

# *Semiramis*: An Early 11<sup>th</sup> c. Norman Text with Anglo-Danish Connotations Reviewed as a Dramatic Script

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This article discusses a text, a satire, in the manuscript *Paris, Bibl. Nat. lat. 8121 A*. Conveniently this section of the codex is called *Semiramis* (see Dronke 1970). Based on Dronke's (1970) and Gunnell's (1995) research, the article looks further into *Semiramis* and discusses whether staging rather than reading it comes with a profit. While discussing this hypothesis four major reasons why *Semiramis* would benefit from being read as a dramatic script and staged can be singled out. Although the play is a distinctly Latin *Semiramis* shows affinities with the Anglo-Danish culture of its day and age as well as with Eddic plays, especially *Skírnismál* and *Lokasenna* (see Gunnell 1995).

## Introduction

### The Manuscript

The text conventionally known as *Semiramis* is extant in the 11<sup>th</sup> century manuscript *Paris, Bibl. Nat. lat. 8121 A* (Dronke 1970: 77, 87).

In this codex all pages are equal-sized and systematically ruled with 34 blind hardpoint lines on each page (Ziolkowski 1989: 28; McDonough 1995: 63–65). As an 11<sup>th</sup> century manuscript *8121 A* was never finished. Three hands worked separately, and possibly simultaneously, with each their section.

The first scribe completed his task, fols. 2<sup>r</sup>–27<sup>r</sup>, leaving 27<sup>v</sup> blank. The second scribe completed his task, fols. 28<sup>r</sup>–32<sup>v</sup>. The third scribe began his task at fol. 33<sup>r</sup>, but stopped on fol. 33<sup>v</sup> leaving fol. 34 blank. The first two scribes copied five literary works and the third began copying a prose treatise on the making of organ pipes.

The first section consisted of three texts: two poems (498 and 160 verses respectively) by a poet called Warner mentioned in the opening salutation of each poem, followed by the play *Querolus*. The first poem is a narrative poem, a verbal abuse targeting a self-proclaimed Irish grammarian called Moriuhth (ed. McDonough 1995).

The second is a contention or a flyting (see Dronke 1970:76) between Warner and a runaway monk called 'Fran ...', possibly *Franbaldus*, from Mont Saint-Michel (Musset 1954:255-56). The first poem is usually called *Moriuht*, the second may for convenience's sake be called *Franbaldus*. The play *Querolus* is written in a *sermo poeticus* – a poetic language intended to imitate Plautus' meter. It is by an anonymous Pseudo-Plautus and composed in Late Antique Gaul (Jacquemard-le Saos 1994: LV, LXI & 120–122).

The second section consisted of two anonymous poems known as *Jezebel* (141 verses) and *Semiramis* (181 verses).

The four shorter texts are satiric in tone and invective. Moreover, *Moriuht*, *Franbaldus*, *Jezebel* and *Semiramis* seem relatively contemporary. Probably they were composed in the first third of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. There are verbal links between *Jezebel* and *Semiramis* and between *Moriuht* and *Jezebel* (Ziolkowski 1989: 32–37; McDonough 1995: 66–67). These links may or may not suggest that Warner wrote *Jezebel*. Dronke (1970: 81–83) pointed out stronger thematic relations between *Moriuht* and *Semiramis*.

It is beneficial following the analysis by Carol Clover concerning verbal Germanic contests and read *Franbaldus*, *Jezebel* and *Semiramis* as flytings, that is, as contests or verbal duels based on the exchange of insults and innuendo. In a flyting the winner is unquestioned (see Clover 1980: 465–467) and there is no physical violence involved in the outcome of a flyting (Clover 1980: 459–465).

In these dialogues, therefore, the contention comes to an end when one of the two persons engaged in the contest is silenced by the other. Warner gets the last word in *Franbaldus* and so does *Jezebel* as well as *Semiramis*. It has been suggested that the abusive language and the flyting perspective in itself represents links to Norse literature and culture. Generally speaking that is unlikely, inasmuch as the flyting is a widespread Germanic phenomenon with deep roots in oral culture (Clover 1980: 444–450).

The most obvious ties to Norse or Scandinavian culture are the links to the Norman and English courts. The dedicatees of *Moriuht* and *Franbaldus* are the Archbishop Robert of Rouen and his Danish mother Gunnor (*Moriuht* only) and Elisabeth van Houts (1992) has demonstrated that the persons behind the characters in *Semiramis* are Archbishop Robert, his sister Queen Emma, King Æthelred, Emma's first husband and King Cnut, Emma's second husband. Elisabeth van Houts suggested and Andrew Galloway (1999) argued convincingly that even *Jezebel* belongs in the political sphere of King Cnut and Emma. Galloway suggested that *Jezebel* was Cnut's first queen Ælfifu, whom Cnut put aside when he married Emma.

## A Pair of Dialogues

“End of the first book, beginning of the second”, says a caption inserted in the second section of the manuscript after the fifth line on fol. 30<sup>r</sup> in *8121A* (Ziolkowski 1989: 74, n141). What comes to an end is *Jezebel* a dialogue between a male interlocutor and a woman called Jezebel. It is “a dialogue based upon the antagonism between a sanctimonious interrogator and an irreverent, foul-mouthed responder” (Ziolkowski 1989: 47). The dialogue consists of 134 leonine hexameters introduced by a headline (referred to in a catch phrase already at fol. 27<sup>r</sup>:32) and two consecutive, parallel and fairly obscure three liners. The first states something about *sors* – ‘fate’ or ‘chance’ (ll. 2–4), the second something about *laus* – ‘praise’ (ll. 5–7). Rather than expanding upon the truth of these statements, the dialogue stands out a series of casual conventional questions and foreseeable burlesque answers. The dialogue therefore consists of a headline, an enigmatic prologue and a flyting.

That which *begins* on fol. 30<sup>r</sup> is the dialogue *Semiramis*, 181 leonine hexameters, edited, translated and discussed by Peter Dronke (1970 & 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 1986). This dialogue too contains a flyting inserted between a prologue and an epilogue. Originally, the above mentioned caption may have been intended to separate the two texts, but when they were copied into *8121A* they became a dyad – a pair of 11<sup>th</sup> century dialogues, albeit not under one headline. Even though their historical context is the same, female lasciviousness may have been a selection criterion when the codex was planned in the last part of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Dronke 1970: 76–77). Be this as it may, the scribe who copied *Jezebel* and *Semiramis* including the caption separating them, completed a specific 10-page task. The fact that he missed *Semiramis* l. 59 and had to add it at the bottom of fol. 30<sup>v</sup> suggests that he aimed at filling 323 verse lines from a manuscript in front of him into 340 ruled lines, thus combining the last and first text of book 1 and 2 of an unknown work. Since the lines as well as the caption, which can be scanned as a hexameter, were copied, the scribe may have worked automatically (Dronke 1970: 78). Unintentionally, therefore, he could have preserved the characteristics of the original manuscript in which the two texts were *separated*. Owing to the scribe’s line-by-line work mode, the fact that in *Semiramis* the dialogue is governed by marginal rather than internal speaker notations (Dronke 1970; Gunnell 1995: Fig. 89) suggests that these were not added by the scribe, but copied from the original.

## Drama and Speaker Notations

There is a textbook agreement that drama of sorts is imbedded all cultures. Drama is simply a form of cultural presence perceived as dramatic, that is, outstanding deeds

or events. Drama as a genre usual has an actor, but technically speaking he or she may be his or her only perceiver. Material agency on the other hand can make up for the actor as long as this agency is perceived as dramatic. When it comes to dialogues such as fictive flytings, there is nevertheless a great point in agreeing with Gunnell's (1995: 10–13) minimalistic definition of drama as a relation between actor and audience. This relation can be seen as an interactive one and may be written *performer :: perceiver*. In this perspective we may talk of a widespread dramatic tradition for instance in Late Iron Age Scandinavian burial customs. Beowulf's funeral (*Beowulf*, vv. 3137–82) and Ibn Fadlan's description of a funeral among the Rus, Montgomery (2000: 12–21,) are cases in point and some archaeological sources indicate the same, (Herschend 2003). A more general discussion of dramatic funeral rites can be found in Price (2012) or Gardela (2012: 229–233; 2013: 373–393). Funeral and burial contexts depend upon the simple notion of the dead being present on the pyre, in the boat or in the grave, and yet not present. As we are confronted with two worlds in one, that is, on the one hand a world of death and transition to the other world staged in front of us, and on the other the world where we sit or stand and the performers perform, then we experience a perceptual dyad. Even this interactive relation *parallelism :: confrontation* between two realities in the same space is fundamental to drama and cardinal to drama as fiction.

Funeral and burial contexts are often intricate installations forming a backdrop to complex ritual events with several actors or celebrants in addition to the dead. In this context the frozen moment of death that the mourners see on the face of the deceased is the fundamental constellation *performer :: perceiver* in a setting of *parallelism :: confrontation*. Since time during the performance is not governed simply by the present, the plays *temporal dynamism* – time measured on different scales in its different worlds – keeps the relationships and the performance together, especially in drama as fiction.

