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Medieval Latin 105: The *Waltharius*  
Summing Up Scholarship

Rachel Stone. "*Waltharius* and Carolingian Morality: Satire and Lay Values." *Early Medieval Europe* 21, no. 1 (2013): 50-70.

In this article, Stone argues that the *Waltharius* is more likely to belong to the ninth than the tenth century, and addresses the scholarship asking whether the *Waltharius* should be taken seriously or not. Some scholars have argued that the poem is "ridiculing rather than celebrating its supposed heroes" (52). She writes that it is more plausible that the *Waltharius* be seen as a "serious joke" or a "social parody" satirizing warrior culture (52). She also compares the poem to contemporary Latin poems and moral texts from 780-900, drawing on recent research on the ethos of Carolingian lay aristocrats. She notes that overall, attempts to date the poem suggest that the *Waltharius* is Carolingian rather than Ottonian, evidencing the positive view of the Huns, which, Stone argues, "fits better with the aftermath of the triumphant Frankish campaigns of the 790s than the menace of the 'Avari qui dicuntur Ungari' experienced from the 890s onwards" (56); as well as the portrayal of Gunther as a greedy and avaricious king, which "fits squarely within a Carolingian corpus of discussions of good and evil kings" (57). Stone concludes that throughout the poem, Walter behaves in ways that Carolingian moralists "saw as acceptable for a lay nobleman" (66). Even though Walter robbed the Huns and despoiled dead bodies, Stone argues that Carolingian readers would not have had a problem with these actions. In regards to whether the ending of the poem should be considered satire or not, Stone points out that grotesque humor can also be found in "serious" Carolingian poetry (66). The severe wounds sustained by Hagen, Walter, and Gunther enable the author to end the poem without killing any of them, thus avoiding a tragic ending. The point has been made that a character who was essentially a poor leader is punished for his misdeeds.