mirror imagery presented in the work.

The goal of this thesis is to provide an overview of some of the research already completed on this fascinating and complex motif, and to present further reflections on a

subject which has already received its fair share of attention over the century. It will become clear, however, that the riddle of the mirror will continue to hold a fascination over readers and critics alike.

CHAPTER 1
THE SONGS

The following chapter provides a description and overview of Neidhart's oeuvre. The songs have commonly been divided into two categories, the summer songs (*Sommerlieder* [*SL*]) and the winter songs (*Winterlieder* [*WL*]), and many also contain counterstanzas (*Trutzstrophen*) and spurious verses.[1] Any description of Neidhart's songs would also have to include one of traditional *Minnesang* since Neidhart used it as a point of departure for both his winter and his summer songs:

> Voraussetzung für das Sommerlied und Winterlied Neidharts ist der ‚klassische' Minnesang, und dies nicht nur im genetischen Sinne, sondern hinsichtlich ihrer Aufnahmebedingung. Letzteres heißt, daß die spezifische Intention der beiden Liedtypen nur erkennbar war, wenn der Hörer das Minnesangschema daneben zu halten vermochte.[2]

---

[1] The terms summer songs and winter songs were coined by Rochus von Liliencron in "Über Neidharts höfische Dorfpoesie", *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 6 (1848): 79; see Eckehard Simon, *Neidhart von Reuental* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975) 86.

[2] Kurt Ruh, "Neidharts Lieder. Eine Beschreibung des Typus", in *Studien zur deutschen Literatur und Sprache des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Hugo Moser zum 65. Geburtstag*, (continued...)

Walter Blank provides a succinct description of *Minnesang* in his article "Junge Minne zu 'Alten Frauen'?"

> Der sängerische Minnedienst steht im Hohen Minnesang in einem unauflösbaren Spannungsverhältnis von *dienest* und *lon*. Beständige Dienstleistung des Sängers kontrastiert nach dessen Auskunft hart mit der Nichteinlösung des versprochenen Lohnes durch die Dame. Unverbrüchliche Treuebindung und deren stets erneute Zusicherung durch den Minnediener gehören genau so zum Typus dieser Lieder wie dessen ständige Klage, daß die Dame ihn nicht erhört.... Als nicht erlaubt gilt in diesem Regelsystem eine wie immer geartete körperliche Erfüllung der Liebe, da man durch sie die entscheidende geistige und gesellschaftliche Komponente dieses Minne-Spiels gefährdet sieht.[3]

In his book *Neidhart von Reuental*, Eckehard Simon provides a useful description of the themes and general subject matter of Neidhart's songs. In his article *Neidharts Lieder: Eine Beschreibung des Typus*, Kurt Ruh also summarizes the themes and roles in Neidhart's summer and winter songs; however Ruh focuses more attention on the similarities and differences Neidhart's songs have with

---

[2](...continued)
eds. Besch, Jungbluth, Meissburger, Nellman (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1974) 152.

[3] Walter Blank, "Junge Minne zu 'Alten Frauen'? Ein Problem des späten Minnesangs," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, n.s. 29 (1988): 23.

Minnesang than Simon.[4] I will therefore rely on both of these sources for this discussion, which will begin with an overview of the summer songs, then the winter songs, the counterstanzas, and finally the spurious verses.

There are few similarities between the summer and the winter songs. The summer songs are thus called because they begin with a depiction of a spring setting (*Natureingang*). A *Natureingang* is also a characteristic of *Minnesang*. The scenes and themes of the summer song can, according to Simon, be divided into five groups.

The first group encompasses 10 songs which share the theme of peasant girl and mother bickering (Simon 41-44). A girl wants to go to the village dance with the hope of being with the singing knight, but her mother tries to dissuade her. The peasant girls are attracted to the knight because he flatters them, bestows gifts upon them, and because he is a knight and could offer them a different future. However, the mothers do not share the same sentiments and they employ verbal and physical threats to hinder, unsuccessfully, the daughters from attending the village dances.

---

[4] Because Ruh focuses on the relationship between Neidhart's songs and *Minnesang*, he must concede "Sonderfälle" (exceptions) which he is unable to use in his discussion. "[Die Sonderfälle] weisen zwar Konstanten des Typus auf, so durchwegs den Natureingang, stehen indes durch andersartige Thematik und Funtion deutlich außerhalb des Systems"(153). His exceptions include: two crusade songs, Neidhart's three later songs, *SL* 27-29, and the *Spiegelraub* song.

In these songs one can detect strong similarities to the *Minnesang* model. In *Minnesang* an unnamed lady of higher status is praised and exalted by a knight who is usually of lower rank. He promises undying devotion and service in her name. Society plays the role of *Huote* (the guard) to ensure the lady's reputation remains unsullied, that is, the relationship remains on a spiritual level and is never sexually consummated. In this first category of summer songs, there is a role reversal. The knight, of higher status, is the object of love and praise. The peasant girls assume the role of the lower ranked knight in classical minnesang, and the mother acts as the watchdog.[5]

The second group of summer songs is similar to the first, and it comprises four songs. Here the mother/daughter roles of group one are reversed: the amorous mother wants to be with the knight while the daughter attempts to frustrate her mother's efforts (Simon, 44).

The six songs in group three feature dialogues between two peasant girls. They talk about love, the village dances, and, of course, the knight von Reuental. Jealousies regarding the knight arise and the result is a discussion which changes to an altercation (Simon, 44-45).

Only two songs are contained in group four. In these songs, a peasant girl performs a monologue in which she

---

[5] Ruh notes that the peasant status of the pursuing lady makes it possible for love to be expressed on a sensual rather than a spiritual level(157).

discusses the problems of *Huote* (being guarded), also a familiar presence in conventional *Minnesang* as noted above. The girl expresses her desire to be rescued from the ever watchful eyes of *Huote* (Simon, 46).

The last group is a miscellaneous category, and seven songs can be found in it (Simon, 46-50). The only thing these songs share is the singer von Reuental speaking in the first person singular. The significant topics in this group include the *Spiegelraub*, which Neidhart "will eventually raise ... to the level of a discordant leitmotif in the Winter Songs", two crusade songs, and a song in which *Vrômuot* (joy/cheerfulness), personified, leaves Austria (Simon, 47). Simon does not attempt an analysis of the *Spiegelraub*, but he raises the questions scholars have been wrestling with for decades:

> Although the poet seems obsessed with Vriderun and her mirror, he only tells us about Engelmar's crude theft *that* it happened but never why or how.... most of our questions are never answered: Where did this mirror come from and why was Vriderun selected to receive it? Was it a present properly befitting only a courtly lady that the Reuentaler, violating convention, gave to Vriderun? Is it a symbol of narcissism by which Vriderun is attracted to her own reflection? Or does this glass of fashion represent self-recognition or self-awareness? Neidhart never answers these questions.(47-48)

It is no wonder the *Spiegelraub* has been so popular among scholars. The possibilities for interpretation are endless.

To summarize, the summer songs, with a few exceptions, are generally light, and the parody of *Minnesang* is

entertaining.[6] The tone, structure, and themes of the winter songs are very different as the following discussion will demonstrate.

The winter songs tend to have more stanzas than the summer songs, and the stanzas themselves are longer than those of the summer songs. The winter songs open with a winter scene which is often described as an absence of summer: the birds are silent, the trees are bare, and the flowers have disappeared. Whereas the summer songs tended to take place outdoors, the winter drives everyone indoors. This adds to the dreary setting of winter.

Simon argues that the winter songs are quite dissimilar to the summer songs, but they share common elements with *Minnesang* such as structure, imagery, and language.[7] "For his Winter Songs, Neidhart employed the traditional tripartite stanza of minnesong, consisting of pes (*Stollen*), counterpes (*Gegenstollen*), forming the frons (*Aufgesang*), and the cauda (*Abgesang*)" (Simon, 52). The similarities to

---

[6] Ruh, on the other hand, theorizes that a direct parody of *Minnesang* in the summer songs is limited because the reversal in roles eliminates the service-reward relationship inherent in traditional *Minnesang*. "Die Vertauschung der Minnerelation führt zum Wegfall des Dienst-Lohn-Verhältnisses und damit einer der wichtigsten Bestimmungen hoher Minne. Die Möglichkeit der direkten Parodie ist so entscheidend eingeschränkt"(158). Only the scenes in which the mother and daughter exchange roles provide a direct parodistic relationship.

[7] Compare Ruh who, as noted earlier, based his discussion on the premise that both the summer and winter songs shared common elements with *Minnesang*.

Minnesang in imagery and language are crucial to the creation of a stark contrast to *Minnesang* in terms of content. "... [I]n the context of describing the actions of peasant dandies and in praising a village girl as the exalted lady love, the language of minnesong is twisted to create satirical effects"(Simon, 86).

The themes of the winter songs are much more numerous than those of the summer songs--Simon has identified eleven themes (52-78)--and at first glance they seem to defy classification. However, Simon believes that it is possible to identify thematic elements in this apparant hodgepodge of images:

> ... [I]t is my conviction that the diffuse, irregular, and fragmented appearance of the Winter Songs, the lack of transitions and the abrupt changes from one topic to another--traits which scholars have frequently noted and criticized--are the result of a compositional technique which works with smaller thematic entities rather than with each song as a unified statement. In other words, certain definable themes are often put together in such a way as to form a discordant and disjointed song pattern which is apparently the effect that Neidhart wanted to convey.(Simon, 53)

It is beyond the scope of the present investigation to confirm or reject the above conviction. However, accuracy of interpretation aside, it is a useful and appropriate

statement at this point in the discussion in that it prepares us for the wide variety of images which will be encountered in the winter songs.

As mentioned above, the winter songs open with a depiction of winter. What often follows this scene is the singer's lament that he has been devoted to his exalted lady in song and service, and that she continues to be indifferent and to spurn his efforts.[8] Neidhart utilizes the theme of service and unrequited love, the foundation of conventional *Minnesang*, and the vocabulary of *Minnesang* to express his suffering, but with this twist: the exalted lady to whom he is devoted and sings praises is a village girl. "Thus Neidhart transfers language and imagery of high minnesong to the village milieu with the result that both realms become the objects of satire" (Simon, 57). The juxtaposition of the singer ridiculing his peasant rivals for intruding upon his relationship with his lady followed by a lament of his suffering for love, heightens the incongruity between conventional *Minnesang* and Neidhart's parodistic depiction of the same in a peasant setting. Simon refers to this as a thematic dichotomy.(Simon, 59)

Another theme which emerges in the winter songs is the singer's appeal to his friends for advice. This can occur

---

[8] In the winter songs, Neidhart tends to utilize the lyric "I" and is often the subject of the songs. In the summer songs the singer only occasionaly speaks in the first person.

when the singer has been unsuccessful in his attempts to "win" his ladies, or when his peasant rivals interfere with his attempts at *Minne* duty. This theme is not original to Neidhart; it also appears in songs of earlier *Minnesänger*; However, Neidhart exploits this theme just as he has the one previously mentioned: in one song (*WL* 8) the singer asks his friends how he can win his "lady", while in fact he is actively attempting to entice a protesting peasant girl. His attempts prove to be successful.

Of course the question of who these friends are has been asked. Simon, like most critics, believes that more than likely the friends were Neidhart's listeners, that is, the courtly audience.

In *WL* 8 the singer successfully seduces the peasant girl; however, this is not the norm for the winter songs. In most cases, he loses the girl to his peasant rivals, who are not portrayed in an appealing light. This is another common theme of the winter songs. Although the peasant boys are clothed in knightly attire, it is clear that they are imposters: they are clumsy with the "ladies", the peasant girls, and commit crude acts against them.

Simon has identified three other themes closely related to this one. When the rivals successfully interfere with the knight's attempts at *Minne* duty, the singer retaliates

by insulting them and threatens to do physical harm to them, a threat he never fulfills.[9]

The second related theme is the singer's ridicule of the peasant boors in their knightly attire. He takes tremendous pleasure in disparaging their unsuccessful efforts at emulating the dress of the courtly class.

The third theme in this group is the description of the peasant dances: not only have the peasant swains failed at imitating the dress of the court, their clumsy display on the dance floor further heightens their boorishness. These scenes, of course, are all described from the singer's perspective. They are also distinct from the dance scenes in the summer songs in which the peasant girls, and at times the knight von Reuental, dance lightly on the meadow. In the winter songs, the dancing takes place indoors and the peasant boys participate with the girls.

A ninth theme in the winter songs is the singer's inclination to call the peasants by name. Simon notes that Neidhart utilizes 125 names in the winter songs, names of both men and women (69). This stands in sharp contrast to conventional *Minnesang* which never reveals the name of the exalted lady or the lyric "I".

---

[9] Neidhart's physical drubbing of his peasant rivals later becomes one of the themes in Heinrich Wittenweiler's *Der Ring*, a mock-epic satirical poem written in the first decade of the 15th century.

The singer utilizes this same technique of naming to comprise the tenth theme, that of place names--he employs 17 different place names in the winter songs (71). Some critics have attempted to locate these places on maps, and some have sought to reconstruct Neidhart's travels based on these names. Simon, however, postulates that the place names are just substitutes for *Riuwental*, the Vale of Grief:

> In my view, the seventeen Austrian place names function collectively as a substitute for Reuental and can therefore be considered the equivalent of the Riuwental theme. Neidhart probably picked up the names of these hamlets and brooks during his travels with Duke Frederick and could no doubt count on his Viennese audience to be familiar with these as places of profound rusticity.(71)

The eleventh theme of the winter songs can be found in verses that appear to have been attached to the songs but are unrelated to the general content. In these verses the singer reveals aspects of his personal situation to the audience, aspects which usually have to do with his poor financial and emotional circumstances, and appeals to the listeners for support and assistance.

The themes mentioned above constitute the winter songs, most of which revolve around the singer's usually unsuccessful attempts at winning a "lady" and his disparaging portrayal of his peasant rivals. The above

discussion provides an overview of the content and structure of the winter songs; however, two more issues must be briefly considered in this overview of Neidhart's corpus. They are the spurious verses and the counterstanzas (*Trutzstrophen*).

Many verses have made their way into the corpus which were penned by Neidhart imitators, the "Neidhartianer". This thesis is not concerned with the authenticity of all the verses in the Neidhart oeuvre, as the "Neidhartianer" strove to be as faithful to the spirit of the original as possible. The *Trutzstrophen*, however, require some explanation.

The origin of these counterstanzas has been the subject of much discussion. They are found almost exclusively in the winter songs in which the singer usually is insulting a peasant. The *Trutzstrophen* are attached to the end of the song and are written from the peasant's perspective, who responds in kind to the singer's allegations. "In the majority of the songs involved, the poet attacks or makes fun of a certain peasant, and either the peasant or some associate of his replies in kind, usually raising the threat by several factors"(79). Since it is the peasants responding to the singer, critics originally believed these phrases were created by them. There is still no agreement on the origins of these *Trutzstrophen*, although some critics believe they are too sophisticated to have been created by

peasant folk, especially if one accepts that Neidhart played for a courtly audience. In any case, careful studies done by Haupt and Wiessner indicate that most of the counterstanzas could not have been penned by Neidhart. Simon, on the other hand, suggests that Neidhart could be the writer of some of the Trutzstrophen: "Still, there are some stanzas which, as far as diction and metrics are concerned, could have been composed by Neidhart..."(82). He also confirms that Neidhart would not have been setting a precedent by doing so.[10] If one agrees that Neidhart was the originator of some of the *Trutzstrophen*, then it would follow that the "Neidhartianer" could have followed his example and composed the others.

The above discussion has provided an overview of the Neidhart oeuvre. An understanding of this larger context is essential when examining individual songs within the corpus. This holds particularly true for the *Spiegelraub*, since the poet weaves it as a leitmotif into the winter songs. The next chapter will focus on *SL* 22, the song in which the Spiegelraub occurs, and other scenes in which objects are taken from girls, in order to determine whether or not parallels can be drawn between such incidents and the *Spiegelraub*.

---

[10] "Counterstanzas similar to Neidhart's have come down to us in the song repertoires of der von Kürenberg and Friedrich der Knecht"(Simon,83).