Although we need not doubt that drama existed in quite elaborate forms for instance in connections with funerals, a specific theatrical form is difficult to prove. One possibility is to look at written dialogues because they are a straightforward way of preserving the *parallelism :: confrontation* relation in a literary genre of which some dialogical mimetic plays may be extant.

The way a dialogical text is composed, structured and lay-outed has, among other things, to do with the way and by whom it was meant to be received. Evidently, being a manuscript, a dialogue could be read silently or aloud, spoken or sung in a gestic or non-gestic performance. And since there are so many performative ways of relating to a text, the divide between non-performatively and performatively based

receptions is a fine one. That this predicament of reception was felt at least among the upper-classes, c. 1000 AD, is hinted in a passage from *The Later life of Queen Mathilda* commenting upon a decision she allegedly took after the death of her best-beloved son Henry of Bavaria:

*Posthac neminem voluit audire carmina secularia cantantem nec quemquam videre ludum exercentem, sed tantum audivit sancta carmina x de evangeliis vel aliis sacris y scripturis y sumpta, necnon in hoc sedulo delectabatur, ut de vita vel passione sanctorum sibi cantaretur*

Henceforth she wished [to hear] no one singing worldly songs, nor see anyone performing plays; rather, she insisted on listening to holy songs based upon the Gospels and other sacred scripture and greatly enjoyed it when the lives and passions of the saints were sung to her. (Gilsdorf 2004: 111)

Whether Mathilda really changed her way of life is not important. It is the moral correctness of her change of mind that matters. However, one mustn't draw the conclusion that women at the Ottonian court in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century didn't themselves read dialogues. As Claudia Villa (1984: 99–108) has convincingly argued the following postscript at the very end of a manuscript of Terence's plays, shows that Ottonian upper-class women did indeed read and write: *Adelheit Hedwich Matthilt curiales adulescentule unum par esse amicitie* — “Adelheit, Hedwich, Matthilt, young women of the (Imperial) court equal to one in friendship”.

It is easy to imagine the pleasure these three literary ‘musketeers’ felt studying Terence together irrespective of their relative Queen Mathilda being against worldly songs and *ludus exercentem* where *exercentem* indicates that people employ themselves in working with plays.

A little earlier, c. 960, King Edgar drew attention to similar moral problems, when he saw the way cleric life was conducted. Things had gone so completely out of hands *ut iam domus clericorum putetur conciliabulum histrionum* — “that now the clerics' houses are an assembly place for actors”, that is, their scene. The King continues saying that this is well-known since *haec milites clamant; plebs submurmurant; mimi cantant et saltant in triviis*—“this the warriors cry, common people whisper; mimes sing and dance it on the markets” (Ogilvy 1963: 612–614).

Since there were plays and actors entertaining the upper classes, it is possible that the three dialogues in *8121A* were performed as theatre. Researchers, nevertheless, have been reluctant to accept theatrical plays. Hrotswit of Gandersheim, who

wrote plays in the vein of Terence, albeit with pious and religious themes *c.* 970, has not been accepted as a true dramatist and if her plays were indeed plays they were probably never staged. Katharina Wilson puts it thus: ‘most Hrotsvit scholars now agree that they were eminently performable.’ Full stop! (Wilson 1989: *xiii*). Performable, yes! Performed, not necessarily. One of the arguments why the plays were not meant to be performed has to do with the layout of the manuscript in which they have been preserved. The codex, which contains a substantial collection of Hrotsvit’s varied production, was sponsored by the Abbess Gerberga of Gandersheim – Henry of Bavaria’s daughter and thus Queen Mathilda’s grandchild – and dedicated to the Emperor Otto – Queen Mathilda’s son. The layout of the manuscript, however, doesn’t indicate that the plays were meant to be produced from the manuscript. This has to do with the speaker notations. They are internal, that is, they are a red capital letter inside the text column, primarily informing a silent reader of who’s speaking when the reader encounters them while reading.

In *Semiramis* the speaker notations are marginal, that is, they are moved out of the text column into the margin where a capital letter indicates who is speaking. If two people read the manuscript they look in the margin for the letter indicating their character and then they look for the capital letter in the corresponding line in the text column, that is, for the beginning of their line. The actor therefore looks, listens and waits for his or her turn. If there is only one silent reader moving his or her eyes in and out of the text column serves no rational purpose.

There are other ways of making it easy for several readers to read one and the same manuscript. In *Querolus*, e.g., the speaker notations are internal, but at the end of each line spoken by an actor, that is, in a gap before the next line, three, four or five larger bold capitals indicate the next speaker in overly ostentatious ways (see e.g. Barlow 1938: 87, 100 & Pl. 139). For a single reader these notations are unnecessarily ostentatious, but for readers who want to know when a certain character speaks they are most helpful.

When Terry Gunnell discussed internal and marginal speaker notations, primarily in Eddic dialogues, such as *Lokasenna*, *Skírnismál*, *Hárbarðzlióð*, and *Vafþrúðnismál* (1995:282ff.) he also discussed this phenomenon with a broader outlook. His earliest examples of this kind of manuscript were a much used Italian 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> century dramatic script of Terence’s plays (Prete 1970), and 11<sup>th</sup> century *Semiramis* (Gunnell 1995: 303). Gunnell concluded that unobtrusive *internal* speaker notations indicate a manuscript meant to be read by one person aloud or silently, while *marginal* notations were meant to facilitate rehearsal or a read-aloud performance of a dialogue.

*Franbaldus* has no speaker notations at all. The text itself introduces the two speakers, first by naming them in the prologue and later on by one addressing the other speaker as ‘you’ in the beginning of his lines. Warner, who starts, has seven lines and consequently the loser Franbaldus has six. Prologue and epilogue are spoken by Warner who addresses the Archbishop Robert and points to himself as Warner while doing so.

*Jezebel* is so firmly linked to its leonine hexameters that it has no need of speaker notation – invariably the interlocutor, who starts by addressing Jezebel in line 8, speaks the first half of the hexameter questioning her, Jezebel speaks the second answering him. The dialogue is ‘eminently performable’. Some find it an inexorable series of predictable commonplace and capricious questions or statements paired with lewd, ironic and haphazard answers (Dronke 1970: 78–80). Some read a brimming and bold poem in which “almost every line is a masterpiece of poetic skill” (Herren 1992: 508). The latter would no doubt have appreciated a performance of it as an entertaining burlesque flyting.

*Semiramis* is different. It depends on narrative structure, symmetry, climax, setting, properties, characters, timing, voices, word play, detail etc. Originally, therefore, the caption and the external speaker notions may have indicated a specific difference between the flyting from book 1 and the one from book 2.

Peter Dronke suggested that *Semiramis* could be staged as a mimetic drama by four speakers (1970: 87–100). He didn’t specifically discuss its codicology the way Gunnell did, and although Dronke thought that the “dialogue could have been enhanced by *stage business*”, he deemed that “clearly we cannot leap from what could have been to what was” (Dronke 1970: 86). Given that *Semiramis* was probably composed sometime between 1017 and 1037 (see below) and that the late 11<sup>th</sup> century codex *8121 A* copied an earlier play manuscript, *Semiramis* was originally designed as a dramatic script with marginal speaker notations. Thus, based on Dronke’s and Gunnell’s research, we can establish the overall structure of the script and read the text closely in order to discuss whether staging rather than reading it comes with a profit.

## The Narrative

Between four speakers: the prologue (no speaker notation), the augur Tolumnius (A), the queen Semiramis (S) and the god Apollo (a), the narrative unfolds on three different levels. Old myth dominates the beginning, 11<sup>th</sup> century satire the middle and general social and moral norms the end. The point is simple: the past reflects the pre-

sent and satirizing the present dressed as the past involves general social and moral norms.

To begin with the prologue, catches the interest of the audience by telling it about Queen Semiramis. She was married to King Ninus of Babylon, and during 'his times'—*temporibus Nini* or 'his day and age' she took a bull as her lover. Cunningly, the prologue indicates what several researchers following Elisabeth van Houts (1992: 20–23) have argued: Ninus of Babylon is King Æthelred of England, Semiramis is Emma, the Norman princess, the sister of count Richard II of Normandy and Archbishop Robert of Rouen († 1037). Jove, the bull, is King Cnut, who Emma married 1017 when Æthelred had been dead only 15 months (Keynes 1998: [xxi-ii]) and thus arguably still in 'his times', albeit *after* having been husbandless for 12 months as stipulated by the law (Thorpe 1840: 417).

After the prologue, an augur enters telling the audience that he is Tolumnius, Semiramis' brother. The audience gathers that the man must be Archbishop Robert of Rouen. This means that the play was meant to entertain an audience sometime between 1017 and 1037, perhaps after 1035 when Cnut expired.

Tolumnius is deeply troubled by his sister's conduct and by the fact she is dead. In real life, nonetheless, Archbishop Robert died 15 years before his sister. We may look at this as an inconsistency or the satirists' precaution or argue that in satirical and moral terms Emma died when she married Cnut or when he died. When he did, in 1035, Emma was forced to defend her position as a queen mother (Keynes 1998: [xxix ff.]). In a piece of illustrated political propaganda, commissioned c. 1040, her encomiast quoting Virgil likened Cnut in his 'great union' with Emma to Caesar who held 'divided empire with Jove' (Campbell 1998: 72–73). Indirectly referring to this view upon herself and Cnut her opponents could argue that politically she 'died' 1035 when Jove's Danish coregent died. Tyler makes it very likely that Emma, apart from commissioning *Encomium Emmae Reginae* was her encomiast's principle advisor.

Tolumnius, that is Archbishop Robert in Normandy, tells Semiramis that he wants to bring her back from Hades, which may be England after 1017 or her exile in Flanders in 1037 (Campbell 1998: xlvi) and beseech her to tell her secrets. Her lasciviousness in the past torments him, but it is difficult to explain why he must make it his business to bring her back, except to satisfy his own needs. Nevertheless, necromancy and divination become central. Tolumnius' mind is so confused that sometimes it is impossible to understand what he says, and even to catch his drift. It is significant, moreover, that although he has succeeded in making contact with Semiramis, otherwise the flyting would not have been possible, he has failed to bring her back from the dead. Not until she explains what must be done offering-wise, does

his divination go straight. Notwithstanding, Semiramis' involvement stresses Tolumnius because in the process he loses ritual control.

In the end, l. 156, Semiramis becomes visible, not as a palpable body, as the augur had wished, but in the only shape possible, that is, as a *figura* or a phantom. Seeing her, Tolumnius is carried away and foolishly he tries to touch her. She shouts at him not to touch her probably because physical contact is an offence in a flyting. Soon he falls silent. Semiramis has won the flyting and conquered the stage. Before she goes back to Hades she explains what happened once upon a time in Babylon: What she did in in the garden when Jove in the shape of a bull made love to her, was no more than any woman loved by a supreme god would have done.

Dronke (1970: 110) observed the intentional parallelism and contrast between the first and the last 19 hexameters. He talked of a 'symmetry-through-contrast', that is, 'binary opposition' to later generations. This opposition is so dominant that on the general level of myth and moral, the augur's part, satire and flyting, contributes nothing. The text makes perfect sense if we read the last 19 hexameters, ll. 163–181, as Semiramis' reaction to the prologue's allegations in the first 19 hexameters, ll. 1–19 (see *Appendix*). The flyting in-between the beginning and the end is just entertainment.

From the prologue's point of view, females and their sexuality seems easy to condemn and ridicule, but having read the satire the greatest problem concerning female sexuality seems to be the way it traumatises men like Archbishop Robert. Whatever men may think, the conclusion is obvious: to aristocratic women like Emma and indeed her Danish-born mother Gunnor (see van Houts 1999: 8–10) a successful social life is a matter of loving and marrying power in Babylon as well as in 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century Normandy and England.

Although he is deranged, the augur / Archbishop Robert represents the prevailing view of the Medieval Church when it comes to female promiscuity. Semiramis / Emma, on the other hand, represents a woman in a *hieros gamos* situation. *Hieros gamos* in the sense *sacred marriage* or *sacred sexual intercourse*, is "the technical term of a mythical or ritual union between a god and a goddess, more generally a divine and a human being, and most especially a king and a goddess" (Kees 2005: 3974). It is a widespread model of the ideal marriage and sexual intercourse (Kees 2005: 3974). In terms of Scandinavian research history this phenomenon is the conjuncture between structural marital norms, Lönnroth (1977), and the general myth about the fertile and oppositional heterosexual dyad as described by Simek (1994: 146). These perspectives are merged, for instance, in Steinsland (2006: 402–405), who emphasizes the complementarity of worldly power structure and mythic sexuality (see

Steinsland 1991: 237–239).

Emma's experience of sexual attraction and marriage is comparable to that of Brunhild in poems by Venantius Fortunatus' written *c.* 566. In these poems, composed to commemorate her wedding with King Sigebert, Brunhild is Venus' daughter destined for King Sigebert's *earthly* marriage bed (see Herschend 1998: 94–101, with refs.).

Emma's experience is also comparable to that of Virgin Mary in early the 9<sup>th</sup> century Saxon gospel harmony *Héliand*, ll. 243–338 (Murphy 1992; Herschend 2001: 64–68).

Furthermore it is comparable to Queen Mathilda's, in the *Older Life of Queen Mathilda*, late 10<sup>th</sup> century, inasmuch as she had saintly qualities already when she met Henry I and he fell in love with her (see Gilsdorf 2004: 41, 74–75).

Lastly, Emma's experience is comparable to that of the giantess Gerðr in the Eddic poem *Skírnismál*, vv. 17–38, when the giantess falls in love with the god Freyr (see Dronke, U. 1997).

*Semiramis* demonstrates that in early 11<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Danish England or in Normandy, that is, in the long wake of Scandinavian and Germanic folk religion as ideology (see e.g. Mensching 1964 on folk religion) this kind of woman, whether giantess, saint or simply human, could still be a protagonist. In orthodox Christianity, Virgin Mary is the only woman with a *hieros gamos* experience and hers is generic. In a typical non-Christian, but genuine way, Mary in *Héliand* and 9<sup>th</sup> century Saxony, forces Gabriel to describe the sexual quality of her intercourse with God's bodily strength before Mary, who to begin with thought that Gabriel was just an imposter, agrees to the *hieros gamos*.

## The Structure

Although the dialogue is sometimes obscure, its composition is all the more transparent. As a composition, *Semiramis* is divided into three parts each comprising *c.* 60 lines. These in their turn can be understood in relation to a tripartition (see Fig. 1). The first ninth consists of a prologue covering 19 lines. Then Tolumnius' introduces himself, but the first 20 lines of this 40-line part are a chaotic dialogue between the visible augur and the invisible Semiramis. She expresses herself abruptly one or two hexameters at a time (see Fig. 1). The central part, ll. 59–121, is a more balanced dialogue between the augur and Semiramis. It has a semi-strophic structure inasmuch as both tend to speak three hexameters at a time.

The Augur's second monologue, ll. 118–158, is a contrast to his first, ll. 38–58, and he becomes deranged giving it. In this second monologue, moreover, the author



Table 1. The relation in monologues between rhyming and non- or half-rhyming leonine hexameters.

Monologue section	Part of play	Rhyming lines	Non- & half-rhyming lines	Percentage Rh : (N-&H-Rh)
ll.118-157	c. 2/9 <sup>th</sup>	39	1	98:02
ll. 163-181	c. 1/9 <sup>th</sup>	16	3	86:14
ll. 38-58	c. 1/9 <sup>th</sup>	15	6	78:22
ll. 1-19 Prol.	c. 1/9 <sup>th</sup>	12	7	63:37

introduces Apollo as *deus ex machina*. At one point when Tolumnius' necromancy seems not to work he beseeches his master: "Why don't you comfort me Apollo?" Surprisingly, Apollo answers him. Dronke emphasized the dramatic stage qualities of this appearance (1970: 98), but not the oddity of his answer. Instead of answering his augur as a kindly father, he fobs him off and turns, for what it is worth, to his Olympic caseworker Fluxus (i.e. 'lax', Lewis and Short 1879: *fluxus*).

*In Libia fueram, tibi mox prestabo figuram.  
Fluxus ab Egipto miseram revocare memento.*

I was in Libya, soon I shall grant you her shape. / 'Lax'! Remember to call back the poor woman from Egypt.

These are purposeful satirical lines depicting a pagan god more or less as a worldly lord with a tight schedule brushing off a persistent supplicant. Dramatically speaking, this two-line Apollo travesty is a caesura in the augur's monologue that changes his mood if not his mind. He finishes his dialogue in 20 hexameters, ll. 138–157 and in line 156 Semiramis becomes visible. She interrupts Tolumnius in l. 158 and his speech becomes confused before she quells him in l. 163 and brings the satire to a balanced end with a significant monologue, ll. 163–181, which also serves as an epilogue. Together, prologue and epilogue bracket the spectacular central part of the play.

*Semiramis* is composed of leonine hexameters, which according to Bede tend to become monotone if they are not allowed variation (McDonough 1995: 58). Accordingly, mixing normative rhyming lines with non-rhyming lines was a popular solution to the problem. In *Jezebel*, there's only *one* non-rhyming hexameter in the dialogue, and monotony, therefore, is a matter of style adding to the satire's misogynic locker room qualities. In *Semiramis*, whose author uses half-rhyming hexameters in close association with the non-rhyming ones, variation is applied with dramatic intention (see Fig. 1).