CHAPTER 2
THE *SPIEGELRAUB*

The mirror is a powerful motif and symbol in the songs of Neidhart and the Pseudo-Neidhart. The scene in which it is first introduced, *SL* 22, is often referred to as the *Spiegelraub*, and the mirror itself as Friderun's mirror. In this scene, the singing knight laments the theft of Friderun's mirror by the peasant Engelmar. Rolf Mueller observes:

> ...[T]here has always been some vaguely sensed feeling that the episode of Friderun's mirror is crucial to the entire corpus. A link between the summer and winter songs (it is mentioned sixteen times in the latter), the episode deserves closer attention.[1]

This *Spiegelraub* discussion will begin with a brief description and investigation of the song. A discussion of *Spiegelraub* references which surface in other songs will be reserved for the next chapter. The songs in manuscript R in Wiessner/Fischer's *Die Lieder Neidharts* will be utilized for

---

[1] Rolf R. Mueller, "On the Medieval Satiric Fictions of Neidhart and Wittenwiler: Fools for their Theme, let Satire be their Song," in: Windor Connell, ed., *in hohem prise. A Festschrift in Honor of Ernst S. Dick*, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 480 (Göppingen, 1989) 300.

this and all following discussions. (See Appendix B for *Sommerlied* 22 with English translation.)

SL 22 begins with the characteristic introductory verses describing the passing of winter and the coming of spring. It is the traditional *Natureingang* of *Minnesang*. The trees yearn to clothe themselves with leaves, and the nightingales begin to sing, happy that the month of May has arrived again. The winter was very long this year, but now the meadows are covered with flowers, and the singer states that he has sent Friderun, a peasant girl, a beautiful wreath. The gift indicates that Friderun is the singer's chosen girl.

In verses three and four, he instructs the young women to sing new songs and take part in the coming of spring. He promises that nearly all sorrows of the heart will dissipate; the girls should do as he advises and dress for the occasion. It is time to celebrate; *wir sulnz ûf dem anger wol wikîsen*: "let us dance in the meadows"(26,1).[2]

In the middle of the fourth verse, the carefree tone of the song suddenly changes as the singer switches to the past

---

[2] When referring to an entire song, the song numbers used in the standard editions since the 19th century will be used. Parts of songs are referred to by stanza and line number, a method of identification also developed by 19th century editors like Moritz Haupt and Karl Lachmann for editions of Middle High German song texts. Such enumeration, found in the margin of the text editions, progresses through the text independent of the song number and refers to the provenance of the material in the manuscripts on which the text is based. Thus "(26,1)" refers to line 1 of stanza 26 in MS.R.

tense and recalls a similar time when Friderun skipped like a doll among the others. On the other side of the group, Engelmar secretly watched.

The singer continues his recollection as the song moves into verse five. He describes how the dancers began to choose their partners; the knight was to sing the dance song for them. However, he was unable to sing, and this "at a time when the summer fills everyone's heart with joy": *gegen der zît sô diu sumerwünne manegem herzen vreude gît* (26,12-14).

In verse six, the singer suddenly slips back into the present tense and reveals why, at times, he is unable to heed the peasants' requests for his songs: he has responsibilities at his estate which keep him busy many mornings. *nu heizent sî mich singen; / ich muoz ein hûs besorgen, / daz mich sanges wendet manegen morgen* (26,15-17). Thus, he cannot attend and sing at some dances. At first glance, this confusion of tenses appears to signal the singer's distress and confusion. "Das Durcheinander der Zeit- und Bezugsebenen ist...raffiniert unaufdringliche Darstellung der Verwirrung des Sängers..."[3] A scene in the present reminds him of a similar one in the past. He utilizes the past tense to recall certain events only to switch back to the present when he speaks of the

---

[3] Ulrich Gaier, *Satire: Studien zu Neidhart, Wittenwiler, Brant und zur satirischen Schreibart* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967) 26-27.

circumstances, that is his estate, which hindered, and continue to hinder, him from singing. *Wie sol ich gebâren?* "What shall I do?" the singer asks (26,18). There is a perceived conflict. He should be singing, but sometimes he cannot.

The cause of his distress and confusion, however, remains unclear to the reader until the singer laments that he continues to be outraged that Engelmar tore Friderun's mirror from her side: *mirst an Engelmâren ungemach, daz er Vriderûnen ir spiegel von der sîten brach* (26,19-22).

In verses seven and eight, the singer observes that Engelmar's father would have spared Friderun. Engelmar himself does not know the meaning of moderation. He and another peasant have wronged her, but she has a friend who will not let this incident go unnoticed forever, and, for this reason, Engelmar wants to drive Friderun away.

This information is followed by a short description of Engelmar. He is portrayed as a buck among the young women and is considered the lead dancer. His strength lies in the round dance, and he finds favour among the girls.

Verse nine begins with the curious comment that, in jest, Engelmar took away Friderun's doll cradle. "This we could have weathered but not the beautiful ivory-framed mirror which he violently snatched from her." *Der het ir genomen / in schimphe ein tockenwiegel / daz hiet wir verklagt, niewan den spiegel / ... / den sîn hant / ir nam*

gewalticlîche; (124,17-24). The singer has lost his happiness because of this.

The song in manuscript R ends with a more detailed description of the mirror's intricate features. It had a beautiful braided cord that was imported from Spain, and the ends of the cord were animals fashioned out of red gold. The singer closes by stating that never has he suffered so. *nie geschach sô leide mir* (125,32).

SL 22 is unique among the summer songs. Kurt Ruh excluded it from his discussion in *Neidharts Lieder. Eine Beschreibung des Typus* because he viewed it as an exception to the pattern of the summer songs (Ruh,153). In many of the summer songs, it is the peasant girls who give chase to the singing knight, whereas in this song Friderun is not only the object of the knight's desire, but also of Engelmar's. This is also the only summer song in which a peasant boy appears as a rival to the singer. Is this why the theft of the mirror appears to have caused the singer such anguish? Is the singer distraught because for the first time he has lost his village girl to a village boy? Does the violent nature of this act heighten his distress?[4] It is tempting to speculate along the lines indicated by the above questions.

---

[4] In medieval literature, the mirror could symbolize virginity. See Herbert Grabes, 161-162.
The forceful way in which Engelmar stole the mirror from Friderun could, therefore, symbolize the taking of her virginity.

As mentioned above, *SL* 22 is unique among the summer songs, and it serves not just as a link between the summer and winter songs, but almost as an introduction to the winter songs. It is one of the few summer songs in which the singer uses the lyric "I". The roles of traditional *Minnesang* which are reversed in the summer songs--girl pursues knight in the latter--, appear to be restored in *SL* 22. The singer admits to having sent Friderun a wreath, thereby acknowledging that she is his girl. She is also in possession of a valuable, artfully handcrafted mirror, something more befitting a courtly lady than a peasant girl.[5] This is a theme developed fully in the winter songs: the peasants clothe themselves in courtly attire and handle objects which are normally associated with courtly society.

As noted earlier, the first indication of the singer's uneasiness regarding Engelmar is revealed in verse four when he describes the lurking figure of his peasant rival secretly gazing at Friderun. Of all the girls dancing in the meadow, it is Friderun, the girl that has found favour with the singing knight, who has caught Engelmar's

---

[5] It has been suggested by some critics that Friderun's mirror had been a gift from the singing knight, as it is beautiful and valuable, and mirrors were considered a status symbol of courtly society. How else could Friderun have such a valuable object in her possession if not as a gift from the knight? However, the singer never reveals that he has given Friderun the mirror as a gift and to suggest that he did so is pure speculation.

attention. The peasant rival is another common theme that is expanded upon in the winter songs. As Petra Giloy-Hirtz notes, in the winter songs, and in *SL* 22, the peasant rivals play the role of *Huote*. In the summer songs this role is played by either the mother or her daughter--the scenes in which one tries to prevent the other from attending the dance or sneaking away to see the knight from Reuentel--, and in each case the peasants are very successful in their role as *Huote*.[6] Engelmar takes advantage of the knight's absence and claims his territory by stealing the mirror from Friderun's side. It seems natural that the knight appears distressed that his lady has been taken from him by a peasant rival, and his response is to mock Engelmar's boorish behaviour: *Sîner basen bruoder / hiet sis wol erlâzen. / er kan sich deheiner dingen mâzen;/ er ist ein toerscher Beier* (123,1-124,4). His ridicule of Engelmar continues as he states that Engelmar's *gewalt* lies in the round dance and is popular among the girls. *sîn gewalt der is an dem reien under den kinden manicvalt* (124,14-16). *Gewalt* is an attribute normally used for a knight, and it commonly referred to his strength and skill in the martial arts. In this scene the singer uses the word in mockery. This is a typical reaction of the knight in the winter

---

[6] Petra Giloy-Hirtz, *Deformation des Minnesangs. Wandelliterarischer Kommunikation und gesellschaftlicher Funktionsverlust in Neidharts Liedern* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitatsverlag, 1982) 40.

songs; he verbally attacks and mocks the peasant rivals but rarely does he follow through physcially with any threats he makes.

The *Spiegelraub* is not the only occurence in Neidhart's oeuvre in which an object is snatched from a peasant girl. There are five other such incidences in the winter songs. Does the significance of this scene lie in the act of taking an object, or is it the type of object seized that is important? It is obviously pertinent to the present discussion to examine briefly the songs in which other thefts occur and to observe how they compare to the *Spiegelraub*.

In *WL* 9, the knight is the pursuer and takes a stylus from his lady, who is not mentioned by name. She feels insulted and articulates her displeasure. However, he feels justified in taking it by stating that he dares to go after what he wants.[7] In this song, then, it is the singer who takes an object from his lady and that is excusable even if it is against the lady's will.

In *WL* 10, a peasant boor grabs a ball from the singer's "lady". Throughout the song the singer has been insulting the village boys and specifically the boy who

---

[7] *Nieman sol an vrouwen sich vergâhen. / des wart ich wol inne: mirst die mîne gram. / der getrat ich leider alsô nâhen, / daz ich ûz ir hende ein glesîn grüffel nam / ... / "wâ gesâhet ir ie wîp die man alsô gephenden? / jâ getrûwe ichz sust nâch mînem willen wol volenden." / nâch dem grüffelîne muose ich senden.*(48,8-11; 48,26-28)

takes the ball. The act gives the knight additional fuel to vilify the peasant boy. *er zuhte ir einen bal. / erst ein toerscher leie* (50,29-30). The situation described in this song is similar to the *Spiegelraub*--peasant boy steals object from singer's "lady" and is ridiculed--but the act itself does not affect the singer emotionally as the *Spiegelraub* did.

The theft of a ring is compared with the theft of Friderun's mirror in *WL* 18. The knight complains that boorish peasants are treating him unfairly and courting his lady; and before he describes the theft of the ring, he reminds the audience of what happened to Friderun by asking: "How did Friderun lose her mirror?" He then reports that his lady lost her ring in the same manner: it was taken from her against her will.[8]

The similarities between the theft of the mirror and the theft of the ring do not end here. Just as in *SL* 22, the singer is angry at and mocks his peasant rival, although his insults in this song are more pronounced than in *SL* 22. In *WL* 18 the rival takes advantage of an opportunity as Engelmar did in *SL* 22: *wê mir sîn, / da er sî sô rehte dar zuo vant* (60,34-35)! He follows this comment with another that shares common elements with a verse in *SL* 22: *jâ*

---

[8] *Gîselbreht / unde ein toerscher ganze, Walberûn, / tuot mir zallen zîten ungereht. / wie verlôs ir spiegel Vriderûn? / Alsô vlôs mîn vrouwe ir vingerîde. / dô sî den krumben reien ûf dem anger trat, / dô wart es ir ab ir hant, seht, âne ir danc genommen!*(60,24-30)

verklagte ich wol daz vingerlîn, / het er ir verlenket niht die hant: "I would have been able to get over the theft of the ring, had he not sprained her hand when he stole it" (60,36-37). On the one hand, he likens the theft of the ring to that of the mirror, and in the same breath he dismisses the seriousness of the act by remarking that he could have endured it had the peasant rival not sprained the "lady's" hand in the process.

One can draw parallels between this comment and another curious comment the singer makes in SL 22: *Der [Engelmar] het ir genomen / in schimphe ein tockenwiegel. / daz hiet wir verklagt, niewan den spiegel*: "In jest, he took away her doll cradle. This we could have tolerated, but not the mirror" (124,17-19). By comparing one evil act to another, the singer creates a scene in which the latter appears more immoral than the former. In *SL* 22 he compares the theft of the mirror with the doll cradle, and concludes that taking the mirror is worse than stealing the cradle. As a result of the theft, his happiness has left him and never has he suffered so. In *WL* 18 he first likens the theft of a ring to the *Spiegelraub*, but then he concludes that he could have, in fact, endured the theft of the ring if the peasant boor had not sprained his "lady's" hand. If he could have endured this act, which he admits is as bad as the *Spiegelraub*, does it follow that he could have also endured the *Spiegelraub* under some circumstances? The singer takes

this one step further and compares the peasant boors with Engelmar. They are aggravating him as Engelmar did once. The *Spiegelraub* diminishes in emotional significance when juxtaposed with these comparisons.

A similar comparison is made in *WL* 24. The singer complains about his peasant rivals and their continual interference with his attempts at *Minne* duty, and he mocks their boorish efforts at masquarading as knights. Next, he describes a scene in which two peasants, Hildebolt and Willeger, offend the singer even more than Engelmar did. Hildbolt gave *der guoten*, the singer's girl, a piece of ginger which Willeiger snatched away from her.[9]

As was illustrated in the discussion of *WL* 18, the fervent nature of the *Spiegelraub* is reduced beside these comparisons. The theft of the ring is comparable to the theft of the mirror, but now the audience is presented with a theft that is even worse than the *Spiegelraub*.

A similar comparison is made in *WL* 27 in which a peasant oaf, Lanze, pulled a girl's head scarf from her and also took her floral wreath. *Lanze der beswaeret ein vil stolzez magedîn. / eine kleine rîsen guot / zarte er ab ir houbet, / dar zuo einen bluomenhuot: / wer het im daz erloubet* (81,2-6)? Once more the singer uses the

---

[9] *Engelmâr getet mir nie sô leide an Vriderûne, / sam die zwêne tuont. ich nîde ir phellerîne phosen, / die si tragent; dâ lît inne ein wurze, heizet ingwer. / der gab Hildebolt der guoten eine bî dem tanze; die gezuhte ir Willegêr.*(74,15-19)

conditional to qualify this act: Had Lanze not pulled the scarf from her head, she would have been able to get over the theft of her wreath. *hiete er ir gebende / ungezerret lâzen, / daz kränzel hiete ouch sî verkorn* (81,11-13). Then he makes the link to Engelmar and the *Spiegelraub*. Lanze is worse than Englemar who violently stole the mirror from Friderun. *er is ungevüeger danne wîlen Engelmâr, / der gewalticlîchen nam / den spiegel Vriderûne* (81,14-16). The only difference between the course of events in this song and the preceding one is that the girl whose scarf and wreath were stolen is not the singer's lady. What remains common between the two is that the peasants who committed these acts are even more boorish and immoral than Engelmar.

This is the third song in which the significance of the *Spiegelraub* has been thrown into question. Was it or was it not a pivotal and emotional event in the singer's life? An observation by Eckehard Simon about the *Spiegelraub* seems very fitting here:

> As is frequently the case with Neidhart's more extreme assertions, it is difficult to determine whether we are to take the poet at his word or whether we are expected to laugh with him at an event of minor significance which is exaggerated out of all proportions.(64)

One important question still remains to be answered, namely: Why did the poet choose the mirror, which is so rich in symbolic meaning in medieval literature, to build

his leitmotif? How did Neidhart and the Pseudo-Neidhart poets want the mirror imagery to work? Is it the act, the object, or both that is of significance? The above discussion has demonstrated that the *Spiegelraub* set a precedent by which similar acts could be judged, but it has not shed light on the significance of the mirror itself. The next chapter will focus on the other *Spiegelraub* references, in the hope that this will provide a new perspective on this problem.

CHAPTER 3
THE MIRROR AND THE *SPIEGELRAUB* AS LEITMOTIF

The preceding chapter examined the *Spiegelraub* within the context of *SL* 22. This chapter will explore the mirror and the theft of the mirror in a broader context. After its introduction in *SL* 22, reference to a mirror, Friderun's mirror, or the act committed by Engelmar, is made twice in the summer songs (*SL* 27 and 28) and 17 times in the winter songs, according to MS.R. This discussion will include not only specific references made to the scene in *SL* 22 but will also consider the general uses of mirror imagery in Neidhart's songs.

The singer refers to the mirror or *SL* 22 in a variety of ways which can, and will, be grouped and examined according to theme: 1) peasant boors are compared to Engelmar and his "dirty" deed; 2) the theft of the mirror marks the start of great unhappiness; 3) mirrors and situations are compared to Friderun's mirror; and 4) the singer uses mirror imagery which is not linked to the scene in *SL* 22. The chapter will conclude with a synthesis of the four themes and how the seemingly disparate parts work together to create a cohesive whole.