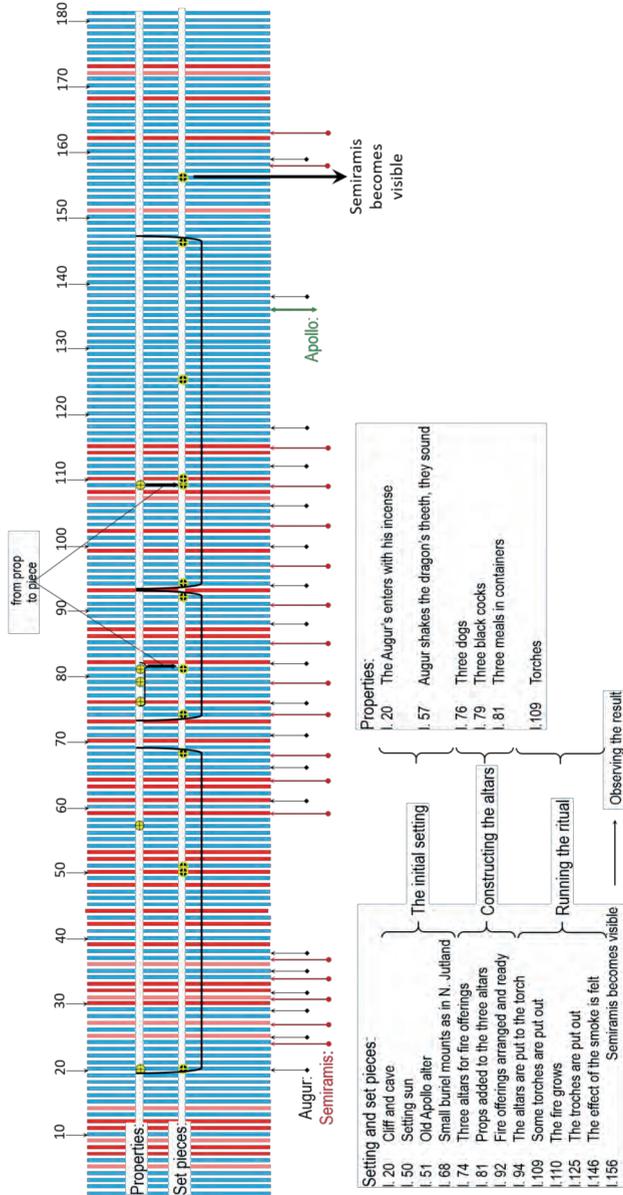


Fig.2. The introduction of set pieces and theatrical properties in Semiramis.

Although clustering was important *avoiding* non-rhyming clusters was equally important (see Fig. 1, l.5–l.14 & 30–33 & note). In addition, the dialogue itself, whether balanced or abrupt, gives rise to variation (see Fig. 1 ll. 25–38 & 59–119). Monologues, moreover, may contain the odd, a few or several non-rhyming lines, Tab. 1. Even sound play adds to oral variation, see *Appendix*.

The standard expression in the dialogues consists of a block of three hexameters. If a block is shorter, it signifies a statement, interrupting irony or snapping. The balanced central dialogue, ll. 59–121, is a three-line dialogue although it takes 20 lines, 59–79, before Semiramis falls completely into the pattern.

### The setting

There is no freestanding description of the setting. Instead, everything important is pointed out to the audience by the speakers. Thus, in order to direct the play, one must extract information from three different levels. The first concerns set pieces, the second theatrical properties and the third actions and movements on the stage. On the first and second level information about the setting is systematic (see Fig. 2).

The initial setting is a place where the dead may be recalled from Hades. Before a *figura* appears from the darkness of the underworld it can be heard although it is still – ‘bound down’ or ‘held back by the urn’, ll. 24 & 74. The concepts ‘cave’ and ‘cliff’ (see Fig. 2) are *not* specifically mention, perhaps because it would narrow down the possible stage solutions considerably, but the functions may nevertheless be inferred from ll. 20–68. The setting sun, the augur’s Apollo altar, a monument over his failed attempts to bring his sister back from Hades, and the burials must be visible. The prologue speaks in front of this cemetery setting, which is in unchanged until l. 74. The augur’s burning censer must be visible and his dragon teeth heard to rattle although (and because) these latter properties are to no necromantic avail. After l. 68 there are no hints to the initial setting.

Between lines 73 and 93 three altars are built into the initial setting. In essence they are small pyres on which a dog, a cock and an offering meal are placed. Preparations are painstaking and they come to an end in the middle of the play.

Torches are introduced to lit the pyres and because it’s getting darker. While running the ritual, ll. 109–156, the torches are put out as the fire grows in the pyres and the smoke carries away the offerings, l. 110. Aptly, without realizing how right he is, Tolumnius laments the paganism he envisages:

*Me facit insanum pecoris commixtio totum*

It makes me insane all this mixing of livestock (l. 94).

The logic of the play implies that nobody can interfere with the altars because the offerings and careful preparation has created a context in which the burning pyres themselves bring about divination. There is nothing to explain. Everything works as in a material narrative, the spectators look for themselves, fire and smoke is as real as the smell and the dramatic effect is obvious. The way this scene is performed discloses its affinities with the drama of a cremation funeral, which also transports the spirit of the dead (Price 2012; *Beowulf* vv. 1108–1124 and vv. 3137–3182; *Ibn Fadlan*, Montgomery 2000: 12–20). The stage, moreover, is reminiscent of the multifunctional Iron Age cemetery (Henriksen 2015). Amidst this dramatic scene evoked by smell and smoke as well as possibly prayer, Apollo speaks from his lofty Olympic office. He may or may not have been called forward because of the prayers, but ritual preparations, offerings, mixed livestock and Fate certainly played a decisive role. Twenty lines later Semiramis too becomes visible and we may conclude that visible/invisible is a dramatic opposition. Semiramis never returns to the human world because, as she points out: *Non est, crede, iugis concessus sermo sepultis*—“The buried, believe me, are not for ever given licence to speak” (l. 181). In practice the dead await Judgement Day in silence.

The three offerings are the most visual part of the drama and they make entertaining theatre. They require helpers building pyres, killing dogs and birds and arranging them on the altars together with the offering meal. Compared with one large pyre making three small ones (e.g. 0,75x0,75x1,0m) is indeed timesaving, manageable and stageable. The pyres are lit in line 110 and the stage crew has had c. 10 minutes, that is, the time it takes to perform the central dialogue, ll. 75–110, to prepare pyres and offerings in front of the audience while the actors speak. The actual killing of the animals and the cooking need not take place in front of the spectators. Three teams can build each their pyre, place the offerings on top of it and set fire to the construction. In line 159, these events are referred to by Tolumnius as *spetacles*, that is, ‘shows’ or ‘performances’ as seen by spectators.

Apollo’s appearance as a *deus ex machina* has obvious performative qualities and so have the varied dialogues and contrasting monologues. Even the contrast between the rational Semiramis and the deranged augur, have dramatic points, not least the opposition between opaque and transparent. The augur’s muddled lines, that is, when his speech becomes confused must be performed as expressions of his troubled mind. His last four lines are a case in point because they make both sense and non-sense:

*Sunt obscura nimis propera spectacula noctis.  
Investigo tuas sedes ubi rapta quiescas.*

*Sed ne respicias post posteriora relictas,  
Euridice loculos frustra post dorsa retorsit.*

They are obscure, far too fast, the night's spectacles / I search after your abode, where ravished you must rest, / but don't you look around at what you have relinquished, / In vain did Eurydice look back at places behind her back. (ll. 159–162)

Although Dronke (1970: 99) did find some sort of explanation for this the augur's 'palpably superfluous' piece of advice, the text *itself* is not coherent. It doesn't tell us who's here or there, resting where, looking toward Hades, Babylon or at the spectators or indeed forwards or backwards. Moreover, judging from their actions Tolumnius/Orfeus as well as Semiramis/Eurydice have nothing to do with the original mythic characters. The hexameters are obscure and in the end, the audience must concur with Semiramis:

*Fermentate, malis quæ pars tibi cum furiosis?*

Fermenting man, what part of you (seethes) with evil rage? (l. 165)

Cleverly, Semiramis suggests that his 'in-sane' – words are bubbling out of his mouth because some part of his body is decomposed by fermentation, that is, he is seriously ill.

## The Characters

### The Prologue (see Fig. 3 & Appendix)

The audience is put in a lewd mythological picture by a learned prologue equipped with moral guidelines. He has the capacity to judge myth correctly and a good common fostering sense. He knows that hearing about the loins of a bull will stain the reputation of young maidens engaged in spinning. That is why to begin with he suggests that these girls should temporarily be made deaf. If not, what we are about to experience will make them visibly ashamed. Having X-rated the performance and excited younger members of the audience, we are told about Babylon and King Ninus' wanton queen Semiramis. Her affair destroyed Babylon and by the likes of her, depravation spread. Semiramis personifies the whore of Babylon, that is, the mother of all prostitutes.

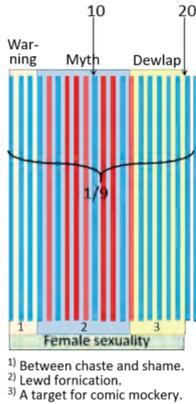


Fig. 3. The general structure of the prologue.

allegations with an honourable traditional and semi-pagan argument devoid of innuendo, the dispute reminds one of allegations and answers in *Lokasenna* in which Loki, although he often has a point, stands out as a fool while the women are sensible. From a satirical and dramatic point of view one could argue that the prologue acts like a proto clown making the maidens ashamed while claiming to protect them.

The prologue goes on without being carried away to make an ironic point: If queens and bulls indulge in fornication, why shouldn't it show? Why doesn't a cow wear the crown? Why haven't the genii supplied these queens with a dewlap reminding us of the bull whose dewlap deprived Semiramis' purple dress of its value when he mounted her as if she were a cow? The prologue makes his comic point indirectly suggesting a new fashion: a dewlap headgear that will forever remind us of the bull when he mounted the woman. The prologue is a miniature example or caricature of the burlesque poetry such as Warner's *Moriuh*t favoured by the Danish-rooted Norman aristocracy, that is, a poetry with affinities to equally burlesque Norse poems as discussed e.g. by van Houts (1983; 2000: 18–21), McDonough (1995: 21–22), and Ziolkowski (1989: 42–43). Since Semiramis answers the prologue's

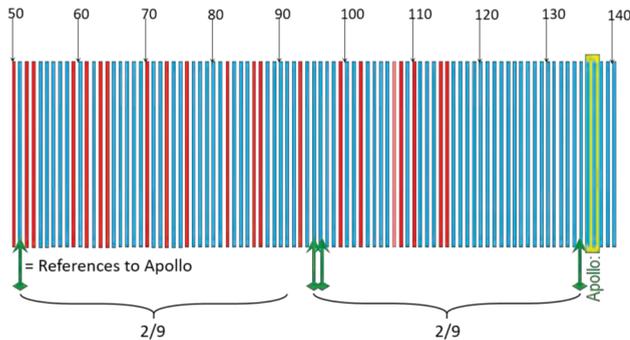


Fig. 4. References to Apollo and his appearance as *deus ex machina*.

**Apollo (see Fig. 4)**

Besides speaking his lines 136–137, Apollo is referred to three times by Tolumnius in ll. 51, 97 & 135 and once in l. 96 by Semiramis in response to the augur. She wonders what point there is in sending up prayers in Apollo’s name. Tolumnius is Apollo’s priest and indirectly Semiramis doubts the augur’s competence. Since Apollo’s disinterested attitude comes to the fore in his lines it would seem that Semiramis is right when she says: “Why bend your knees in front of Apollo’s altar?”

Apollo’s know-all attitude has a parallel in the Danish King Hrothgar in *Beowulf*. When the hero has landed his ship on the Danish shore, l. 258, he explains who he is and why his has come, first to the coastguard and later on to Wulfgar, the King’s messenger and servant. After 113 lines of explanation, Wulfgar presents the case to Hrothgar. Instead of discussing the pros and cons when it comes to asking Beowulf to enter, the King simply says:  *Ic hine cūðe cnihtwesende* —“I knew him when he was a boy”. That settles the matter, but for our benefit the King is kind enough to elaborate a bit on Beowulf’s family, his character and strength as well as on God’s doings, before he orders Wulfgar, as Apollo ordered Fluxus, to fetch the protagonist in question.

In *Beowulf* as well as *Semiramis* the audience notices the importance of the powerful king or god and the work of their servants: the coastguard, Wulfgar, the augur and Fluxus. Nonetheless, the two lords, the kindly aloof Hrothgar and the mildly bored (fate-forced?) Apollo, have settled each their case without the help of their ser-

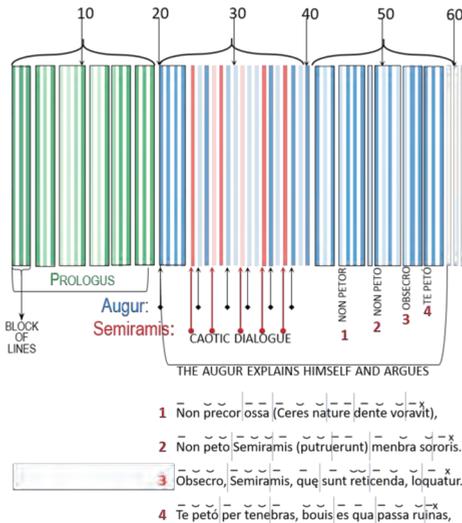


Fig. 5. The first part of the augur’s part in *Semiramis*.

vants because they themselves possess all relevant information. Consequently, both authors know how to create a decisive moment in an old-fashioned autocratic society. Contrary to the long-winded epic skald, the economizing playwright does it in a satirical way.

### The Augur (see Fig. 5)

Similar to Loki in *Lokasenna* and Skírnir in *Skírnismál* – dialogues that are considered to be plays (see Gunnell 1995 & 2006; Dronke, U. 1997; La Farge 2005) – Tolumnius' mind becomes more and more troubled as the narrative develops. All three males are obsessed with deviant sexuality and their preoccupation with sex and women, consumes them during the flytings they are engaged in. Loke is driven away as a pariah, Skírnir is reduced to mechanically repeating Gerðr and the augur is “drunk with Orestes' madness” (l. 163).

The augur's character passes through four stages. In the first he introduces and explains himself, ll. 20–59 (see Fig. 5). In the second he engages himself in a dialogue with Semiramis, ll. 60–118 (see Fig. 6). The third and fourth stage concerns his evocation of Semiramis, ll. 118–135 and ll. 137–162 (see Fig. 1). In stage three he despairs and in stage four after Apollo's intrusion he gains some confused hope, but that is soon crushed by Semiramis.

In the first stage Tolumnius has some kind of success, Semiramis speaks a few lines, but when she answers him he doesn't take up the dialogue. Instead, he continues to characterise himself and explain his own situation. Even when Semiramis poses a question inspired by the augur's self-pity, he doesn't answer. Instead he rambles on and it becomes up to the audience to figure out what this chaotic dialogue is all about. After a while Semiramis gives up on this disjoint conversation with an ironic one-liner:

*Orfeus Eurydicem quesivit carmine dulcem.*

Orpheus sought by song sweet Eurydice. (l. 37)

Orphean singing has never cross the augur's mind. Instead, he turns to the gods and starts to speak of Semiramis in the third person singular. Eventually ll. 56 – 59 he calms down in recognition of his failure. He turns to Semiramis, shakes some dragon's teeth and scatters some 'sibylline murmurs' while he waits for her to say something. His lines, aided by the sound of the teeth and the murmurs, create a *ritardando*, which Semiramis breaks with a freestanding, only slightly ironic comment that introduces a new scene:

Augur: *Ut credas verbis. dentes agitabo draconis,  
More Phitonisse tibi murmura spargo Sibille.*  
Semira: *Humanum non est perfecte posse cauere.*

A: That you may believe my word, I'll toss about dragon teethes.  
In the manner of a sorceress I'll scatter Sibylline murmurs before you.  
S: It isn't human to take the perfect care one wishes to take. (ll. 57–59)

Introduced in this way, the second stage, ll. 60–160, makes more sense as a dialogue because Semiramis decides to help her imperfect human brother arranging three proper offering pyres. In effect, therefore, Semiramis interrupts Tolumnius and takes the lead in the dialogue that follows because she can and because she is anxious to speak to the audience. In effect the dialogue develops into a clash between the augur's approach to necromancy seeking the support of Apollo, Minerva and Diana and Semiramis' approach compelling Fate. Since she is submerged "in the deep waves of death and the fabric of Fate" she knows that she can hope for no more than appearing as a pallid ghost summoned by the three offerings.

In this dialogue Tolumnius' mind is torn apart. In his agitated state of mind, he experiences alternating self-pity, disgusting offerings and shame. Yet he agrees to take part in the rituals. He wants his sister to return and admit to her shameful behaviour, but she points out that the rituals in which he must engage himself will not bring forth any shame on her part only the fabric of Fate and her phantom.

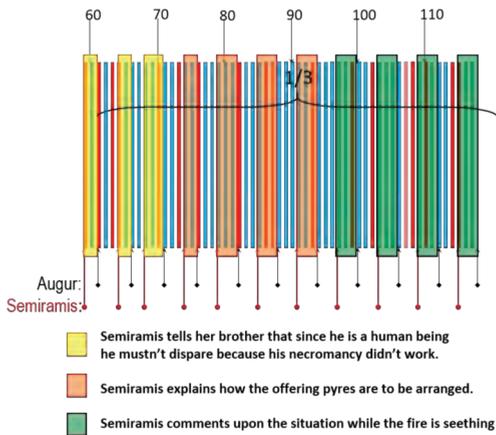


Fig. 6. The augur's and Semiramis' central dialogue.

In line 110, having lit the pyres *ebullit cursu furiosi pectoris ignis*— “the fire erupts like the race of the furious chest”. And since it is the augur’s fire that burns, the chest is his too. The chest with its ribs and spine is not just a metaphor for the seat of the mind, it also reminds one of an Iron Age pyre (Henriksen 1993: 100–101).