By far the most common reference to *SL* 22 is in the comparison of peasant oafs to Engelmar. That all of these

scenes take place in the winter songs makes sense, as it is only here that the peasants, other than in *SL* 22, appear as the singer's rivals. These scenes follow a formula: The singer complains about his lack of success with his "lady"--a peasant girl--because oafs are always interfering just as Engelmar did once; or the singer comments that these oafs are as bad as or worse than Engelmar. In *WL* 12 he complains about the boors because of their continual interference in his attempts to win a lady, and he then remarks that Engelmar annoyed him once; he wishes that someone would take him to a place where he could be safe from the peasants' cocky threats. *wîlen müet mich Engelmâr. / owê, der mich braehte, / da ich genaese vor ir üppiclîcher dreu* (53,26-28).

A similar situation occurs in *WL* 18, the scene in which a ring is stolen from a "lady". The singer complains about the peasants in general and how they think they are so clever. Again he wishes them away and remarks that Engelmar tormented him once. *Alle drî / dünkent sich die dörper wîse gar. / herre got, nu schaffe mich ir vrî! / hi bevor dô müet mich Engelmâr* (61,4-7).

WL 26 is another song which adheres to this formula--peasants interfer, singer is angry and recalls Engelmar. In it, the singer complains that two peasants are responsible for his lady's rejection of his attempts at *Minne* duty. One in particular, Madelwig, causes him stress and is a "smart

alec", and the singer announces that he has reason to be angry at Mandelwig. Then he suddenly switches attention away from Mandelwig and asks if anyone has seen the one who took Friderun's mirror? He [Engelmar] does not care about his conduct although the singer has been ashamed for Englemar's behaviour.[1] Immediately after this the singer plunges into the next scene and describes an oaf who is making advances towards the singer's lady.

In the above songs, the singer has made only indirect comparisons to Engelmar and/or the *Spiegelraub* scene. However, in these short one or two line implied comparisons, he evokes in the audience/reader, a wealth of associations. One recalls not only Engelmar and his violent act, but also the carefree days of spring, which now stand in stark contrast to the winter scenes, and Friderun, who danced like a doll with the others. The audience/reader also recalls the singer's confusion and anger. However, these indirect comparisons are also a source of confusion for the reader. Should the audience/reader accept the emotion and distress in these scenes as equal to that experienced by the singer of the *Spiegelraub*, or does the latter scene become the object of parody?

---

[1] *Ich hân ungemach von Madelwîge. / sîner ungenâden lîde ich mêre danne vil. / sîner ungevüege ich vil verswîge, / diech den liuten nimmer halbe ze ôren bringen wil. / ich bin im von schulden gram. / erst ze snabelraeze. / sach ab iemen den, der Vrdierûn ir spiegel nam? / dem gelîch ist allez sîn gelaeze. / ze mangen stunden ich mich sines ungelimphes scham.* (26, 78,29-37)

In the following references, the singer makes a direct link between the boors in the winter songs and Engelmar in *SL* 22. These comparisons result in a perceived trivialization of the entire incident.

WL 31 is one long complaint about peasants who possess varying degrees of stupidity. One is not necessarily worse than the other, and so it is not clear why the singer compares one to Engelmar specifically. In fact, the singer warns the other peasants to beware of the large, strong fellow named Bear. "Do you see the one who stole Friderun's mirror? This one acts the same. He belongs to those who would like to see me leave this place."[2] Perhaps the singer has greater fear of this peasant because of his size and power. It has been demonstrated in an earlier chapter that the singer threatens the peasants but never follows through. A more likely explanation is that the singer simply wishes to hold this big, clumsy "Bear" up to ridicule.

There is a second example of intertextuality in this song when the singer refers to the oaf who was beaten because of a piece of ginger (*WL* 24). Neidhart is fond of

---

[2] *Dâ ir bî ein ander sît, / tumbe getelinge, / dâ sult ir iuch hüeten wol vor enem toerschen knehte. / der gêt alrest hiwer her vür / und ist geheizen Ber. / der ist lanc und ahselwît, / gîtic übeler dinge / unde wünscht, daz er kom, da er im genuoc gevehte. / er kumt kûme in zer tür. / phî, wer brâhte in her? / erst noch tumber, dane die uns in den anger sprungen. / sâht ir den, der Vriderûn ir spiegel nam? / jener der gebârt alsam. / erst ir einer, der mich hât von lieber stat verdrungen.*(90,34-91,21)

utilizing vocabulary, imagery, and scenes which have already appeared in his songs, as well as in the those of *Minnesänger*.

In *WL* 14 the singer describes a train of peasants masquerading as knights and how their behaviour is incongruous with their dress. He mocks them and remarks that they are dumber than the one who stole Friderun's mirror. "Now they are the ones who resent my happiness and keep the woman for whom my heart longs away from me."[3]

One song, *WL* 24, in which two boors are involved in the incident where ginger is stolen from "the good one", was already discussed in the previous chapter. There the peasants are considered even worse than Engelmar. *Engelmâr getet mir nie sô leide an Vriderûne, / sam die zwêne tuont* (74,15-16). A smiliar comparison is found in *WL* 20. The singer is angry at some peasant boys who are continually interfering and are happy at the knight's misfortune. The singer remarks: "One of them has depressed me as you never did, Master Engelmar." *under disen vieren hât mir einer mînen muot beswaeret, / daz er nie sô trüebe wart von iu, her Engelmâr* (65,2-6).

---

[3] *si wellent sîn / tumber, danne der uns Vriderûn ir spiegel nam. / des gewaltes was uns hie zerunnen. / nu sint ez jene, / die mir vröude enbunnen / und mir die guoten verrent, nâch der ich mîn herze sene.*(56,2-7)

In *WL* 30, the singer, after a long life of unrewarded service, decides to serve God instead of his lady.[4] He is saddened to be growing old when someone requests a song from days gone by, from the time when the singer sang of peasants in the Tullner area. Immediately, the singer launches into a song about an oaf who is dumber than the one who stole Friderun's mirror. *erst noch toerscher, danne der uns Vriderûn ir spiegel nam* (88,27). Another peasant, even cruder than Engelmar, is the one who snatched the head scarf from a village girl's head in *WL* 27. *er is ungevüeger, danne wîlen Englemâr, / der gewalticlîchen nam / den spiegel Vriderûne* (81,14-16).

The last reference in this category is subject to a slightly different presentation. It is one of the few occurences in which the singer displays such blatant sarcasm. In this song, *WL* 33, the singer describes a scene in which an oaf steps on the skirt of the "lady" he is trying to impress. The oaf acts like a fool and forever whispers in the "lady's" ear, which annoys the singer. The singer, of course, regards the oaf and his crony as total idiots and remarks that in all of Germany there can't be anyone who knows how to treat women better. Even Engelmar

---

[4] This is not the only time this thought is expressed in Neidhart's songs. A similar declaration is made in *WL* 34. It is also a theme common to *Minnesang*. *Minnesänger* who have utilized this motif include Friedrich von Hausen, Heinrich von Morungen, Oswald von Wolkenstein, and Carl von Kraus. See Edmund Wiessner, *Kommentar zu Neidharts Liedern* (Leipzig: S.Hirzel Verlag, 1954) 211.

did not do this well with Friderun. The singer ends by commenting: "Would that he [the oaf] might rather tear her skirt than whisper sweet nothings in her ear!"[5] If there was any doubt as to how the singer wanted the audience to understand these comparisons, this reference makes it clear. Engelmar and the brutal act he committed, like everything else, is fair game to be mocked and parodied.

Engelmar, like the *Spiegelraub*, is woven as a leitmotif into the other songs because his name sparks a series of associations in the audience's mind; but he is not necessarily any more or less evil than the other peasant boys. In fact, Helmut Birkhan believes that the oafs are interchangeable:

> Die Fülle der Dörpernamen bedeutet nicht Individualisierung des Dörpers im realistischen Sinn, sondern im Gegenteil Massenhaftigkeit und wie die schon bei Neidhart oft gestifteten, bei seinen Nachahmern noch weiter getriebenen Verwandtschaftsverhältnisse nahelegen, eine gewisse Austauschbarkeit. Ein *dörper* ist wie der andere, sie sind ja auch alle miteinander verwandt.[6]

---

[5] *jâ waen inder zwêne knaben / in allen diutschen rîchen / bezzer ez mit wîben haben / niht gein einer griuze. / Engelmâr gewan ez niht sô guot mit Vriderûne, / als ez doch der einer hât. / jener dürkel ir di wât, / ê daz er dâ gerûne!* (98,32-39)

[6] Helmut Birkhan, *Zur Datierung, Deutung und Gliederung einiger Lieder Neidharts von Reuental* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1971) 10-11.

Several references are made in the winter songs which equate the loss of happiness with the theft of Friderun's mirror. A common theme here is that the singer's life-long unrewarded attempts at *Minne*-service leave him feeling depressed, and he cites the theft of Friderun's mirror as the start of all this unhappiness. In *WL* 23 three peasant boys are pursuing the singer's girl, and the singer is not happy about this. In fact, he has not been happy since Engelmar stole Friderun's mirror, and blames Engelmar for all his misfortune. The singer goes on to say that so much injustice has occurred since this incident as has not occurred in a hundred years. He then remarks that Friderun never completely recovered from this incident, and he wishes that the hand which tore the mirror may be lamed.[7] The sentiments expressed in this song are consistent with those in *SL* 22. The singer confirms that the *Spiegelraub* was a pivotal event, and that he specifically, and society generally, have experienced only misfortune since that time.

A similar situation occurs in *WL* 25. Throughout this song, the singer whines about his unsuccessful attempts to win his lady's affections because the interference of his peasant rivals prevents him from even getting near his lady.

---

[7] *von iuwern schulden hân ich disiu leit, her Engelmâr. / Sît von iuwern handen Vriderûn den spiegel vlôs, / so ist unbildes vil geschehen, des genuoge müezen jehen, / dazs in hundert jâren nie sô vil dâ vor geschach. / beidiu laster unde schaden sî doch nie verkôs / noch verkiesen niht enwil.*(70,37-40, 71,1-3)

He further complains about having missed his opportunity for happiness and wonders if he will ever be able to find good fortune again. Then he observes that Engelmar started all of this with dear Friderun when he took her mirror, "to which that lout was not entitled". *an der lieben Vriderunen huop ez Engelmar, / der ir spiegel nam, / des im gouche niht gezam. / des ist unvergezzen, ich getuo ir einem sînes / herzen küneginne alsam* (78,7-9). It appears that Engelmar set a precedent for other peasant boys when he stole the mirror from the singer's girl. The singer's tone is one of anger and frustration here. It is a far cry from the confusion and distress expressed in the original *Spiegelraub* incident. It is clear that the singer's luck has changed, and he is no longer getting his "fair share of the pie". In fact, he has not been receiving any favours from the girls since the *Spiegelraub* incident. Could the singer's growing anger and scorn be linked to unrequited, unconsummated love for which he holds his peasant rivals directly responsible?

Equating the theft of the mirror with the loss of happiness continues in *WL* 32. The setting is much the same as in the previous two songs. He speaks of unacknowledged life-long service and song. He talks about how his hair has turned grey due to the stress caused by his peasant rivals. Following this, he specifically blames Engelmar, who is still in possesion of the mirror, for his grey hair and how

he has experienced only sorrow since that time.[8] A comparable thought is expressed in *WL* 34. After a lifetime of unsuccessful service, the singer states his intention of relinguishing *Minne*-service in favour of holy service.[9] He complains of the ill treatment one receives when old, and notes that once there were happy times, but now there is only sorrow in the country since Engelmar stole the mirror from Friderun. Not only is happiness gone but also discipline and honor, in other words *Minnesang*.[10] The singer is referring to the lack of honor and discipline displayed by the peasant boors towards the "ladies", and this is confirmed when the singer launches into the next verse and ridicules one of the peasant boys for his boorish efforts to seduce the girl.

The preceding four songs share a common theme: happiness has forsaken the singer, and, in some cases, the country, ever since the mirror was stolen from Friderun.

---

[8] *Schouwet an mîn hâr, / daz gevar ist als ein îs! / daz grâwet mir (des ist niht rât), / wande mir von getelingen niwan leit geschach. / jener Engelmâr, / von des schulden bin ich grîs, / diu hiute noch den spiegel hât, / den er dörper Vriderûnen von der sîten brach. / von der zît / immer sît / warp ich nimmer mêre, / ich enhiete ein iteniuwez herzenleit.*(93,3-12)

[9] See footnote number 4, Ch.3.

[10] *Ê dô kômen uns sô vreuden richiu jâr, / dô die hôchgemuoten wâren lobesam: / nu ist in allen landen niht wan trûren unde klagen, / sit der ungevüege dörper Engelmâr / der vil lieben Vriderûne ir spiegel nam. / dô begunde trûren vreude ûz al den landen jagen, / daz si gar verswant. / mit der vreude war verswant / zuht und êre; disiu driu sît leider nieman vant.*(96,3-11)

This theme is consistent with the emotions initially expressed in *SL* 22; however, it is difficult to take the singer at face value as the context of these winter songs is different from that of the *Spiegelraub* scene. In *SL* 22, the singer's feelings of confusion and distress and his admission that nothing quite as unfortunate has ever happened to him sound genuine. However, the context of the above winter songs puts the *Spiegelraub* into a different light. One could accept the singer's assertions of the loss of all happiness when the mirror was stolen, were it not for the juxtapostions. On the one hand, he creates a deceptively authentic scene utilizing *Minnesang* language and imagery, only to destroy this image when he begins his tirade against the peasants when he ridicules and mocks their boorish behaviour. In among all of this he refers to the *Spiegelraub* and how all happiness has left since that time. Total chaos appears to be reigning in the winter songs, and references to the *Spiegelraub* seem displaced. It is a case of crying wolf too often; the scene has lost its meaning from misuse and overuse. It is at times impossible to determine whether the singer is referring to the scene in *SL* 22 with or without sarcasm or mockery.

Two songs hold references to Friderun's mirror and compare it to another object or situation. The first song in this category, *SL* 27, bears strong similarities to the songs just discussed. The tone of this song resembles the

winter songs rather than the summer songs. It is a beautiful May, but no one can be happy about it because Austria is full of sorrow. The singer addresses the girls and tells them to be confident that God in his goodness will do away with all sorrow. Then he talks about the joy that summer brings and tells the girls to dance; Lady Joy will join them. The village girls and boys are ready for the dance, but then the singer admits that Lady Joy has left Austria. "We will have to do without her and Friderun's mirror. We should be able to get over the mirror; Lady Joy we will carry high above our heads should she be returned to Austria." *Vrômuot is ûz Ôsterrîche entrunnen. / wir mugen uns ir und Vriderûnen spiegel wol verkunnen. / den spiegel solte wir verklagen, / Vrômuot ûf den handen tragen, / dies uns her wider gewunnen* (32,1-5). Unlike the above songs in which the singer states that happiness is gone since the mirror was stolen, in this song there is no direct link between loss of happiness and loss of the mirror. In fact, the theft of the miror is not awarded as much stature in this song as it is in the winter songs. He even goes so far as to say that it is possible to get over the mirror if only Lady Joy would be restored to Austria. In other words, if that which the mirror represents, which is happiness and *Minne*, would be restored, it would not be necessary to restore the icon for that happiness.

WL 16 compares a peasant's mirror to the one owned by Friderun. In the first two stanzas, the singer complains about his many years of service without reward. He then recounts an incident in which he had to suffer such misfortune, for which a peasant boor is responsible, as he has not had to suffer in a long time. The singer describes the peasant's pathetic attempts at imitating a knight. The boor has a long sword with a mirror in its pommel, a mirror which exactly resembles the one Friderun owned. The boor asks "the good one" to look at herself in this mirror. The village girl refuses. She announces that she is not impressed with his courtly behaviour and would rather give away all her possessions than look into his mirror. In fact, she has three mirrors at home, each of which she prefers to his. Again he insists she look into his mirror and annoys the girl with his continual insistence. The singer then remarks that this is the end of his story and confirms that, in general, the village boys cause him grief.[11] *WL* 16 seems to share more common elements with

---

[11] *Ine gewan vor mangen zîten ungenâde mêre, / danne ich hân von einem getelinge. / derst alsô getoufet, daz in niemen nennen sol. / der ist an siner strâze beidiu tretzic unde hêre. / langez swert alsam ein hanifswinge, / daz treit er allez umbe. im ist sîn gehilze hol. / dâ sint luoger in gemachet, zeine zîzelwaehe. / oben in dem knophe lit ein spiegelglas, / dem gelîch alsô daz Friderûnen was. dô bat er die guoten, daz si sich dar inne ersaehe. / Sine wolde iedoch in sînen spiegel nie geluogen. / daz versagtes im in einer smaehe. / si sprach verwendeclîchen: "daz ist immer ungetân. / ich bekenne iuch niht an iuwer höveschеit sô kluogen. / ê ez iu ze liebe an mir geschaehe, / jâ wolde ich ê verliesen slehtes allez, daz ich hân." / sî sprach: "liupper, heime ich*

the other winter songs--a peasant rival pursues the singer's "lady" or "good one", as she is sometimes called, and the singer is miserable as a result of this. However, by comparing the mirror in the village boy's possession to Friderun's mirror, the singer conjures up a series of *SL* 22 images--Engelmar, Friderun dancing like a doll, the violent theft of the mirror--to which *WL* 16 must invariably be compared.