The evocation, which leads up to Semiramis becoming visible, falls into two parts – the augur’s monologue up and until Apollo’s two lines, that is ll. 118–135, and its continuation, ll. 137–157, up and until the augur is silenced by Semiramis. In the first part he tried his luck aided by fire offerings, but he didn’t succeed and turns to Apollo. After the god’s promise, the augur regains his faith and tries once again. This time Semiramis becomes visible, but not in the form the augur had hoped, that is, not as a palpable body. She appears exactly as she predicted and probably not owing to the augur’s evocation, but because of the preparation of the three pyres and the fire that predictably began to consume the correctly arranged dogs, cocks and meals. Apollo has deceived Tolumnius, while Fate has favoured Semiramis.

Although I agree with Dronke’s analysis of the relation between Tolumnius and Semiramis, (1970:88-9) I don’t think the augur is the high priest of Fate, l. 28, because *antistes*—“priest of a rite or a god” is both male and female, the priest might as well be Semiramis.

### Semiramis (see Fig. 6)

Tolumnius have jumped to the same misogynistic conclusions as the prologue. Semiramis on the contrary plays the part of a sane and knowledgeable person. In their first dialogue he hardly speaks to her. Nevertheless, he is unable to evoke her from the dead and set things straight. Semiramis drops out of this dialogue, but she starts the second one (see Fig. 6) by interrupting him because she wants to come forward, explain herself and correct the prologue’s misconceptions. Semiramis takes the initiative and the flyting draws to an end.

When Semiramis stops the augur in l. 158, effectively because he tried to touch her, he goes on to speak his last confused lines, which give him away as deranged. Probably, as Semiramis puts it he is *rabie potatus Orestis*— “drunk with Orestes’ madness”, that is, he has gone mad because he has been betrayed by his god Apollo (see *Appendix*).

Tolumnius forever silenced, Semiramis continues, ll. 163–181, emphatically to explain a simple fact: when a god like Jove wants to copulate with a woman, this will inevitable happen. As Semiramis points out with the simple clarity of a rhyming leonine hexameter:

*Quis prohibente deo, castus remeavit ab orto?*

—Who if the god forbids, will return chaste from the garden? (l. 176)

A truly Christian woman might have preferred to die, but as the prostitutes in Hrotsvit's plays demonstrate, repentance, albeit perhaps to death is also a solution at least in late 10<sup>th</sup> century Saxony, e.g. for the harlot Thaïs in *Pafnutius* (see Wilson 1989; 1998). Nevertheless, true to her divine status, a daughter of the love goddess Derceto (Archibald 2001: 38) and her *hieros gamos* experience Semiramis concludes:

*Me stuprante pio iuste peccavimus ambo.  
Lascivis penitus lex est ablata deabus.*

When the devout defiled me, we both sinned equitably.  
For goddesses wanton in their very heart, the law is null and void. (ll. 177–178)

### The Play *Semiramis*

There are four more or less important reasons why *Semiramis* should be read as a play.

THE PRIMARY reasons are facts that cannot be explained, if the text is not a play:

(1) The marginal speaker notations make sense only in a dramatic play manuscript.

(2) The augur's part and confused words add nothing important to the narrative about the conduct of queens. From the point of view of mimetic theatre, however, the augur and what happens around him and the way he comments directly upon it is central.

(3) Apollo's appearance has no necromantic relevance. However, as *deus ex machina* and a travesty his appearance is designed for satire and the stage.

(4) The augur's first two words are *Augur odoriferus*—“(I am) the incense-spreading augur” (l. 20). Incense occurs only here. In literary fiction an author may refer to incense at any time. In a staged play, however, the augur *and* his working censer must be brought on stage simultaneously, especially if the censer is a property with no part in the written narrative. *Odoriferus*, therefore, is a stage direction and the augur's material emblem, not Chekhov's gun.

THE SECONDARY reasons have to do with performance vs textual clarity and they are not equally binding:

(1) In a literary medieval text there is no reason to describe madness by means of inconsistent lines reminding a modern reader of stream of consciousness. Instead, the author is supposed to be in control of his or her text. If the lines are not coherent, orality takes charge of the meaning because no specific meaning is expressed by the words themselves.

(2) Likewise, in the first dialogue, in which Semiramis speaks one or two lines at a time without being able to connect to the augur, the irony of the situation becomes a problem. To begin with she is serious and in the *end* when she refers to Orpheus who, contrary to Tolumnius, actually took an interest in contacting Eurydice in Hades, she is ironic, but when does her irony start? Again this is up to the acting speaker to decide.

THE TERTIARY reasons have to do with setting and visual effects. They are not binding, but they add tremendously to the dramatic quality. The initial scene and the offerings (*spectacles*) are cases in point and so is the augur spreading his sibylline murmurs with his hands full of censer and a purse full snakes' teeth.

THE QUARTERLY reasons are many and esoteric, such as the oral qualities of word play, but nonetheless important.

For instance: the modular 20-hexameter planning of the text creates control of the time it takes to perform the dialogue. Consequently a given point in time such as Apollo's appearance as *deus ex machina* fits the time line and the rhythm of the play. At the same 'time' his appearance adds to its dynamic dimension. In the middle of the play, ll. 74–109, when the stage crew works with the preparations for the offerings, the dialogue, most conveniently, consists of freestanding statements and comments on the preparations. This slows down the dialogue probably in order to make its tempo fit the work on the stage when the offering pyres are prepared.

When the pyres start to burn the augur begins his second monologue stating: *Incipit obscuri nunc observatio voti*—“Now the observation of the dark offerings begins”. Standing in front of the pyres he observes and respects what happens because of the ambiguity of *observare* and the word play *obscurus* / *observo*—conceal / attend to (see Ahl 1986: 28–29, and pp. 19–25 on Latin word play & etymology, and Galloway 1999 on *Jezebel*). The tempo of his oral performance, therefore, is determined by the development of the cremation process. Then Apollo appears: the rites become successful, the augur regains hope and oral performance is back in charge (ll. 135ff.). *Deus ex machina* breaks the *ritardando* in the middle of the play and during the ensuing *accelerando* the augur goes mad. This, in its turn, paves the way for Semiramis to appear as *dea ex machina* crying out: *Ne tangas artus!*—“Don't you touch my limbs!” (l. 158), and finish the play with measured step and clarity – Epilogua opposing Prologus.

## Conclusion

In *Semiramis* the author's fiction makes a point of accommodating the interactive relationships between *performer :: perceiver* as well as between *parallelism :: confrontation*. The performers don't perform the characters they are said to create and the perceivers are supposed to interact with the actors, e.g., by laughing and being silent at the right time. The historical settings are meant to highlight the interactive relationship between parallelism and confrontation in two given historical situations that are both similar and dissimilar as well as true and untrue. The scene itself, that is, the audience visiting a pagan cemetery, is in itself an example of the interactive relation *parallelism :: confrontation*. In its turn, the contrast between the complicated historical events described in the play and the fact that it is but a short entertainment in the form of a fictional flyting constitutes the *temporal dynamism* that makes it possible for the audience to talk about the play as a coherent dramatical work.

This is why *Semiramis* stands out as a short satirical play that makes use of the flyting as related to fact, fiction and entertainment. In so doing, the play features (1) a pagan god who speaks to the audience, (2) a human representative of this god, the augur and (3) a mythological queen. Semiramis and the augur are a thinly masked modern human beings. The knowledgeable prologue bridges past and present. There are not many other plays to compare with. One, as it happens, is *Jezebel* since Jezebel is also a mythological queen interrogated by a priest. The prologue is part of the present and the setting is historical. Both women love the god *qui regnat in horto* – “who reigns in the garden” as Jezebel puts it in line 19 without naming the god. Semiramis tells us that he is Jove. Both Jezebel and Semiramis wins a flyting they have been provoked to take part in.

In the end, *Jezebel* line 135, the interlocutor understands that he is up against a woman with no mercy. He knows that Hell is full of fire and that we (and he) are let to our downfall, but he is prepared to die or as he puts it to ‘be dissolved’ (ll. 134–138). Instead of continuing to return the interlocutor's predictable backhands and forehands from her baseline, Jezebel takes the initiative in line 138 and tells the interlocutor that she, contrary to him, wishes to be joined in marriage before she is too old. Having been joined in marriage she will go to live among the *Numadae* – a pun that refers to nomads as well the ill-reputed Numedians – there she will display her tail like the bird of Juno – thus demonstrating her knowledge of Ovid (Dronke 1970: 80). In this metaphor there may be a reference to the original *hieros gamos* between Jove and Juno, but the point is that the Phoenician princess Jezebel, presently King Ahab's queen, is triumphant and her future among the *Numadae* a splendid one. The interlocutor, on the other hand, will hang up his garments to show that he has escaped

Pyrha's snares like the sailor who survived the storm – thus demonstrating his knowledge of Horace (Dronke 1970: 80) – before he will eventually die (Ziolkowski 1989: 160–163). The interlocutor withdraws because he has just lost the flyting inasmuch as he managed only to survive the storm. He could not tame it. Jezebel, the untamed storm, proceeds into the future because she has won the flyting.

It seems a significant clue to who Jezebel is that as a remarried woman she will join the *Numadae* because the dyad *nomads* & *numidae* stands out as a befitting metaphor, used ironically, for Vikings and Danes. This distinction between Vikings and Danes is observed in *Liðsmannaflokkr* vv. 4 & 6 (see e.g. Orchard 2001: 178). If, therefore, we take the genre, that is, the flyting, into consideration, then it is reasonable to conclude that Jezebel is Emma and the interlocutor her brother Archbishop Robert. Cnut is referred to in the prologue (Galloway 1999: 199–205). And if we are right in inferring that Ahab is indicated, then he must be Æthelred.

Since Emma spend time as a widow in Rouen 1014 before returning to England in 1016 before marrying Cnut, whom she may have met after the siege of London, *Jezebel* is set 1014–16, but written after 1017 when Emma married Cnut. Whilst Archbishop Robert has not died and Cnut's doings are described in the headline and the first six lines of *Jezebel* (Galloway 1999: 203) the dialogue was probably written before 1037. *Semiramis* too is set 1014–16 and probably written before 1037 when Archbishop Robert died. In both flytings Emma wins.

The *first reason* to connect *Semiramis* and *Jezebel* with an Anglo-Danish perspective rests with both dialogues being pro-Emma inasmuch as it doesn't matter what is said during a flyting as longs you win and that is what happens when performing the dialogues. It would seem, moreover, that Emma has the capacity to win very different kinds of flytings, which in an Anglo-Scandinavian perspective is impressive.

If the main characters in the two dialogues are the same, then the common traits that Ziolkowski (1989: 33–37) found and the more complex ones that Galloway (1999) found between *Jezebel* and *Semiramis* strengthen both authors' understanding of the dialogues being composed by the same author, albeit for different audiences or occasions. If this poet is Warner, it has to be proved that he would have had reason to ridicule Archbishop Robert.

The *second reason* to connect *Semiramis* and *Jezebel* with an Anglo-Danish perspective is the fact that they are dramatic and dialogical flytings meant to entertain when being performed. As Clover has showed the roots of the flyting are deeply buried in Germanic Iron Age culture. But if we want to find examples of the flyting as dramatic entertainment between fictional characters – whether recognisable or not – there are but a few examples. They are the Norse ones pointed out by Gunnell,

*Hárbarðsljóð*, *Vaffrúðnismál*, *Lokasenna* or *Skírnismál* and the pro-Emma Anglo-Scandinavian ones *Semiramis* and *Jezebel*. If, moreover, we want pagan gods to be characters in these dramatic dialogues, then there are only four left *Vaffrúðnismál*, *Lokasenna*, *Skírnismál* and *Semiramis*. There may well have been flytings in other parts of Northwest Europe, but hardly performances featuring pagan gods in societies that had been Christian and uninvaded by Scandinavians for hundreds of years.

The *third reason* to connect *Semiramis* and *Jezebel* with an Anglo-Danish perspective rests with the good reason we have to accept Galloways emendation and interpretation of the opening lines of *Jezebel* (Galloway 1999:203) and its bilingual Latin–Norse puns (1999:191 & 201) – not least because it is possible to take this bi-cultural interpretation a little further falling back on the cultural and linguistic interaction at the Anglo-Danish court discussed by Tyler (2005).

For what it is worth: If you happen to scan Latin verse qualitatively, as if it were a Norse composition, then the two three-liners after the headline, that is *Jezebel* ll. 2–7, can be scanned as two Latin alliterating strophes in a kind of *ljóðaháttr* with two long lines rather than one and a concluding full line. The last but one line is not perfect because one of the alliterations fall on the last stressed syllable. This, nevertheless, is not without Norse parallels (e.g. *Skírnismál* st. 38, ll. 4–5 and *Liðsmannaflakkr* v. 1 ll. 3–4 & v. 8 ll. 1–2. See e.g. Orchard 2001: 177–179).

- (2) Sors est fallēdi    solis concessa poetis  
Musca parit camum    si mus transfertur ad inum  
Alati formantur equi sculptoris in arte.
- (5) Laus est Cnutōni    sub mobilitate trocheī  
Pictorum digiti    cornu fecere rudenti.  
 Sub vatum lingua cornuta creabitur ursa

The privilege of deception is granted to poets alone; / a ‘fly’ [*musca*] gives birth to a ‘bridle’ [*camum*], if a ‘mouse’ [*mus*] is brought back to the end: / [thus] winged horses are fashioned through the craft of the sculptor. / Acclamation is Cnut’s – subject to the transformation of a trochee: / the painters’ fingers have made a horn [*cornu*] for a rope [i.e. a knot, *knútr*]. / Under the tongue of poets a she-bear will be made horned [Cnuted]. (Galloway 1999: 203)

A similar, albeit reversed, bicultural composition was highlighted by Orchard (2001: 180–182) in his discussion of the Latin touch in a brief ‘poem’ in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle *sub anno* 1036.

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Commissioning *Jezebel* and *Semiramis* would seem to be in complete agreement with the way Tyler (2005) discuss the importance of orality in the production of history in 11<sup>th</sup> century. And since the satires target Archbishop Robert of Rouen, who is belittled among his peers, that is, in front of an audience of nobility and clergy, the dialogues in addition to their Anglo-Norse audience were probably meant to find one also on the Continent. To some degree staging *Semiramis* will compensate for the audience's possible lack of proficiency in Latin and Tolumnius inability to express himself with clarity. Only the beginning and the end must be understood as speech. The satire is in line with Queen Emma's view upon herself as she would expect it to be from a commissioned work meant to entertain rather than inform. Commissions were typically given by Anglo-Normans such as Duke Richard I and Richard II of Normandy, Archbishop Robert of Rouen and Queen Emma (e.g. Webber 2005: 14–15; Tyler 2005: 367–378).

In addition to Emma being a product of several cultures as argued by van Houts (1992), Galloway (1999), Orchard (2001) and Tyler (2005), Emma was as a most powerful dynastic queen. As discussed by Earenfight (2013: 107–112 & 117–118 on queens) she was comparable to her mythic, allegedly contemporary, Scandinavian sisters, but contrary to her slightly older Saxon peers such as Mathilda and Adelheid (Gilsdorf 2004) she was neither the moral compass of her husband nor saintly. As political propaganda *Semiramis* belongs within the same sphere as Dudo's illustrated *Historia Normannorum* (see Christiansen 1998 & Pohl 2015: 182–197) and the Emma-commissioned *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (Campbell 1998; Orchard 2001). These two texts make educated Catholic liberal arts-styled sense of a recent heathen or half-heathen past. In Dudo's terms the authors have digested (*digerere*) oral tales (*relatus*) allowing us to understand them correctly (see Christiansen 1998: xix). It would seem that even the background to the entertaining satires *Jezebel* and *Semiramis*, were told to a commissioned author who digested the stories as part of a quest for the acculturation of a traditional Norse society and a Medieval Christian one. In the Middle Ages, however, Semiramis' case – an attractive woman mentally and physically in love with the supreme god – was soon lost (Archibald 2001:42-3) and so was Jezebel's – the unstoppable queen (Ziolkowski 1989: 5–12). All four texts must thus be seen in the wider context of the ongoing Christian Cultural Revolution that successfully overran North European Heathendom. The texts acknowledge Christianity and there are no signs of any lasting balanced cultural interaction, hybridization or acculturation between Latin and Norse identities. Instead, there's condemnation of the latter, *nota*

*bene*, paired with a rhetorical defence of a few politically important individuals, who had to live the revolution. This doesn't mean that the texts are uniform in intent. *Semiramis* ridicules Archbishop Robert's stupid necromancy, deranged mind and mannerist ways, while Dudo praises him and his actions (see Christiansen 1986: xxvi).

Affinity with a heathen Scandinavian mind set is established when the play sides with Semiramis in her poetic response to the prologue (Appendix I). In this epilogue her relation with Jove ties in with Mary's unorthodox relation with God, that is, *theod-gode* – 'folk-god' in *Héliand*, but also with Emma's commissioned description of her relation to Cnut – Jove's coregent (Campbell 1998: 72–73) – and the way her encomiast sums it up with reference to this special case of divine dispensation:

But when by the divine dispensation they [Emma & Cnut] at length and after frequent and protracted interchange of emissaries decided to be joint in the marital link, it is hard to credit how vast a magnitude of delight in one another arose between them both. (Campbell 1998: 32–35)

A holy marriage is a happy one and Emma's marriage to Cnut was as happy a holy royal Germanic marriage as ever the one between Brunhild and Sigebert 450 years earlier.

## Appendix

The prologue, ll. 1-19, and Semiramis' concluding monologue, ll. 163-81. The Latin text is based on Dronke (1970) and Lindbärg (2013) with normalized spelling. The below translation and its shortcomings are my own, but it is indebted to Dronke's English translation (1970) and Lindbärg Swedish translation (2013). On the binary relation between these two monologues see Dronke (1970:110) or above under 'Narrative'. Having presented the translation, *Binary Opposition, Form and Meaning* as well as *Word Play* are discussed separately.