The two songs share some similarities,--the scenes which involve peasant interference are recalled by the singer--but mainly appear as a series of contrasts. First of all, *WL* 16 takes place in the winter time. Second, the roles which the characters play in this scene are a reversal of those in *SL* 22. In *WL* 16, it is the village boy who is in possession of a mirror, one similar to Friderun's. He bears no resemblence to Engelmar in his behaviour towards the village girl in that he does not force her to do something against her will, rather he merely requests that she look into his mirror. This is in stark contrast to Engelmar who did not request anything of Friderun and thus risk rejection. Instead Engelmar acted with brute force and violently snatched the mirror from her. In *WL* 16 it is the village girl who acts rudely. She belittles the oaf's

---

hân noch guoter spiegel drîe; / derst mir iegelîcher lieber danne der." / schiere sprach er aber: "vrouwe, luoget her!" / alsô müete sî der gouch mit siner hoppenîe. / Hie mit disen dingen sî diu rede alsô gescheiden!(59,6-26)

behaviour and haughtily rejects his request. The village girl asserts herself in this song as Friderun never did. This is a technique often utilized by Neidhart. He continually assigns his characters different roles and does not hesitate to reverse roles already established, or to utilize them in a different context. He does not limit this to the characters or images within his songs either. It has already been demonstrated that he borrowed language and images from traditional *Minnesang* and used them in a radically different setting. The village girl considers the peasant boy unworthy of her attention as demonstrated in her remark that she is not impressed with his attempt at courtly behaviour. This is consistent with the sentiments expressed by the girls in the summer songs; they rejected the village boys in favour of someone of higher status, that is, the singer. In fact, the "good one" in *WL* 16 finds the boy so disagreeable, she would rather lose all her possessions than comply to his wishes and look into his mirror. Why would the village girl consider the act of gazing into the boy's mirror so disagreeable? How is the mirror symbolism to be understood in this passage?

In medieval literature many objects could act as mirrors, and humans, or lovers, were among these (Grabes, 78). In *WL* 16, the village boy is expressing his erotic desire for "the good one" when he requests that she look into his mirror. She is uninterested in forming a union

with this boor who, she believes, is unworthy of her attentions. She taunts him by remarking that she has three mirrors of her own. If the lover can act as a mirror, and if by looking into this mirror one expresses erotic desire, then it would follow that the "good one" would rather have no lovers than the peasant boy. *ê ez iu ze liebe an mir geschaehe, / jâ wolde ich ê verliesen slehtes allez, daz ich hân* (59,20-21). However, the "good one" has three mirrors, or lovers, which she prefers and has no need for the boor's affection.

Two other songs refer to the lover as a mirror of the beloved. *SL* 28 begins with the observation that the change in season to spring brings happiness even though the singer has been unsuccessful in his *Minne*-service. The song then moves to a conversation between two peasant girls. The first speaks of how men no longer possess the law of honour to secretly beg for their, the girls', love. She is not interested in unworthy love. *man sint niht in êren, / daz si tougen unser minne gern. / ich wil von in valscher minne enbern* (33,5-7). Her friend responds that men are different. Some are honourable, some are not. The singer then takes his turn again and reiterates what the girls have said: "Men who should be praising ladies and smiling into their happy eyes have tarnished themselves by participating in activities never before seen in Germany. A man who wants

to reduce women to lust is not the woman's mirror."[12] In other words, such a man is not a good example of how a woman's lover should act. The singer continues into the next stanza lamenting the fact that false love has displaced honourable love, the love represented by *Minnesang*.

The second reference to the lover as mirror is found in *WL* 34. This song was already mentioned earlier in the context of its claim that happiness, discipline, and honour are gone since Engelmar stole the mirror from Friderun. Related to this remark, and to the reference discussed in *SL* 28, is the singer's observation that *Minne*, that is Lady Love, is losing her dignity, and he is ashamed for her. He continues: "You have ruined your reputation by giving your hair ring to unworthy friends. May you be cursed! You let a peasant put his finger in your hair ring." The singer then speaks of *Minne* in the third person. That she did not give the ring to the knight when it was still new and fresh! She would still have been able to give it to the peasant later. The singer does not understand why *Minne* has acted in this manner. Perhaps the peasant was *Minne*'s mirror (eye's delight)?[13]

---

[12] *Die den wîben hôchgemüete solden machen / unde in in diu lôsen ougen solden lachen, / die habent sich bewollen mit sô vremden sachen, daz hie bevor den Tiutschen wilde was. / ja ist er niht der wîbe spiegelglas, / der sî ze vrevel wil geswachen.*(32,18-23)

[13] *ich muoz mich ze manegen stunden vür dich schamen. / dû verliusest dicke dînen riutelstap. / daz dû swachen vriunden gîst dîn haerîn vingerlîn, / dêst dîn êre kranc. / da*

Like most of the commentary appearing in the songs, the singer's lament over *Minne*'s downfall cannot be taken completely seriously. On the one hand he complains that *Minne* does not practise discretion when choosing her lovers; on the other hand, the singer is indifferent as to whom she bestows favours on, just as long as she takes care of him, the knight, first. The *Minne* of Neidhart's summer and winter songs is unlike the *Minne* found in traditional *Minnesang*: In the summer songs, the village girls have claimed *Minne* as their own in their pursuit of the knight; in the winter songs it is the village boys who adopt and alter the ways of *Minne* to suit their role as rivals, and the knight mimics and parodies the role of the *Minnesänger* when he complains of lifelong *Minne*-service which has gone unrewarded.

The above discussion has revealed the multivalency of the mirror in Neidhart's songs. When first encountered, the *Spiegelraub* scene appears to be a pivotal event in the singer's life and one which has caused him stress and confusion unlike anything he has ever experienced. The symbolic value and multivalency of the mirror makes it an ideal object to steal. The *Spiegelraub* is unique, even

---

dû, vrouwe, habest undanc! / in dîn haerîn vingerlîn ein kneht den vinger dranc. / Daz siz niht dem ritter an den vinger stiez, / dô iz in der niuwe und in der wirde was! / dannoch hete siz dem knehte wol vür vol gegeben. / ich weiz rehte niht, war umbe sî daz liez. / lihte was der kneht ir ougen spiegelglas.(96,33 - 97,0-4)

among scenes in which other objects are seized from a village girl, because it is this event the singer chooses to compare with other situations and out of which he fashions a leitmotif. However, the apparent sincerity of the singer's use of the motif in this song is called into question as the reader encounters further references to the *Spiegelraub*-scene depicting peasants who are at least as boorish as Engelmar was, if not more so. The songs in which the theft of Friderun's mirror marks the start of the loss of the singer's and/or the country's happiness are a further confusing point. It is tempting to take the singer's expressed sorrow at face value and believe that the *Spiegelraub* is a sign of degenerating times, times in which the courtly class loses its power and advantage to the upwardly mobile lower/peasant classes. However, the singer deflects any serious contemplation of the scene by quickly launching into other scenes in which he ridicules boorish peasants and their clumsy antics. This could be viewed as a defense mechanism exercised on behalf of *Minnesang*, but this is likely not the case. Neidhart, after all, ridicules not only the peasants but *Minnesang* as well. Nothing is too sacred for his caustic tongue.

It is clear that Neidhart was aware of the mirror's symbolism--he demonstrated his familiarity with its metaphorical meanings in the last two songs discussed in this chapter (*SL* 28 and *WL* 34)--and chose it deliberately

for that reason. However, it is impossible to assign one definition to the mirror as utilized by Neidhart. This will become increasingly evident in the next chapter which examines some responses to the *Spiegelraub* by various critics.

CHAPTER 4
THE CRITICS' RESPONSE

The *Spiegelraub* scene has fascinated critics for years. It has been the focus of discussion for over a century, and the interpretation of this scene has gone through cycles usually closely related to the theory of scholarly investigation popular at a particular time. Thus it has undergone a variety of schools of thought. The number of critics who have expressed opinions on the *Spiegelraub* is too numerous for all to be discussed in this paper. However, a brief overview of how some critics have attempted to understand the *Spiegelraub* will be provided.

In his study, *Neidhart von Reuental. Geschichte der Forschung und Bibliography*, Eckehard Simon provides a good overview of work done in this field up to 1968.[1] Although the focus of this chapter will be on more recent investigations, a few of the earliest *Spiegelraub* interpretions are included. The discussion will begin with how the *Spiegelraub* was received in the late 19th century.

---

[1] Eckehard Simon, *Neidhart von Reuental. Geschichte der Forschung und Bibliographie* (Massachusetts: Harvard Unversity Press, 1968). For those who wish to spend more time investigating earlier Neidhart studies, this book is highly recommended.

Most of the earlier critics approached the Neidhart oeuvre from the positivist perspective: Neidhart's life was reflected in his songs. This does not mean that they were in agreement on what that life was. For example, opinions differed on who Neidhart's audience was, some critics believing Neidhart performed for the peasants, others that he played for both the court and peasant society.[2] The songs were considered autobiographical, and scholars attempted to reconstruct Neidhart's life based on the information given in his song corpus.

The present survey will begin with Rochus von Liliencron (1820-1912) whose interpretation of Neidhart's songs was an exception to the popular positivist theory of that time. He had difficulty comprehending why a knight, who played for the court, would have altercations with peasants. Why would Neidhart utilize the *Minnesang* structure, after which the winter songs are patterned, to portray peasant affairs? Liliencron developed the theory of "masking" to resolve these difficulties, a theory that was dismissed by both his contemporaries and later scholars.

---

[2] Karl Schröder, Otto Richter, Eduard Tischers, et.al. depicted Neidhart as living among the peasants and adopting their songs as a contrast to the stilted, courtly, structured poetry of the time (Simon:1968, 38-39).

Hermann Schmolke, on the other hand, believed Neidhart played both for the court and for the village folk. When he played for the village people, he refrained from singing the songs which portray the peasants in a negative light (Simon:1968, 40).

More recently scholars are in agreement that Neidhart played for a courtly audience.

Liliencron's masking theory claimed that happenings of the court were "masked" behind the facade of the peasant world. The winter songs were a parody of life at court. An autobiographical element could still be found in the songs but not to the same extent as the positivist approach would have it. In other words the songs would not always represent exact parallels to courtly life. Thus, for example, the *Spiegelraub* signified an unhappy or unrequited courtly love affair (Simon:1968, 28-29).

It is easy to understand why Liliencron would be the object of criticism because it is very difficult to substantiate such a theory, which is also very radical relative to the prevailing understanding of the Neidhart corpus of that time. However, because Liliencron regarded Neidhart's work in such an unusual light for that time, his views are remarkable and worth mentioning in passing.

> Es bleibt aber doch bemerkenswert, daß Liliencron zu einer Zeit, als man immer mehr dazu neigte, Neidharts dichterische Aussagen als Wirklichkeit auszulegen, überhaupt von Maskenfiktion, Verwechslungskunst und Parodie sprechen konnte.(Simon:1968, 30)

According to Hermann Schmolke, Neidhart's summer songs resembled folk songs and were created first. The singing knight created and sang these songs during the time in his life when he participated in village life. They precede the winter songs, which satirise the peasants and which the

knight performed for the court. The winter songs signal a more mature period in the singer's life. What occurred in the singer's life that made him turn from the carefree, naive lifestyle in the village to the more formal one of the court?

The answer is found in the *Spiegelraub,* although Neidhart never explains the actual scene, only recalls it. The knight had given his girl Friderun a mirror, and Engelmar stole this gift from her. After this occurrence the knight entered a period of mourning and suffering which gave birth to the winter songs in which the peasants are satirised. Simon considers this the start of Neidhart scholars' preoccupation with the *Spiegelraub.* "Dieser für Schmolke letzthin rätselhafte Spiegelraub, den Neidhart niemals erzählt, sondern immer nur beklagt, den Liliencron auf eine höfische Liebesaffäre bezog, steht von jetzt an im Zentrum der Neidhartforschung" (Simon:1968, 40-41).

Richard Moritz Meyer used Schmolke's work as a point of departure. He also believed that Neidhart performed the summer songs for a peasant audience, and the winter songs for a courtly audience. However, he differed with Schmolke in his understanding of the *Spiegelraub.* Its significance is not that the singer lost his girl to the peasant, but rather that the peasant's brutal performance robbed the knight of his integrity in the village, and he was forced to leave this environment and look elsewhere for an audience to

pay him for his singing. Meyer's reasoning was that Neidhart was a knight, but, like many knights at that time, he had become impoverished and found a paying audience among the new rich peasants. Engelmar robbed the knight of his livelihood and thus Neidhart found a new audience at the court (Simon:1968, 44).

The above three interpretations view the *Spiegelraub* scene as a self-contained unit and a *Wendepunkt* in Neidhart's life. That the object is a mirror is of no symbolic importance. Considering the mirror's reflecting function becomes significant only in later interpretations.

It was only many years later that a different approach was taken. Hans Naumann believed it was not important that the object stolen from Friderun was a mirror; however, he did not view the *Spiegelraub* as a turning point in the singer's life. The only significance is the act of taking the object away from Neidhart's "lady", and that another now possesses it. The mirror itself has no special meaning. He likens this scene to others in which objects are taken from peasant girls.

> So war es auch auf den Spiegel nicht angekommen, sondern nur auf seine Wegnahme, vielmehr darauf, daß dieser Gegenstand, der dem Mädchen gehörte, sich jetzt im Besitz eines Mannes befindet, der nicht Neidhart ist. Die Art des Gegenstandes spielt offenbar keine Rolle, der Spiegel an sich hat keine Sonderbedeutung,

es kann auch ein Griffel, Ingwer, Ring, Fürspann oder was immer sein. Nur daß der Gegenstand dem Mädchen gehört hat, ist notwendig.[3]

The weakness in Naumann's argument is his examination of the mirror only within the corpus of the Neidhart and "Neidhartianer". He fails to examine the mirror within the related literary conventions of that period. Considering the widespread use of the mirror motif in antiquity and medieval art and literature, "it would be surprising indeed if no evidence of its magnetic attraction were to be found in superstition and systems of belief, in the proverbial lore documenting this, or in literary texts"(Grabes, 5). Choosing the appropriate mirror metaphor from medieval literary convention is no easy task, if not impossible. This will become increasingly clear in the following discussion.

According to Helmut de Boor, the *Spiegelraub* symbolizes the penetration of the threatening peasant world into the courtly sphere, since the mirror is the sign of the courtly lady, and it was torn by a peasant from the "lady's" side. It therefore symbolizes the dissolution of the social order and in later songs the decline of courtly society and *Minnesang*. The fact that the singer does not prevent or avenge the theft indicates he is not judging the action,

---

[3] Hans Naumann, "Friderun's Spiegel," in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 69 (1932) 298.

merely observing it. Although de Boor appears to be drawing parallels between Neidhart's songs and his reality, he hastens to add that one should take care not to interpret Neidhart's songs allegorically.

> Der Spiegelraub wird geradezu das Symbol für den Einbruch der bedrohlichen außerritterlichen Welt in Kreis und Recht des Rittertums. Denn wie das Schwert Zeichen des ritterlichen Mannes ist, so der Spiegel Zeichen der höfischen Frau. Er ist wie Ingwer eine ritterliche Gabe. Der Bauernlümmel aber reißt ihn dem Mädchen von der Seite, und er tut es ungestraft. Neithart vermochte es weder zu hindern noch zu rächen; Friderun erhält den Spiegel nicht wieder.
>
> Weit über das Genrehafte hinaus macht Neithart den Spiegelraub zum Symbol der Auflösung gefügter Ordnung und geprägter Daseinsform. In den späten Liedern wird er zum Zeichen des Verfalls....
>
> Das Einmalige wird zum Typischen erhoben, zu urbildhafter Größe, zum Maß der Zeiten. Das ist sehr mittelalterlich gedacht und wird zum Schlüssel für Neitharts Denken und Wollen.[4]

De Boor does touch upon the medieval mind in his interpretation: "Das ist sehr mittelalterlich gedacht...",

---

[4] Helmut de Boor, "Die höfische Literatur. Vorbereitung, Blüte, Ausklang. 1170-1250," in *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 2, Helmut de Boor und Richard Newald (München: 1953) 366.

but he gives little attention to the literary conventions involving the mirror. The only significance attributed to the mirror is that it signals to the reader that Friderun is playing the role of courtly lady. Are there other characteristics of the mirror in medieval times which should be considered?