### TEXT AND TRANSLATION

The Prologue

[Prol:] *Fama puellaris tauri corrumpitur extis.*

*Sordescant tenere torquentes fila puelle,*

*Ne pudor ad frontes possit transire nitentes.*

*Est per concubitus iniuria facta deabus.*

*In terris meretrix numquam crudelius arsit,* 5  
*Quam lupa Semiramis, moechum que traxit ab herbis.*  
*Temporibus Nini bos est inventus adulter.*  
*Si regina bovem durum quesivit in ervo,*  
*Cur non regalem portavit vacca coronam?*  
*Fiat vacca Nini, fiat regina viventi.* 10  
*Prodiit a Babilon talis confusio stupri.*  
*In terris quod plus potuit sordescere scortum?*  
*Purpureas vestes faciunt palearia viles.*  
*Semiramis virides discit mugire per herbas,*  
*In tenera luna taurinis saltibus usa.* 15  
*Femina quę Babilon cepit se sub bove stravit.*  
*In multis urbem contrivit, sola pudorem.*  
*Cur non auxit ei genius palearia largus?*  
*Quadrupes est moechus Nino pereunte repertus.*

By the bowels of a bull a young woman is corrupted!  
 Let them hold their ears, the young spinning girls,  
 lest shame should pass over their shining foreheads.  
 Thus being lain with, harm was done to goddesses!  
 Never on the earth did a courtesan burn more fiercely 5  
 than wanton Semiramis, who took an adulterer from the herbage.  
 In Ninus' time a bull was found to be adulterous!  
 If the queen looked for a rough bull in the vetch  
 Why didn't a heifer wear the royal crown?  
 May she be Ninus' cow, may she be the living queen! 10  
 from Babylon such lewd disorder spread –  
 on the earth, what harlot could be more dirty?  
 Her purple robes are made cheap by his dewlap!  
 Semiramis learns to low in the green herbage,  
 when under the tender moon she enjoyed the bull's mounting. 15  
 The woman who took Babylon spread out under the bull.  
 She alone in many towns destroyed chastity;  
 why didn't some generous genius give her a dewlap?  
 When Ninus perished a quadruped adulterer was found.

Queen Semiramis

<i>S: Quid conturbaris, rabie potatus Orestis, Plenus adulterio si lusit Iuppiter orto? Fermentate, malis que pars tibi cum furiosis? Si deus illusor hinnivit sicut amator, In bovis effigie pius est sub fronde repertus, Qui de stellifero solio sua fulgura mittit. Iuppiter appetiit, sed me devotio traxit. Per celi tonitrum presumptio pulchra deorum Arrisit leviter, sed pressit amore potenter. Si deus illusit non est dapnatio facti, Divino scortatori proscriptio non est. Inculpabiliter talis mihi risit adulter. Cum Iove si vellet me quis peccare negaret? Quis prohibente deo castus remeavit ab orto? Me stuprante pio iuste peccavimus ambo. Lascivis penitus lex est ablata deabus. Tollat merorem mea testificatio tristem. Amplexu duram retrahor Plutonis ad urnam, Non est, crede, iugis concessus sermo sepultis.</i>	<p>165</p> <p>170</p> <p>fol. 32v</p> <p>175</p> <p>180</p>
 <i>S: What are you? Deranged! Drunk with Orestes madness because full of adultery, Jupiter amused himself in the garden? Fermenting man, what part of you (seethes) with evil rage? Suppose the god imposter neighed as a lover and I found him graceful in a bull's shape in the garden, he who sends his lightening from his starry throne? Jupiter assaulted, but devotion drew me to him, with heaven's thunder, the beautiful god's anticipation smiled gently, and pressed me forcefully with love. Suppose the god assaulted, that doesn't condemn his deed, against a divine fornication there is no proscription, so blameless, so excellent, the adulterer smiled at me. Who, even if he wants to, can deny me the right to sin with Jove? Who, if the god forbids, returns chaste from the garden? When the devout defiled me, both of us sinned equitably, for goddesses wanton in their very heart, the law is null and void. Let my testification take away the mournful grief.</i>	<p>165</p> <p>170</p> <p>fol. 32v</p> <p>175</p>

In Pluto's embrace I am drawn back to the rough urn — 180  
 the buried, believe me, are not for ever given licence to speak.

### Binary Opposition, Form and Meaning

Both the anonymous prologus and Queen Semiramis compose their monologues mainly by means of strophic three-line structures and in the end they add a concluding four liner. Semiramis' four liner, nevertheless, is followed by a three-liner, which is a freestanding strophe – a general comment – that brings the play to an end addressing the audience as well as the deranged augur and the anonymous prologue.

The prologue builds his three liners of a conspicuous first line that stands out as a sharp statement in its own right. The second and the third line by contrast, make up a pair of lines that develop a point with reference to the first line. In relation to this line they are a period that stands out as a conclusion, a comment, a speculation or a description. As a result of this technique the prologue has made it possible in his performance to single out the first lines of his five three liners, and the last line in his four liner as a case summary in themselves:

By the bowels of a bull a young woman is corrupted	01
Thus being lain with, harm was done to goddesses	04
In Ninus' time a bull was found to be adulterous.	07
May she be Ninus' cow, may she be the living queen	10
Her purple robes are made cheap by his dewlap.	13
When Ninus perished a quadruped adulterer was found.	19

Seen as two three liners these six lines are inversions of the prologue's original semi-strophic three-line pattern. In this case summery, lines one and two comprise a period and read as a premise. The last freestanding and indeed reoccurring passage is the sharp conclusive statement.

The prologue is an oral mannerist as well as an opportunist. By means not least of the line pair 2/3 he turns to the audience as if it were a thing assembly and the stage a thing place. Similar to a prosecutor he finds Semiramis guilty and suggests a penalty for the adulteress.

Semiramis three liners are of a different kind inasmuch as she uses the strophic form to compose thematically coherent arguments. She addresses herself to the augur as well as the prologue, in front of the audience or 'thing assembly', that is, to all of us. Her arguments, therefore, are based on cultural sense and logic. Contrary to the prologue she doesn't take advantage of the opportunity.

The prologue presents a number of different suggestive accusations using several techniques. He is ironic, snide and vulgar and he aims at painting a grotesque yet obvious situation. Like a prosecutor he ends by suggesting a defaming penalty that a court could make its verdict.

Like the accused, Semiramis gives her defence speech settings things right when eventually she is given the opportunity. Coherently, her concluding four lines sums up the facts of the case and makes it obvious that she isn't and cannot be guilty of any crime.

### Word Play

With reference to Ahl (1986) Marvin (2001) has pointed to the author's conscious use of word play and the way it characterizes the roles, for instance Tolumnius'. In l. 44-45 the augur says:

*Non pecor OSSA – Ceres nature dente VORAVIT  
sed VOCO VOS ORARE gravem, nigra castra, Plutonem*

I do not ask for the bones – the goddess Earth has devoured these with nature's teeth, / but I call upon you to beseech grave Pluto your dark dwellings.

The word play is meant to create performative variation because the expression VOCO VOS ORARE—'I call upon you' contains the two most significant words in l. 44, that is, OSSA (*os* – bone) and VORAVIT (*vorare* – to devour). It is typical of the augur that he, who is more speech than sense, happened, as if by chance, to use the same sounds in different constellations without adding any meaning to the central words.

Contrary to the augur the prologue and Semiramis use their word play to enhance the meaning of their lines (see Marvin 2001:52-3) and true to the binary opposition between the first and the last 19 lines their puns mirror each other: In ll. 5-6 the prologue says:

*In terris merETRIX numquam crudelius ARSIT,  
Quam lupa Semiramis, moechum que TRAXIT ab herbis.*

Never on the earth did a courtesan burn more fiercely  
than wanton Semiramis, who took an adulterer from the herbage.

5

And in l. 171 Semiramis says:

*ARRISIT leviter, sed PRESSIT amore potenter.*  
smiled gently, and pressed me forcefully with love.

With his puns the prologue wants to add an extra raw meaning to the way the toil of egocentric lust and illicit love showed itself when the ‘courtesan burned (and) took’ – meRETRIX-ARSIT-TRAXIT.

Semiramis on the other hand puns in order to capture the intricate and inherent bipolarity of love that is both gentle and forceful, ‘smiling and pressing’ – ARRISIT-PRESSIT In so doing she uses almost the same consonants as the prologue: P-R-S-T rather than R-S-T-X. She continues to stress duality for instance in ll. 177-8:

*Me stuprante PIO iuste PECCAVimus ambo.*  
*LASCIVIS penitus LEX EST ablATA deabus.*

When the devout defiled me, both of us sinned equitably,  
for goddesses wanton in their very heart, the law is null and void.

She uses word play to unite what seems to be oppositional, devout and sinning – PIŌ-PECCĀ, but also lascivency and law and (perhaps) the proposer of law (*lator* hiding in *ablata*) – LASCIVIS – LEX EST – ablATA.

It is obvious that both the prologue and Semiramis are intellectually capable individuals and that the prologue is not much helped by the doings of the augur. The deranged and pathetic augur, nevertheless, adds an entertaining dramatic, chillingly heathen and spitefully satirical, dimension to the story.

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