Frederick Goldin addresses this question in his essay *Friderun's Mirror and the Exclusion of the Knight in Neidhart von Reuental*:

> One of the chief problems in Neidhart's poetry is the meaning of his favorite motif, the theft of Friderun's mirror. One reason for the difficulty is that not once when the incident is mentioned is the usual function of the mirror important; indeed, if it were not for the word *spiegel* itself, we should never know that the object in question is something that one looks into in order to see what would otherwise be invisible to the unaided eye.[5]

Goldin ultilizes *Winterlied* 16 to define the mirror motif, a song which makes reference to Friderun's mirror and in which "the mirror *is* regarded according to its function" (354).

The opening two stanzas of Winterlied 16 resemble traditional *Minnesang*. The poet mourns the passing of

---

[5] Frederick Goldin, "Friderun's Mirror and the Exclusion of the Knight in Neidhart von Reuental," in *Monatshefte. A Journal devoted to the Study of German Language and Literature*, 54, 1 (Wisconsin, 1962) 354.

summer, the days are short, the birds have stopped their singing, and the singer laments unrequited love. He searches for advice from one who has also suffered so, and he closes verse two with the comment that he will never again sing a new song for a woman.

In verse three there is a sudden change in tone as the singer describes a peasant clothed in knight's attire. In the pommel of his sword lies a mirror which exactly resembles the one Friderun owned. He asks the "good one" to look at herself in the mirror.

The girl, however, perceives herself as a courtly lady because the knight has "won her by falsely reflecting his own courtliness upon her"(357), and now she has contempt for the peasant suitor; she refuses to look into his mirror. She has three mirrors at home which she prefers over his. The peasant forces the girl to look into the mirror attached to his sword, and thus she recognizes herself for what she truly is--a peasant girl, not a courtly lady. She is forced to return to the peasant's realm and so the singer has lost his chances of possessing her.

By forcing the girl to confront her true identity, the peasant demonstrates "the falseness of his own masquerade" and, therefore, "not only affirms the real courtliness of the singer but also refutes that of the girl. It is this *geteling* (peasant boy) who distinguishes the one class from the other and restores every mislocated identity to its own

proper sphere..." (358). Goldin believes that social order is what Neidhart prizes above all else and relates this to the *Spiegelraub* in the following manner:

> To return to the problem of Friderun's mirror, the one constant element is the result of the theft: the instant that Engelmar possesses the mirror, Neidhart is excluded.... in snatching the mirror, Engelmar gains control of Friderun's true image and simultaneously refutes the false flattery with which Neidhart had obliterated her quality and made the other members of her class repugnant to her.(359)

Goldin is one of the first critics to explore the mirror metaphor within medieval literary tradition. Others have followed his lead.

Gert Kaiser also considers the reflecting function of the mirror as crucial to understanding the *Spiegelraub* scene: "die verbreitete mittelalterliche Spiegelmetapher [erhält] ihren Sinn doch stets von der Funktion des Widerspiegelns... Daß Neidhart das Motiv des Spiegels so gänzlich außerhalb der Tradition verwendet haben soll--das wäre durchaus befremdlich."[6] He bases his interpretation on Heinrich von Morungen's poem *Mir ist geschehen als einem*

---

[6] Gert Kaiser, "Narzißmotiv und Spiegelraub. Eine Skizze zu Heinrich von Morungen und Neidhart von Reuental," in *Interpretation und Edition deutscher Texte des Mittelalters. Festschrift für John Asher zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds. Kathryn Smits, Werner Besch, Victor Lange (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1981) 77.

kindelîne. (See Appendix C for *Mir ist geschehen als einem kindelîne* with English translation.) The singer of this song compares himself to a child who is so delighted by his reflection in a mirror that he grabs for the image and breaks the mirror. The event transforms the child's happiness into sorrow. The singer relates this to his own experience: in his dreams, love has brought the image of his lady before his eyes. His happiness disappears when he sees her contorted mouth. He is filled with fear that her beautiful red mouth might fade. He grieves anew that he should suffer so and witness such agony through his eyes, like the child who fell in love with his reflection in a fountain and had to love it until death. The singer encounters himself in the image of his lady, just as the child discovers himself in the mirror, or as Narcissus beholds himself in a stream.

Kaiser explains that the concept of the singer encountering himself and his poetic creation in his lady's image is not foreign to *Minnesang*. However, it is Morungen who compares this encounter to looking into a mirror.

> Alle minnesängerische Reflexion über das Bild der *vrouwe* ist insofern immer auch eine Begegnung mit dem eigenen lyrischen oeuvre, mit dem eigenen Minnedienst--und damit, aber diese Folgerung zieht erst Morungen: mit sich selber. ...im Bild der geliebten *vrouwe* begegnet der Dichter seinem Werk,

und diese Begegnung ist wie ein Schauen in den Spiegel.(73)

Kaiser discusses two additional points in Morungen's song which are important considerations in his Neidhart *Spiegelraub* interpretation. The first is that the singer did not see his lady in the mirror, but rather *Minne* brought her before his eyes. Therefore, *Minne* is the mirror that makes possible the meeting of the poet and his work through the image of the lady. The second point is that the image of the lady is flawed: her mouth is twisted. This signifies the imperfection of the singer and his song and explains his fear that this could cause the mouth of his lady to fade.

With this background information, Kaiser turns his attention to *SL* 22 and the *Spiegelraub*. He notes that the *Spiegelraub* motif appears in only two summer but in 14 winter songs. Furthermore, in the winter songs the *Spiegelraub* motif appears only in those songs which follow the classical *Minnesang* structure, even if the characters--peasant boors and peasant girls--do not belong to the courtly sphere. One last important point is that wherever the *Spiegelraub* motif is the centre of meaning in a song, it is also linked with the singer's relection of worth and the effect of his *Minnesang*.

In allen Fällen, in denen das Motiv vom Spiegelraub selber Sinnzentrum ist, ... da steht es in Zusammenhang mit Reflexionen des Dichters über Sinn, Wert und

Wirkung seines Minnesangs. In diesem Zusammenhang war es ja auch eingeführt worden.(77)

In *SL* 22, the singer's admission that he cannot sing is connected to the theft of Friderun's mirror, and Kaiser notes that whenever the singer makes reference to the *Spiegelraub* in the winter songs, he links it to the decline of his ability to perform.

> Immer wieder steht der Raub des Spiegels im Kontext der Niederlage des Minnenden. Deutlicher noch: Mit dem Raub des Spiegels datiert der Beginn dieser Niederlagen. Seit dem Raub erweisen sich Minnedienst und Minnesang als erfolglos und ohne Kraft. Damit ist alle *vreude* gewichen, nicht nur für den Dichter.
>
> Und so entdeckt sich der Spiegel auch hier als Symbol des Minnedienstes and Minnesangs, und der Raub des Spiegels wird zum Zeichen des Niedergangs der Minnepraxis.(79)

As in Morungen's song, Neidhart utilizes the mirror as symbol for *Minnesang* and *Minne*-service. However, in Morungen's mirror, the singer discovers himself and worships his lady, while Neidhart's mirror reflects the decline of *Minne* culture. Kaiser utilizes this information to explain why the theft of the mirror is reported in the past tense. The past is considered happy and carefree: it is when Friderun, the singer's lady, possessed the mirror; it is when the poet could perform *Minne*-service, that is, sing his

songs of praise. This all changed when the mirror was stolen by a peasant, and the intruding presence of the peasants continues to thwart the singer's attempts at *Minne*-service. In effect, Neidhart borrows the mirror motif from Morungen, who used it as a metaphor for *Minnesang*, but assigns a new meaning to the motif: the decline of *Minne* culture.

Ulrich Gaier devotes a book to defining and discussing satire in the works of Neidhart, Heinrich Wittenwiler, and Sabastian Brant.[7] In his Neidhart discussion, he tackles almost every problem encountered by critics, and the mirror is seen as the key to solving these problems. Therefore, the following discussion will be quite detailed.

Gaier utilizes six of Neidhart's songs--he claims they are representative of Neidhart's oeuvre--to which he applies his definition of satire.[8] At first glance, ultilizing satire as a means of defining some of Neidhart's songs

---

[7] See Ch.2, n.3.

[8] He claims satire is based on the following criteria: "...erstens muß sie dem Wirklichkeitsbezug, dem Angriffscharakter dieser Schreibart gerecht werden, der die Satire unmittelbar kenntlich macht; zweitens muß sie unter irgendeinem Gesichtspunkt gestatten, die Werke der römischen Satiriker als Satiren zu bezeichnen, denn diese sind es schließlich, für die der Name ursprünglich galt and heute noch gilt;"(2).

Compare Rolf Mueller: "Simply put, it is attack *of* somebody or something (usually the faults in particular men or their institutions), *by* somebody (sometimes the satirist, but more commonly his persona), *for* somebody (the select audience that already shares or can be moved to share in the antagonism)"(295-296; see Ch. 2, n. 1).

appears to be a logical choice when one considers the characteristics of the satirical mirror[9] and the prominance of the mirror as leitmotif in Neidhart's oeuvre. "Satire often takes the form of an exposing or unmasking mirror, which strips away the deceptive surface of appearances to reveal the hidden depths of evil and folly" (Grabes, 99). If one wants to utilize the satirical mirror in an interpretation, one must first consider what impact the poet wanted to make on his audience and the position of the poet and his work within society (Gaier, 7). In other words, if one can demonstrate that Neidhart's intent was to expose folly, the key as to why the mirror was assigned such a prominant role would be found. Gaier attempts exactly this.

The *Spiegelraub*, *SL* 22, is one of the six songs singled out for closer scrutiny.[10] In this song, the crucial factor for Gaier is the singer's excuse for being unable to sing at some dances: responsibilities at his estate keep him from performing his *Minne*-service at times. *ich muoz ein hus besorgen, daz mich sanges wendet manegen morgen*

---

[9] Grabes notes: "Satire as a mirror bears more resemblance to the historiographical mirror, as the reflecting function is once again subordinated to correction. But the satirical is clearly differentiated from other mirrors in presenting only negative examples with a deterrent effect (99)."

[10] The other five are: *SL* 11-a crusade-song; *SL* 20--a conversation between two peasant girls; *SL* 7--a conversation between a mother and her daughter; *WL* 19--a song about two peasant rivals; *WL* 30--sadness is expressed over loss of happiness because sinless life is impossible. He illustrates that each of these poems enholds the same satirical lesson.

(26,16-17). The singer's absence on this occasion gave Engelmar the opportunity to steal the mirror from Friderun. Gaier points out that the singer is allowing his love for his possessions to interfere not only with his duty to sing at the dances, but his first and foremost knightly duty: to engage in *Minne*-service. Had the singer been present at the dance, Engelmar could not have stolen the mirror. Gaier perceives the theft of Friderun's mirror as just punishment for the singer who allowed private interests to take precedence over his knightly duties to sing and perform *Minnedienst*. It is therefore not Engelmar who should be assigned blame, but rather the singer. However, because the singer does not want to be held accountable for the act, he diverts attention from himself to Engelmar by portraying the peasant as the villain, and this is where satire occurs:

> ... Engelmars Tat wird erst dadurch möglich und als eine Art Strafe dafür sinnvoll, daß der Sänger seine höfische Idealität an seine wirtschaftlichen Privatinteressen verrät. ...Der Spiegelraub liegt in der Vergangenheit, und immer noch ist dem Sänger sein *hûs* wichtiger als das Singen, durch dessen Versäumnis es erst so weit gekommen ist. Der Sänger klagt über Engelmar, statt sich selbst auf seine innere Korruption zu besinnen, und fällt so der Satire anheim.(29)

Gaier takes this one step further and transfers the criticism of this specific incident to the entire knightly

class which is in danger of losing its knightly ideals of *Minne*-servce to private interests. The restoration of courtly ideals is of utmost importance to the singer; thus, he develops the *Spiegelraub* into a leitmotif. The audience is to recognize the singer's criticism of the decline of courtly ideals every time reference to the *Spiegelraub* is made and therefore be moved to take corrective action.

> Für den Hörer, der Neidharts Satire versteht, ist die Geschichte von Engelmars Spiegelraub ein Beispiel, an dem die Korruption des Rittertums aufgedeckt wird, ihre ständige Wiederholung eine leitmotivische Abbreviatur, die auf die satirische Tendenz dieses Liedes 25,14 zurückweist, denn nirgends sonst wird das Motiv erklärt. Die Schlüsselstellung dieses Liedes macht seine ausführliche Besprechung notwendig und sinnvoll.(33)

Gaier is able to draw the same conclusion, namely that Neidhart's songs are satirical mirrors meant to encourage the audience to re-embrace the courtly ideals of love and duty, through his investigation of the other five songs. However, he hastens to add that not all of Neidhart's songs are of a satirical nature.[11]

---

[11] "Wie hier sich andeutet, sind nicht alle Lieder satirisch; meine Analysen zeigen von den 66 Liedern neun, die ich nicht als satirisch auffassen möchte, davon sieben in den insgesamt 29 Sommerliedern, zwei in den insgesamt 37 Winterliedern" (41).

Gaier takes care to distinguish between Neidhart the poet, and Neidhart the singer. He describes the singer as a hostile, miserable *Krautjunker*, a pejorative term for country squire, who employs "courtly" practices in order to seduce and corrupt the peasant girls. The poet uses this persona as a satirical mirror which is being held up to the courtly audience (43). Gaier has taken the mirror imagery very seriously: the *Spiegel* and *Spiegelraub* are the key to understanding Neidhart's poetry. Neidhart used the mirror to develop his leitmotif because of its reflecting function. The songs themselves are mirrors which reflect to the listeners, if they choose to be receptive, a negative portrait of themselves underneath the deceptive surface. They are to recognize their folly in this negative portrait and be motivated to take corrective action. Gaier has considered the mirror in its tradition and has identified who is holding up the mirror to whom. Not only has he ascribed an abstract funtion to the mirror, the act of unmasking folly, but he also considers its conventional use: the act of reflecting. He proceeds to establish the connection between the abstract and the concrete.

> Wenn Frideruns Spiegel als Objekt eine Bedeutung hat, dann diese: daß unter dem Einfluß des Ritters das Bauernmädchen über sich zu reflektieren anfängt und daß Engelmar, der sich in Abwesenheit des Sängers an sie heranmacht und sich vor den untreuen Sänger schiebt,

ihr diese Reflexion in einer fremden Welt wieder nimmt.(83)

Under the singer's influence, Friderun begins to reflect on herself, and this removes her from the peasant world. In the winter songs the peasant boys participate in a type of reflecting--by imitating knights in dress and speech--and this also removes them from the peasant world. The act of reflecting has destroyed order in peasant society, but in *SL* 22, Engelmar pulls Friderun back into her place by taking the mirror from her.

To reflect on oneself may cause disorder in the peasant's world, but reflection is necessary in courtly society in order to prevent its ideals from becoming trivialized and corrupt, Gaier argues.

> Neidhart macht offenbar einen bedeutsamen Unterschied: Reflexion verdirbt die Einsinnigkeit der bäuerlichen Ordnung; Reflexion ist aber der höfischen Welt notwendig: sie allein vermag in den Zuhörern die Übereinstimmung zwischen Wort und Wert, zwischen äußerer Form und innerer Haltung wieder herzustellen und die höfische Kultur vor der Veräußerlichung und Korruption zu bewahren.(84)

Another point of particular importance for Gaier is that Friderun does not defend herself against Engelmar; she does not attempt to regain possession of the stolen mirror. In this sense she rejects the singer since the mirror was a

gift from him. The singer lifts a voice of complaint in this song, but not because he has been harmed; he only bemoans the act committed against Friderun when, in fact, he gave Engelmar the opportunity to perpetrate the act because he was at home looking after his private interests instead of singing at the dance. In this sense he is raising false complaints. First, it is a false complaint because he himself is at fault. A second reason why the complaint is false is that the theft of the mirror has restored order to the peasant society. Why is this important? Gaier interprets this as being important because in *SL* 27(31,5) the singer urges an end to complaining about the mirror. He does so because this is a false complaint, and only in the absence of false complaints can happiness, *Vrômuot*, be restored (84).

Gaier is able to resolve almost every difficulty Neidhart's work has presented to critics thus far. Because Neidhart utilizes the deceptive image of the satirical mirror, it makes sense that he would use the setting of the peasant world rather than that of the court. The songs could be understood in two ways: at first glance, on a purely superficial and entertainment level as a parody of courtly society, its dances, language, and *vröude;* and on a deeper level as a display of declining courtly standards meant to motivate its audience towards corrective action. This gives the audience great freedom in deciding whether or

not it wants to be entertained or criticized, and it would not come as a surprise were an audience to choose entertainment value over criticism. Swift's quote is especially applicable here: "Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own, which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so few are offended with it."[12] However, Gaier insists that the primary purpose of Neidhart's songs is not to entertain but to lead courtly society to improve itself, "denn der Zweck von Neidharts Liedern ist ja ... nicht etwa der der Unterhaltung seines Publikums, sondern der der Besserung einer langsam sich zersetzenden, von innen ausgehöhlten Gesellschaft" (92). How was Neidhart able to steer the listeners beyond the entertainment value of the songs to realize their faults displayed in his satirical mirror? He did this through the persona created by the singer: "... [der Sänger ist] für das einseitige Bauernbild und die Verzerrung der höfischen Begriffe verantwortlich. Was ohne den Sänger eine scherzhafte Parodie sein könnte, wird durch seine ständige Anwesenheit zur Satire auf sein Versagen in jeder Hinsicht" (82). The singer's and the listeners' shortcomings are one and the same.

---

[12] Jonathon Swift in preface to *The Battle of the Books*, ed. Sir Henry Craik, (Oxford: Clarendon Press [1928]).

In short, Gaier attempts to demonstrate that Neidhart is holding up the mirror to those members of courtly society who have reduced *Minnesang* from the spiritual to a merely sensual level, who waste their energies on material objects rather than on maintaining courtly values, and who have allowed the peasant class to debase the songs of the court. One could argue that by setting the songs within the peasant sphere and allowing the peasants to distort the image of courtly society, Neidhart is seeking to restore class order. Gaier claims this is of secondary importance (85). The primary intent is to restore order and re-dedicate energies to courtly ideals within the degenerating knightly class:

> ...wen kritisiert der Dichter in dem Sänger? Wer ist das Ziel seiner Satire? Ganz offensichtlich doch die höfische Gesellschaft, oder mindestens der Teil davon, der die höfischen Werte und Ideale veräußerlichte, der die Minne ohne *herzenliebe* als Bloße Formkonvention und gleichzeitig als Sinnenliebe verstand und behandelte, der höfische Begriffe auf wertlose Objekte verschwendete und die Kunst des höfischen Sanges verdörpern ließ.(91)

In fact, Gaier concludes, in terms of the importance of natural order also expressed in the songs, Neidhart's satire possesses a universal quality which makes it relevant beyond the courtly audience of that time. "Neidhart sah die heilige Ordnung des Reichs, den Spiegel der göttlichen

Schöpfung bedroht, und dieser Erkenntnis entspricht die Universalität seiner Satire" (93). Perhaps Gaier has taken the seriousness of the satirical mirror a step too far with this conclusion. Ninety pages are dedicated to convincing the reader of Neidhart's satirical intent with the mirror, and his presentation would have been complete without this generalization. It reads as if it were inserted as an afterthought.

By studying six representative songs out of the corpus, Gaier is able to put Neidhart's oeuvre into a neat package--that of exposing the folly of courtly society through the use of the satirical mirror to encourage corrective action. Not all of the critics have agreed with his thesis. In his article *Neidharts Lieder. Eine Beschreibung des Typus*, Kurt Ruh argues that the six songs Gaier selected as representative of Neidhart's work are, in fact, exceptions. Gaier's thesis on satire, he believes, is therefore very tenuous.

> Unsere Typusbeschreibung widerspricht [Gaiers] Behauptung: "Die interpretierten Lieder wurden nicht gewählt, weil bei ihnen Neidharts Satire besonders sichtbar wäre..., sondern weil sie als repräsentativ gelten können". Das "nicht" wäre zu streichen. Im übrigen verrät das Folgende, daß sich Gaier im Grunde der Ausnahmestellung seiner Beispiele bewußt ist, er spielt sie jedoch herunter durch die Betonung der

> Konstanten. Das Satirische ist indes ausgerechnet durch die "Ausnahme" bedingt, gleichgültig wie wesentlich man diese für die Konstituierung des Typus in Anschlag bringt.(Ruh, 153)

Rolf Mueller agrees with the link Gaier makes between satire and the leitmotif of Friderun's mirror because, after all, "satirists are very fond of mirrors and the reflections they provide" (Mueller, 300). However, he does not agree with Gaier's interpretation that the purpose of the satire expressed in Neidhart's oeuvre is to display to the listeners their poor courtly performance and move them to improve it. The weak point in Gaier's argument according to Mueller is that he mistakenly identifies the squire as functioning "as Neidhart's satiric persona with the rustics acting the part of the adversaries" (299). Mueller describes the singing squire as "an unprincipled boor" and "an embarrassment to courtly society" who resembles a "pseudo-persona"(300)[13]. Mueller, like Gaier, utilizes *SL* 22 to make his point: "...there has always been a vaguely sensed feeling that the episode of Friderun's mirror is crucial to the entire corpus" (Mueller, 300). Gaier considered the reason for the singer's absence to be the key to understanding this scene, and the object of satire. Mueller, on the other hand, considers the singer's

---

[13] This term was coined by Ronald Paulson in *The Fictions of Satire* (Baltimore: 1967) 6.

exclamation "*Wie sol ich gebâren?*" and his reponse to it as critical to interpreting the nature of Neidhart's persona. If the singer were to act as Neidhart's satiric persona, his reaction should have been to proceed with an account of what the proper conduct of a knight would be under such circumstances. Instead, the singer denounces Engelmar, thereby releasing himself from any blame. The end result is that "[Neidhart] turns a character who fancies himself a satirist into a disgraceful Pasquil figure" (301). It is this misunderstanding of the persona which led Gaier to the wrong conclusion about the satire intended by Neidhart:

> There is a lesson to be learned from the fact that Neidhart's songs continued to pass as satire despite the misunderstanding of the real subject-object relationship. Satire is not just opposition in the abstract to vice and folly and an attack against everyone is no attack at all. Thus I cannot concur with Gaier who praises Neidhart for satiric universality.(301-302)

Jürgen Schneider also finds fault with Gaier's interpretation. Gaier argued that the satiric persona's confession that he missed singing at the dance because he has an estate which requires his attention places the blame for the mirror's theft squarely on the singing knight's shoulders. This admission led Gaier to conclude that the listeners should recognize their own faults as mirrored by

the singer, which would motivate them to make positive changes in their behaviour. Schneider regards this interpretation as unsatisfactory.[14] He considers this reference to the singer's estate a technique the singer utilizes to remind his listeners that he sings for a living and they should be generous when they show their appreciation in monetary terms. The juxtaposition of this comment with the *Spiegelraub* should be viewed as a humorous effect (230-231).

What, then, is the key to understanding this scene? According to Schneider, the importance of the *Spiegelraub* is that for the first time, the only such occurrence in the summer songs, a peasant boor successfully, and intentionally, forces his way onto the singer's territory, in this case, the singer's girl Friderun. Schneider notes that Gaier makes a casual comment regarding this point but fails to realize its significance:

> Das Allerwichstigste streift Gaier nur ganz kurz in einer Klammerbermerkung(!): nämlich das Eindringen des Dörpers in die Liebesangelegenheit des ritterlichen Sängers--genau dies aber ist das entscheidende Moment: das Spiegelmotiv soll dokumentieren, daß zum ersten Mal (das einzige Mal in den Sommerliedern!) ein 'gebure',

---

[14] Jürgen Schneider, *Studien zur Thematik und Struktur der Lieder Neidharts*, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, eds. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher, Cornelius Sommer, no. 196/197 (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1976) 206.

nämlich Engelmar es wagt, in das Gesichtsfeld und in das Betätigungsgebiet des ritterlichen Sängers zu treten und zwar als gewaltsamer Nebenbuhler und gefährlicher Rivale, der in Konkurrenz mit ihm um das Werben der Dorfschönen tritt, mit dem offensichtlichen Ziel, ihn auszustechen.(209)

The knight's social prestige and privileges are being threatened by a peasant who has overstepped the class boundaries. Just as Friderun is robbed of the mirror, the singer is robbed of his social prestige. This shocks the singer and is a source of stress, and it explains his emotional and exaggerated response to the act: *wie sol ich gebâren? mirst an Engelmâren ungemach, daz er Vriderûnen ir spiegel von der sîten brach.* He does not appear to recover from this shock since, as we have seen, he refers back to this scene many times in subsequent songs.

This image of the peasant as rival and threat to the singer, introduced in the *Spiegelraub*, is developed more fully in the winter songs. Again Schneider:

In dem Spiegelraub taucht zum ersten Mal das Dörperliche ... mit all seinen späteren Konsequenzen für den Ritter als Konkurrenzbereich zum eigenen Machtanspruch auf--ein Konkurrenzbereich, der sich später in Nebenbuhlerschaft und Ausgestochenwerden durch die 'dörper' negativ auswirkt, d.h. daß dieser Ritter als Verlierer aus diesem Konkurrenzkampf

herausgeht--so wie dies die Winterlieder in ständiger Wiederholung und in zahllosen Variationen demonstrieren.(210-211)

In the winter songs the knight is forced into conflict by the peasants. He must fight for what traditionally belonged to him merely because he is a member of the knightly class. The peasants challenge his power, his right to the women, and the singer is continually defeated by the peasant boors. The singer's anger and frustration are evident. Time and again in the winter songs, he refers back to the *Spiegelraub*--the scene of his first defeat--when he cannot contain his anger any longer.

What message, if any, is the singer attempting to convey in the *Spiegelraub*? Why does he use it as a springboard for the boorish, intrusive, violent *dörper* theme in the winter songs? Is it a reality the poet finds threatening? Schneider is cautious not to seek the biographical or historical reality in Neidhart's songs and distances himself from critics who do. However, he does suggest that perhaps the songs, to a certain extent, were influenced by the politics of the time.

Literatur übt hier eine Ventilfunktion aus, und zwar in dem Sinne, daß das in der historischen Faktizität nicht mehr aufzuhaltende Vordringen des Bauern in den sozial privilegierten Lebens- und Betätigungsraum des Ritters in der Dichtung Neidharts in den ohnmächtigen

Haßausbrüchen des ritterlichen Sängers sublimiert wird.(227)

Schneider is not equating the poetry with reality, or the singer with the poet Neidhart, but he is acknowledging that poets do not write in a vacuum.

Although Schneider has taken a cautious and conservative approach in his interpretation, it nevertheless raises some questions. If Neidhart and the singer are not one and the same, can one conclude that the singer in *SL* 22 is asking his audience to be generous in their pay when he speaks of his poor financial state? *ich muoz ein hûs besorgen, daz mich sanges wendet manegen morgen*. In this example, one cannot distinguish between the two.

Schneider himself admits there appears to be an incongruity; however, he also believes that the first person singer possesses a multi-dimensional character. He expresses himself on many levels, and at times this means he expresses himself as Neidhart, the person who wants pay for his songs (233).

An interpretation that takes an approach different from the above will end this chapter on critics' responses to the *Spiegelraub*. Most of the above presentations have attempted to understand the *Spiegelraub* scene and its ensuing leitmotif in relation to the symbolism of the mirror itself. Surely the key to understanding the *Spiegelraub* lies in deciphering the mirror's symbolism. Why did Neidhart choose

an object which had such rich associations attached to it in medieval times? Its ability to reflect images--accurate, distorted, satirical, upside-down--and its multivalency have kept critics guessing and debating its intended use for decades.

In *Spiegelraub und rote Stiefel. Selbstzitate in Neidharts Liedern*, Elisabeth Lienert agrees that the mirror is brimming with symbolism and this is exactly why Neidhart chose it to build his leitmotif.[15] He plays with the opportunities presented by the mirror as metaphor, spins it into a leitmotif, and ultimately uses references to the *Spiegelraub* in later songs to introduce new characters and motifs. "Auch der symbolisch überhöhte Spiegelraub bildet letztlich keine Ausnahme; vielmehr fungiert dieses Motiv gerade als Hauptanknüpfungspunkt für neue Motive. Der Dichter selbst spielt mit der symbolischen Bedeutung des Vorfalls" (13).

Lienert views the mirror as a tool--a method--the poet utilizes to spin his tales for the audience, but surely we must regard this symbol as much more complex. It almost appears as the epitome of the Neidhart corpus. This will be examined more closely in the following chapter which will investigate the structure of the songs, the roles of the characters, and Neidhart's style of *imitatio*.

---

[15] Elisabeth Lienert, "Spiegelraub und rote Stiefel. Selbstzitate in Neidharts Liedern", in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 118 (1989): 1-16.

CHAPTER 5
THE MIRROR AS STRUCTURAL AND STYLISTIC FEATURE

The previous chapters examined the mirror as leitmotif and symbol within the context of Neidhart's songs. This chapter will investigate the significance of the mirror as a structural feature of the poems. The key to understanding these structural features lies in the idea of the *Spiegelraub*. It will be argued that the singer of the songs himself steals a mirror--the mirror of *Minnesang*, which could represent ideal love, a lady of high birth, virginity, or spiritual contemplation. In his songs, the singer has robbed the mirror of its true reflection. This discussion will investigate how the poet steals from other medieval writers and presents the reader with a distorted reflection of the borrowed material. It will also examine how the characters in Neidhart's songs reflect, reverse, and exchange the various roles of *Minnesang*.

The concept of imitation, "the adoption of tone, style and attitude of another writer" was common in the Middle Ages.[1] It is evident that Neidhart was not a stranger to

---

[1] "The primacy of the mirror as metaphor can thus be explained both by the nature of the prevailing world-view and by the specific nature of the mirror. Preference for the mirror was, for one thing, fostered by the universal validity of the principle of *imitatio* throughout the Middle Ages and (continued...)

this technique; the preceding chapters have already demonstrated that Neidhart borrowed the language and imagery of *Minnesang*.[2] Not only did he borrow and distort these *Minnesang* images, but he acknowledged and symbolized this in the *Spiegelraub*. Just as Engelmar violently snatched the mirror from Friderun, the poet steals the mirror, a primary icon of courtly society, thereby robbing it of its true reflection, and he replaces it with distorted images.

The theft of the mirror symbolizes a spurning of the courtly/ideal love of *Minnesang*. The realm of love is now played out in the peasant rather than the courtly milieu. The *Minnesang* roles--pursuer (knight), pursued (lady of high birth), *huote* (society as moral watchdog)--have been reversed in the summer songs. Here the village girls take on the role of pusuer while the knight is being pursued. The poet observes the class system of *Minnesang* in his summer songs in that the pursuer (the village girl) is of a lower social station than the object of desire (the knight). The mothers of these girls play a dual role. In some instances they assume the role of *huote*, in which they plead with their daughters not to associate with the knight but rather choose a boy from their own class (*SL* 15, 16, 18, 19,

---

[1](...continued)
the Renaissance. Central here was the re-creation of the pre-existent: ..." (Grabes, 226-228).

[2] Similarities and quotes of his contemporaries that appear in the songs have been documented by Edmund Wiessner in *Kommentar zu Neidharts Liedern*.

21, 23). In other situations the mothers are the ones who have been struck by love/lust and feel compelled to follow their feelings. In these scenes, the daughters switch roles with their mothers and act as *huote* when the mother is in hot pursuit of the knight (*SL* 9, 17). This distorted reflection of *Minnesang* roles enables the poet to subvert the traditional interaction between the pursuer and pursued; thus the spiritual love presented in *Minnesang* now can become a purely physical one.

The characters of Neidhart's songs resume their traditional roles in the winter songs, but a different kind of distortion takes place within these roles. The singing knight reverts to his role as a traditional *Minnesänger* and laments his lack of success at the hands of his reluctant lady. He is a master of deception in this role, for when the audience is first exposed to the beautiful language and imagery he utilizes, it is likely to conclude that the winter songs emulate *Minnesang*. This, of course, is the singer's intent. He builds the tension through his lamentations and then releases it with the startling revelation that the unidentified reluctant lady, *min vrouwe* (my lady) or *die guote* (the good one), is a village girl. There are further distorted reflections of *Minnesang* in the winter songs. As in *Minnesang*, *huote* is a significant aspect of the winter songs, and the peasant boys are assigned this role. *Huote*, which in *Minnesang* comprises a

strict code of ethics and the watchful eye of society, is now portrayed by carnal peasants. They keep the knight from succeeding in love through their rivalry. The singer's response to his peasant rivals, or *huote*, is another distortion of the behaviour expected of a traditional *Minnesänger*. Whereas the language he utilizes to describe the "lady" bears a strong resemblance to *Minnesang*, his description and defamation of the peasant boys do not. His crude depiction of the peasant boys stands in stark constrast to the language used to describe the "lady" and is an indication of the singer's inability or lack of desire to respond to *huote*, his rivals, in a manner befitting a *Minnesänger*.

The peasants play a dual role in the winter songs. The first, as described above, is the part of *huote*. As *huote* they are the knight's rivals and prevent him from succeeding at *Minnedienst*; as rivals, they also take on the role of pursuers. By placing the peasant boors in the pursuer role, the poet adds a new dynamic to the scene, and it enables him to wildly distort the image of the traditional *Minnesang* suitor. Examples of the peasants' boorish behaviour as suitors have already been given in the preceding chapters.

It has been noted above that in the winter songs the part of the *Minnesang* "lady" has been assigned to the peasant girls. In general, they provide a fairly accurate reflection of their counterparts in *Minnesang* in that they

remain unnamed, are generally passive, and do not respond to the singing knight's pleas for love and recognition. However, as with all the other characters in Neidhart's songs, the "lady" receives her own unusual features which distinguish her from the lady of *Minnesang*. In *WL* 16 the peasant lady defiantly tells a boor she would rather lose her possesions than look into his mirror. She adds that she has three mirrors herself each of which she prefers over his. Another example of a defiant lady can be found in *WL* 9 in which the knight has stolen a glass stylus from his lady. She diplays no passivity as she turns on him in anger and declares that he had no reason to steal her stylus and hence she will refuse to be his dance partner.

Minne, love, has also been assigned a number of different roles in Neidhart's songs. One can sense a celebration of promiscuity in the summer songs as young and old women alike feel the fever of spring settling into their limbs. However, within the midst of this fervour the poet offers a reflection of the *Minne* of old and the *Minne* of his poetic reality. In *SL* 28 two young women engage in discourse. One finds joy in the coming of spring and love, while the other complains that men no longer possess the law of honour to secretly solicit women's hearts. She will abstain from false love.[3]

---

[3] *"Trûtgespil, nu swîge, niht verlius dîn lêren! / ob ich dir noch hilfe dîne vröude mêren, / wer mêret mir die mînen?*
(continued...)

In the winter songs, one can recognize the love found in *Minnesang* when the singer laments his lady's indifference, and this serves as a constrast to the peasant boys' lustful understanding of love as well as the singer's behaviour when he taunts and ridicules the peasants. *Minne* herself becomes a target of the singer's frustration when he accuses her of indiscriminate behaviour. In *WL* 34 he speaks of how *Minne* has lost her honour because she gives herself freely to members of a lower class rather than serving the knight first. Clearly the knight is interested only in seeing that his own needs be satisfied.[4]

According to Jutta Goheen, the characters in Neidhart's songs can also reflect changes in nature. The *Natureingang* of the songs is either joyful or sad, and the atmosphere created by the *Natureingang* is reflected not only in the situation which follows but also in the characters of the songs. "Selbst die Unterschiede zwischen dem Sommer- und

---

[3](...continued)
man sint niht in êren, / daz si tougen unser minne gern. / ich wil von in valscher minne enbern. / die site wellent sich verkêren."(33,3 - 33,8)
The concept of false love can also be found in Heinrich von Veldeke, Walther von der Vogelweide, Gottfried von Strasburg. See Wiessner, *Kommentar zu Neidharts Liedern*, 75-76.

[4] *ich muoz mich ze manegen stunden vür dich [minne] schamen. / dû verliusest dicke dînen riutelstap. / daz dû swachen vriunden gîst dîn haerîn vingerlîn, / dêst dîn êre kranc. / daz dû, vrouwe, habest undanc! / in dîn haerîn vingerlîn ein kneht den vinger dranc. / Daz siz niht dem ritter an den vinger stiez, / dô iz in der niuwe und in der wirde was! / dannoch hete siz dem knehte wol vür vol gegeben.*(96,33 - 97,2)

dem Winterbild lassen sich im Menschenbild nachziehen."[5] The sensual, fertile girls reflect the characteristics of summer, and the stormy, dark, confrontational boys the season of winter.

The above discussion has demonstrated how the mirror is not only the central symbol of Neidhart's songs but also a central structural feature. The poet steals the mirror and its reflection of traditional *Minnesang*, and creates a new reflection for his own work. The singing knight and the peasant men and women assume, exchange, and reflect the various roles of traditional *Minnesang* which produces an unconventional and sometimes confusing dynamic. Delving into Neidhart's work is like walking into a house of mirrors. One is confronted with a multiplicity of mirrors and reflections no matter in which direction one turns, and it is impossible to determine which way is out.

---

[5] Jutta Goheen, "Natur- und Menschenbild in der Lyrik Neidharts," in *Beitrage zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 94 (1972) 377.

CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the mirror as symbol, leitmotif, and structural feature in poems of Neidhart and the "Neidhartianer". This study has not attempted to determine which of the songs within the Neidhart corpus can be directly traced to Neidhart, who continues to remain an unknown entity, but rather seeks to show the different ways the mirror might have been understood by the medieval poets who contributed to the Neidhart tradition, and whose poems/verses are included in the Neidhart corpus. The description of the songs in Chapter 1 demonstrated that regardless of the originator, the songs share common themes, characters, satirical situations, language, and imagery; traditional *Minnesang* is used as a point of departure.

Chapter 2 examined the song containing the *Spiegelraub* scene. Two things became apparent: first, the singer states that he is distressed because Engelmar tore the mirror from Friderun's side, a declaration which is difficult to judge with respect to its sincerity in the song in question; two, the singer does not reveal why the theft of the mirror should cause him such distress. It is impossible to attempt to decipher the secret of the mirror based solely on *SL* 22 because of the fact that one of its functions is to serve as

a leitmotif in other songs. Any exploration of this motif must include the broader context of these other songs.

Chapter 2 also examined four other scenes within the Neidhart oeuvre in which an object is taken away from a peasant girl in order to determine whether the significance of this event lay in the act of seizing or in the object which was taken. It became evident that it was a combination of the two since the mirror is the only object which is fully developed into a leitmotif, and the act of stealing also is referred to in other songs. These scenes involving stolen objects all take place in the winter songs and carry a darker, cruder, and more insulting tone than the scene in *SL* 22. Whereas the singer's distress in *SL* 22 sounds genuine, the scenes in the winter songs are delivered in a scornful and patronizing manner. This already sets the *Spiegelraub* apart from the scenes in which other objects are taken from peasant girls.

The focus of Chapter 3 was a study of the other *Spiegelraub*/Engelmar/Friderun references found throughout the songs, specifically the winter songs and two of the summer songs. The most frequent reference is to Engelmar and how other peasant boors remind the singer of Engelmar. They are as bad as or worse than the one who stole the mirror from Friderun. Presenting the *Spiegelraub* and/or the characters involved in the *Spiegelraub* scene in these other circumstances creates a whole new, confusing, context around

the mirror, its theft, and the singer's response to the event. Was the *Spiegelraub* a pivotal point in the singer's life? Was he, in fact, distressed at the occurrence? Why were the mirror and the scene surrounding the mirror developed into a leitmotif, and not one of the other objects taken from a girl? How did the poet want the mirror imagery to work?

It is apparent that Neidhart was familiar with the rich and multivalent symbolism of the mirror, for it is used three other times within the oeuvre in a context different from that of the *Spiegelraub*. These mirror references were examined in Chapter 3. In these scenes the mirror symbolizes erotic love, or it describes the kind of man who is worthy, or unworthy, of being the eye's delight of a lady. This imagery is also common to *Minnesang*.

The critics' response to the *Spiegelraub* is as varied as the mirror's symbolic meaning in medieval literature. Chapter 4 began with a brief discussion of the earlier interpretations which attempted to reconstruct Neidhart's life through his poetry. The *Spiegelraub* was understood literally: it told the story of an unhappy love relationship of the poet Neidhart von Reuental. In later interpretations, critics believed the mirror symbolized the decline of courtly society and the rise of the peasant class. It is only in more recent studies that scholars attempted to decipher the meaning of the mirror by examining

its symbolism within the context of medieval literature, specifically traditional *Minnesang*, and also by focussing on the reflecting function of mirrors.

Interpretations following this line of thought fall on all points of the continuum. The mirror was understood as a means of restoring social order because its function is to reveal that which is not normally seen, which is the true reflection or identity of the viewer (Goldin). A different approach was used by Kaiser who, through a complex process of comparison with a Morungen song, concluded that Neidhart utilized the mirror, by means of its reflecting function, to mourn the decline of *Minne* culture.

A significant portion of the discussion was devoted to Gaier and his detailed analysis of the satirical nature of the mirror. He postulated that Friderun's mirror was utilized as a satirical mirror in which Neidhart's audience, the nobility, should recognize themselves and their folly and be moved to self-improvement (Gaier). Gaier had many critics and Chapter 4 included an investigation of their points of view.

The chapter concluded with a position that acknowledged the importance and symbolism of the mirror in medieval literature and proposed that this is exactly why Neidhart chose it as his leitmotif (Lienert). The poet himself plays with the imagery and symbolism and utilizes the mirror to introduce new scenes and motifs. Considering the wealth and

variety of interpretations surrounding the mirror, it is easy to become overwhelmed by the diversity in points of view. The present discussion has attempted to present a reasoned and coherent overview the vast body of literature surrounding the mirror and the *Spiegelraub*. There may appear to be no rhyme or reason to the way Neidhart and the "Neidhartianer" manipulated the mirror in the songs, but the issue is certainly more complex than such a view leads one to believe. This is especially evident when one considers that the songs, characters, and themes are based on the reflection and imitation of Minnesang, as has been explained earlier.

The mirror was chosen as an image and leitmotif precisely because it evokes innumerable and diverse associations. In stealing the mirror and its reflection of traditional *Minnesang*, the poet is able to create a new reflection for his own work, but it is a reflection that still includes all the associations of *Minnesang* and courtly society in the eyes of the audience. In this way, Neidhart and the "Neidhartianer" were able to change and mold this symbol and make it their own.

APPENDIX A

TRANSMISSION OF THE MANUSCRIPTS OF NEIDHART AND THE "NEIDHARTIANER"

Each description will include: the name of the text; where the manuscript is currently stored; when and where it originated; and how many stanzas it contains.[1]

MS.A: "Kleine Heidelberger Liederhandschrift: (vellum), *Cod. pal. germ.* 357, University Library of Heidelberg, compiled in the late 13th century, probably in Strasbourg, 35 authentic stanzas, 4 spurious stanzas.

MS.B: "Weingärnter Liederhandschrift" (vellum), *Cod.* HB XIII 1, Wurttemberg Regional Library in Stuttgart, compiled around the turn of the 13/14th century in Constance, 30 authentic stanzas, 47 spurious stanzas, plus 3 belonging to Konrad von Kilchberg.

MS.C.: "Große Heidelberger Handschrift" (vellum), *Cod. pal. germ.* 848, compiled in the first third of the 14th century in Zurich, 143 stanzas, 90 spurious stanzas.

MS.C : 3 vellum sheets, *Cgm. 5249,26*, Bavarian State Library in Munich, compiled in the 14th century in Würzburg, 19 authentic stanzas, 7 spurious stanzas.

MS.G: 2 vellum sheets originally owned by Franz Gieshaber of Rastatt, now missing, compiled in the 14th century, place unknown, 9 spurious stanzas, some incomplete.

---

[1] Hanns Fischer in the Introduction to *Die Lieder Neidharts*, IX-XV. (See Introduction, n.2.)

MS.K: 1 vellum sheet discovered by G. von Bretschneider, now missing, compiled in the first half of the 14th century in the Middle German dialect, place unknown, 6 authentic verses.

MS.M: "Codex Buranus" (vellum), *Clm.* 4660, Bavarian State Library in Munich, compiled before the middle of the 13th century in Upper Bavaria, 1 authentic stanza.

MS.O: 2 folded vellum sheets, City and University Library of Frankfurt, compiled in the 14th century in the Lower Rhein, 25 authentic stanzas, 9 spurious.

MS.R: "Riedegger Handschrift" (vellum), *Ms. germ. fol.* 1062, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, compiled end of the 13th century in Lower Austria, 365 authentic stanzas, 18 spurious stanzas.

MS.S: parts of 3 vellum sheets, Library of the St. Paul Benedictine Seminary in Lavantal, compiled in the beginning of the 14th century in the Bavarian dialect, place unknown, parts of 7 authentic stanzas, 4 spurious stanzas.

MS.c: *Ms. germ. fol.* 779 (paper), Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, compiled 1461-1466, probably in Nuremberg, 395 authentic stanzas, 703 spurious stanzas.

MS.d: *Cod. pal. germ.* 696 (paper), University Library of Heidelberg, compiled in the 15th century in the Swabian dialect, place unknown, 82 authentic stanzas, 50 spurious stanzas.

MS.e: *Ms. germ. fol.* 488, (paper), Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, compiled around 1530 in Würzburg, 7 spurious stanzas.

MS.f: *Ms. germ. quart.* 764 (paper), Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, compiled in the

second half of the 15th century in either Bavaria or Austria, 14 authentic stanzas, 247 spurious stanzas.

MS.fr: paper, Canton and University Library of Freiburg (Switzerland), compiled in the first half of the 15th century in the East Middle German dialect, place unknown, 22 spurious stanzas.

MS.h: "Liederbuch der Clara Hätzlerin" (paper), *Cod.* xA12, Knihovna Národního musea in Prague, compiled 1470-1471 in Augsburg, 7 spurious stanzas.

MS.k: "Liederbuch des Jacob Käbitz" (paper), *Cgm.* 811, Bavarian State Library in Munich, compiled in the first half of the 15th century in Wemding (near Donauwörth), 11 spurious stanzas.

MS.ko: "Kolmarer Liederhandschrift" (paper), *Cgm.* 4997, Bavarian State Library in Munich, compiled around 1460 in Rhine Franconian area, 7 spurious stanzas.

MS.m: *Clm.* 3576 Rhine-Franconia (paper), Bavarian State Library in Munich, compiled in the 15th century, probably in Augsburg, 7 spurious stanzas.

MS.p: *Cod. fol.* 260 (vellum), Burger Library in Bern, compiled in the 14th century in Strasbourg, 5 spurious stanzas.

MS.s: "Sterzinger Miszellaneen-Handschrift" (paper), formerly in the municipal archives in Sterzing (in an unknown location since 1945), compiled in the beginning of the 15th century in Tyrol, 16 authentic stanzas, 146 spurious stanzas.

MS.st: *Ms. V.u.* 85:2 (paper), Royal Library Stockholm, compiled in the 15th century, place unknown, 15 spurious stanzas, some incomplete.

MS.w: "Schratsche Handschrift" (paper), *Cod. Ser. nova* 3344, compiled in Preßburg, Lower Austria, 7 authentic stanzas, 156 spurious stanzas.

MS.z: "Neidhart Fuchs", 3 editions, the first eidtion compiled 1491-97 in Augsburg, the second edition 1537 in Nurenburg, the third edition 1566 in Frankfurt, 12 authentic stanzas, 341 spurious stanzas of which three belong to Oswald von Wolkenstein.

APPENDIX B

SOMMERLIED 22
R-manuscript

Der linden welnt ir tolden
     von niuwem loube rîchen;
dar under lâzent nahtigal dar strîchen:
si singent wol ze prîse
vremde süeze wîse,
doene vil.
si vreunt sich gein dem meien:
     sîn kunft diu ist ir herzen spil.

Si sprechent, daz der winder
     hiuwer sî glenget.
nu ist diu wise mit bluomen wol gemenget,
mit liehter ougenweide
rôsen ûf der heide
durch ir glanz.
der sante ich Vriderûnen
     einen wolgetânen kranz.

Di vogele in dem walde
     singent wünneclichen.
stolze mägde, ir sult ein niuwez tîchen.
vreut iuch lieber maere!
maneges herzen swaere
wil zergân.
tuot, als ich iuch lêre,
     strîchet iuwer kleider an!
Ir brîset iuch zen lanken,
     stroufet ab die rîsen!
wir sulnz ûf dem anger wol wikîsen.
 Vriderûn als ein tocke
sprane in ir reidem rocke
bî der schar:
des nam anderhalben

Engelmâr vil tougen war.
Dô sich aller liebes
gelîch begunde zweien,
dô sold ich gesungen haben den reien,
wan daz ich der stunde
niht bescheiden kunde
gegen der zît,
sô diu sumerwünne
manegem herzen vreude gît.

Nu heizent sî mich singen;
ich muoz ein hûs besorgen,
daz mich sanges wendet manegen morgen.
wi sol ich gebâren?
mirst an Engelmâren
ungemach,
daz er Vriderûnen
ir spiegel von der sîten brach.

Sîner basen bruoder
hiet sis wol erlâzen.
er kan sich deheiner dinge mâzen;
er ist ein toerscher Beier.
er und der junge meier
tuont ir leit.
noch hât sî den vriunt,
der imz die lenge niht vertreit.

Dar umbe wil si aber
ein Engelmâr vertrîben.
er ist ei gemzine under jungen wiben.
er ist ein ridewanzel,
in dem geu vortanzel.
sîn gewalt
der ist an dem reien
under den kinden manicvalt.

Der het ir genomen
in schimphe ein tockenwiegel.
daz hiet wir verklagt, niewan den spiegel
(der was von helfenbeine,
waehe, ergraben kleine),
den sîn hant
ir nam gewalticlîche;
dâ von al min vreude swant.

Ir sult mirz wol gelouben,
ich sag iz niht gerne:
diu spiegelsnuor die kom her von Iberne.
es was ein waeher borte.
niden an dem orte
stuonden tier
geworht von rôtem golde.
nie geschach sô leide mir.

TRANSLATION

The lime trees want to enrich
     their tops with new foliage.
The nightingales begin to sing.
They are singing beautiful,
     strange, sweet melodies,
many songs.
They are looking forward to the month of May.
     Its arrival is their hearts desire.

It is said, the winter
     lasted long this year.
Now the meadow is well mixed with flowers,
Roses on the heath
     are a feast for the eyes
with their splendor.
Of them, I sent Friderun
     a beautiful wreath.

The birds in the forest
     sing delightfully.
Proud girls, sing new songs.
Take pleasure in the good news!
     most all sorrows of the heart
will dissipate.
do as I advise you,
     don your festive clothing.

Lace yourselves up,
     remove your veils!
Let us dance in the meadows.
Like a doll, Friderun
     danced in her pleated skirt
among the others.
On the other side,
     Engelmar secretly watched.

When they had all paired up
     according to their inclination,
I should have begun to sing the dance song,
but at that time
     I was unable to begin,
and this at a time
when the delights of summer
     fills all hearts with joy.

They want me to sing,
     but I have a house to look after,
and this hinders me from singing many a morning.
What shall I do?
     I am outraged
at Engelmar
that he tore the mirror
     from Friderun's side.

His father would have certainly
     spared her.
He, however, is unable to be moderate in anything.
He is a village boor.
He and the young steward
     injure her.
Now, she still has a friend,
     who will not let him get away with this forever.

That is why Engelmar wants
     to drive her away again.
He is a buck among the young women,
he is a round dancer,
     he is the lead dancer in the entire area.
His strength
in the round dance
     is great among the girls.

In jest,
     he took away her doll cradle.
This we could have tolerated, but not the mirror
(it was a beautiful, finely-crafted,
ivory framed mirror),
which his hand
tore from her so violently.
     This is why my I am no longer happy.

You can well believe me,
     I do not admit this easily:
the mirror had a beautiful braided cord
that was imported from Spain.
     The ends of the cord were
animals fashioned
out of red gold.
     Never have I been treated so badly.

APPENDIX C

MIR IST GESCHEHEN ALS EINEM KINDELÎNE
Heinrich von Morungen

Mir ist geschehen als einem kindelîne,
daz sîn schoenez bilde in einem glase gesach
unde greif dar nâch sîn selbes schîne
sô vil, biz daz ez den spiegel gar zerbrach.
Dô wart al sôn wunne ein leitlich ungemach.
alsô dâhte ich iemer vrô ze sîne,
dô ich gesach die lieben vrouwen mîne,
von der mir bî liebe leides vil geschach.

Minne, diu der werelde ir vröude mêret,
seht, diu brâhte in troumes wîs die vrouwen mîn,
dâ mîn lîp an slâfen was gekêret
und ersach sich an der besten wunne sîn.
Dô sach ich ir liehten tugende, ir werden schîn,
schoen unde ouch vür alle wîp gehêret,
niuwem daz ein lützel was versêret
ir vil vröuden rîchez {rôtes} mündelîn.

Grôz angest hân ich des gewunnen,
daz verblîchen süle ir mündelîn sô rôt.
des hân ich nu niuwer klage begunnen,
sît mîn herze sich ze sülher swaere bôt,
Daz ich durch mîn ouge schouwe sülhe nôt
sam ein kint, daz wîsheit unversunnen
sînen schaten ersach in einem brunnen
und den minnen muoz unz an sînen tôt.

Hôher wîp von tugenden und von sinnen
die enkan der himel niender ummevân
sô die guoten, die ich vor ungewinnen
vremden muoz und immer doch an ir bestân.
Owê leider, jô wônde ichs ein ende hân
ir vil wunnenclîchen werden minne.
nû bin ich vil kûme an dem beginne.
des ist hin mîn wunne und ouch mîn gerender wân.

Heinrich von Morungen, Lied XXII (MF. 145,1), in *Des Minnesangs Frühling*, 36th ed., eds. H. Moser and H. Tervooren, (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1997)

TRANSLATION

Something happened to me, as to a child
who saw his beautiful image in a mirror
and continually grasped for his reflection
until the mirror broke.
Then all his happiness turned to sorrow.
I always thought I'd live a happy life
until I saw my lovely lady,
through whom I experienced happiness and sorrow.

Love, who increases the joy of all people,
you lead my lady before me as in a dream,
when my body has succumbed to sleep
and it indulges in this bliss.
I saw her splendour and radiance
more beautiful and noble than other women,
except that twisted
was her blissful, red mouth.

I experienced great fear
that her mouth should become so pale.
This is why I have begun a new lamentation
because my heart has never experienced such pain
before,
That my eyes should have to witness such pain
like a child who, lacking in wisdom,
sees his image in a fountain
and must love it until death.

Women who are more vituous and noble
heaven cannot even hold
like the lady, whom, because of fate's spiteful nature,
I must avoid, and yet stay by her always.
Oh sorrow, would that I were at the destination
of her wonderful, noble love.
But I find myself barely at the beginning
and so my happiness and also my hope is gone.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alewyn, Richard. "Naturalismus bei Neidhart von Reuental." *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 56 (1931): 37-69.

Behr, Hans-Joachim. "*Ich gevriesch bî mînen Jâren nie gebûren alsô geile...* Neidharts 'Dörper'-Feindlichkeit und das Problem sozialen Aufstiegs im Rahmen des Territorialisierungsprozesses in Bayern und Österreich." In *Neidhart von Reuental. Aspekte einer Neubewertung*, ed. Helmut Birkhan, 1-17. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH., 1983.

Bennewitz-Behr, Ingrid. *Original und Rezeption. Funktions- und überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien zur Neidhart-Sammlung R.* Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, eds. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher and Cornelius Sommer, no. 437. Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1987.

Beyschlag, Siegfried. *Die Lieder Neidharts. Der Textbestand der Pergament-Handschriften und die Melodien.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975.

Birkhan, Helmut. *Zur Datierung und Gliederung einiger Lieder Neidharts von Reuental.* Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungberichte, no. 273, 1. Abhandlung. Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1971.

_____. "Neidhart von Reuental und Sigmund Freud. Allgemeines und Spezielles zur psychoanalytischen Interpretation mittelalterliche Texte." In *Neidhart von Reuental. Aspekte einer Neubewertung*, ed. Helmut Birkhan, 34-73. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH., 1983.

Blank, Walter. "Junge Minne zu 'Alten Frauen'? Ein Problem des späten Minnesangs." *Literatur-wissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, n.s., 29 (1988): 23-33.

Böckman, Paul. *Formgeschichte der deutschen Dichtung*. Vol. 1. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1954. 176-211

de Boor, Helmut. "Die höfische Literatur. Vorbereitung, Blüte, Ausklang. 1170-1250." In *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Vol. 2, 4th ed., Helmut de Boor and Richard Newald, 292-370. Munich: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953.

Fritsch, Bruno. *Die erotischen Motive in den Liedern Neidharts*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, eds. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher and Cornelius Sommer, no. 189. Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1976.

Gaier, Ulrich. *Satire: Studien zu Neidhart, Wittenwiler, Brant und zur satirischen Schreibart*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967.

Giloy-Hirtz, Petra. *Deformation des Minnesangs. Wandelliterarischer Kommunikation und gesellschaftlicher Funktionsverlust in Neidhart Liedern*. Beihefte zum Euphorion. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1982.

Goheen, Jutta. "Natur- und Menschenbild in der Lyrik Neidharts." In *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, vol. 94, eds. Helmut de Boor and Ingeborg Schröbler, 348-378. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1972.

Goldin, Frederick. "Friderun's Mirror and the Exclusion of the Knight in Neidhart von Reuental." *Monatshefte. A Journal devoted to the Study of German Language and Literature*. 54, 1 (1962): 354-359.

Grabes, Herbert. *The Mutable Glass. Mirror Imagery in the Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*. Translated by Gordon Collier. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Haupt, Moritz. *Neidharts Lieder*. 2nd edition, revised by Edmund Wiessner. Leipzig: 1923.

Hermann, Petra. *Karnevaleske Strukturen in der Neidhart-Tradition*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, eds. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher and Cornelius Sommer, no. 406. Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1984.

Kaiser, Gert. "Narzißmotiv und Spiegelraub. Eine Skizze zu Heinrich von Morungen und Neidhart von Reuental." In *Interpretation und Edition deutscher Texte des Mittelalters. Festschrift für John Asher zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds. Kathryn Smits, Werner Besch, Victor Lange, 71-81. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1981.

Langen, August. "Zur Geschichte des Spiegelsymbols in der deutschen Dichtung." *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, 28 (1940): 269-280.

Lienert, Elizabeth. "Spiegelraub und rote Stiefel." *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 118 (1989): 1-16.

Mück, Hans-Dieter. "Fiktiver Sänger Nithart/Riuwental minus Fiktion = Realer Dichter des Neidhart-Liedtyps?" In *Neidhart von Reuental. Aspekte einer Neubewertung*, ed. Helmut Birkhan, 74-91. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH., 1983.

_____. "Ein 'Politisches Eroticon'. Zur Funktion des 'Spiegelraubs' in Neidharts Liedern der Handschrift c (MGF 779)." In *"Minne ist ein swaerez spil". Neue Untersuchungen zum Minnesang und zur Geschichte der Liebe im Mittelalter*, ed. Ulrich Müller, 169-207. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, eds. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher, Cornelius Sommer, no. 440. Goppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1986.

Müller, Jan-Dirk. "Strukturen gegenhöfischer Welt: Höfisches und nicht-höfisches Sprechen bei Neidhart." In *Höfische Literatur. Hofgesellschaft. Höfische Lebensformen um 1200. Kolloquim am Zentrum für interdiziplinäre Forschung der Universität Bielefeld (3. bis 5. November 1983)*, eds. Gert Kaiser and Jan-Dirk Müller, 409-453. Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag GmbH, 1986.

Müller, Rolf R. "On the Medieval Satiric Fictions of Neidhart and Wittenweiler: Fools for their Theme, let Satire be their Song." In *"in hôhem prîse". A Festschrift in Honor of Ernst S. Dick, ed.* Windor McConnell, 295-305. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, eds. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher, Cornelius Sommer, no. 480. Goppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1989.

Naumann, Hans. "Frideruns Spiegel," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 69 (1932): 297-299.

Obermayer, Susanne. "Zur Neidhart-Rezeption im Spätmittelalter." In *Neidhart von Reuental. Aspekte einer Neubewertung*, ed. Helmut Birkhan, 129-148. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH., 1983.

Ortmann, Christa, Hedda Ragotzky and Christelrose Rischer. "Literarisches Handeln als Medium kultureller Selbstdeutung am Beispiel von Neidharts Lieder." *Internationales Archiv fur Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, vol. 1. eds. Georg Jager, Alberta Marino, Friedrick Sengle, 1-29. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1976.

Paulson, Ronald. *The Fictions of Satire.* Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, [1967]. Quoted in Rolf R. Müller. "On the Medieval Satiric Fictions of Neidhart and Wittenweiler: Fools for their Theme, let Satire be their Song." In *"in hohem prise". A Festschrift in Honor of Ernst S. Dick, ed.* Windor McConnell, 295-305. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, eds. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher, Cornelius Sommer, no. 480. Goppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1989.

Ragotzky, Hedda. "Der Bauer in der Narrenrolle. Zur Funktion 'verkehrter Welt' im frühen Nürnberger Fastnachtspiel." In *Typus und Individualität im Mittelalter.* ed. Horst Wenzel. Vol. 4, Forschungen zur Geschichte der älteren deutschen Literatur, eds. Joachim Bumke, Thomas Cramer, Kalus Grubmüller, Gert

Kaiser, Horst Wenzel, 77-101. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1983.

_____. "Zur Bedeutung von Minnesang als Institution am Hof. Neidharts Winterlied 19." In *Höfische Literatur. Hofgesellschaft. Höfische Lebensformen um 1200. Kolloquim am Zentrum für interdiziplinäre Forschung der Universität Bielefeld (3. bis 5. November 1983)*, eds. Gert Kaiser and Jan-Dirk Müller, 471-489. Dusseldorf: Droste Verlag GmbH, 1986.

Ruh, Kurt. "Neidharts Lieder. Eine Beschreibung des Typus." In *Studien zur deutschen Literatur und Sprache des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Hugo Moser zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Werner Besch, Günther Jungbluth, Gerhard Meissburger, Eberhard Nellman, 151-168. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1974.

Schmidt, Margot. "Identitat und Distanz. Der Spiegel als Chiffre in der höfischen Dichtung des Mittelalters." In *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, n.s., 19. 233-235.

Schneider, Jürgen. *Studien zur Thematik und Struktur der Lieder Neidharts. Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Forschung. Neuansätze einer Interpretation der Liedaussagen unter literatursoziologischen Aspekten*. 2 vol. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, eds. Ulrich Müller, Franz Hundsnurscher, Cornelius Sommer, no. 480. Goppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1976.

Schulze, Ursula. "Zur Frage des Realitätsbezug bei Neidhart." In *Österreichische Literatur zur Zeit des Babenberger. Vorträge der Lilienfelder Tagung 1976*, eds. Alfred Ebenbauer, Fritz Peter Knapp, Ingrid Strasser, 197-217. Wiener Arbeiten zur germanischen Alterstumkunde und Philologie 10. Vienna: Verlag Karl M. Halosar, 1977.

Seeberg, Reinhold. "Das Ratsel des Spiegels." *Die Reformation*, 10, (1911): 137-139.

Seemüller, Josef. "Zur Poesie Neidharts(1908)." In *Neidhart*, ed. Horst Brunner. Wege der Forschung, no. 556. 1-11. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986.

Simon, Eckehard. *Neidhart von Reuental. Geschichte der Forschung und Bibliographie.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968.

_____. *Neidhart von Reuental.* Twayne's World Author Series, ed. Sylvia E. Bowman, no. 364. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975.

Strasser, Ingrid. "Neidharts Winterlied 23. Überlegungen zu Strophenfolge und Strophenschichtung und zu Neidharts poetischem Stil." In *Neidhart von Reuental. Aspekte einer Neubewertung*, ed. Helmut Birkhan, 225-251. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH., 1983.

Swift, Jonathon. Preface to *Battle of the Books*. ed. Sir Henry Craik, preface. Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1928].

Titzmann, Michael. "Die Umstrukturierung des Minnesang-Sprachsystem zum 'offenen' System bei Neidhart." *Deutsche Vierteljahres Schrift*, 45 (1971): 481-514.

von Morungen, Heinrich. "*mir ist geschehen als einem kindeline.*" In *Des Minnesangs Frühling*, 36th ed. eds. H. Moser and H. Tervooren. Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1977.

von Negelein, Julius. "Bild, Spiegel und Schatten im Volksglauben." *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 5 (1902): 1-37.

Wiessner, Edmund. *Kommentar zu Neidharts Liedern.* Leipzig: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1954.

_____, ed. *Die Lieder Neidharts.* 4th ed. Revised by Hanns Fischer and Paul Sappler. Appendix of melodies by Helmut Lomnitzer. Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1984.

Wittenweiler, Heinrich. *Der Ring*. Translated by Horst Brunner. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH., 1991.